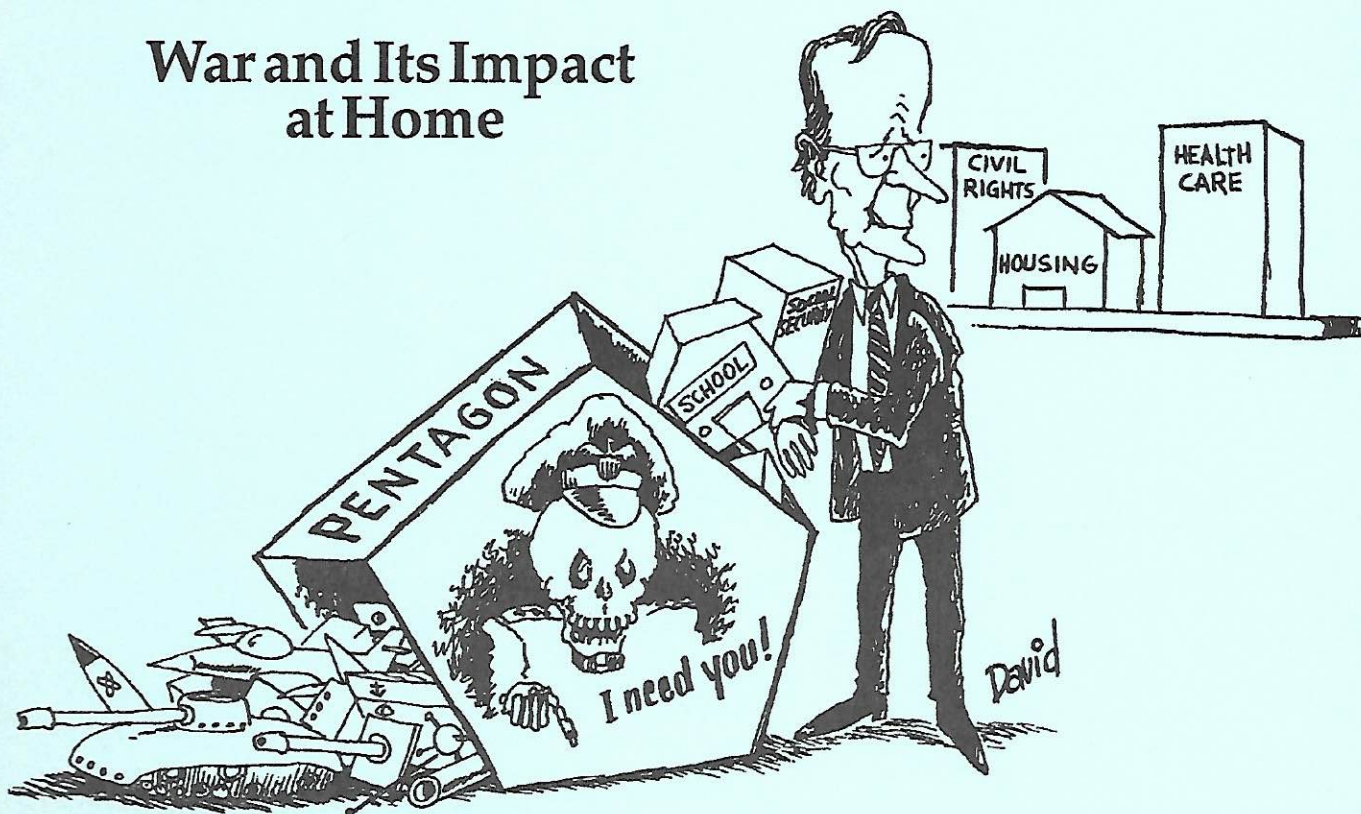


War and Its Impact at Home



Middle East Crisis in Review

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Who We Are

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

FIT members and supporters are involved in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. We are activists in unions, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. intervention, student formations, and lesbian and gay rights campaigns. We help organize support for oppressed groups here and abroad—such as those challenging apartheid in South Africa and bureaucratic rule in China, Eastern Europe, and the USSR. We participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies through our ties with the world organization of revolutionary socialists—the Fourth International.

The FIT was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because they opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. We tried to win the SWP back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective, and called for the reunification of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. through readmission to the party of all who had been expelled in the anti-Trotskyist purge. The SWP formally severed fraternal relations with the Fourth International in June of 1990. Our central task now is to reconstitute a united U.S. sympathizing section of the Fourth International from among all those in this country who remain loyal to the FI's program and organization as well as through the recruitment of workers, students, Blacks, women, and other activists who can be won to a revolutionary internationalist outlook.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, No. 83, March 1991

Closing date February 7, 1991

Send correspondence and subscriptions to BULLETIN IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009.

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U.S. Rulers Choose War

by Tom Barrett

On January 16, 1991 (U.S. time), only 19 hours after the United Nations deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, the United States launched all-out war against Iraq and, by extension, all the working people and poor people of the Middle East. U.S. and British air forces, with token support from the Saudi and Kuwaiti air forces, are carrying out over 1,000 raids per day over Iraq. The initial boastfulness by the Bush administration has given way to the recognition that the Iraqi military will not be a pushover and that the United States is very likely in for a long war. The U.S. government has acknowledged the truth of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's assertion that most of the Iraqi forces have not yet been committed to the fighting and that the U.S. has failed to destroy Iraq's capacity to defend itself.

Of course, in any war the belligerents impose strict censorship and do not release information which might be detrimental to their interests. Consequently, there is no way of knowing from the outside what the actual relationship of military forces is. However, many important facts are already known about this completely unjustified assault against Iraq. One of the most important things which the antiwar movement can do is to refute the administration's lies; the truth is Bush's greatest enemy.

In Contrast to Bush's Lies . . .

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker shot down the last hope for peace on January 10. Rather than seriously considering the many diplomatic solutions offered by Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, Baker simply repeated Washington's ultimatum: withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait or face war after January 15. No other conclusion can be drawn—George Bush and the more belligerent wing of the U.S. ruling class he represents consciously chose war in the Middle East. In this drive to reassert U.S. domination of the oil-producing Persian Gulf region,¹ Bush is showing no concern for the devastating consequences of a military confrontation with Iraq. He is completely indifferent to the loss of thousands of lives, both of young Arab and American soldiers and of civilians.

At this time opinion pollsters report that a majority of U.S. citizens support war against Iraq, assuming that it will be of short duration with few American casualties. It should be noted that considering the stage of hostilities, support for the administration's war policies is smaller than it has been in similar situations in the past. The *New York Times* acknowledged in its January 11 issue that the movement in opposition to a Middle East war is stronger than the anti-Vietnam war movement was at the time Lyndon Johnson ordered the bombing of North Vietnam in 1965. That is a vast understatement.

Popular support for imperialist war can only be built on a foundation of ignorance, and popular support for this war

against Iraq is no exception. In order to gain it the administration has covered up the truth and lied outright to the American people. In order to maintain it the administration has imposed restrictions on the media which are so severe that NBC has filed suit against them in court.

The best opportunity antiwar activists have to build a movement against this war is to counter Bush's lies with the actual facts of the situation. In addition to mass protests in the streets, the teach-ins which have been held across the country have been indispensable. Informational activities such as the four-hour radio teach-in on January 13, originated by New York's WBAI and broadcast throughout the U.S. on the Pacifica network, must continue.

Some of the facts which are important to explain to working people and especially to young people who may be facing military service in the near future are these:

- In contrast to the Bush administration's claim that Saddam Hussein represents a threat to the U.S., the fact is that he has been president of Iraq since 1978 and has held actual power since 1968. He enjoyed a friendly relationship with the United States throughout the 1980s. For example, when an Iraqi missile hit the U.S.S. *Stark* in 1987, killing 38 American sailors, a simple apology sufficed, and the incident was forgotten.
- In contrast to Bush's self-righteous assertion that aggression "will not stand," the U.S. has taken a hands-off attitude and allowed aggression to stand for decades in the Middle East. In 1967 Israel took the Sinai Peninsula, West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem by force, and in 1973 the Zionist state seized the Golan Heights. East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights have been formally annexed. UN resolutions in 1967 and 1973 demanded that Israel return the territories. To date, only the Sinai has been relinquished. The Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations turned a blind eye to the shah of Iran's aggression against Iraq and intervention to suppress the people of Dhofar, who were fighting for independence from the reactionary sultan of Oman. Washington gave its encouragement to reactionary forces in Lebanon—including outright fascists—leading to one of the most horrific civil wars in this century. Ironically, the administration has shown less concern for U.S. citizens held captive by various militia groups—held considerably longer than the hostages in Iran—than for the exiled emir of Kuwait, who is comfortably ensconced in a luxury hotel in Taif, Saudi Arabia. Most ironically, the Carter and Reagan administrations gave their blessing to this same "madman" Saddam Hussein in his aggression against Iran in 1980, leading to the disastrous nine-year war. Hussein's formidable military apparatus was to a great extent built during that period, with Kuwaiti and

Saudi financing. It should not be surprising that even Bush's allies in the region do not take such posturing seriously.

- In contrast to the assertion that the Iraqi attack was "unprovoked," the truth is that Iraq has expressed a number of grievances against Kuwait. This does not mean that they justify the invasion, or that young Arab working people should sacrifice their lives for the Iraqi bourgeoisie's gripe with Kuwait. However, the facts remain: Kuwait was using slant-drilling techniques to steal oil from the Iraqi portion of the Rumailah oilfield. Kuwait insisted on repayment of Iraq's massive debt, incurred during the Iran-Iraq war, a war which Kuwait helped to instigate. Kuwait violated the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) production quotas and kept crude oil prices at a sufficiently low level that Iraq had no possibility of meeting its international debt obligations. On a higher level, the Kuwaiti ruling family has for decades used its oil wealth for its own enrichment and for the support of reactionary and pro-imperialist forces in the Arab world, while the people in the more populated Arab countries—and the 60 percent of Kuwait's residents who are not citizens—continue to suffer extreme exploitation and poverty.
- The circumstances around the August 2 Iraqi invasion raise many questions, which no one in the administration has seen fit to address. First, on July 25, the U.S. ambassador, April Glaspie, assured Saddam Hussein that the U.S. would not oppose his military seizure of the Kuwaiti portion of the Rumailah oilfield. Second, the CIA, which has operated freely within Iraq throughout the 1980s, gave advance warning to the Bush administration that the August 2 invasion was imminent, yet Washington made no attempt to prevent it. Third, it has been reported by U.S. citizens who had been working in Kuwait that within minutes of the invasion, the emir and his family were already on their way to Taif. The conclusions drawn by these Americans, some of whom had been held as hostages and none of whom had any sympathy for Iraq, was that the al-Sabah family had advance warning of the attack.
- In contrast to Bush's claim that "no one wants peace more than I do," Bush has shot down at least three opportunities to settle the conflict. In an interview with Rowland Evans, broadcast on CNN on January 14, Jordan's King Hussein said that within 48 hours of the invasion he had had an assurance from Saddam Hussein that the Iraqi forces would be withdrawn from Kuwait. In November the Saudi defense minister (who is also King Fahd's brother) announced that Iraq would be willing to withdraw from Kuwait if they were given two uninhabited islands at the head of the gulf and the Kuwaiti portion of the Rumailah oilfield (which extends only a few miles into Kuwait). In September, Saddam Hussein announced that he would withdraw from Kuwait if Israel relinquished the West Bank and Gaza. In December that offer was modified: Iraq was willing to withdraw from Kuwait if a UN-sponsored conference were convened to discuss settling all conflicts in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. All of

these Iraqi initiatives were rejected out of hand by the president of the United States. At the Pentagon, the possibility that Iraq would agree to a settlement and withdraw from Kuwait was routinely called, "the worst-case scenario."

The Anti-Iraq Coalition

George Bush has claimed that the gulf conflict is not between Iraq and the United States but between Iraq and the "entire civilized world." It is true that the invasion of Kuwait has been rejected by nearly all governments throughout the world, and that a number of countries are allied with the United States in the field. Obviously, Washington has had considerable foreign policy success since the August 2 invasion, and the strength of George Bush's hand in this situation should not be underestimated. However, acting in coalition against Iraq has imposed limitations on U.S. policy and given Saddam Hussein opportunities to exploit the alliance's fragility.

Washington's biggest liability is its ties to Israel. U.S. support for the Zionist state shows clearly to all Arabs that its "aggression will not stand" posturing is total hypocrisy. The Arab rulers, both the monarchs and the bourgeois nationalists, know that to be in any way allied with Israel is to invite overthrow by their own people. Both President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia indicated that they would withdraw from the coalition with the United States if Israel entered the war, and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in his January 10 news conference stated that if war broke out Iraq would launch an attack on Israel. Iraq has been launching Scud missiles, armed with conventional warheads, against Israeli targets since the war began.

The complications created for Washington are obvious, and U.S. diplomats and Cabinet secretaries have been using all persuasive means at their disposal to keep Israel from launching an attack of its own. Israel, of course, has a long history of using whatever pretext it can find as an excuse for aggression. It has been argued that the fear of the "Arab coalition" breaking apart is unfounded. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait have all reaffirmed their commitment to the U.S. war effort against Iraq, even in the event of Israel's taking measures of "self-defense." However, Bush is not worried about Hosni Mubarak, let alone Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, withdrawing support from his coalition. Rather, he is concerned that any *de facto* alliance with Israel would be seen by the Arab populations as a disgraceful betrayal by their so-called "leaders," and they would be right. It should not be forgotten that the primary war aim of the U.S. is a Middle East ruled by stable, pro-American capitalist governments, to use Bush's own words, "coalition partners."

The pro-U.S. coalition also depends on a short war. The longer hostilities drag on, the more pressure the Arab rulers will feel from their own populations. One of the biggest concerns expressed by the U.S. government is that its coalition partners will "cut their own deals" with an Iraqi president who is not as intransigent as is claimed.

Since the war began on January 16, the entire world has witnessed a new level of technologically advanced destructive power. The computerized aircraft and laser-guided bombs and missiles are clearly the most formidable non-nuclear weapons

ever created, and they have given imperialism a military superiority which cannot possibly be overcome exclusively on the battlefield. It must be said: Bush's assertion that "we will prevail" is not a bluff. If the conflict is resolved *exclusively* by armed force, there can be no doubt that the U.S.-led coalition will win.

To assert U.S. military superiority is not to state the obvious. Iraq's military forces are the fourth largest in the world. They survived a nine-year war with Iran, itself a formidable military power in the Middle East, and in the process became combat experienced. On the ground Iraq has virtual parity with the U.S. and its allies: slightly less than a half million soldiers, roughly the same number of tanks and artillery. The difference is in air and naval forces, which will be decisive if the war remains exclusively conventional.

Even if the Iraqi fortifications in Kuwait are sufficient to withstand U.S. bombing, and conceding the courage and combat skill of the Iraqi army, U.S. control of the air and sea is an overwhelming military advantage. If the U.S. controls the air it will prove difficult or impossible to resupply the Iraqi troops at the front line or to bring up reinforcements. U.S. naval superiority combined with Iraq's international isolation will require Iraq to produce all its own war matériel. That will be impossible if U.S. planes can locate and destroy Iraq's munitions plants.

The U.S.'s vulnerability is not military, but political and economic. Time is on the Iraqi side for two reasons. First, though the U.S.'s technological weapons have been impressive in the initial stages of combat, it remains to be seen how reliable they will be in a protracted war in harsh desert conditions. More importantly, however, they are unbelievably expensive. One—one!—Tomahawk Cruise missile costs \$1.5 million. Hundreds have been fired in the first days of the war. One FA18 fighter-bomber costs \$35 million; other military aircraft models carry similar price tags. The war effort is costing \$750 million per day for ammunition alone. When one adds to that lost aircraft, fuel, food, military pay, etc., the costs of this war reach stratospheric levels. This is the real downside of the technological war—no government, not even the U.S., can afford to sustain it for very long. It is easy to maintain popular support for a war when people feel that they are just watching "Top Gun" on television; but a major test will come if Bush has to ask for tax increases or proposes major cutbacks in social spending to pay for it.

Second, the U.S. cannot politically sustain large numbers of casualties for an extended period. When Americans start losing family members they will inevitably begin demanding real answers as to why Bush launched this war. Waving the flag won't do. And of course, the longer the war goes on, the more Bush's lies will become exposed. Opposition sentiment to the war will inevitably grow; if that sentiment can be organized into effective action—and this has already begun to happen—it will have a real impact.

The antiwar movement will become a direct factor in the conflict if the war continues long enough that troop rotation becomes necessary. Already military recruitment is down; a strong antiwar movement can convince larger numbers of people not to volunteer and can pose the likelihood of even greater social unrest if a draft is attempted. As the antiwar movement exposes the government's dishonesty, it will be-

come politically more difficult to force American working people to bear the financial costs and other sacrifices of the war. And now, unlike at a comparable stage of the Vietnam war, some leaders of organized labor are speaking out in opposition to Bush's policies. The longer the war continues, the more intolerable the social cost will become.

How long the war will continue is a matter of speculation, and it depends on several factors. George Bush has claimed that the aim of this war is to "liberate Kuwait." It may very well be possible for the U.S. to force the Iraqis to withdraw from Kuwait within a relatively short time. However, it would have been possible to gain Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait without firing a shot. If Bush's real intention is to topple Saddam Hussein from power it will be another matter entirely. That would require a ground assault up the populated Tigris-Euphrates Valley against Baghdad, and casualties would be enormous. Furthermore, the Arab states which are now supporting the U.S. have stated that they will not support a land invasion of Iraq. Bush's hysterical rhetoric about all of Saddam Hussein's crimes may make it politically difficult to justify U.S. casualties in a war which ends with him still in power. Only time will tell if Bush will overreach himself.

Bipartisan Support for the War

It should not be surprising that Bush was able to win congressional authorization for an attack on Iraq before the war and that since the war started the Democrats have been attempting to outdo the Republicans in their enthusiasm for this aggression. What may at first seem surprising is the level of opposition within Congress to the resolution which authorized Bush to take military action, bypassing Congress's constitutional responsibility to declare war.

It should be understood that the large number of representatives and senators (mostly Democrats) who opposed the war authorization resolution were not motivated by any disagreement with Bush's objectives. They were, rather, concerned that immediate military action was not the best way to achieve those objectives. The Democrats and Republicans are united behind the drive to reimpose U.S. domination over the oil-producing countries of the Middle East. Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia expressed it best when he opened hearings in the Senate Armed Services Committee, which he chairs. He said that the issue is not whether military action "is justified. Clearly it is." His concern was whether or not a military attack would be in the best interests of U.S. foreign policy. That was the basis of nearly all opposition to the war resolution. Once the war started, a resolution of support to Bush and the U.S. armed forces was passed almost unanimously by both houses of Congress.²

The Democrats' refusal to act decisively against this war flows from the real nature and purpose of the Democratic Party itself. The Democratic Party, like the Republican Party, represents the interests of the wealthiest bankers and businessmen in the United States. When there are disagreements between the Republicans and Democrats—or, just as often, *within* the Democratic Party and *within* the Republican Party—they are disagreements on how best to advance the interests of that wealthy class which owns or controls the productive resources and actually rules in the United States.

There has been and continues to be disagreement within this class on the wisdom of Bush's war policies, and neither of the two capitalist parties is united on this question. Even some extremely reactionary figures in the Republican Party, whose thinking is consistent with the management of the smaller oil companies, are opposed to U.S. involvement in a Mideast war. They do, however, agree with Bush's fundamental objective, which is to reassert U.S. domination of the oil-producing Persian Gulf region. They simply disagree on how best to do it.

Of possibly even greater importance is the agreement among all capitalist politicians that *they*, not the American people, have the sole right to decide when young working men and women are sent off to fight and die. Now that the hostilities have actually broken out they have closed ranks. With only a few exceptions—nearly all of them African American—those politicians of either party who opposed Bush's drive toward war have not given any support to the mass demonstrations in the streets demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops. No matter what they think about the wisdom of a war in this situation, they know that unleashing the power of direct action by working people is a serious threat to their power. The Vietnamese revolutionary leaders have explained that the mass demonstrations in the United States and throughout the world demanding immediate U.S. withdrawal was a major factor in their victory over the most powerful military force which has ever existed. Obviously, direct action by working people against a war in progress is intensely harmful to the capitalist government's ability to carry out its foreign policy. It carries with it the logic of working people taking more and more direct action, leading to direct action to wrest power away from the bankers and businessmen who hold it now.

The lack of any serious expression of opposition within the Congress—even from self-styled "socialists" such as Bernie Sanders (Independent-Vermont) or Democratic Socialists of America leader Ron Dellums (Democrat-California)—shows very clearly how U.S. workers are hamstrung by their lack of their own political party. Within a political party run by and responsible to the ranks of organized labor, working people could be informed about and debate the issues of the Mideast war and have their decisions carried into the highest levels of government. That would be a powerful force in building the direct mass action which can actually limit the U.S. government's ability to carry out this war against the Arab people.

The Role of the United Nations

When the United Nations was established following World War II, the intent was to provide a framework for inter-imperialist cooperation in dominating the world. One of its purposes was to oversee an orderly transition to independence in the former colonies, as an alternative to popular revolution. Another was to use military force *against* popular revolutions when the people did not accept "orderly transition."

During the first decades of the UN's existence its functioning was hampered by the cold war and the nationalist sentiments of the postcolonialist governments. Today, however, the Soviet government's cutoff of even partial aid to anti-im-

perialist revolutions, combined with the realization by the bourgeois regimes in the former colonies that their dependence on imperialism cannot be ended short of ending *all* bourgeois rule, including their own, has led to a new cooperation between imperialism, Stalinism, and the bourgeois nationalist regimes of the third world.

One of the former imperialist possessions which gained its independence through "orderly transition" (in 1961) was the emirate of Kuwait. Since then, Kuwait used its oil resources to provide aid to conservative, pro-imperialist regimes in the semicolonial world. Throughout the UN there has been condemnation of the Iraqi invasion and nearly universal support for the imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq—which is nothing more than war by other tactics. The United Nations, no less than the U.S. Congress, acknowledges the right of *imperialism*, which today exercises its rule through multinational financial institutions (including the National Bank of Kuwait) rather than through colonial offices, to dominate the Middle East and the entire world. The United Nations not only acknowledges that right but is prepared to defend it with arms in hand. Its resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq if Saddam Hussein's forces were not withdrawn by January 15 was a complete victory for George Bush. The United Nations has shown itself for what it really is—not an organization promoting world peace but an organization to preserve imperialist world domination. If this war is to be stopped it is the working people—whose lives are on the line—who will stop it, not the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen in the talkshop on Manhattan's East Side.

Though it is inevitable that antiwar sentiment in the United States will grow, it is *not* inevitable that it will be a factor in staying Bush's hand. That can only happen if it reaches a certain critical mass—where it clearly threatens public support for the war—and is *organized* and carries out effective intelligent action. Antiwar activities must first of all be large and united, making it easy for working people and even active-duty military people to participate. The antiwar movement must appeal to the broadest section of the population, first and foremost explaining what Bush's *real* war aims are and why they have nothing to do with the interests of American working people. Then a sustained campaign of mass action can ultimately make the political cost of this war too high for the American ruling class. The antiwar demonstrations have thus far been successful. They must continue until Bush complies with their central demand: *Out Now!* □

February 5, 1991

Notes

1. The body of water between Iran and the Arabian peninsula was known as the "Arabian Gulf" until the shah of Iran decided to rename it the "Persian Gulf" as a reflection of Iranian domination of the region. However, there is nothing "Persian" about it. The inhabitants of both coasts are Arabs and it is called the Arabian Gulf by them.

2. Bernie Sanders and five members of the Congressional Black Caucus—Mervyn Dymally, Calif.; Charles Hayes, Ill.; Gus Savage, Ill.; Craig Washington, Tex.; and Maxine Waters, Calif.—voted against the resolution. Five other caucus members—Ron Dellums, Calif.; Cardiss Collins, Ill.; Major Owens, N.Y.; Edolphus Towns, N.Y.; Donald Payne, N.J.—and Henry Gonzalez, Tex., voted "present." The Senate vote was unanimous.

Biggest U.S. Antiwar Actions Since Vietnam

by Steve Bloom

In response to the beginning of George Bush's shooting war against Iraq, hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens took to the streets in protest on two consecutive Saturdays—January 19 and 26. By all accounts, these demonstrations constitute the largest outpouring of antiwar sentiment in this country since Vietnam.

The numbers are indeed impressive: In Washington, D.C., there were 50,000 on the 19th and 250,000 one week later. In San Francisco the figures were 75,000 and 200,000. In addition, the citywide antiwar coalition in Los Angeles organized its own protest of 20,000 people on January 26th. Smaller actions were held in other cities where people could not travel to one of the major national demonstrations.

What is particularly noteworthy is that these massive mobilizations have taken place at the very beginning of the war, at a time when the American people are hearing over and over how successful the bombing raids against Iraq have been and about the continuing atrocities of Saddam Hussein. Despite the opinion polls, in which George Bush's approval rating is running at a record 70-80 percent, those who oppose his attack on Iraq have not been intimidated. January 19 and 26 demonstrate conclusively that Washington has failed to overcome the legacy of mistrust that still exists among the people of this country as a result of Vietnam.

It is not, of course, surprising that Bush should be able to rally a large majority in the opinion polls at the start of his shooting war. The real contest for U.S. public opinion lies ahead. As the war continues, and the casualties on both sides mount, more and more people will begin asking: What is the killing really for? Is it worth it? Why are we spending billions of dollars on war when state and local governments say that they are unable to continue paying teachers or to provide other basic public services? What will be the further financial drain on a country already in a deep recession?

Today Bush can get away with his lies about a fight for "freedom" and the "liberation of Kuwait." But once people take the time to think things over it will not be hard for them to see what this war is really all about: oil, and the continued U.S. military domination of the world. The marches on the 19th and 26th show that a well-organized opposition is already in place

that can help explain this truth. Bush's "national consensus" could well prove extremely fragile—even if his military experts are right and they can bring the war to a victorious conclusion within a few months. If they are wrong, and things drag on much longer, the potential exists for a real social explosion in the U.S.

However, the U.S. movement is not without its problems. Because there is an organizational split among antiwar activists, two national demonstrations were called one week apart with virtually identical political programs. The 19th was called around three slogans: "Stop Bush's War Now!" "Fight Racism and Poverty at Home!" "Bring the Troops Home!" For the 26th, the demands were: "No War in the Middle East!" "Bring the Troops Home Now!" "Money for Human Needs, Not War!"

The January 19 wing of the movement is represented by the National Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East. This group was formed shortly after Bush deployed troops to Saudi Arabia, and was responsible for the first round of nationally coordinated actions last October 20, when tens of thousands mobilized in cities across the U.S. In late November, the leadership of this coalition issued the call for January 19

marches in Washington and San Francisco. They chose that date to tie in with the celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday (January 15, official holiday on January 21) and thereby link opposition to the war with the needs and demands of the Black community.

The other group, the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, was formed at a September meeting of activists from across the country. Its second national meeting on December 1 was attended by hundreds of representatives from national

and local antiwar groups, as well as local coalitions. This was by far the broadest and most representative planning meeting of the movement up to that point, and it issued the call for January 26—motivated largely on the basis that students needed extra time to mobilize, since campuses would be closed in early January.

Those attending the December 1 meeting appealed to the National Coalition to join them and unify around the January 26 date. The Coalition, however, stated that it had already done substantial publicity for its January 19 action, and insisted that

Actions Worldwide Against the Gulf War

In addition to the many thousands who demonstrated in the U.S. on January 19 and 26, millions have demonstrated for peace around the world. The *New York Times* reports that on January 26, 200,000 marched in Bonn and 100,000 in Berlin. Thousands turned out in London, the Netherlands, and throughout Europe. Tens of thousands demonstrated in Tokyo, and hundreds of thousands marched throughout the Arab and Muslim world during the preceding days. Two million protested in Libya, 400,000 in Algeria, and the Sudan had the largest demonstrations in its history.

the link with Martin Luther King's birthday was one it did not want to give up. Each group tried to achieve hegemony for its date. Either of them could have deferred to the other on the question, but neither one did. The result was two separate mobilizations built by two separate national coalitions.

Political Issues Dividing the Movement

There are political differences between the National Campaign for Peace and the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention. One of the most important represents a general dividing line among antiwar activists in the U.S.: Should the movement here join in the international condemnation of Saddam Hussein for his invasion and annexation of Kuwait? The Coalition, from the beginning, rejected any statement along these lines as part of its political platform. This was one of the main reasons why some of the more conservative elements in the movement decided to work for the formation of the Campaign for Peace, and insisted at its founding meeting that an explicit condemnation of the Iraqi invasion must be integrated into the political platform of the Campaign.

Two other political questions have also been important, but on these the divisions are not so clear. One has to do with the use of sanctions by the Bush administration as an alternative to a shooting war. The other is what role the UN might play as a force for peace in the present conflict. The Campaign for Peace has not taken a formal position on these questions, but the same conservative elements in the movement—who are concentrated organizationally within the Campaign—tend to support both the idea of sanctions as the “proper” way to force Iraq out of Kuwait and UN intervention.

Others in the movement have argued a more consistent “Out Now!” viewpoint: that sanctions are, in fact, simply war in another form—another way for Bush and the U.S. rulers to establish their right to control the oil-wealth of the Mideast—and that the UN has proven to be nothing but a tool used by the rulers of the U.S. to gain a political cover for their slaughter. The January 19 Coalition has taken a clear position against sanctions. But opponents of sanctions can also be found working within the Campaign for Peace. In fact, many who have been active with the Campaign during the period leading up to January 26 even oppose its call for a condemnation of Iraq.

The political dividing line between the two coalitions is, therefore, a fuzzy one. The main reason for this lies in the decision-making process that has been implemented by the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention. It has never allowed activists to have a real voice in the process. All of its proposals for action—including the call for January 19—have been issued by a self-selected “administrative committee.” Mobilizing meetings are sometimes held so that the leaders can tell activists what will be done and how they should do it. Agendas and reports at these meetings are structured in advance with no opportunity for those in attendance to change them. Discussion is limited. And no votes are taken. Many within the movement, even those who are politically closer to the program developed by the Coalition, have oriented more to the Campaign for Peace because of such undemocratic practices. Within the structures of the Campaign there has at least been an opportunity to raise ideas for discussion and debate.

It is significant that, despite the differences that do exist in political orientation, the formal demands of both January 19 and January 26 were essentially the same. This reflects the fact that a truly broad movement against the war in the U.S. can only be built around those basic points that unite all activists. There is simply no agreement on whether to condemn Iraq, or on the call for sanctions and UN intervention. Diverse views on these questions should be welcomed in the movement and at demonstrations. Everyone can bring their own signs and banners, with their own political slogans, so long as we can unite in opposition to the shooting war. There was no objective political reason why the two coalitions could not have agreed to march in January at the same location and on the same date. There is no reason why agreement for united actions cannot be reached for the future. Such an agreement will significantly strengthen the overall movement against Bush's policies.

In fact, the entire spectrum of antiwar opinion was represented in Washington on both January 19th and on the 26th. The 26th tended to have more American flags and signs asserting that it would have been better if Bush had “let sanctions work.” Most of the speakers expressed this point of view. But the call for sanctions instead of a shooting war was heard on the 19th as well. In fact, Jesse Jackson, who initially supported Bush's decision to send troops to the Mideast and now expresses a pro-sanctions viewpoint, spoke at both demonstrations. Opponents of sanctions and condemning Iraq made their presence felt on the 26th as well as on the 19th.

Blacks, Women, and Labor

The one noticeable difference between the two actions was the presence on the 19th of significant Black and other minority contingents—including a particularly impressive group of several hundred students from Howard University in Washington, D.C. This gave the 19th a somewhat different character not only from the 26th, but also from previous antiwar demonstrations in the U.S. where Black representation has been noticeably weak. The Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention chose to focus on this problem when it selected the Martin Luther King Day holiday weekend for its action.

There is certainly far more antiwar sentiment, and vocal antiwar sentiment, in the Black community than in the U.S. population as a whole. The January 25 *New York Times* reported a *New York Times*/CBS News poll conducted January 17-20. Whites favored Bush's military action by 4-1, while Blacks were evenly split on the question. This reflects the lower overall confidence that Blacks have in U.S. government policies as well as a specific understanding in the Black community that their youth will inevitably pay the heaviest price in this war.

Blacks make up about 12 percent of the U.S. population. But they represent nearly 25 percent of U.S. forces in the gulf—and an even larger percentage of the ground combat troops that will no doubt bear the largest burden of the fighting. The acute crisis of unemployment and poverty in the Black community means that joining the army is the only real choice open to many Black youth—other than entering into the dead end world of drugs and prison.

The National Organization for Women (NOW), the largest feminist organization in the U.S. which has been responsible

for several massive demonstrations in defense of abortion rights in the U.S. over the past few years, endorsed January 26. It put out a button saying simply "Women Against War," which was visible everywhere during the demonstration. NOW's participation in the January 26 coalition represents an important step both for the women's movement and the fight against the war.

There have also been protests against a shooting war from some elements in the U.S. labor movement. Union contingents were visible on both the 19th and 26th. The January 11 *New York Times* reported that hundreds of union leaders around the country were coming out against the danger of war because it would be "fought by the children of blue-collar workers." This stands in marked contrast to what happened during Vietnam, when the main leaders of organized labor in the U.S. lined up behind Washington's war effort. It was only at the very end of that war—when antiwar sentiment was clearly the overwhelming majority viewpoint in the country—that this labor "consensus" began to break down.

Before Bush's war actually started a number of international unions issued a letter urging that sanctions be given more time to work. With the commencement of hostilities it appears that there has been a significant retreat—on the part of the mainstream union bureaucracy—from even such mild protests. But the issue has still become a legitimate one for discussion among the rank and file. The same forces that can erode Bush's support within the population as a whole will affect organized labor. It may well be possible to bring U.S. unions into the antiwar movement in a much bigger way—and in a much shorter time—than during previous wars.

Perspectives for the Future

At this point both the Campaign for Peace and the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention are continuing their efforts. Plans for an ongoing series of actions are taking shape. Every week brings a new round of demonstrations and protests. Both national groupings are calling for local actions to take place on February 15 and 16.

The Coalition is also organizing a national conference over the weekend of February 9-10. The Campaign is planning its own national meeting on February 23. In addition, students have begun organizing on a national scale. In Chicago on January 19 a delegated national conference of around 200, representing 50-60 campuses, was held. It formed the National Network of Campuses Against the War. On January 27, the day after the big Washington march, students from around the country gathered in that city for a mass meeting of nearly 2,000. It called for a day of student protests on February 21 and established the National Student and Youth Campaign for Peace in the Middle East.

The January 26 mobilization organized by the Campaign for Peace was certainly larger and more representative geographically than January 19. But January 19 was impressive nonetheless. And the ability of the January 19 Coalition to establish links with forces in the Black and Latino communities indicates that it, along with the Campaign for Peace, will probably continue to play an important role in building a movement against the war in the U.S.

It is unclear at this point precisely what the form and leadership of that movement will be, given the diverse political and



organizational conceptions that are being widely debated. In the period leading up to the January demonstrations many antiwar activists, groups, and local coalitions refused to line up exclusively with either of the two national leadership bodies. The sentiment for unity was widespread, and with the inability to bring about a convergence around a single date, many endorsed and/or attended both demonstrations.

At this point it is hard to see how the Campaign for Peace will be able to really unite antiwar forces around its leadership if it continues to insist on a statement condemning Iraq as a basis for membership—a statement that many, perhaps even most, of those who are active in organizing the movement do not agree with. But it is even more difficult to see how the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention can provide an adequate leadership to unite the movement given its completely bureaucratic structure.

Those who supported unity in action leading up to January 19 and 26 will certainly continue to make their voices heard. And given the tremendous upsurge in antiwar sentiment and activity that we have seen during the past few weeks, they are also certain to get a good hearing from rank-and-file activists. A real and growing U.S. movement against Bush's war seems inevitable, whatever solution is ultimately worked out in terms of political program and leadership structure. □

The Emerging Student Antiwar Movement

by Keith Mann

One of the most striking characteristics of the emerging movement against the war in the Middle East is the participation of large numbers of students and young people at the forefront of antiwar activity. Marches, demonstrations, rallies, teach-ins, and conferences often seem to be made up primarily of young people. Antiwar groups have sprung up in hundreds if not thousands of high schools and campuses throughout the country, while existing antiwar and progressive student organizations have swollen in size. Some of the reasons for this are quite obvious. Many of the reservists now in the gulf are students who joined the reserves in order to pay for college. Young people are aware of the possibility of a draft that would reportedly begin with 20-year-olds. Furthermore, the links between budget cuts in education and the enormous cost of the war are crystal clear to students—especially those from public schools.

For many students and youth, participation in the movement against the war is their first political activity. Many others have already participated in actions against U.S. foreign policy in Central America and the Caribbean, and in the movement to end U.S. government and business support for South African apartheid. Though many of today's protesters were only born towards the end of the Vietnam war, the so-called "Vietnam syndrome" is clearly deeply ingrained in the collective memory of wide social and generational layers of the American people.

Students of color are steadily taking their place and playing a leadership role at all levels of the movement. But until now they have not been present to the degree that their disproportionate presence in the armed forces and in public schools subject to budget cuts would merit. However, the declared sensitivity on the part of many white student activists to the need to reach out and include Black and Latino students in the movement and include them as leaders is a further indication of the high level of political understanding in the student movement. Actions speak louder than words and declared intentions, of course, and the coming period will prove how seriously this question is taken by a movement which is still clearly deficient in this regard.

Nationwide Organizing

In the weeks and months leading up to the war, local, citywide, and regional student coalitions sprang up on both coasts, as well as in the Midwest and other parts of the country. In New York City for example, representatives of antiwar groups from over 15 area campuses had been meeting for months as a coalition called Students Against U.S. Intervention in the Middle East (SAUSIME). Meetings tended to attract 20-25 activists. A call for a mass student meeting that went out less than 24 hours after the beginning of the U.S. bombing on January 16 brought out nearly 200 students to a SAUSIME meeting at Columbia University the following Tuesday. Many students reported that meetings of their local campus groups had doubled and tripled in size. Similar experiences were reported throughout the country.

A national student conference—which formed a new organization, the National Student and Youth Campaign for Peace in the Middle East—was held in Washington, D.C., on January 27 following the successful demonstration of 250,000 people the day before. A similar meeting took place the same day in San Francisco attended by several hundred students. The Washington meeting had been prepared by a handful of full-time organizers for the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, organizations such as the United States Student Association (USSA), and representatives of other forces who had been selectively invited by the organizers. This mode of functioning, and the exclusion of many student formations from input into the organization of the conference, was widely resented. Nevertheless, over 1,800 people registered for the conference, held in a high school gymnasium.

The meeting began with greetings from the organizers and from French student activist Ariel Denis who read a statement from an international youth conference against the war which was held in Paris during the weekend of January 12-13. The conference then broke up into regional caucuses to discuss a six-point set of political demands and proposals for the structure of the organization. A people-of-color caucus attracted around 100 students. A smaller caucus of Jewish students also met. The reconvened plenary session turned out

to be quite disorganized. This situation was exacerbated by ultra-left cadre organizations who repeatedly interrupted the chair. A truncated political discussion around the proposed demands was followed by a vote. The following demands were overwhelmingly approved by the conference: 1) Stop the War, 2) Bring the Troops Home Now! 3) No Legal or Economic Draft, 4) Fight Racism, and 5) Development of a Sustainable Energy Policy. A further demand to End All Occupations Now was passed by a relatively narrow margin and will certainly be widely debated at future meetings. It was also decided that a steering committee made up of one representative of each group affiliated to the National Student and Youth Campaign would be formed. A steering committee meeting is scheduled for March 24.

Perhaps most significantly, it was agreed that February 21 would be a national day of student protest. This date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X as a way of tying in the fight against the war with the struggle against racism. February 21 will be an international day of student protests. Students throughout Western Europe and Japan will also be holding actions against the war.

The previous weekend another student antiwar conference had been held in Chicago. It formed an organization called the National Network of Campuses Against the War (NNCAW). Organizers reported that 200 students from 57 campuses participated. The political demands of NNCAW are quite excellent. They are: Stop the War; U.S. and Allied Troops Out Now; End Racism at Home and Abroad; Money for Education and Human Needs, Not for the Military; No Poverty Draft, No Legal Draft.

Supporters of NNCAW came to Washington for the January 26 march with NNCAW buttons and a leaflet inviting students to participate in an NNCAW contingent. At the student conference the next day they lobbied for support for another conference in Chicago, scheduled for March 1-3. In the context of the breadth of the National Student and Youth Campaign, the role NNCAW sees for itself will be important. The student movement must remain united and avoid any competition for leadership that might divide it in the same

way that the general movement was divided before January 19/26.

Political Precociousness

The political clarity and precociousness of wide layers of the student movement is as striking as their heavy participation in antiwar activity. The wide popularity of the slogan "Stop the War, Bring the Troops Home Now" reflects the understanding that whatever one thinks of Saddam Hussein—and supporters of Hussein and his invasion of Kuwait are hard to find—it is the United States that is responsible for this war, and that the antiwar movement must focus its protests on the U.S. government. So far, those forces calling for "Negotiations," "Sanctions," and an approach that condemns Iraq in equal terms as the United States have been marginalized in the student movement to a far greater degree than has been the case in the movement as a whole.

Amongst the forces who have not raised consistent "Out Now!" slogans are the Communist Party and their youth group, the Young Communist League (YCL), and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and their youth group, the DSA Youth Section. These organizations refuse to call for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. The YCL looks to the same United Nations that sanctioned a deadline for war "to act decisively to stop war and conduct negotiations" and the DSA Youth Section urges an end to the war by letting sanctions work. Sensing how out of step they are with the mood of students, these groups have for the most part avoided public debates in student organizations and coalitions, preferring to advance their positions through leaflets and their press.

A recent meeting of a student subcommittee in the New York City coalition building for the January 26 demonstration in Washington illustrates how isolated these ideas are. In a discussion over the demands that should be raised in a leaflet aimed at building the demonstration amongst students, the lone DSA representative argued articulately for a condemnation of Iraq and support for sanctions. An initial straw poll saw slightly more than two-thirds of the two dozen young people present reject this approach. But following a discussion in which independents and members of various political groups explained the imperialist nature of the war, the devastation to civilians that a blockade involves, and the obvious need for a military force to enforce the sanctions, a binding vote saw everyone except the DSAer reject her proposals and call for a consistent "Out Now" approach.

As the war drags on, liberal public opinion, sections of the Democratic Party, and reformist forces in the radical movement will certainly step up their attempts to persuade the antiwar movement to raise the demand for negotiations. This will present a test for the student movement in general, and its leaders in particular. They will need to explain clearly that such a demand implies that the U.S. has a right to interfere in the affairs of the Arab people and that it is therefore incompatible with the slogan "Bring the Troops Home Now!" Much the same can be said for demands for a "cease-fire" if they are counterposed to the idea of immediate withdrawal.

Though widespread debate and discussion around antiwar strategy has not yet been a major preoccupation of the student movement, their instincts are clearly favorable to a mass action perspective. This is not to say that tactics such as civil disobedience, guerrilla theater, sit-ins, etc., are not popular. But the need for mass demonstrations and rallies is widely understood as paramount. Congressional lobbying and letter-writing campaigns have definitely not inflamed the passions of young people.

Wide Sentiment for Unity

The widespread disgust of rank-and-file activists at the disunity which has marked the movement, manifested by the calling of two national antiwar demonstrations one week apart by the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East and the Campaign for Peace in the Middle East, has found a strong echo amongst the students. The open letter to the antiwar movement calling for unity in the fight against the war that was published in the December 26 issue of the *Guardian* newspaper seems to have struck a deep chord with activists. Distributors of the appeal have noted a particularly positive response to the letter from those newest to politics.

The mass meeting of the New York City student coalition, SAUSIME, on January 22 passed a resolution, virtually unanimously, calling for unity in action and democracy for the movement as a whole. The group introduced a statement inspired by the *Guardian* appeal for debate at the January 27 student conference. Though the statement was never discussed by the plenary, it received a warm reception in the Northeast caucus.

Such initiatives are extremely important because the considerable political weight of the student movement can be decisive in forcing the main wings of the movement as a whole to unite in the calling of actions and conferences.

A General Youth Radicalization?

It is of course too early to tell to what degree the deep opposition to the war amongst young people signals a general youth radicalization. But the extreme popularity of the slogan "No Blood for Oil!" suggests that such a radicalization could very well be developing. This slogan and its mass appeal clearly reflects an understanding of the connection between oil profits and the war. The anticapitalist implications of this slogan suggest that broad layers of students and youth in this country will be open to a Marxist critique of American society, the role of imperialism in the world, and at least a consideration of a socialist alternative to what exists. These are quite spectacular developments given the fact that a year ago imperialist ideologists used the occasion of the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe to definitively proclaim the death of communism and the triumph of free market capitalism. Any ideological gains in favor of their system that they may have registered through this campaign have now been seriously challenged in the eyes of millions of people throughout the world.

Commentators are already seeking to draw parallels with the student movement of the 1960s and early '70s. If that experience is any guide to current reality, it suggests that deep mass radicalizations leading to overall critiques of society are a product of social crises which manifest themselves on several fronts. The youth radicalization of that period was only in part the result of the Vietnam war and the opposition to it. Young people had begun to rebel earlier against the suffocating atmosphere of the cold war—largely through free speech battles, and the inspiring examples of the civil rights movement and the Cuban revolution. The feminist movement of the 1970s was both a product of and a contributing factor to this radicalization. But the clear connections today between war, austerity, racism, and oil profits, coupled with a recession that will only be aggravated by the war, could very well provide the basis for such a radicalization in the short to medium term.

All this means that revolutionary socialists now have an opportunity to win students and young workers to the banner of Marxism. With the discrediting of "real existing socialism" (read "Stalinism"), and the complicity of both the Soviet and Chinese governments in the U.S. war, along with the identification of social democracy with war and austerity, the Trotskyist politics of the Fourth International will certainly have a strong appeal to radicalizing youth today. □

U.S. Foreign Policy in Historical Perspective

by Paul Le Blanc

The following remarks were presented at a teach-in in Pittsburgh on October 23, 1990.

In these brief remarks, I want to suggest a critical-minded historical perspective on our country's foreign policy. But first I want to offer a few comments on the present crisis.

A Lebanese revolutionary whom I know recently commented on the money being spent by the United States and its allies to fund the current operations in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. The cost of U.S. deployment alone has been estimated at more than a billion dollars a month. He said: "Imagine how bitter this must make those who have struggled—often in vain—to raise sufficient money to prevent the mass starvation of men, women, and children in such countries as Ethiopia. What does this say about the priorities of the civilized Western governments?"

We know that the U.S. government has orchestrated this massive military intervention into the Persian Gulf with a claim that it must defend such democratic principles as that of self-determination. The United States must be a bulwark of democracy and human decency, we are told, against the brutality of such dictators as Saddam Hussein.

One of the central facts for journalists, the late I. F. Stone once commented, is this one: "Governments lie." Much of the U.S. news media is, in the present situation, quite prepared to apply this golden rule of journalism—but only to the government of Iraq. The brutal dictatorship in that country certainly deserves to have all of its policies looked at with a sharply critical eye. It's too bad that the U.S. news media was not so critical of Saddam Hussein when he was repressing and slaughtering left-wing oppositionists, trade unionists, Kurdish nationalists, and others over a period of two decades. It's too bad that the U.S. media was not inclined to be so critical when Saddam Hussein was getting big loans from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in order to finance a bloody war against Iran only a few years back.

But we have a responsibility to examine critically the actual motivations of our own government. It is important to recognize, first of all, that "our" foreign policy is not made by *us*. It is made by an elite of government officials, career diplomats, and foreign policy experts who wish to preserve the American way of life.

One aspect of the American way of life is that the richest one percent of the population receives as much income overall as the poorest forty percent, with the top ten percent holding 70 percent of the wealth. Between one and five percent of the population controls at least 80 percent of the economy.

This economic power directly translates into political power. Our government conducts a foreign policy which is in harmony with the needs of the top 500 immensely powerful capitalist corporations. In a recent study entitled *Confronting the Third World*, the noted historian Gabriel Kolko has discussed this foreign policy in some detail. Kolko was sharply criticized in the *New York Times* by a prominent foreign policy analyst

named Alan Tonelson. A couple of quotes from Tonelson's critique are quite revealing. Essentially, he argues that Kolko is foolishly unrealistic. In Tonelson's words, "the United States may often need to do terrible things to get what it has always wanted from the developing nations." He adds that—to quote him again—"indirect control [of third world countries] through local stooges made a great deal of sense." Tonelson suggests that, ultimately, even if it isn't really motivated by democratic or humanitarian concerns, such a foreign policy approach is beneficial not only to wealthy elites in our country, but to the American people as a whole.

There are a number of informative studies which show us that this debate is not new. William Appleman Williams's classic history *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* is one of many. Williams show that there has been an expansionist dynamic in the U.S. economy and foreign policy from the beginning. It is worth looking at how different views about this were expressed in earlier years.

One aspect of U.S. expansionism, obviously, involved "the winning of the West," in part from Mexico and especially from the Native American peoples, the Indians. The well-known political leader and amateur historian Theodore Roosevelt viewed the matter in racist terms: "It was wholly impossible to avoid conflicts with the weaker race [Roosevelt wrote] unless we were willing to see the American continent fall into the hands of some other strong power; and [he went on to assert, in a classic "blame the victim" gambit] even had we adopted such a ludicrous policy, the Indians themselves would have made war on us. It cannot be too often insisted [Roosevelt triumphantly concluded] that they did not own the land."

The question of ownership was fully resolved by the 1890s, with the closing of the frontier. Yet the interests of the dynamic industrializing economy of the United States could not be confined to the borders of our own country. This was advanced in part through the famous Open Door Policy—designed to keep the doors of Latin America, Asia, and other parts of the globe open to U.S. commerce.

As president of the United States, Teddy Roosevelt explained the U.S. perspective in 1901. "The same business conditions which have produced the great aggregations of corporate and individual wealth have made them very potent factors in international commercial competition," Roosevelt told Congress. He went on to say: "America has only just begun to assume a commanding position in the international business world which will more and more be hers." Roosevelt sought to show that he was a man of peace, proclaiming: "The true end of every great and free people should be self-respecting peace; and this Nation most earnestly desires sincere and cordial friendship with all others." But he also let it be known that he held very much the same attitudes which he'd had toward the Indians who had gotten in the way of U.S. interests. He put it this way: "Wars with barbarous or semi-barbarous peoples come in an entirely different category, being merely a most regrettable but necessary international police duty which must be performed for the sake of the welfare of mankind."

We should note that the so-called "barbarous or semi-barbarous peoples" invariably had darker skins and were not inclined to be naturally cooperative toward the business interests or geographical concerns of U.S. economic and political leaders.

We know that U.S. interests soon came into conflict with the interests of competing world powers as well, culminating in our entry into the First World War. In the years leading up to that fateful conflict, Roosevelt and others advanced a policy of what they called military "preparedness," similar to some of the policies of President Bush today. One of the sharpest critics of that policy, a policy which paved the way for World War I, was the great working class trade union leader Eugene Victor Debs. I want to conclude by looking briefly at his views.

Debs did not want to preserve the American way of life—he wanted to change it fundamentally. He felt that capitalism was not good for the working class majority. He was a socialist and he explained himself by saying: "I believe, in common with all Socialists, that this nation ought to own its own industries. I believe . . . that all things that are jointly needed and used ought to be jointly owned—that industry, the basis of our social life, instead of being the private property of the few and operated for their own enrichment, ought to be the common property of all, democratically administered in the interest of all." It was from this standpoint that Debs criticized the U.S. foreign policy of his day.

"Capitalist 'preparedness' means the security of this nation's robbers against the same class of robbers of other nations," he argued. He added: "Danger to the ruling class is a thing to rejoice over and take advantage of, and not to worry over and prepare against. The ruling class owns the nation, controls the government, and waxes fat on the spoils wrung from the working class. Let the ruling class fight their own wars and defend their own booty." Instead of following the policies of people like Teddy Roosevelt, Debs urged the majority of people in the United States, the working people, to "fight every battle for the overthrow of the ruling class and their ravaging, plundering, war-breeding, man-killing, heart-breaking, soul-destroying system, and for the emancipation of the working class and the brotherhood and peace of all the world."

Of course the world is a more complicated place today than it was in the time of Teddy Roosevelt and Gene Debs. But I think it is not a completely different place. If that is true, then this debate of long ago may have some relevance for our own situation as we face the possibility of war in the Persian Gulf.

Obviously the ideas put forward by Debs are completely worthless for those who shape U.S. foreign policy today. But they do find some reflection in the widespread sentiment in our country (even among many who express to the opinion polls a

superficial support for U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf) that this is a rich man's war but a poor man's fight, not defending ideals or principles but instead U.S. economic and political power, and especially the profits of the oil companies.

If our country *does* get involved in a Vietnam-type conflict

in the Middle East, the thinking of many so-called "average Americans" could go in a more radical direction. Even now many believe, with Debs, that our fight is not overseas but here at home in the struggle for social justice for blue-collar and white-collar working people, African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities, women, hard-

pressed working farmers, the urban poor, and others who make up the majority of our people.

This raises an obvious question that U.S. policymakers will have to deal with. There is probably sufficient public support to begin a war in the Persian Gulf, but will such a war prove to be more costly—economically and politically—than it is worth to them?

Those who oppose such a war have a responsibility to let the policymakers know that the cost will be too high.



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NOW Holds First Young Feminist Conference

by Sarah M. Springer

The first National Young Feminist Conference organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW) was held in Akron, Ohio, on February 1 through 3. More than 750 women from 46 states attended the conference. They were mostly of high school and college age.

Akron is a special concern to young women, since it is the site of *Ohio v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health*, one of two cases in which the Supreme Court ruled last summer that states can restrict young women's right to abortion through parental consent and notification laws. NOW President Molly Yard explained in *National NOW Times* (Nov./Dec. 1990) that the "conference will help young activists in organizing their peers around the country to fight further loss of their reproductive rights, so Akron seemed an appropriate place to be."

In 1988, rising attacks on women's rights brought young women into struggle across the nation. Later, the April 9 and November 12, 1989, demonstrations mobilized hundreds of thousands of young women and placed their organization and this conference squarely on the feminist agenda, along with connecting them to the existing feminist movement. The conference itself was organized by the National Young Feminist Steering Committee, representing Latina, Anglo, Asian, and African Americans, lesbians, women in the workforce, college and high school students, and single mothers. The steering committee met in Akron in November with Patricia Ireland, NOW's executive vice president, Dixie Johnson, National Conference coordinator, and other NOW activists from Ohio, to begin planning the conference and organizing outreach to young feminists across the country.

Steering Committee Greeting

The three-day conference included plenaries, workshops, issue hearings, and special constituency caucuses. Opening ceremonies, welcome and greetings, and an open microphone session made up the first plenary.

The welcome and greetings provided an opportunity for the steering committee to introduce themselves, discuss activities in their cities and states, and speak about issues they are concerned with and involved

in. Leanne Blood, Spokane NOW chapter president and single parent, described the progressive legislation on women's issues being forced through in Washington state despite last minute obstacles presented by Democratic "friends." She emphasized the need for a new party. Joy Chairusmi, a high school student from Old Bridge, New Jersey, spoke of plans to build high school chapters of NOW. Jennifer Goldberg, who works with the Towson State Women's Center in Maryland and who founded a feminist consciousness-raising group on campus, addressed the need to internationalize feminist issues and stand in solidarity not only with our sisters here, but also with women abroad who suffer from the U.S. government's repressive foreign policies.

Ellen Hone, Jr., was a presenter at the young feminist workshop at the National NOW Conference in Cincinnati in 1989 from which the resolution was drafted to call for this young feminist conference. "It enrages me to think that today we are still fighting for some of the most basic rights that our foremothers struggled for, such as the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. And even some of the battles we thought were over are back to beset us, like the threat of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned," said Hone.

Josie Miranda, a Puerto Rican lesbian feminist and NOW co-coordinator at the University of California at Davis, addressed the current war in the gulf, calling it a symptom of the disease of patriarchy. Diane Rose-Schedler, Pulaski county NOW chapter president and a senior at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, talked about her local NOW chapter and its involvement in outreach to area high schools and colleges. Chimene Schwach, coordinator of Maryland's Students for Choice, expressed the need for young feminists to fight against parental notification laws. "We don't want women's lives endangered anymore," Schwach stated.

Sarabeth Eason, a high school sophomore from Toledo, Ohio, is currently involved in the peace movement and in educating people about the problem of affordable education. Tanya Thomas, an African American single parent from Washington, D.C., talked about the need to both eliminate sexism within the African American community and racism within the feminist movement. Finally, Jill Skin-

ner, a student at the University of Colorado at Boulder, spoke of the pro-choice referendum held on her campus, which declared the university a pro-choice sanctuary.

An open microphone session immediately followed the steering committee's greeting. This Young Feminist Action Update provided an opportunity for conference participants to add to the discussion on issues especially important to young women. Some of the topics included women in the military, parental consent and notification laws, violence against women on college campuses, clinic defense, women's access to higher education, and building networks with young feminists around the country.

Workshops

Saturday morning began with three workshop sessions. A fourth workshop session was held on Sunday morning. Among the workshops presented were "Affirmative Action: Quota Is Not a Four-Letter Word," "Discrimination in Uniform: Issues of Women in the Military," "Feminization of Poverty: Women and Welfare," "Pay Equity or 'The Check Is in the Mail!,'" "Do We Need a National Health Plan?," "We've Come a Long Way . . . Maybe: Feminist Speakout on the Equal Rights Amendment," "One in Four Is One Too Many: A Discussion of Date and Acquaintance Rape and Recovery," "I'd quit, but I really need this job!"—Sexual Harassment in School and on the Job," "Who's Invited to the Party?," "Exploring Differences and Making Connections: Heterosexism, Racism, Classism, Ageism, Ableism, and Sizeism," "Don't Agonize—Organize! Campus Organizing for the 90's," "Our Future Is NOW: High School Students Organize," and "The New Right and the Rise of Religious Fundamentalism Worldwide." Other workshops included such topics as incest and abuse, community organizing, women's health care, and feminism and ecology, all of which dealt in some way with young women's contribution to these issues.

Of special interest to me were the workshops dealing with pay equity, the need for a national health plan, and the update on the Commission on Responsive Democracy. The first was presented by Peggy Kahn, associate professor at the

University of Michigan at Flint. She outlined the history of the pay equity movement and its demand that women receive equal pay for comparable worth, i.e., jobs with similar demands on the worker. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 provided for equal pay for women in the same jobs as men, but has, nevertheless, proven to be inadequate because women are still largely excluded from jobs traditionally held by men. What women are still lacking is comparable worth legislation enforcing equal pay for

Fighting for Women's Rights in the 1990s

by Claire Cohen, Carol McAllister, Gayle Swann, and Evelyn Sell

A Fourth Internationalist Tendency Pamphlet

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similar jobs. Kahn described what the pay equity movement is doing to change the pay gap between female and male workers in similar occupations. One organization working towards improvement is the National Education Association. It is commissioning (in some areas) a reevaluation of clerical and maintenance support jobs held mostly by women and people of color. Kahn concluded with three ways to eliminate the undervaluation of women's work. One is to support comparable worth campaigns. Another is to support women's unionization, which provides an organizational base for women to fight for comparable worth and without which most changes in this struggle do not happen. Finally, Kahn recommended working towards a cultural change in attitudes by educating women about comparable worth.

The workshop entitled "Do We Need a National Health Plan?" was chaired by Virginia Montes, government relations director of National NOW, Margaret Schmid, executive director of the Coalition for Universal Health Insurance, and Valerie Taylor, D.C. Rape Crisis Center. The presenters opened the workshop by hearing participants' views on a national health

plan. "Health care is a right, not a privilege," was reiterated several times. People also expressed the need for the women's movement to take on this very urgent issue. Another person pointed out that of all the industrialized countries, only the U.S. and South Africa do not have nationalized health care. One woman stated that the medical situation in the U.S. is atrocious. Margaret Schmid gave statistics on those people most acutely affected by the lack of a nationalized plan: children, students who are no longer eligible under their parents' insurance, and working people whose employers refuse to provide adequate or any coverage. The reason why the U.S. doesn't have nationalized care already, Schmid said, is that big money interests—insurance corporations, medical associations, pharmaceutical associations, and business associations—make extremely high profits by keeping the system the way it is. For the insurance and medical associations, a new national health care system would mean rationalizing costs. This is truly a crisis for millions of people in the U.S. today who are children, students, unemployed, or employed and only partially, if at all, covered by health insurance through their employers.

The workshop entitled "Who's Invited to the Party?" provided an update on the progress of the Commission on Responsive Democracy, which is exploring the possibility of a new political party. Among the presenters at the workshop were Cara Gaziano, a member of the commission, and Molly Yard. They discussed how the commission came out of a workshop at the 1989 National NOW Conference in Cincinnati. At the same time, in a different workshop, participants developed a "Bill of Rights for the 21st Century." Both the call to charge the Commission on Responsive Democracy with investigating third party sentiment in the U.S. and the Bill of Rights passed on the floor of that conference. Because some present in the workshop assumed the commission had already reached a consensus for a third party, Yard explained that it is too soon to know whether the outcome of the commission's hearings will be to recommend the formation of a third party with other progressive forces.

Gaziano addressed what she has heard from young people at the hearings. There is a common misrepresentation of young people as being apathetic towards politics, she said. Based on the number of young women and men at the last two pro-choice marches in Washington, D.C., Gaziano does not see young people in that light. However, she said, young people have not found an effective political organization in which to channel their efforts and enthusiasm, and that is what makes

them frustrated, but certainly not apathetic.

Questions from the more than 90 participants in this workshop covered a wide range of concerns. Can we reform the Democratic Party? Can we use a new party to motivate the Democrats to reform? Should a new party be a permanent rejection of the Democrats? What other forces are interested in forming a new party? How can a new party be built? How hard will it be to get on the ballot and raise money? What about media coverage? What platform would such a party have? Many workshop participants expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with their participation in and experience with the Democratic Party. Yard urged people to attend upcoming commission hearings to talk about their experiences and listen to other people express a wide range of ideas on the subject. So far, the commission has held two hearings, in New York and Atlanta.

'Power Through Unity'

The second plenary was entitled "Power Through Unity: The Feminization of Power." Speaking at the plenary was Patsy Mink, Congress member (D., Hawaii), who wrote the Early Childhood Education Act in 1971 (vetoed by Nixon), the Women's Educational Equity Act, the Freedom of Information Act Amendments, and co-author of Title IX of the Education Amendments (which prohibits sex discrimination in the allocation of funds by all educational institutions). Suzanne Denevan, student body president and chief officer of the Minnesota Student Association at the University of Minnesota, urged young feminists to keep on taking power and not to back down. She spoke of the importance of student government in the self-determination of policy-making on campuses. Bridgetta Bourne, program development specialist for Professional and Community Training Programs, a unit of the National Academy at Gallaudet University, described the successful demand of students at her university for a president who was deaf and their victory after a week of protest. Molly Yard spoke, this time on her life as an activist. A life of activism is very rewarding, Yard said, because of the feeling of optimism one has by helping to bring about changes.

Special Constituency Caucuses and the Gulf Crisis

Immediately following the second plenary were the special constituency caucuses, on racial and ethnic diversity, lesbian rights, disability rights, men and feminism, high school feminists, organizing against

acquaintance rape on campus, women and medicine, and the gulf crisis.

At the caucus on the Persian Gulf war, students discussed what activities were being planned (and what had already happened) on their campuses and high schools, including teach-ins, demonstrations, petition drives, and many other actions in opposition to the war. Also, students who had attended the National Student and Youth Campaign for Peace in the Middle East meeting, held in Washington, D.C., on January 27, discussed the call for a national student day of action against the war. One issue that was shared by many of the caucus participants was the subject of sexism within their antiwar student coalitions and how to deal with it. Many women felt excluded from leadership and decision making and were frustrated at the lack of consideration shown by some men in these student coalitions. Some discussed forming women's subcommittees within coalitions to provide a forum for women.

Next came the issue hearings, to which people came with their ideas for resolutions to be brought before the conference. The hearings included violence against women, reproductive rights, racial and ethnic diversity, lesbian rights, political empowerment, economic empowerment, health, and other issues. I will go into more detail later on the resolutions that were drawn up out of these hearings.

'Campaign for Young Women's Lives'

The third plenary, on Sunday, was entitled "Campaign for Young Women's Lives." This plenary was especially important for young and poor women. Young women are currently affected by restrictive parental consent and notification laws flowing from the Supreme Court's decision to leave abortion legislation up to state governments' discretion. Although parental consent and notification laws are not in effect nationwide, increasingly states are passing such legislation. Also, laws restricting the availability of abortions funded by Medicaid is taking a toll on women who cannot afford to pay for an abortion in a privately funded clinic.

The Fund for the Feminist Majority has launched a campaign to recruit one million young people on campuses to fight to stop parental consent and notification laws. Kathy Spillar, national coordinator of the Feminist Majority, and director of the Becky Bell-Rosie Jimenez Campaign, introduced *Abortion Denied*, a video history

of parental consent and notification laws. The film also chronicles the effect on one young woman, Becky Bell, who died on September 16, 1988, from a back alley abortion rather than tell her parents about her pregnancy and get their consent. She was afraid they would be disappointed in her.

The Bell family is on tour to speak out against these parental involvement laws. Bob Bell, Jr., brother of the young woman who died, said the "devastation that these laws create in a family is incomprehensible." The laws killed his sister, he said, and they are nothing but a death notice.

Karen Leo, an intern for the Feminist Majority, explained the case of Rosie Jimenez, who died from a back alley abortion. Jimenez was only months away from receiving her teaching certificate and the possibility of providing a better economic life for herself and her young child. However, discovering her pregnancy and the fact that laws had been enacted to cut off Medicaid funding for abortion, she had to make a decision. She had to either choose to spend her last \$250 on a safe abortion, or chance a back alley abortion which would cost less and allow her to spend the money on herself and her child. She chanced the back alley—and died. "Women should not have to compromise because they are poor," Leo concluded, "this is a woman's issue—all women—regardless of their economic/racial status." A NOW button sold at the conference emphasized this point. It read, "Keep abortion safe, legal, and affordable."

Nancy Bowles, campus organizer of a successful attempt to defeat two anti-abortion measures on the November 1990 Oregon ballot, spoke of the campaign. Parental consent and notification laws affect a special part of the feminist movement, Bowles said, and that part is young women.

'Power Through Action'

The fourth plenary, "Power Through Action: Young Feminist Plan of Action," was devoted entirely to voting on resolutions. There were 25 resolutions in all, and the participants succeeded in making it through almost all of them before the close of the conference. Some of the resolutions that were passed included:

- College students' right to be registered to vote in their college districts

- Acquaintance rape
- Petition campaign against *American Psycho*
- Equality in education/athletics—Title IX
- Commission on Responsive Democracy (calling on the commission to recommend to NOW the forming of a new party)
- Universal access to birth control
- Medicaid funding of abortion
- Young feminist activism against parental involvement laws
- Young Feminist Conference Implementation Committee
- Annual young feminist gathering
- National demonstration to combat the growing offensive against women's rights
- Young feminist participation in the January 1992 Global Feminist conference
- Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students at education institutions
- AIDS awareness on high school and college campuses
- Immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Saudi Arabia
- Support of a national day of campus action against the war.

Conclusion

The positive response to this conference was overwhelming. Representatives of a new generation of young feminists met together to discuss common problems and effective solutions. It was, for most participants, their first feminist conference, and the discussions were strong and aggressive in their commitment to work together to combat the repressive legislation on women's rights that previous generations had struggled so hard and persistently to eradicate. There was a lot of talk about next year and excitement to get back home and plunge into the long struggle ahead for women's—specifically young women's—rights in the 1990s. Active young women all across the country are fighting back against their exclusion from decisions affecting their reproductive rights, education, jobs, and health care. □

Treatment of Political Prisoners in the United States Is Denounced

III. The Right to Self-Determination

Over the last 30 years, since the passage in 1960 of the historic United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Resolution 1514 (XV)) which called for the “speedy and unconditional end to colonialism in all its forms and manifestations,” the right to self-determination has evolved to a peremptory norm of International Law—a norm accepted and recognized by the international community of states as a whole from which no derogation is permitted.

Of particular importance to the codification of this fundamental right is the Universal Declaration of the Rights of People (“Algiers Declaration”) which affirms that the peoples of the world “have an equal right to liberty, the right to free themselves from any foreign interference and to choose their own government, (and) the right, if they are under subjection, to fight for their liberation.” This assurance is specified in Article 1: “Every people has the right to existence,” and Article 6: “Every people has the right to break free from any colonial or foreign domination, whether direct or indirect, and from any racist regime.”

In addition, UN Resolution 2625 (XXV) known as “The Declaration on the Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,” adopted by consensus in 1970, provides authoritative clarity to the character and importance of the right to self-determination. Its preamble affirms that “the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples constitutes a significant contribution to contemporary law, and its effective application is of paramount importance for the promotion of friendly relations among States.”

The Declaration mandates that every state has a duty to promote the principle of self-determination and to assist the United Nations in its realization so as to improve relations among states and “to bring a speedy end to colonialism, having due regard to the freely expressed will of the peoples concerned.” The right of self-determination as a peremptory norm of international law has been confirmed by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion on Namibia (ICJ Reports 1971) and in its decision in the Western Sahara case (ICJ Reports 1975). As the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties provides, a peremptory norm of international law (Jus Cogens) cannot be abridged or superseded by any act of sovereign will, including a treaty.

Finally the two international covenants on human rights (International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(which the United States has refused to endorse) are initiated by a common Article 1 (1) indicating a place of primacy for self-determination: “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.”

The Tribunal heard evidence by Puerto Rican, Native American, Black, and Mexicano witnesses of their peoples’ national development, characteristics, and continuing history of oppression. Witnesses also testified to the long train of repression against the organizations and leaders of their people.

Each of these peoples satisfy the objective and subjective criteria for self-determination. Each perceive themselves as separate people and each suffer special targeting and oppression by the U.S. government.

III. 1. Native Americans

This Tribunal received ample evidence on the history of the Native American People’s struggle for their right to self-determination and on the genocide committed against this people by the United States government.

The history of European and Native American relations reveals theft of 99 percent of the land base and genocidal practices of war, disease, alcohol, starvation, and deculturalization which reduced the indigenous population from approximately 12.5 million to less than 227,000 by 1890.

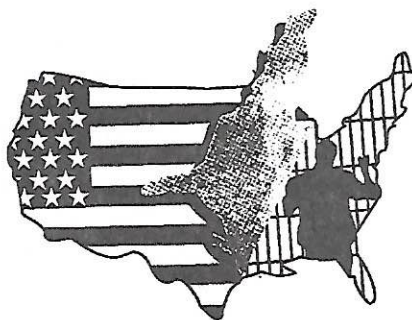
Meeting substantial resistance, if not outright defeat, at times seeking alliances against others, what became

the United States government entered into some 371 treaties with the indigenous people of North America during the 18th and 19th centuries. The importance of these treaties was embodied in Article VI of the U.S. Constitution as the “supreme law of the land.” By this principle, the United States government has incorporated into its domestic law the content of the treaties signed with the Native American people. However, as was pointed out consistently in the evidence presented to the Tribunal, the U.S. government has systematically violated or refused to respect the terms of the agreements reached with the Native American people.

Therefore, this Tribunal recognizes that, first, the Native Americans constitute a people within international law definitions who are carrying out a struggle for self-determination. Moreover, this Tribunal takes notice that, despite all the treaties signed by the U. S. government with the Native American peoples, the U.S. has consistently denied those treaty rights to these peoples. In decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court such as *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 5 Pet. 1 [1831] and *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. 6 Pet. 515 [1832], the Court established the principle that Native American people are

by the
**Special International Tribunal
on the Violation of Human
Rights of Political Prisoners and
Prisoners of War in
United States Prisons and Jails**

Part 2



domestic and dependent on the U.S. government, thus denying their right to self-determination. After these two Supreme Court decisions, the so-called "plenary power" doctrine was initiated by the U.S. government which denied the right of the Native American people to organize and govern themselves. This, for example, is the pattern followed by the enactment in 1924 of the U.S. Congress's Indian Citizenship Act (8 U.S.C.A. Sec. 1401). Through this Act U.S. citizenship was imposed upon the Native American people. In addition, in 1934 the U.S. Congress enacted the Indian Reorganization Act (25 U.S.C.A. Sec. 461) by which the U.S. government decided to organize "tribal" councils to resemble corporate boards. The intention behind this was to reduce the autonomy of the Native American peoples to govern their own affairs.

Thus, this Tribunal, after carefully hearing various witnesses and taking judicial notice of many historical aspects of U.S. government policies towards the Native American peoples, considers that the practices of the U.S. government are in breach of Common Article 1 of the United Nations International Covenants of 1966 (on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights) guaranteeing, amongst other things, the right of the people to self-determination.

Second, this Tribunal considers that the U.S. government has also conducted a policy of genocide against these people. The Tribunal follows the definition of genocide as established by Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948. This Tribunal recognizes the most cruel policies occurred in the early years of the U.S. republic, when a plan of physical extermination was conducted against the Native American people. After failing to completely exterminate them, a new policy was designed to impose compulsory assimilation, so as to destroy the history and culture of the Native American people.

Tactics employed to achieve this end include the criminalization of Native religious practices, forced transfer of children through mandatory indoctrination at boarding schools for extended periods, adoption by non-Indians, enactment of laws designed to destroy traditional culture, e.g., by prohibiting the holding of land in common. Implementation of policies such as "termination" (where the federal government literally dissolved selected indigenous populations) and "relocation" (systematic dispersal of Native populations) were combined by the U.S. government with declarations that certain groups of living peoples were "extinct." Systematic involuntary and uninformed sterilization of Native American women has compounded these genocidal policies, as has the use of the "blood quantum" method of identification to statistically manipulate out of existence certain groups of Native Americans.

Native Americans are the poorest population group in North America with the highest incidence of infant mortality, death by exposure, tuberculosis, plague disease, malnutrition, and teen suicide. The average life expectancy of an American Indian male is 44.6 years and for females it is less than three years longer. For white males the figure is 74 years.

The policy of genocide has been legitimized by different laws approved by the U.S. Congress, for example, the General Allotment Act (25 U.S.C.A. Sec. 331 [1887]) used to deprive the Native American people of the land that they consider common and sacred.

In addition, this Tribunal has taken notice of documents that proved the collaboration by the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the 1970s, together with the Indian Health Service, in the systematic performance of involuntary sterilization on Native women. This particular practice, in conjunction with other practices of the U.S. government, clearly manifests a pattern of committing genocide against the Native American people.

III. 2. Puerto Ricans

Of the four peoples represented before the Tribunal, the right to self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico is the clearest and most recognized by the international community. With a separate territory, language, and culture, the plight of Puerto Rico constitutes one of the last remaining classic colonial cases in the world.

Beginning in 1973 and 1976 and then in each succeeding year, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization has reviewed the case of Puerto Rico, reaffirmed the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination, and called upon the United States to stop all interference with the free and full exercise of that right. The U.S. has refused to follow these mandates and has consistently used all its coercive powers to block the case of Puerto Rico from being considered by the entire General Assembly.

The Decolonization Committee resolutions, plus pronouncements from the nonaligned countries and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, provide authoritative support for Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. Even the president of the United States, George Bush, in his recent call for a referendum on the island's status, has acknowledged that the Puerto Rican people have not chosen freely their present relationship with the U.S.

This Tribunal also adopts the findings and verdict of the Permanent People's Tribunal on Puerto Rico (Barcelona, January 27-29, 1989), which declared in part:

1. That Puerto Rico and its people have the right to freely determine their political, economic, social, and cultural condition in accordance with the Algerian Declaration and the principles of International Law.

2. That the constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is not the proper way for the Puerto Rican people to exercise their self-determination right, whereas in the referenda which have been carried out on the Island, the required guarantees which govern the true exercise of said right, in accordance with the Resolutions of the UN, have not been observed.

3. That the U.S. has an international duty to respect the right of Puerto Rico to its self-determination, in accordance with the obligations it has conventionally and customarily assumed.

Regrettably, the United States government refused to participate in the Barcelona Tribunal and has ignored its findings.

As clear as the Puerto Rican people's right to self-determination is the historical record that such right has been denied to that people. Testimony established a military, political, psychological, economic, ideological, cultural, and linguistic domination by U.S. colonial power over Puerto Rico since the beginning of the U.S. invasion and occupation. The evidence also was compelling as to the use of repression against the national movement for independence, its leaders and organizations. The Nationalist Party and its supporters were fiercely repressed in the 1930s and again in the 1950s when a mass resistance to U.S. attempts to eliminate the independence

movement resulted in the killing and arrest of hundreds of people.

Today that repression continues. Seventeen Prisoners of War or political prisoners are serving draconian sentences, exiled from their homeland to jails in the United States. The FBI and the grand jury system are used to investigate, intimidate, and intern independence activists and supporters. Thousands of others have been placed under surveillance and on "subversive lists" for their pro-independence sentiments. Presently nine more independence activists and leaders face conspiracy charges in Hartford, Connecticut, hundreds of miles from their homeland.

It should also be noted that some of the colonial conditions imposed on the people of Puerto Rico have genocidal characteristics. These include the forced sterilization of 33 percent of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age; the economically forced migration to the United States of one half of Puerto Rico's population; the consequent deculturalization of the population; and one of the world's highest rates of suicide, drug abuse, and mental illness.

We again quote from the verdict of the Barcelona Tribunal as to the obligation of the U.S. government to :

a) acknowledge the political prisoner status of those Puerto Ricans incarcerated due to their work and militancy in favor of Puerto Rico's independence and to grant a general amnesty to all Puerto Ricans currently incarcerated because of their involvement in the struggle against colonialism;

b) relinquish the current powers the U.S. Congress has to amend and approve the decisions made by the representative bodies and government of Puerto Rico;

c) completely transfer any power the U.S. Congress or the U.S. government may have over Puerto Rico, to a deliberative body with constitutional character, made up of representatives from all the political and social forces of Puerto Rico chosen on an equal elective basis;

d) negotiate such measures, as a transitional status of the juridical and political condition of Puerto Rico, until the self-determination right is effectively exercised.

We further call upon the United States government to accord Prisoner of War status to those Puerto Rican prisoners captured as anticolonial combatants.

III. 3. Black People In the United States

It is an uncontested historical fact that Africans, forcibly brought to the area which would become the United States, came from various tribes and regions of Africa. In addition, these kidnapped Africans spoke many tongues and were forged into a new and distinct people, with distinct problems, requiring unique solutions, during the three-century ordeal of chattel slavery. It is also historically documented that these Africans and their descendants were considered "three-fifths" of a human being, thereby necessitating an elaborate system of laws, cultural norms, and religious canons to deprive people of African descent of their rights as human beings and, by extension, to deprive them of their right to self-determination.

In 1865 at the end of the U.S. Civil War, the U.S. government abolished slavery (13th Amendment) freeing the kidnapped African slaves. Rather than allowing this freed people to choose or reject citizenship and to freely exercise the right to self-determination, the 14th Amendment imposed citizenship upon them, as the Jones Act of 1917 would later do to Puerto Ricans

and as the Indian Citizenship Act did to the Native Americans in 1924.

There have been various strategies, necessitated by a system of white supremacy, pursued by Black organizations in the United States in their efforts to obtain freedom and justice for their people. The main strategies at work today within the Black movement are the struggle for independent political power; forms of community control and autonomy; and some groups who advocate independence of the New Africa nation. UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 expresses the options available to a people entitled to exercise the right to self-determination:

the establishment of a sovereign and independent state, the free association or integration with an independent state or the emergence of any other political status freely determined by a people, constitute modes of implementing the right of self-determination by that people.

Whichever strategy prevails which brings about genuine self-determination is for Black people in the United States to decide. However, it is clear that the Black people of the U.S. have not been allowed to freely exercise their right to self-determination. The evidence overwhelmingly established an unbroken pattern of repression against Black organizations and activists fighting for their human, political, economic, and civil rights.

While the Tribunal recognizes that the right of self-determination for Black people in the U.S. has not previously been established by international bodies or tribunals, we do not feel that this lack of precedent is determinative of the issue. Rather, this Tribunal believes that the evidence presented before us strongly supports the claim that Black people living within the borders of the United States are a distinct people entitled to self-determination.

Equally compelling is the evidence that Black people in the U.S. have been forcibly denied the freedom to exercise that right. From the inhuman outrage of slavery up to the present circumstance of attacks on community and political organizations, Black people in the United States have never been given the opportunity to choose their destiny. The documents submitted which establish this conclusion are the FBI Counter-Intelligence Program and the testimony on the targeting and repression of the Black Panther Party (BPP), Republic of New Afrika (RNA), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Move organization, and the Black Men's Movement Against Crack. The evidence also established that the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist hate groups functioned with impunity and often with the complicity of the government in committing acts of violence and intimidation against the Black community.

The history and treatment of Black people in the United States also supports a claim that the U.S. government is guilty of the crime of genocide against the Black people. There is no question that during the kidnapping of Africans in the slave trade, and in the barbaric Middle Passage to North America, millions of Blacks were killed. In addition, during the more than 200 years of chattel slavery, Black people were wantonly murdered, savagely brutalized, and denied all basic human rights.

The condition of Black people living in the United States today strongly suggests that policies of the U.S. government are designed to lead to the elimination of Black people. The Tribunal was presented with evidence that:

(1) the infant mortality rate for Black people is double that for whites;

(2) Black women, regardless of class, are twice as likely to bear low-weight babies than white women;

(3) the gap in life-expectancy rates between Blacks and whites has recently widened from 5.6 to 6.2 years, and "Blacks today have a life expectancy already reached by whites in the 1950s or a lag of about 30 years";

(4) the rate of survival for Black males over 40 years old in Harlem, New York City, is lower than for men in Bangladesh;

(5) dangerously high blood pressure is a hidden cost of racial prejudice at least for some Blacks;

(6) in New York City "increasingly large numbers of women of child-bearing age are dying. . . combined with the deaths of men in the same age group, the result is the destruction of families and the orphaning of tens of thousands of children, most in low-income African American neighborhoods";

(7) AIDS is "more and more becoming a disease of the poor, Black, and Hispanic heterosexuals in the inner city." It is the leading killer of Black women in the 15-44 year age group in New York and New Jersey;

(8) unemployment for Blacks is double the rate for whites and nearly 50 percent of Black teenagers are unable to find work;

(9) white families earn 45.5 percent more than Black families.

III. 4. Mexican People (Chicanos) Living in the United States

Mexican people living in the North of their country came under the authority of the U.S. government after the Mexican-American War of 1841, a war generally recognized as expansionist and unjust and which deprived Mexico of 50 percent of its territory.

After the conquest and occupation there was a continuing policy of brutal repression and exploitation of Mexican people throughout the occupied territories, including numerous lynchings and other killings.

Mexicano people organized resistance to, and have fought against, this occupation. Among the most famous Mexicano resistance fighters are Tiburcio Vazquez, Joaquin Murieta, and the Cortez and Espinoza brothers. Also, Juan Nepomuceno Cortina from Texas who for fifteen years waged guerrilla warfare against the U.S. government. Armed clandestine organizations also emerged like La Mano Negra and Las Gorras Blancas. In 1915, the Plan de San Diego was another armed uprising calling for self-determination and independence of the occupied territories. It was violently repressed.

Armed Rangers and other law enforcement agencies who formed in California, New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona were essentially private vigilantes organized to repress Mexicanos with the consent of the U.S. government. Between 1915 and 1920 about 5,000 Mexicanos were killed along the border by the Texas Rangers, who have also been used to police migratory labor, striking unions, civil rights activists and organizations, and to beat up Mexicano-Chicano candidates running for elected positions.

The FBI and grand jury have been used to repress the Mexicano/Chicano resistance movement. Beginning in the late 1930s, the FBI has consistently investigated and monitored Mexicano/Chicano organizations such as LULAC, the GI Forum, the Association Nacional Mexico-Americano. In the 1950s the FBI created the Border Coverage Program (BOCOV) as part of COINTELPRO. It maintained offices both in the occupied territories and Mexico. Additionally, the Border Patrol and the Immigration and Naturalization Service are special police agencies created primarily to be used against the Mexicano people.

All these repressive actions are supplemented by the terrorist activities of the Ku Klux Klan against Mexicanos/Chicanos.

The homes of Mexicano/Chicano resistance fighters have been bombed and many have been killed. Among the latter are Ricardo Falcon, Rito Canales, Antonio Cordova, and Los Seis de Boulder.

The Tribunal heard that a United States border separates the Mexicano/Chicano people and that since the 1850s "Los Rinches" (the Rangers), a police terror force, have killed 20,000 Mexicanos/Chicanos. There have also been countless lynchings by North Americans. There is a high incidence of poverty, malnutrition, and a proliferation of drugs (50 percent of incarcerated Mexicanos/Chicanos are held for drug offenses). Not only is there a high rate of premature births but although Mexicanos/Chicanos comprise 8 percent of the U.S. population, 25 percent of all pediatric AIDS cases are found among Mexicano/Chicano children. Overall, there is a grossly disproportionate incidence of AIDS infection compared with the general population.

Mexicanos/Chicanos have also been subjected to a policy of cultural assimilation, principally directed towards their Spanish language. The issue has become more acute with the newly imposed legislation compelling the use of the English language only and forbidding the use of Spanish in all official activities, including schooling of Mexicano children.

The Tribunal recognizes the claim that the Mexicano/Chicano people living within the borders of the United States are a people entitled to exercise their right to self-determination. □

[To be concluded in the next issue.]

Deepening Crisis of Soviet Bureaucracy on National Question

by George Saunders

Another crime can be added to those on the list committed by the Gorbachev regime against the non-Russian peoples striving to assert their national rights.

On January 12 Soviet central government forces seized several key buildings in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, including a printing plant where pro-independence and oppositionist publications are produced. The next day the same forces took the television tower in Vilnius, killing thirteen unarmed civilians. An anonymous Lithuanian Committee of National Salvation, claiming the republic was on the verge of civil war, took responsibility for these actions and called for presidential rule by decree to be imposed on the republic. The obvious intention was to oust the pro-independence government of Lithuania, elected by a majority in a vote the Kremlin itself had permitted in February-March 1990 as part of "democratization." Similar moves were made in Latvia a week later.

Gorbachev defended these actions while suggesting he had not ordered them. (*Komsomolskaya Pravda* published official regulations indicating that no such actions could have been permitted without orders from the top leadership of the country—in other words, Gorbachev.) He has clearly placed himself on the side of continued centralist dominance, in opposition to the powerful and growing movements for national rights, including the right to independence.

The first major crime of the Gorbachev regime on the national question was in Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian Republic, two years ago on April 9, 1989, when Soviet army troops slaughtered thirteen Georgians, mostly women, and used poison gas against thousands in breaking up a pro-independence demonstration.

Before that was the September 1987 pogrom against Armenians in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait—clearly organized by the local authorities, probably in collusion with the KGB and the central government—an attempt at terrorization in reprisal for the rise of a mass movement in the Armenian-populated Karabakh region (which Stalin had placed under Azerbaijani rule in the early 1920s). The vast majority of the Karabakh population had mobilized in the streets, demanding unification with the Armenian Republic.

A year ago, in January 1990, Gorbachev sent tanks with guns blazing to occupy Baku, capital of the Azerbaijan Republic, where a mass movement, led by the Azeri People's Front, had become a force that the local pro-Moscow bureaucracy could no longer control. The Bush administration at that time condoned Gorbachev's act of violent suppression. In fact Bush's approval was a quid pro quo for the Soviet bureaucracy's near silent acquiescence in U.S. imperialism's invasion of Panama.

This year, in January 1991, on the eve of the deadline for war in the Persian Gulf, as the world waited to see if the Bush

administration would indeed "use force" against the former British colony of Iraq (after twisting the UN arm for "legal" authority to do so), reactionary elements of the Soviet bureaucracy struck in Lithuania. It seemed that U.S. imperialism, in return for a Soviet agreement not to veto the UN Security Council resolution, might be willing to look the other way if the Soviet bureaucracy reasserted its control over the former colonies of tsarist Russia in the Baltic region which Stalin had seized on the eve of World War II in a secret agreement with German imperialism. But fortunately the outcome of events in 1991 does not depend on secret agreements between self-seeking imperialist and bureaucratic governments.

Earlier the Gorbachev regime sent paratroopers to the Baltic republics to round up "draft dodgers." By early February, in response to strong protests against the repression, some of these forces were withdrawn and the Kremlin was making some conciliatory gestures, while at the same time putting army patrols on the streets of eighty-six Soviet cities (officially to deter "crime," but in reality to discourage further popular demonstrations).

At the time of writing no further military actions toward ousting the independent governments of the three Baltic republics had been taken. In fact the Lithuanian Committee for National Salvation, whose membership had never been made known, announced it was dissolving itself. Still, central government forces continued to hold the buildings they had seized (some on the grounds they were the "former property" of the pro-Moscow Communist parties in Lithuania and Latvia). Meanwhile the Lithuanian government took steps to prosecute leaders of the pro-Moscow rump CP on charges of participation in an attempted coup d'état. And more importantly it called for a national poll on February 9 for or against an independent, democratic Lithuania. [In a massive turnout, 90 percent voted unequivocally for independence.] The Estonian government called for a similar poll on March 3. Georgia will have a March 31 vote on its status. Armenia has called Gorbachev's plan for a union-wide referendum on March 17 "unacceptable."

The day after the first attacks Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Republic, issued a joint statement with the heads of the three Baltic republics calling for a UN conference on the situation in the Baltics and urging that the UN deadline for war in the Persian Gulf be postponed! (They clearly felt that with the outbreak of war, reactionary forces in the USSR would take advantage of the tense atmosphere as an excuse to tighten things up even further.) Yeltsin also called on soldiers from the Russian Republic not to fire on unarmed civilians.

In Lithuania there was a massive outpouring of the population in a funeral to honor the dead. Similarly in Baku a year

earlier massive turnouts for funerals of the victims showed the strength of the movement in spite of the massacre authorized by Gorbachev. This year, although Gorbachev implied he had not ordered the attack, he defended it, and a television program organized by the central government—under the newly appointed official in charge of TV and radio, Leonid Kravchenko—denounced the mass funeral procession, claiming the victims had been faked. (It is said that Kravchenko, whom Gorbachev appointed in late 1990, has effectively ended glasnost on central television, restoring the kind of censorship that existed in the “era of stagnation.”)

The television personality Aleksandr Nevzorov, who is said to be “very popular in the central Russian heartland” because of his attacks on organized crime, has consistently called the Lithuanian government “fascist.” Admitting that the January attacks had the result of strengthening popular support for the pro-independence (“separatist”) government, Nevzorov cynically charged that the Lithuanian government must have organized the attacks itself. If nothing else, the Stalinists are consistent. Years ago, in 1940, the Stalinist press said that Trotsky must have organized the machine-gun attack on his own home—to gain attention and sympathy. (Of course it was actually organized by Stalin’s NKVD in collaboration with the local pro-Moscow Communist Party and led by the muralist David Siqueiros.)

Within days of the killings in Lithuania, 100,000 people (some reports said hundreds of thousands) turned out in Moscow to protest the attacks—and the lies about them in the official media. One sign carried by protesters declared: “Gorby, take your scum bag (*podonok*) Kravchenko out of Tse-Te [the Central Television office].”

On February 1 Soviet army troops joined police on patrol in all the major cities of the USSR. Earlier, on January 25, Gorbachev gave the political police (the KGB) and the army new powers to enter and search homes or businesses—powers that were clearly intended for use against political opponents as well as “economic criminals.” On February 7 the Gorbachev government announced a trial against a millionaire Tarasov, head of a Soviet-foreign joint venture of the kind encouraged by the government as part of perestroika. It seems that Tarasov’s real “crime” is to be an adviser to Yeltsin, who favors the same kind of procapitalist market reforms that Gorbachev himself favored up to now, but who has differed from Gorbachev in showing solidarity with the independence movements in the Baltics.

What this adds up to is creeping martial law. Instead of doing it overnight, as the Jaruzelski regime in Poland did in December 1981 to try to stop the mass movement in that country, the Gorbachev government is doing it by stages. This also gives the regime the chance to draw back if it looks like these repressive moves will spark a mass revolt.

And there is strong resistance. The pro-independence governments of Georgia and Armenia refused to implement the decree calling for joint patrols of local police and central army troops. The Georgian Republic proclaimed its intention to form its own army.

The top Soviet leadership made a clear rightward policy shift in the period leading up to these events. At the time of the Communist Party Central Committee plenum and the Fourth Congress of People’s Deputies at the end of the year, hard-core

rightist elements in the bureaucracy, particularly in the army, the KGB, and the administrative apparatus of the CPSU, put very strong pressure on Gorbachev to “reassert law and order.” In a meeting with members of the officer corps of the Soviet military Gorbachev was taken to task with particular vehemence for “letting the country fall apart”—that is, not counterattacking sufficiently against the independence movements in the non-Russian republics.

They especially blamed Gorbachev’s erstwhile liberal adviser and ally Aleksandr Yakovlev as the inspirer of policies that had led to disintegration of the Soviet Union. They called for power in the USSR to be turned over to a Committee of National Salvation. The response by Gorbachev was once again to ask for greater powers for his office of the presidency, and to dissolve the Presidential Council, Yakovlev’s only remaining leadership position. The Soviet president also removed Vadim Bakatin as head of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs). Bakatin had argued against the use of force in dealing with the breakaway republics. He was replaced by Boris Pugo, former KGB head in Latvia, whose newly appointed deputy had been commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, Boris Gromov. At this point Gorbachev’s foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze resigned as a protest against “coming dictatorship.”

Because of the mounting chaos and economic difficulties, Shevardnadze told *Moscow News* that dictatorship was inevitable. Still he protested against it. He wanted to distance himself from it. His reasons, he said, were his concern that the Soviet Union’s good relations with the major capitalist powers, which he had helped develop, would be jeopardized. That might not be the real reason. He is a Georgian, and was the top party bureaucrat of Georgia before becoming Soviet foreign minister; his administration there was noteworthy even before perestroika for a higher level of honesty about the real economic and social problems than was usual in the “era of stagnation.” After the Soviet army went on the rampage in Tbilisi, Shevardnadze played a key role in removing local party officials who had urged the army to attack the demonstrators.

Shevardnadze was surely aware of plans to strike at the national movements, including in Georgia. While not coming out openly and actively to oppose such measures, he does not want to be associated with them. In this way he positions himself as a possible liberal alternative for continued bureaucratic rule in case the dictatorial attempt at repression fails.

General Background

The rising mass movements in the non-Russian republics out of the control of the central government have been frustrating the aims of the bureaucratic architects of perestroika. They want to modify and modernize their rule over the USSR, while retaining their power and privileges. They want to get the economy moving, without giving workers and ordinary citizens any essential control over economic questions. The democratic mass movements, which are especially strong in the national republics, have broken out of bureaucratic control and are seeking their own way to change the system and improve their lives.

The strength of the mass movements was shown especially in the elections of February and March 1990, as a result of which pro-independence governments assumed power not only in the three Baltic republics but also in Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova (formerly Moldavia). In fact during 1990, as a result of the February-March elections, every one of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union, including the Russian Republic headed by Boris Yeltsin, took positions asserting greater sovereignty vis-a-vis the central government.

The 1990 events in the Ukraine, the second most powerful republic in population, size, and economic potential, were particularly disturbing to the bureaucratic rulers. There the independence-minded Rukh movement and other pro-independence groups won a substantial minority in the Ukrainian Republic's Supreme Soviet. Thanks to the rigged system of nominations the bureaucrats had a majority, but their bloc of delegates felt the pressure of aroused Ukrainian national sentiment and joined with the minority "nationalists" to pass a declaration on the state sovereignty of the Ukraine. Still, under bureaucratic leadership the Ukrainian Soviet dragged its feet on measures to genuinely improve conditions for the Ukrainian people.

In mid-September 1990 a gathering of workers' committees called for a one-day political strike on October 1. Among the demands were rejection of Gorbachev's proposed union treaty (about which more below), an end to Communist Party control of the army and police, and workers' control over denationalization of the economy. Support for the strike on October 1 was uneven. For example, the miners in eastern Ukraine, while not agreeing to strike, held a mass rally in Donetsk at which demands were made for a closure of all of the Chernobyl nuclear plants (despite the central government's desire to keep them running), nationalization of CP property, and workers' control of denationalization.

On October 1 the bureaucratic majority in the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet rejected the demands of the strikers and demonstrators. On October 2 a student hunger strike began in the tent city in front of the Supreme Soviet building in Kiev. The students demanded the resignation of the prime minister Vitaly Masol (a Ukrainian CP leader); nationalization of CP property; rejection of the union treaty; no military service outside the Ukraine; and new elections on a multiparty basis. It seems reminiscent of Tiananmen Square and of Paris in 1968. Mass support for the protesters grew from day to day. On October 17 the bureaucratic majority gave in, announcing that Masol would quit and promising multiparty elections, although they didn't say when. The Supreme Soviet agreed not to sign Gorbachev's union treaty for the time being; it would consider nationalization of CP property; and military service outside the Ukraine would be on a voluntary basis only.

In general, the response of the central bureaucracy to the growth and spread of the movements for national rights in the Soviet republics was to make a show of force, threaten military reprisals, impose a five-month economic blockade on Lithuania, and assume emergency powers going in the opposite direction from "democratization."

How was Gorbachev able to push his demand for a presidential position with special powers through the Council of People's Deputies? By relying on the rump of hard-line party bureaucrats in the Soviet of People's Deputies. That body had

come out of the union-wide elections of 1989 in which the rules for nominating candidates had assured a controlling vote to party apparatchiks while allowing the appearance of "democracy." The Inter-Regional Deputies Group formed a liberal opposition, but remained a minority. These "reformers" mainly advocated a quick changeover to a market economy but were inconsistent on the question of greater rights to the republics.

In 1990, after the local and republic-wide elections in February and March showed that the national movements had grown stronger, broader, and deeper, the central leadership of the bureaucracy countered by creating the office of the president of the Soviet Union, giving the new president, Gorbachev, greater powers, including the right to rule by decree in any republic where, from his point of view, the situation warranted it. They even tried to put the holder of this new office above any future criticism. A law was passed making it a crime to insult the president or his office. (Shades of *lèse majesté*.) In December 1990 the presidential powers were increased even further. It is said that *on paper* Gorbachev now has more powers than were officially given to Stalin.

In fact the power of the central government and its room for maneuver are limited by the mass movements that have grown up in the USSR in the past few years, not only the national movements but also the independent workers' movements, especially since the miners' strikes of summer 1989 and the mass democratic movements in all the major Soviet cities (including the student and women's movements). These forces "from below" not only won major elected positions in the city Soviets of Moscow, Leningrad, Donetsk, and in the Soviet of the entire Russian Republic — despite the partial rigging of the elections. Over the past five years they have also taken advantage of the policy of glasnost (a major relaxation of censorship and central control) to create all sorts of independent groups and organizations (including some small revolutionary socialist ones) and a vast flood of independent publications, and have found more and more ways to present officially disapproved views not only in the print media but also on radio and television and in documentary films.

The problems created by the independent media were illustrated when Gorbachev went into a tirade against *Moscow News* over the recent events in the Baltics. The paper's front page had branded January 13 "bloody Sunday" in Lithuania, calling it "the crime of a regime that refuses to quit the scene." The front page of its previous issue had revealed the true face of the Black Berets. The Black Berets are special MVD troops who took the lead in the assaults on buildings and the killing of civilians in Lithuania and Latvia. There sits a young, blond Russian member of the Black Berets, in his room in the special barracks reserved for this force outside the city of Riga. Behind him on his wall hang pornographic pictures of women, a skull and crossbones, and from the ceiling, several hangman's nooses. A Black Beret sergeant Aleksandr Kuzmin was quoted as saying, "We will restore order, establish Soviet power . . . and put the nationalists on trial."

One Black Beret who went over to the side of the Latvian government described how they had been whipped up in preparation for the assault by KGB and army officers and Communist Party officials.

'Separatism' and Gorbachev's 'Union Treaty'

In an attempt to counter the demands for independence in the Baltic and other republics, Gorbachev has proposed a new "union treaty" to redefine the relations between the fifteen republics and the central government. This treaty would supposedly give the republics greater sovereignty, but under its terms the central government still retains control over foreign policy, the military, communications, and taxation. The three Baltic republics, as well as Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova, have declared they will not sign this treaty. Other republics have raised serious questions about it.

Further, Gorbachev is insisting on a union-wide referendum on March 17 to decide the question of whether or not the USSR should remain a single state. On February 6, in a speech over central television, he opened a campaign for a yes vote on the question: "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of people of any nationality will be fully guaranteed?"

"All my convictions," Gorbachev declared, "are based on preservation of the union." In a crass appeal to great-power sentiment, he stressed the Soviet Union's position as a "super-power." "Huge efforts were made to make it so powerful," he argued, "and we could lose [this power] very quickly." As though being a power in world affairs were an end in itself.

Gorbachev's military adviser, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, joined the campaign for the March 17 referendum with an article in the paper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. "Is the Soviet Union to remain united, or will it be dismembered into dozens of states, each dependent on the West?" he asked rhetorically. He went on to stress the need for a strongly centralized state and powerful army, accusing the "separatists" and those who defend them of wanting to break up the country, paralyze the government, and divide the armed forces.

Gorbachev has appealed to opinion in the imperialist countries, too, warning that a breakup of the USSR could destabilize the world situation. In his February 6 speech, Gorbachev proclaimed that "no one in the world, with the exception of die-hard reactionaries and militarists, wants a slackening of the Soviet Union's role in international affairs."

Aside from Gorbachev's bogeymen ("reactionaries and militarists") there are revolutionary socialists and revolutionary democrats who ask: Of what benefit is the Soviet Union's role in world affairs, when its bureaucratic rulers use their power to buttress the position of imperialism? (For example, by voting for the UN's war resolution.) The key issue is the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, up to and including secession, as part of a worldwide movement for greater rights and freedoms for everyone—an aim that can finally be assured only by the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a planetwide socialist society with economic planning to meet human needs on an ecologically sound basis, rather than the capitalist-imperialist world market, based on production for profit, which oppresses nations, classes, and individuals and destroys the earth.

The right of secession from the USSR is not a minor issue. In 1922-23 there was one revolutionary socialist (not a reac-

tionary or a militarist) who fought against Stalin to have the right of secession included in the first constitution of the USSR. That was Lenin. Lenin also signed several treaties acknowledging the independence of nations formerly ruled by tsarist Russia, including Finland, Poland, and the Baltic countries. Those acts were consistent with his commitment to a worldwide socialist revolution. Against Stalin, Lenin wrote that of course there was no question of the need "to rally against the imperialists of the West." It was a different matter, however, "when we ourselves lapse...into imperialist attitudes toward oppressed nationalities, thus undermining all our principled sincerity, all our principled defense of the struggle against imperialism" (see "The Question of Nationalities, or 'Autonomization'" [written December 31, 1922], in *Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism*, Pathfinder Press, New York, p. 138).

It is impossible to predict whether the Soviet bureaucrats will pursue their rightward turn all the way, or pull back in the face of popular opposition. They are using the economic crisis, of course, to try to frighten people, drive them back from participation in politics, and blame the "separatists" and others as scapegoats. Overcoming the reactionary trend will not be easy, but the bureaucracy no longer has full control. If it tries a Ceausescu type of massive suppression, it could meet Ceausescu's fate. Perhaps it has the illusion it can save itself by a Tiananmen-style massacre. The Deng Xiaopings and Li Pengs have gotten away with their turn to repression—so far—because China is a far more backward society, and they are able to rely on backward peasant elements in the army. The Soviet Union, in contrast, is highly urbanized. The strength of the mass movements is in the cities, and among industrial workers, although it also extends to rural areas. The crisis is growing. The bureaucrats are charging imperialist intervention as an excuse to crack down on the population. The best solution to this difficult situation would be the replacement of the illegitimate bureaucratic rulers with a revolutionary democratic government based on the masses, above all the industrial workers, and supporting self-determination for the non-Russian nationalities.

In January, reactionary forces in the Soviet Union hoped to use the outbreak of imperialist war in the Persian Gulf as an opportunity to suppress the national movement in its most advanced form in the Baltic republics. But hundreds of thousands turned out in the Baltics, in Moscow, and elsewhere to protest these acts of "great power" chauvinism and military-bureaucratic domination in the spirit of Stalin. Perhaps they took heart from the reports of hundreds of thousands in the United States, Western Europe, North Africa, Pakistan, India, and Japan (among many other places) demonstrating against the imperialist war. The hope lies in that direction. The Gorbachev government announced after a joint statement by Shevardnadze's successor, Bessmertnykh, and Bush's secretary of state Baker, that some of its troops sent to the Baltic republics were being withdrawn (although of course many remain). Revolutionary socialists must demand removal of all central government forces from the Baltic and other republics. Just as we demand withdrawal of U.S. and other imperialist troops from the Middle East. □

February 7, 1991

The following appeared in the November/December 1990 October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. It was distributed during a rally there protesting the political "trials" under way against imprisoned activists of the June 1989 democracy movement. In recent trials, students were sentenced to four years, intellectuals and workers to longer terms.

Condemn the Persecutions by the Chinese CP!

One and a half years after repressing the 1989 democracy movement, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has started the prosecution and "trials" of a number of key democracy movement fighters. According to the Chinese Constitution and the law, long-term detention and depriving the right of the arrested to even communicate with or see their families are open violations of the law. The so-called "public trials" and the appointment of defense lawyers are also obviously just a show. The repression of the 1989 democracy movement by the CCP was itself criminal, against the people, against democracy, and a counterrevolutionary action. Any justification or defense of such action cannot, in the eyes of the people, be justified or legitimized. Therefore, it is not necessary to quote in detail articles of the law to argue whether the trials by the CCP are against the law or not. However, this does not mean that we should not take these trials seriously. On the contrary, we should reveal the aims of the CCP regime and make a forceful response.

The accusations against the democracy movement activists are: "making counterrevolutionary propaganda," "inciting rebellion," and even "conspiring to overthrow the government." The CCP uses such charges to insist on its characterization of the nature of the 1989 democracy movement. The aims of criminalizing "a handful of people" are to deny that the 1989 democracy movement was a revolutionary movement, with the people rising spontaneously, mobilizing widely, and starting to organize themselves; that the 1989 democracy movement was triggered by the various deep social contradictions under the rule of the CCP; that the repression of the 1989 democracy movement revealed the totally corrupt and rotten nature of the CCP regime and its political suicide before the people. By centering its attack on a group of people, its aim is to root out the most active fighters in the democracy movement and to issue, at the same time, warnings and threats to the people in general.

Current information shows that three main groups of people have been pinpointed for severe penalty: a) people who have been actively promoting the democracy movement since 1979, including Ren Wanding, Wang Juntao, Chen Ziming, Lu Jiamin; b) worker leaders who have organized independent workers' unions and are potentially capable of liberating the massive dynamic of the workers in this democracy movement, including Han Dongfang, Li Jinjin, Liu Qiang, He Lili; c) student leaders, including Wang Dan, Zheng Xuguang, Zhang Ming. Moreover, intellectuals who have been particularly active, such as Liu Xiaobo, Liu Suli, Chen Xiaoping, and supporters of the faction that has lost power, have also been targets of attack.

Some of those democracy movement activists who face charges that can lead to the death penalty were participants of the 1979-1981 samizdat journal movement. At the end of 1978,

the faction led by Deng Xiaoping carried out economic reforms that did not touch the political power of the bureaucracy; at the same time, widely arising in society were spontaneous samizdat journal movements, championing political democratization and various reforms. From January 1979 to April 1981, Ren Wanding, Wei Jingsheng, Liu Qing, Wang Xizhe, He Qiu, Xu Wenli, and many others were arrested and sentenced to jail for up to 15 years. The semi-underground samizdat journal movement was forcibly repressed by the regime, with many people implicated. Wang Juntao and Chen Ziming, although penalized, were not jailed; and they unceasingly used the limited unofficial channels to continue to champion political democratization and reforms, and carry out research work on Chinese society and theory for the democracy movement. They set up the first civilian Beijing Social and Political Sciences Research Institute and carried out massive work of theoretical research. The accumulation of many years of work provided a theoretical basis for the 1989 democracy movement.

Today, the CCP regime wants to pinpoint its attack on these democracy movement activists, with the aim of physically torturing them to the point of annihilation. The Chinese people, including overseas compatriots, must try by all means to defend and rescue them. Overseas solidarity campaigns are developing on a large scale. Marches, demonstrations, signature campaigns, acts of protests, and others, are stating clearly to the CCP regime: you will not succeed in your attempts to cover up with legal procedures your repression of the democracy movement activists; your attempts to foster a facade of legality and stability will fail completely; we shall remove the cloth covering the butcher's knife and reveal the ferocious face of the murderers before the broad masses.

Although the CCP regime is maintaining its rule by force of terror, the social contradictions inside the country will not be lessened. The overseas democracy movement has a lot of practical and urgent things to do. On the question of the "trials" of democracy movement activists, it must initiate the widest possible acts of solidarity, on the one hand to stay the hands of the regime, and on the other hand to aid the families of the persecuted. It must strive to break the official news blockade, send information into mainland China, and link up with and encourage the struggles of the people inside the country. By striking at the legality of the regime and isolating it, it must try to win over those people with lofty ideals to the side of the people and not to collude with the enemy.

The Chinese democracy movement began to rise in 1976 and, with the traditions and experiences of the 1979 and 1989 democracy movements, there will be countless outstanding fighters of the people taking up the torch and continuing the theoretical research work on Chinese society and the democracy movement, promoting the democratic revolutionary movement of the broad masses. □

Turkey: General Strike and Gulf War

by Pinar Selinay

The following article, dated January 10, was sent to the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism from Turkey, where a rising tide of workers' struggles and a political crisis of the regime are unfolding. Its author is linked to the revolutionary Marxist current grouped around the newspaper Sosyalizm.

"Freedom Will Come with the Workers" was one of the slogans which on the initiative of revolutionary Marxists was taken up in the few worker demonstrations which took place in Turkey in the late 1980s. In reality throughout the bleak eighties, characterized by brutal repression, the loss of most trade union and worker rights gained in previous decades, the dissolution of the left and of organized resistance in general, a sharp drop in the standard of living, and the rapid spread of the black veils of Islamic fundamentalism, freedom seemed little more than a vague and distant vision. By 1990, however, the multitude of social and ethnic contradictions which had been forcibly patched together and kept under rigid surveillance, by the military government at first, then subsequently by its civilian continuation under President Turgutoz Ozal, started to fall apart at the seams, with several focal points of resistance organized and on the attack.

Then came 1991, defiantly crashing in on the crest of the indomitable wave of worker mobilizations headed by 48,000 coal miners of the Zonguldak region of the Black Sea coast, along with their families and virtually the entire local population in the area marching alongside them. And it is Zonguldak, previously one of the areas of stricter police surveillance and repression, where no more than two people could comfortably come together for discussion in the coffeehouses without being harassed, which has proved to be the rest of Turkey that, in fact, Freedom Comes with the Workers.

From day one of their strike the miners transformed Zonguldak into the region of Turkey with the most freedom. The police were forced to move to the sidelines to give way to daily demonstrations of up to 100,000 people accompanied by marching, music, and dancing in the streets. The demonstrations lost no time in gaining a militant political character, calling for the resignation of the government and parliament in its entirety, and making it known that they have no intention of fighting in the war against Iraq of which Ozal has become the most ardent proponent alongside Bush. The miners, who work in highly dangerous conditions where deaths are frequent, and where those not killed are left unfit to work by the age of 50, were earning some \$5.00 a day, and often forced to send their children into the mines at the age of seven or eight since they could not afford to send them to school. When they chant, "There may be death, but there is no turning back," it is not rhetoric they are advancing, it is stark reality.

The struggle reached its high point with the march on Ankara, the capital city, scheduled for January 4. Having marched every day for 35 days through the streets of Zonguldak without obtaining any response to their demands, the miners were ready to head to the capital to meet their adversary

face to face. Preparations were made to rent the necessary buses for the trip, but when the day arrived it became clear that the police were under orders to see that the buses were prevented from reaching the area. Undaunted and in high spirits, the miners, their families, and numerous supporters, a total of over 80,000 people, set out to make the trip on foot, pushing their way past numerous police barriers along the route and sleeping in small towns (where the local populations numbered no more than 5,000!) on the way. On the third day, confronted with a barricade of over 15,000 soldiers erected to prevent them from entering the main highway and continuing all the way to the capital, the mine workers spent the night on the highway itself with almost no food, water, or blankets. On the fifth day, after the government's repeated statements that there would be no wage negotiations until the mine workers returned en masse to Zonguldak, the trade union leadership so instructed the crowd, exhausted and hungry by this time, and at the moment negotiations are still under way.

Other major sectors of the working class have been swift in taking up the path opened by the miners. These include some 150,000 metalworkers, 10,000 paper mill workers, 100,000 textile workers, and 40,000 lignite mine workers who are now either on strike or planning to go on strike as well. Moreover, collective contracts remain pending in a number of work sectors, as the workers' struggle against the inflationary liberal economic policies of the last ten years which have eroded their standard of living. Two key elements stand out among these struggles and give them a novel character—one is the enthusiasm and high morale among the workers which has given the strikes a festive atmosphere, and the second crucial element is the heightened political awareness which has overcome the strictly economic limitations of past struggles. In essence, the workers are by now absolutely convinced that the outcome of their struggle is inextricably linked to the fall of the present government along with the resignation of Ozal from the presidency, and more importantly, they are also beginning to become aware of the need to overthrow the terror-based regime installed by the generals in 1980 and its legal prop, the undemocratic and anti-worker, anti-Kurd Constitution of 1982.

The struggles reached a high point with the unprecedented general strike of January 3, 1991, reluctantly called by the leadership of the trade union Confederation Turk-Is due to overwhelming pressure from the rank and file. The trade union leadership published a statement to accompany the decision to strike in which the action of January 3 was characterized as a "first warning" to the government. The statement demanded that human rights be respected, the practice of torture be brought to an end, changes be made in the laws as well as the

Constitution towards the establishment of democracy, for the reinstatement of trade union rights usurped by the 1982 Constitution, and for Turkey not to enter the war unless first attacked by outside forces. On this day over 1.5 million workers stayed off the job all over the country despite threats of sackings issued repeatedly by the government on TV in the days preceding the strike. Although some 500 people among the several thousand who took part in scattered demonstrations throughout the day were taken into custody, there was no police provocation or serious attempts at intervention. The significance of this fact is not to be underestimated; it is enough to recall that last May some 20,000(!) police accompanied by German shepherd dogs trained to attack were planted in the city center to prevent any sort of demonstration from taking place. Eight months later the antidemocratic laws which are a legacy of the junta have been overcome *de facto* in the streets.

The workers' movement is by no means the only point of organized resistance to the regime. The southeastern part of the country, historically the northern part of the homeland of the Kurdish nation, has been the scene of a rapidly spreading, iron-willed fight for self-determination known throughout Turkey as the "Kurdish Intifada." What began as scattered guerrilla operations in 1984, led by the semi-Stalinist guerrilla organization PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), is now widespread popular resistance constantly fueled by the brutally and inhuman abuses of the regime. Although arrest, torture, harassment, exile, and random killings (particularly by the government's trained counterinsurgency forces known as "Special Teams," which are immune from legal prosecution) have become everyday matters throughout Kurdistan, both the guerrillas and the struggle are gaining ground. Since its founding in 1923 the Turkish state has denied that the Kurds constituted a separate nation; their language and cultural rights have been strictly prohibited while the people have been subjected to every conceivable effort at assimilation. At this point, however, it has become clear to nearly all that methods based on terrorization and force are achieving just the opposite of their intended objective. High-ranking government officials, including Ozal himself, have already begun to make reference to possibilities of cultural autonomy, effectively admitting the existence of a separate nation and the recognition that neither assimilation policies nor terror will bring the struggle for self-determination to a halt.

At this point there is little doubt in anyone's mind that the regime is in crisis. As a last ditch effort to stay in power, Ozal has banked all his hope on the upcoming war in the Middle East, hoping thus to create a wave of chauvinism which will unite the nation behind him. Nevertheless not only are the Kurds and the workers outspokenly against the war, even the army and important sections of the bourgeoisie have turned against Ozal over this issue. Certain sectors of the bourgeoisie, such as those linked to the oil industry and tourism, have suffered heavy economic loss due to the crisis, while the army, given its experience of the Korean War in the 1950s, is far more cautious and less willing to jump on the American bandwagon. Already at odds with the Ozal regime over other matters, including the latter's open encouragement of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism (after having encouraged religious movements, the army has now at least nominally returned to its traditional position of being faithful to the secular principles of

Ataturk, the country's founder). The resignation of the general chief of staff, Torumtay, last December, was a blatant disavowal of the government's war frenzy and a warning that the army has its own means of filling the vacuum of power opened up by Ozal's fall from grace should they deem it necessary.

There is another powerful growing element of opposition which needs to be singled out at this point. That is, as we mentioned above, the Islamic fundamentalist movement which threatens to throw the country back into the Dark Ages. Largely as a result of the failure of the socialist movement to form a serious alternative to power during the seventies when Turkey was swept by large-scale mobilization and experienced a major growth in the left, the repression and desperation of the eighties gave birth to a fundamentalist movement which has slipped beyond the control of the regime which encouraged it and became a force to be recognized on its own.

In a country where military coups have become a tradition—once every ten years, and the last was in 1980—military intervention is a possibility which must be taken seriously. Another indication in this direction is the fact that MIT, the Turkish intelligence agency, which is directly linked to the army, has begun making provocative statements aimed at discrediting Ozal. In addition, MIT is suspected of having perpetrated several assassinations of persons well known for their defense of secularism, thus aiming to further inflame the secular-fundamentalist controversy and pave the way for military intervention.

Beyond the danger of a military coup lurking in the shadows is the immediate danger posed by the war. It has been mentioned in the press that the government is considering declaring a State of Emergency followed by Martial Law. With imminent war as a cover-up, the regime may choose to deal with the workers' movement in this way, in the meantime making use of the opportunity to round up all the socialists (most of whom were only recently released from long prison terms) as well.

Taking all these opposing currents into account, life in Turkey resembles nothing less than living at the edge of a volcano threatening to erupt. The upsurge of the workers' movement has breathed new life into a left which has never fully recovered from the blow of 1980. The situation, which has been nonrevolutionary for over a decade, is now clearly shifting to an objectively prerevolutionary one. Given the utter impotence of the bourgeois opposition to Ozal, the workers on the march are the only alternative to the prospect of the repressive regime gaining the upper hand over the workers' movement through the administration of war, or even the more bleak possibility of a direct intervention in political life by the military. Nevertheless, the workers' ability to form a political alternative is also contingent upon formation of a workers' party as the key instrument for the consolidation of the struggle. In a country with no traditional reformist workers' parties of any strength (as compared to the Communist parties of Europe and elsewhere) the construction of a working class party, possibly along the lines of the Brazilian Workers' Party, appears as the major task of the moment. And at this point, with a despised government which has been able to stay in power up until now only thanks to the lack of any serious organized and mass opposition, it clearly seems to be the most logical step forward. □

The Workers' Struggle in the 'New' Poland

Report of a Participant

by Iwonna Tyszkiewicz

The following is an edited transcript of a forum presentation given by a Polish revolutionary socialist, Iwonna ("Milka") Tyszkiewicz. Milka is a transit worker in the city of Wroclaw. She was active in Polish Solidarity in the early 1980s and spent some time in prison during the period after the imposition of martial law under General Jaruzelski. She is a member of the Fourth International. The forum, sponsored by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Solidarity, and Socialist Action, was held in Pittsburgh on October 31, 1990—shortly before the Polish elections through which the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki was replaced by the government of Lech Walesa. Also included are a few excerpts from the question and answer period.

I know that all of you probably are interested more or less in the situation which is unfolding in the Eastern bloc. I don't want to repeat stories you could hear or read about in the mass media on developments in Eastern Europe. There are other things which need to be said if you are to get a true picture of the situation. So just briefly I will start from some data about results of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program which has been introduced to Poland over the past year and a half.

Starting with the economy, the average decline of production was 30% in the last half year. This is having a snowball effect, and the decline is so deep that it will be very difficult to reverse the recession in production. The World Bank says that in some sectors of our economy the recession is even deeper. For example, in the auto industry the decline has been over 60% during the last year and a half. In the coal industry, the decline is a little over 32%.

The level of productivity is very low. Also very low is the standard of living of people in Poland. During the last year and a half, the average real wage declined 70%, because there was rising inflation in Poland and big taxes put on the wages. The relationship between the wages and the prices doesn't support people's living needs. The average wage is \$100/month. (There are lower wages—this is just the average.)

Also there is the beginning of unemployment. In June 3.8% of the working force in Poland were unemployed. Now official data says there is around 7% unemployment. There have been articles in which some economists say that unemployment might affect, within the next year or two, around 30% of the labor force. This is the optimists' opinion. Pessimists say that it might be higher, for example, 40% or more. It is quite possible because, for example, in Eastern Germany now there are expectations that every third factory has to be closed, which means the minimum level of unemployment would involve one third of the labor force. Young people have the most difficult situation. Many who graduated from the schools this year couldn't find jobs. Around 60% of those people are still unemployed. The average unemployment benefit is from \$20 to \$22 a month.

An apartment in Lodz, which is a city of around one million people, costs \$5,000 to buy, which means that almost nobody is able to save enough money to buy an apartment. The same situation exists throughout Poland. People are living in small rooms, where there might be a whole family living. People rent houses, rent rooms from private people, but this costs much more. It costs 40, 50, sometimes 60 dollars a month to rent an apartment, depending on whether it is in the center of the city or in the suburbs.

A general feeling of catastrophe is quite common among the Polish labor force, the working class. For the last ten years, members of Solidarity, general supporters of the democratic movement, fought against the bureaucracy and for possibilities of self-determination, self-responsibility, and generally what one can call a path of hope. This hope was like the engine of all the society in the last ten years, and people believed that it was possible to organize in a better society with full freedom, with full democracy, and with an economy which is able to support the most basic needs of all the society.

Now it looks as if the most active part of the Polish population is the bureaucracy. The top of the bureaucracy, the nomenklatura, concentrated in its hands an immense amount of money. Some of the economic changes are led by them. For example, the richest person in Poland now was previously a member of the Jaruzelski government, of the Stalinist government. Also, other members of our former Stalinist government now buy different types of companies, both industrial enterprises and hotels, restaurants, etc. The middle strata of the bureaucracy, concentrated in former Stalinist organizations, are also collectively buying some enterprises and some types of factories. These old Stalinist organizations never gave back money which was stolen from the state or from the society during the last 45 years. They are very rich. Basically the membership of these organizations is completely bureaucratized—it's just a bureaucratic apparatus. For example, in Wroclaw there is a youth organization, formerly a Stalinist youth organization, which has bought the best restaurant in Poland, also a lot of nightclubs, hotels, etc., etc. They don't have any kind of shares—the organization as a whole is taking profits, which then are distributed to the members. The amount which is given to each member depends on what level of the bureaucracy that person is from.

The state apparatus has grown quite quickly during the last year and a half: the number of people who are paid by the government has doubled. One reason for this is that former members of the democratic opposition, when they took over the government, didn't trust the former Stalinist apparatus, and so they tried to develop their own apparatus. The old apparatus is still intact, and there is a possibility that on certain levels the interest of bureaucracy is not against the market, but instead the bureaucracy is using the market to restructure the economy in Poland and also to develop new forms of controlling working people. Members of the former democratic opposition sometimes act as people who have some sort of common interests with the former Stalinist bureaucracy. Both groups need to develop a new type of apparatus, a new type of bureaucracy, which will be able to deal with new forms of organization of the economy. So this is a very complicated situation.

The common, ordinary Pole is not now able—I myself am not able—to know what kind of government offices are or

ganized and for what reason, and what the people do inside those offices. It is almost impossible to find a way to work with all those state offices. Some regional bureaucratic organizations started to produce special books in which there is a list of offices and where and what time you are supposed to find somebody in there.

This is quite a black picture. On the one hand we see that there is an IMF program which has been introduced to Poland, and its effect on the society is very deep and very disastrous. On the other hand, we also see that all those changes didn't destroy the bureaucracy. And somehow history is quite ironic, because members of Solidarity and supporters of Solidarity who have been fighting for the last ten years against bureaucracy now find that the effect of these changes is that the bureaucracy becomes richer and richer and their situation starts to become more and more difficult.

The common feeling of catastrophe, the lack of hope, has also a second reason: the lack of a leftist perspective. The only "practical realization" of leftist ideals up to now has been Stalinism. Polish society doesn't want to go back to the Stalinist authoritarian state. What's more, in the beginning, a year and a half ago, people generally had big hopes for capitalism. They hoped capitalism would be an absolute alternative to Stalinism, and that the capitalist system would bring positive changes and a return to hope in Poland. Yet they have found since then that capitalism, or at least some of its mechanisms, have put Poland in the situation of a third world undeveloped country, which means that there is no choice for Polish society in practice. Or they think there is no choice. Neither Stalinism nor capitalism is able to bring that hope back to workers.

There are in general two types of reaction to this situation. The first one is that when people lose hope and confidence in their own possibilities, in real life, they start to look for a hope in an absolute. And Poland is a very Catholic country. There is the rise of a kind of Catholic fundamentalism in Poland now. On the one hand, this fundamentalist current claims to be fighting for better standards of living for people—they want to defend wages, they are against IMF, and sometimes they are very anti-American. There are many trade unionists who support that current. On the other hand, the same current is against the idea of a secular state, and we have felt some effects of this already. For example, religion was introduced into the schools this year. It's been carried out in an absolutely undemocratic manner. It hasn't been discussed in the Parliament. Instead the Ministry of Education simply gave orders to the schools. In addition, it's more difficult to be divorced now than sometime ago, again not by a decision of Parliament but just by the decision of a government ministry: the number of courts which were able to work on such problems has been cut, and now people have to put their names on the list and wait for their turn. There is a great attack on women's rights in general. Lately there has been a big campaign against the freedom of abortion which exists in Poland. The Polish Parliament is divided into two houses—upper and lower. The upper house has already voted against freedom of abortion. There hasn't been debate in the lower house, so the final results are uncertain.

What is also interesting is the position of former Stalinist organizations in this case. The Stalinists split into two parties, both of which call themselves Social Democracy now, and from the beginning they protested against this campaign. They

say they defend women's rights as an integral part of human rights. And there has been a split inside Solidarity on this question. Solidarity was not able to make any concrete statement. Instead, the Stalinists were the one group who protested officially, and who published posters, who organized picketing of the Parliament. I have heard quite recently that some women want, during the next election, to vote for the former Stalinist parties. And this is again a very ironic situation. These same women were among those who fought against Stalinism—now they will vote for Stalinist parties.

This is the first, very depressing, type of reaction. People feel helpless, and they start to think about a big savior—or they start to look for enemies, like those anti-Semitic currents around Cardinal Glemp, who has made horrible, nationalistic, anti-Semitic speeches several times.

On the other hand, there is a more heartening reaction which can be seen in several organizations that started basically from the members or sympathizers of Solidarity. There are different currents supporting the idea of self-management. This has been an idea which started at the beginning of Solidarity in 1980-81, in the program of a self-managed republic. Solidarity tried to organize self-management before the Stalinist imposition of martial law in December 1981. I think it is one of the reasons that the bureaucracy decided to introduce martial law in Poland. Now when there is freedom of expression and the possibility to exchange information, this current is developing quite quickly. In every factory we have a workers' council. It's a body directly elected by all employees of the factory. They are able to fire the manager of the factory if they don't like him. They can have participation in decision making about the program, the plan of development of the factory, which means investment, wages, etc., etc., etc. They are organized on a national scale in the Association of Workers' Councils. At the beginning, just after the roundtable agreement, there were 224 factories from all over Poland which started the debate. Now I think almost every factory participates in the association. In June 1990, for the first time in the history of self-management, they decided to elect their own candidates to the Parliament, for the purpose of fighting against the IMF program, against privatization of industry (which is absolutely against the idea of self-management), and in order to at least try to implement some of the ideas of a self-managed republic in Poland.

This current is also divided. People are not sure what is the main problem of Poland today. Some of them say that capitalism is going to be introduced into Poland very shortly—rapidly, in a short period of time. This means that the main problem would be privatization and that Poland would develop along the lines of a typical third world country, and that this represents the main problem facing the Polish working class. This current is trying to keep national property and tries to develop classical workers' councils, within the nationalized industry. Workers' councils in this perspective would represent a state or a nation, a society in the factory.

The second trend in this current consists of people who say that in the nearest future there is no danger of the introduction of real capitalism in Poland. The biggest problem for workers still is bureaucracy, but bureaucracy which is using not only former methods of disciplining the working class, but which is using at least some market mechanisms. They say that they would like to have classical workers' councils but also, in order

to develop their own independence, they would like to have a kind of workers' shareholding like ESOPs [Employee Stock Ownership Plans] which you have in the U.S.

Now both elements in this current are not necessarily in agreement with each other all the time, so ultimately it might be extremely difficult to organize a concrete political representation of this current, such as a political party with a coherent program.

Then there are several currents inside Solidarity itself which are more democratic than the main current of Lech Walesa. Solidarity has what we call branches, and these are Solidarity committees from the same types of industry. They organize themselves completely from below, and they are completely democratically elected. They say they are very much against the IMF program. Also they seem not to be fundamentalist. But also they lack a clear leftist perspective. So this current is still not clear. But for leftists it is much easier to work with them than with the fundamentalist current, which is quite dangerous, or with the bureaucratized apparatus of Walesa.

Workers' consciousness is developing quite quickly. In Poland there has been a third generation that doesn't understand what capitalism is—they were enthusiastic about capitalism. A year and a half later the attitudes toward capitalism have changed, and almost everybody in Poland, including some of the members of government, criticize the IMF. Almost everybody disagrees with the idea of laissez-faire capitalism—they say there has to be at least some state intervention in the economy. Some go further, which means the development is quite rapid, and now it is difficult to say at what point it will end.

The position of revolutionary socialists in Poland now is that we think the battle is not over. We think that at least the development of consciousness of the Polish working class shows that some groups of workers probably will try to fight against pro-market reforms. These are the people we would like to cooperate with in order to achieve a labor party, similar to the Brazilian model, the PT (Workers' Party). This is a long-term project. Now we are at the early beginnings of it.

I live in Wroclaw, Lower Silesia, which is a very industrialized place, with mining districts and steel mills. We work in a club called Poland Socialist Center, which is playing a role in integrating socialists, progressive trade unionists, members of peace movements, ecologists, different currents from "Green" parties, some individuals. We think that in the nearest future probably Walesa will win the elections. After that, there will probably be the beginning of an opening for us. We will have bigger possibilities to organize people against the government—which probably means against Walesa. Left trade unions will have to fight against Walesa, who uses pro-working class rhetoric, but who also has the same economic development plan as the present government. So probably he will have to attack the working class in a more concrete way. And the workers will have to defend themselves against that.

Audience Questions

Question: What are the prospects in Poland today for groups explicitly identified as socialist or Marxist? I have heard that

groups identifying themselves that way would tend to be dismissed as irrelevant, since the terms "socialist" and "Marxist" have both been identified with Stalinism.

Answer: It depends mainly on who says that they are socialists. For example, we are quite lucky because we are known as people who have been working with Solidarity. A friend of mine, who is the head of our center, Josef Pinior, was a member of the National Committee of Solidarity and is still one of the best-known leaders of Solidarity. Soon there will be elections in the Solidarity trade union. And Josef Pinior of our center is an important candidate.

We have been on quite a lot of programs on radio and television, and we describe ourselves not only as socialists but also as Trotskyist members of the Fourth International. I haven't met anyone who identifies me with the former Stalinist regime. Even a year and a half ago people were never angry with us. We always had very good relations with trade unionists, although sometimes they said we are crazy, or they said that our program is very good but why do we use the word "socialist"? Now it's much easier, and even in the official newspaper of Walesa you can find articles saying that leftist parties and socialist parties are needed in Poland—even that maybe some progressive members of Solidarity will organize a socialist party in Poland. This shows the difference between a year and a half ago and today.

But I think that the building of a socialist party or a revolutionary Marxist party is very important, especially inside the Eastern bloc, and one has to be very conscious about what one does and very clear about what one says. Workers have to trust you....

There is a very interesting development. Can you guess what is one of the best sellers in Poland during 1990? *My Life* by Leon Trotsky. There was a private publishing house that decided to publish the book in an edition of 30,000 copies. People were queued up to get it, and it sold out in three days. Then they published another 30,000 copies, which also sold out. More were published, but it's difficult to find a copy of Trotsky's *My Life* in Poland....

Question: The popularity of Trotsky's writings probably suggests that one way socialists can overcome the bad reputation, if they have one, is to emphasize the antibureaucratic character of Trotsky's writings, since that is a characteristic of Stalinism that Trotsky attacks and that people in Poland also reject. That should be the thrust of popularizing socialism. Do you find this to be the case?

Answer: I think so. *My Life* of Trotsky worked so well because it is very antibureaucratic and because of the heroism of Trotsky. Trotsky himself was very heroic, and this works well in the Polish reality. People who struggled during martial law can remember many scenes from their own experience that they can compare with *My Life* of Trotsky. I think that both of these reasons account for the book's popularity, but there is another one too. There is his belief in the possibilities of workers. This is what workers in Poland have already—they believe in their own possibilities. Anyway, every member of our regional committee of Solidarity has read it.

On the capitalist reunification of Germany

SINCE October 3, 1990, the absorption of East Germany by West Germany is an accomplished fact. This involves the restoration of capitalism on the territory of East Germany, the West German bourgeoisie taking political power over the ruins of the Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship — which collapsed as a result of a formidable democratic and popular movement in the fall of 1989 — and the reinforcement of the German imperialist state.

The following resolution was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International held in November 1990.

DOCUMENT

1) A political defeat

This outcome of the evolution unleashed in the fall of 1989 is the most negative of the possible perspectives advanced by the United Secretariat resolution of March 5, 1990: "The restoration of capitalism under the rule of a bourgeois state and by the submission of the economy to the hold of big capital...." There has not been a political revolution in the sense of a seizure of power by the working class, the establishment of socialist democracy and democratic planning. Nor has there been a "process of convergence by stages" of the two Germanies enabling the working class and the popular masses to develop liberating political perspectives, rejecting bureaucratic and big capitalist regimentation.

We have pointed up the gravely negative effects of the "Anschluss," both in Germany and internationally, for the working class and all the oppressed. The facts confirm the correctness of our determined opposition to German capitalist reunification and our warnings to the German and international working class:

● **Economic effects:** The dismantling of the bureaucratic planning structures in favor of the "free market" has so far only led to the destructive effects of capitalism. There is no basis for any optimism about the economic outlook on the territory of the ex-GDR. The "costs of reunification" are rising every month. The West German government to this day has been careful to give no exact figures. The Fiduciary Company run by West German directors, managing 8,000 enterprises employing 6 million wage earners, has done nothing but wipe out jobs and transform the leftovers into appendices of the big capitalist trusts. The West German capitalists' investments have remained meager, while they control the market for immediate consumer goods. Among other things, they have created a grave crisis in agriculture for the rural producers organized in cooperatives, who can no longer sell their products. The future fac-

ing the ex-GDR is one of becoming an "underdeveloped" region inhabited by second-class citizens.

● **Social effects:** While the prices of goods payable in marks are the same as in the West, the wage earners of the ex-GDR earn only half of what those in West Germany do. The blackmail of threatening to shut down enterprises, the lack of a credible alternative to the "hope" of attracting capitalist investments, and a feeling of insecurity limit the ability of the working class in the East to create a favorable relationship of forces for immediate demands. Mass unemployment, affecting more than 1.5 million, compounded by "partial unemployment" of more than a million people (at zero time in 90% of the cases), is already a fact in the ex-GDR. All the established political forces, including the social democracy, declare that mass unemployment is inevitable for an indefinite "transitional" period leading to a chimerical state of "accelerated economic growth." What remained of the social gains — full employment, low rents, social security, day-care centers, subsidized prices for necessities — are being destroyed step by step. Women are being driven to rediscover their "natural destiny" as housewives and mothers. They are the first victims of layoffs. The growth of unemployment in the framework of the united state is degrading the relationship of forces between the classes in the country as a whole.

The German bourgeoisie, which claimed until only yesterday that unity could be paid for from the state coffers, is more and more openly demanding "national sacrifice" in order to finance it at the expense of the wage earners.

● **Political effects:** After the victory of the East and West German bourgeois parties in the March 18 elections, all the democratic gains of the mass movement of the fall of 1989 have been destroyed. The East German government was only a puppet of the Kohl government, and was more and more openly insulted as incom-

petent and superfluous. The new state was created by a simple integration into West Germany and its state structures. The majority of elected representatives in East Germany were not present in the common parliament formed on October 3 in the old Reichstag building in Berlin. The united German state was formed without elections. Its constitution, with a few modifications, is that of West Germany. There is no question of a constituent assembly or a popular vote on the constitution and political system. The "round tables" in the GDR are no more than a bad memory for the bourgeoisie.

The civic movements have been weakened, as well as the conscious socialist forces. The West German repressive apparatus has been reinforced. The elections scheduled for December 2 will take place in conditions unfavorable to the left forces, such as the PDS, the Left Slate/PDS and the groups that have come out of the civic movements, and favorable to the rightist forces.

Legislation against immigrants and political refugees has become worse. The criminalization of abortion has partially been extended to the East, and the plan is to extend it fully in two years.

● **Ideological effects:** In order to get "national sacrifice" accepted, all the divisions among the oppressed have been reinforced. Racist, anti-foreign, anti-feminist, anti-Communist and even anti-semitic ideology is being advanced more strongly than ever since 1945, and sometimes backed up by violent attacks. Symbols and forms of mysticism referring to the past "Reich" are becoming commonplace. The proclamation of a "right to forget" the crimes of Nazism is more and more becoming part of accepted political discourse. Today a state premier of the Rheinland Palatinate, Wagner of the CDU, can say without touching off a wave of protest: "Never since 1933, perhaps since 1914, has the German people been able to look forward to such a brilliant future as today."

● **International effects:** The dismantling of the East German "people's army" has not brought on a similar process in West Germany or for the united Germany. The slightly reduced West German army is extending its authority over the territory of the ex-GDR. The united Germany is a member of NATO, which thus extends its operating range to the Polish frontier. The united Germany now openly aspires to share in the role of world gendarme alongside the other imperialist forces. It is starting down this road by gaining the right to use its armed forces even outside NATO territory, under UN cover, by participating

in the imperialist intervention against Iraq in the Gulf. The united Germany will play an economically and politically predominant role in the EEC of 1992, reinforcing all its reactionary tendencies against the third world, against immigrants and political refugees, reinforcing political repression and social inequalities within the Community itself. At the same time, this united Germany is well placed to play a predominant role in the capitalist conquest of the East European countries.

● To sum up: The working class and popular masses in Germany and in the world, aspirations for emancipation, have been dealt a grave defeat by the capitalist unification of Germany, which reinforces the power of capitalism and imperialism.

2) The obstacles proved insufficient

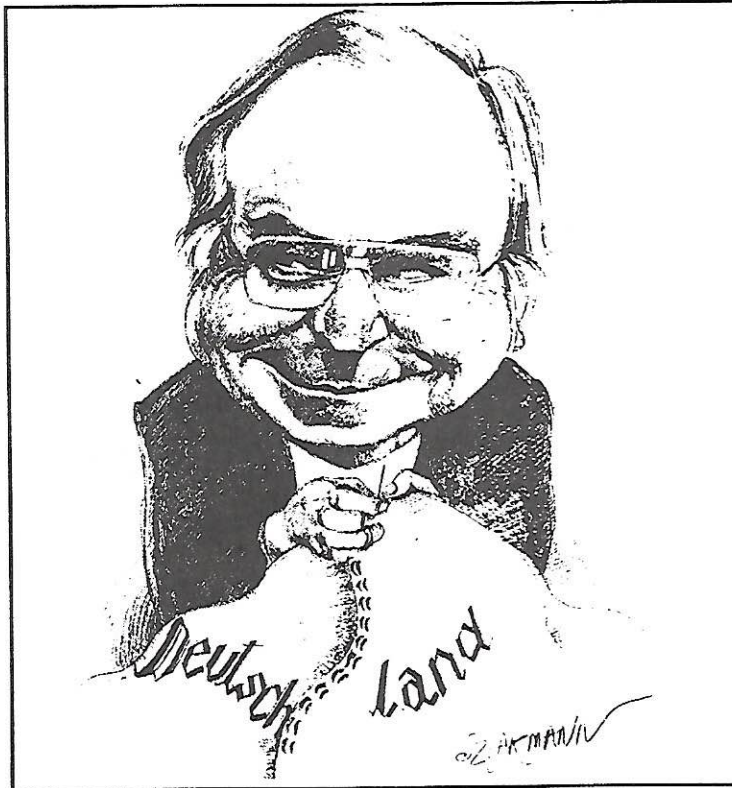
The main obstacle to this negative evolution would have been an East German working class capable of contending for power and endowed with a high level of democratic self-organization and having enough confidence in its own strength to aspire to run industry itself in accordance with the needs of the population. This would also have supposed a West German working class capable of active class solidarity not only with the masses that rose up against Honecker but also with the wage earners of the GDR against West German capital. That was the precondition for the development of a credible alternative going in the direction of socialist democracy.

The subjective conditions for such an outcome were not assembled. The workers' self-confidence had too long suffered the devastating effects of the Stalinist bureaucratic dictatorship, which had deprived them of elementary democratic and political rights, strangled their creativity, their sense of responsibility and their critical spirit. The false alternative between "totalitarian bureaucracy" (largely identified with socialism) and the "free market" (a euphemism for the dictatorship of big capital) had made too deep an impact on people's thinking. The conformism of the Western social democracy, dominant in the workers' movement, made impossible any development of class solidarity on a mass scale that would have helped generalize the aspirations for emancipation against disarray and resignation. It is because we

did not take sufficient account of such delays and deficiencies that we underestimated the tempo the offensive could take and its possibility of success.

Other obstacles that we mentioned in the March 1990 resolution proved insufficiently effective:

— The contradiction between the EEC-1992 project and rapid German reunification did not have political consequences amounting to a real "dilemma" in the short term. The other European states accepted unification because of the weight of German imperialism, thereby reinforcing the latter as a leading force in the Community. This test has obviously not yet been decided, since it involves the bourgeoisie winning out in social struggles that are probable, especially in West Germany, where the working class is highly organized and very much attached to its standard of living. But the bourgeoisie has chosen to take the risk.



— The contradiction between a rapid reunification and the interest of the other imperialist forces in détente with the Kremlin led by Gorbachev did not operate. The Kremlin even accepted the new Germany becoming an integral part of NATO. The reason for this is the gravity of the crisis in the USSR, and Gorbachev's choice to combat this crisis with the maximum aid from international big capital. He is ready to dump any principle to get that. He is acting in that way because the USSR, its economy and its state unity seem to be crumbling under his eyes.

— The problems that some capitalist

leaders in West Germany saw more clearly than the government, the dangers of destabilization arising from a rapid absorption of East Germany, were, and remain, real. But this has not been consolidated in a line of more cautious convergence, because the adventurist line of "you get involved and then you see," the tempting possibility of taking power, rapidly got the upper hand.

The social democracy did not develop an alternative to the breakneck pace of the Anschluss. It limited itself to criticizing details, and completely accepted the logic of rapid capitalist reunification, although that led to reinforcing the political dominance of the conservatives and liberals. It should not be forgotten that it was the SPD that launched the slogan of "Germany, a united fatherland" in East Germany. In particular, it was difficult for the social democrats not to be outdistanced by the bourgeois parties in leading the real process. The SPD cannot now criticize the consequences of the tempo of a capitalist unification that it itself wished for.

The need for a socialist revolution remains on the historic agenda more than ever after the annexation of East Germany by West German capital, because the capitalist reunification bears the signs of regression. The perspective of a defense of a sovereign East Germany as a framework for the aspiration for a road of development alternative to capitalism was not realized.

Nonetheless, capitalist and state unity do not mean real unity. The nationalist rhetoric poorly conceals the divisions. One of those will remain the difference between the real situation of the populations in the East and West.

The unity that we want is built from below, through solidarity, through

a common struggle for social equality and development of the creative forces of individuals freed from the material constraints of capitalist society and the political constraints of the state apparatus.

This struggle, thus, involves a special defense of the interests of the wage earners, women, youth and elderly people in East Germany in order to build real class unity.

It is important in Germany to form links among consciousness adversaries of the new capitalist and imperialist Germany, those who deplore the undemocratic way in which it was formed and those who rebel against its antisocial and reactionary

consequences.

3. The underlying causes of the defeat

East German society lost its potential for development in the 1980s and slid toward a hopeless crisis. The middle and lower strata of the bureaucracy first lost confidence in their leaders and then in the system itself. In the final phase of the death agony of East Germany, they no longer defended the state.

Parallel to this breakdown of the ruling bureaucracy, an opposition developed that was weak at first but persistent and able to act publicly. Its democratic demands and socialist references seemed to represent a political alternative for the masses.

The start of the political revolution that took form in October 1989 was a revolt of subjects without political rights, who had been tightly regimented for decades, with a level of freedom and real consumption lower than capitalist West Germany. Finally, they swept away a regime that they considered intolerable.

The "people on the top," that is the ruling SED bureaucracy were incapable of putting up armed resistance to the mass movement (the Soviet leadership forbade them to resort to this ultimate means, although such recourse was indeed envisaged by the Honecker leadership).

This weak resistance from the bureaucracy facilitated a rapid expansion of the mass movement, but did not push this movement, and in particular the workers, to form strike committees, to call unlimited strikes, to set up organs of dual power or to begin to organize self-defense.

The working class did not contend for power. The mass democratic movement did not lead to a social radicalization beginning to pose the question of the direct rule of those who went into the streets. What had appeared to be a beginning of the reconquest of the East German trade-union movement by the workers rapidly gave way to an offensive by the West German trade-union bureaucracy.

If the leadership of the SED was unable to met the mass movement with large-scale repression, it was also unable, once the enormous mass mobilizations started, to take the initiative of self-reform and of economic concessions to the masses (the large East German reserves of foreign currency were not used to buy great quantities of Western products, which would have made it possible to raise the standard of living of the masses immediately).

A vanguard that was both anti-bureaucratic and anticapitalist could have taken advantage of this. But the weakness of the nuclei that were both anti-bureaucratic and anticapitalist made them incapable of forming an alternative to the SED leadership and the West German bourgeoisie (represented by the SED's satellite parties). They were also unable to

win the leadership of the civic movements. The offensive of the main West German capitalist political force, Kohl's CDU-CSU, did the rest.

Since the West German capitalist system seemed to the masses to be manifestly superior to the Stalinist regime, both in the economic and the political fields, and since the media frenetically prettied it up, the democratic socialist alternative did not acquire any immediate political value for the workers.

The socialist forces in East Germany proved too weak, too poorly organized and too indecisive. The West German left, far from firmly supporting them, acted in a skeptical, if not outright hostile, way toward them. Only a tiny minority in West Germany offered real and active solidarity.

All this led to a result that the March 1990 USEC resolution sketched as a possibility, and even the most likely one.

If the political evolution did not quickly offer a perspective for the masses, they would come finally to accept the capitalist unification of Germany as a lesser evil. This turnaround in the consciousness of the East German masses began to take place in the third week of November 1989.

The incipient political revolution that led to major democratic changes in a short period led to a social counterrevolution in the form of the absorption of the GDR by German imperialism.

The political responsibility for the defeat of the German, European and world working class suffered as a result of the annexation of East Germany by West Germany falls in the first instance on Stalinism, the Soviet bureaucracy and its East German satraps.

By setting up a regime in East Germany in their image, one rejected and despised by the great majority of the working class — which was, however, ready to abolish capitalism and at the same time create democratic political structures, as the whole experience from 1945 to 1947 attests — by maintaining this regime through unrelenting despotic repressive measures, by disorganizing the planned economy with irresponsible economic choices and with a total absence of workers' supervision and management of the enterprises, by permitting the SED bureaucracy to block any road to credible reforms over the past decade, the Kremlin created the conditions for the lightning collapse of East Germany.

Its political narrowness, Stalinism dogmatism, its hanging on to its political monopoly, its material privileges, its growing divorce from the working class, even in its own party, its exceptional rigidity in recent years, made the bureaucracy of Ulbricht and Honecker accomplices in the Kremlin's historic crimes.

The Gorbachev leadership played the role of catalyst in the East German crisis (cf. the "pro-Gorbi" demonstrations in the

spring and over the summer of 1989), and it prevented the SED bureaucracy from resorting to a bloodbath. But since it was unable to offer a credible non-capitalist alternative to the East German masses (the economic situation in the USSR being much more dramatic than that of the GDR) and since it was up to its neck in a policy of retreat and concessions to imperialism, it, in this sense, facilitated the imperialist designs on East Germany.

The German and international social democracy also have their share of responsibility. In lining up at the head of the anti-Communist Cold War offensive, by hiding from the East German workers that the living standard of the masses in West Germany is in large part the result of a determined struggle by the workers' movement and not an automatic product of capitalism, and the participation of German capitalism in the exploitation of the so-called third world, which is itself an inevitable consequence of capitalism; by refusing to conduct any sort of common action with the workers of the GDR and never raising the perspective of a united socialist Germany, the SPD helped to undermine the class consciousness of the East German proletariat and to drive it into the political impasse of November 1989. It "worked for the king of Prussia" [for a proverbial ungrateful master], that is, for West German big capital and the CDU/FDP.

The West German bourgeoisie and international imperialism obviously worked away like beavers to do away with East Germany from the day of its birth. They did this in pursuit of clear class interests.

But this struggle could only end in success thanks to the objective help offered them by the Kremlin, the SED leadership and the SPD leadership.

4. Perspectives

After the defeat represented by the capitalist unification, the battle among the antagonistic social forces will continue. The task of revolutionaries henceforth is to work to prepare the way for the socialist revolution in the new united German state, for its destruction to make way for socialist democracy and democratic planning in accordance with the needs of the population, protecting the environment and assuming the tasks of international solidarity with the poor countries.

After the collapse of Stalinism in Germany, the rebuilding of a revolutionary socialist organization capable of winning a political majority for socialist democracy remains a difficult, complicated and long-term task.

Even to the left of the social democracy and the Greens, doubts have multiplied; the ideological pressure of the right has grown stronger.

In the short term, there is no realistic perspective for a left current with even the



slightest weight emerging within the SPD, which represents electorally the majority of German wage earners. To the contrary, the SPD leadership is continuing to evolve to the right. The majority of party members are responding to the unification by rallying even more forcefully to the idea of the need for a permanent consensus with the bourgeoisie, based on a strategy of reforming capitalism, not of going beyond it and still less of overthrowing it.

Within the unions, there is a clearer differentiation. A wing of the bureaucracy accepts the strategy of permanent social partnership with the bosses.

Another wing (IG Metall) continues to resort periodically to mobilizations or even strikes controlled from above as a means of pressure for gaining concessions from the bosses. Moreover, there are not insignificant nuclei of class-struggle unionists in the rank and file.

But none of these trade-union forces is prepared for the moment to fight for a political project clearly to the left of the social democracy.

The Greens are also accentuating their reformist and gradualist orientation of integration into the bourgeois state.

Elements of the left wing of the West German Greens have been attracted by the Left Slate-PDS. But many of the Greens see capitalist unification and the reinforcement of German imperialism as a positive normalization, and equate it with the role of a "responsible" great power for German imperialism.

Most of the organizations of the civic movement in East Germany have chosen to ally themselves with the Greens. While developing progressive themes of a radically democratic sort, they have less sensitivity to social problems. They give priority to the fight against defeated Stalinism, and do not realize that today the enemy is big capital.

The revolutionary and socialist forces have been weakened, and are in full disarray. They are small, and at the same time

many of them no longer believe that socialist revolution remains on the historic agenda, and thus they are under the pressure of reformist conceptions.

The evolution of the PDS is not finished. Debate, unity in action, electoral agreements with this party offer a possibility to gain practical experience while reinforcing the ability of socialist-oriented forces to have an impact on public political discussion.

But this can turn in a negative direction, if priority is not given to extra-parliamentary action, if cooption into bourgeois democratic consensus is not rejected, if the PDS's rejection of the Stalinist past remains superficial and leads to a pure and simple capitulation to the dominant ideology.

5. Tasks

In these conditions, clarifying, defending and propagating the revolutionary program more than ever constitute a precondition for effective political work and for building the organization. They are long-term tasks that have to be pursued in a systematic and coherent way.

This is especially true since the struggle for socialism as a social model and the need for a democratically structured revolutionary organization placed within an international organization, as well in fact as the need for the masses fighting for their own interests through mobilizations, are more than ever being denied, put in question or neglected.

All this necessarily involves a separate organization of revolutionaries regardless of the precise form of such an organization or the tactic revolutionaries chose for building it.

Moreover, without implacably eliminating all self-justifying Stalinist and post-Stalinist doctrines, without a Marxist explanation of the degeneration and collapse of the post-capitalist states of East Europe, the revolutionary movement will not regain any real credibility.

From this overall analysis flow the precise tasks for Marxists in the period opened up by the Anschluss, tasks that the USec advises the German comrades to take up.

A. Their activity should be centered on defending the masses against the effects of growing mass unemployment, the cuts in social production and reductions in real wages, above all on the territory of the old

GDR.

These tasks cannot be effectively fulfilled, even on this territory, without strong unions ready to fight, unless class-struggle trade union forces operate, playing a real and coordinating role for at least a section of the working class, and unless the masses become more and more actively involved in this struggle.

We are trying to direct these struggles toward action (strikes, factory-occupation strikes, active strikes in the public services) and radical organization (committees).

The most important objectives to be achieved are the following:

— Rejection of any "national sacrifice".

— A shorter workweek without any cut in pay, until full employment is achieved.

— Defense of public ownership, with the creation of self-management factory councils elected by the workers in East Germany. Opposition to the sell-out on the cheap of the enterprises in the ex-GDR for the profit of West German and foreign capitalists and East German speculators.

— Financing of the public sector by orders and subsidies from the public authorities.

— Immediate aligning of wages on the level of West German, a parity to be financed by the creation of a special fund for this purpose.

— Maintaining, generalizing and improving the social institutions of the former GDR, especially with respect to day-care centers, city hospitals and boarding houses at affordable prices.

— Financing these measures through a demilitarization of the country and taxing the capitalists, the highly paid and the rich.

B. With the disarmament measures being applied by the USSR and the announcement of a rapid departure of Soviet troops, the pretexts used by NATO in the past for justifying the arms race are vanishing.

In these conditions, the fact that Germany continues to be one of the most heavily armed and militarized regions in the world, as well as a threat to the freedom of many peoples, will more and more become the object of political controversy. Therefore, we must demand:

— The withdrawal of all foreign troops from German territory.

— A demilitarized Germany in a nuclear-free Europe.

— A fight against any imperialist intervention abroad.

C. Regardless of the failure of the political revolution in East Germany, the movement toward such a revolution that was unleashed in September 1989 continues to provide a democratic impetus that can be fostered, for example by taking our inspiration from the abolition of the Stasi and demanding the dissolution of all secret services and all forms of political police in Germany. ★

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

44. To Each His Own

In the months when we were located near Kovel, I learned of the fate of several little nearby places and settlements. I will not speak of the fate of the local Jews; you can imagine what happened to them. But Poles also lived there. The Bandera forces butchered, one after another, all the Polish families who had not managed to go into hiding. They slaughtered them not with guns but with sabers. They derived pleasure from hacking up other peoples' children with their bare hands and massacring women. Ukrainian women who lived in these villages told me about this.

But I do not mean to lump together in one category all those whom Stalin's judges sent indiscriminately to Vorkuta. They were not all children who took food to a hungry uncle; wives and sisters who would not inform authorities that their husband or brother or fiance had fled into the forest so the authorities could locate and capture them.

One of my acquaintances, a fine lad from Lvov, told me that he had as early as 1940 received a 20-year term for betraying the homeland. He and his comrades offered armed resistance to the Soviet troops who had moved into Western Ukraine after Hitler's quick seizure of Poland, of which Western Ukraine had until then been a part. It is true that when this lad betrayed the homeland, Article 58 had not yet been declared and it had to be applied retroactively. But such a detail did not bother Stalin. Nor did it bother him that my friend, who prior to the invasion of our troops was a citizen of Poland and therefore obliged to defend it from any foreign power—regardless of what relationship that power had toward Hitler—unless his own government *itself* requested our assistance. Such assistance had not been requested and he knew this. He therefore took up arms. Events developed swiftly before the people could realize what was happening. There are many such events that are difficult to comprehend even a quarter of a century later.

It just so happened that in my half of the twelfth barracks a sophisticated misanthropic campaign was in the process of being organized. It consisted of a dozen or two inveterate Jew-haters, joined in a close, friendly bond with several former policemen, with such people, for example, as Ivan Shudro. So now he could talk about women all he wanted! The talk about

women most often centered around the women in the Special Camp Point (OLP) located not far from us—Rechlag had one women's division. Just to be able to walk past the women's division was the dream of many of the male prisoners—just to be able to catch a glimpse of the women!

When our column was led to work, we now and then passed by a group of women busy repairing a road. The column would slow its pace, the women would look up and unwrap the kerchieves from their faces. The wives of communists shot in the 1930s would by now have already died or served out their term and these OLP residents were mainly women who had inhabited Western Ukraine and the Baltic. Some did not even understand Russian.

Young women who had not seen another man except for their warden for years smiled at us. Everyone of us passing by tried to say a good word. Many of our Ukrainian men shouted: "Is there anyone from such and such a place? Is anyone there from the Melnitsk region?"

In the summer, when the weather was clear, one could see the women's camp from the top roof of the coal barracks. However, just opposite the roof was a watchtower, and if you tried to wave a kerchief, the guards threatened you with their machine guns. Waving your hands was not forbidden but the women could not really see that. The women would climb into their attic and wave kerchieves from the window. The window could not be seen from their watchtowers. Thus took place the exchange of little-understood—or deeply understood?—signals between men and women torn from one another, melancholy and anguished. The two camps were about a kilometer apart.

Those whose wives and sisters were in the camps because they would not become informers, and those imprisoned for simply being relatives, hoped to find their loved ones. All those who worked on second or night shift were busy everyday with this signaling. When evening came, it got cold but not dark. We left the "signal" roof and made our way to our barracks in pensive silence.

Less foul language and vile talk was heard. On those Vorkuta nights I was always sad but not depressed.

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

One such evening Ivan Shudro said: "Right now I even wish my sister were here; I could even enjoy myself with her. She would have to crawl away from the bed!"

A real brute, Shudro had a bestially malicious and maniacal hatred for Jews. The mob from the twelfth barracks, infected with cynicism, hated all people who were different from them, especially Jews. If they were left to their own devices, they would not ask for guns but would tear all the Jews apart with their bare hands, the women as well as the men. They said this themselves over and over again for all to hear.

All negative sides of humanity were evaluated the same way: "as a Jew." Stingy as a Jew. Cowardly as a Jew. Stupid as a Jew. Mercenary as a Jew.

At the end of our shift we gathered by the gate to the mine. Outside the gate stood the convoy escorts and they took us away by brigades, counting off the number in each. Everyone wanted to go first (to be "first out"). The escorts did not take the whole shift at once but only a third of us at a time. They would lead away a group of a little more than a hundred and go back for a new group. They did this three times. It was a four-kilometer walk along a rough and sloppy road. No one wanted to end up in the second group or, worse yet, in the third. After eight hours underground, descending and coming up, twice standing in line naked in the dressing room, then the shower, the road back, the search, then standing in line for dinner—when was one to sleep? If you had to wait two or three hours just to go back to the barracks, there was almost no time left for sleeping at all.

Everyone tried to be first out. The Bandera forces were really a very close-knit bunch. Young and healthy, they could elbow their way through the crowd and without fail make it to the front, all the while shouting:

"Hey, stop pushing. What are you, a Jew?"

An interesting, educated, and intelligent man lived in our barracks, an engineer named Osaulenko. He was imprisoned for Ukrainian nationalism—which belongs in the same category as cosmopolitanism. Once, while we were lying on our bunks, on the second tier, I heard him say: "Boys, I notice that every time you see something is bad, you say it's 'like a Jew.' However, tell me, is there one rat among them in the whole camp? But take a look how it is among us."

Osaulenko said "among us" in order not to offend the person he was talking with. It was necessary to say "among us." The majority of the rats were recruited from among those who had at one time served as police for Hitler. The first to assist the Special Division were those who yesterday assisted the Gestapo.

Contempt for rats was no one's national privilege.

How was it that among the Estonians—and I encountered many of them in the camp—there were no rats? Even the officials understood that the Estonians could not be bought but could always be trusted to keep their word. If an Estonian brigade promised: this will be ready in about three days, that meant it would be ready and no one had to check up on them. They would not participate in *tufia* [pretending to work]; it was not something they had been raised to do.

Keeping one's word was a trait the camp officials liked in a prisoner. A model worker was described in the camp newspaper *The Miner*, a newspaper that was secret from the outside world, as follows: "He takes on obligations (not always

voluntarily). Still more often, he does not even take them on, but simply finds out about them from a declaration posted in the barracks. But he fulfills them at any cost. He loves being a miner, or cleaning latrines or hauling away bodies at night, even if he was previously a pilot or a mathematician. He invests all his energy in an assignment received from above. But mainly, he is upright and truthful. If he hears a comrade say that there are queues for bread where he lived on the outside, he quickly writes it up and puts it in the special box at the doors of the Special Division. He does this all unnoticed. He is not ratting but informing."

When a prisoner, young and healthy as a bull, instead of a shovel received the duty of overseeing something—moreover a duty that demanded neither education nor qualifications but only the capacity to force compliance—everyone suspected he had been a rat. And there were enough such jobs in which you did not work like a donkey, tug like a slave crew, hunched over all day pretending you were as dumb as a post, as we said in the crude and raw language of the camp. What a glorious system of reeducation by work in which your reward is the opportunity not to work!

There were other, less obvious means for compensating the rats. They could, for example, add to your daily norm, or remove days altogether. One actual day of confinement could count as one and one-half or two days for someone who behaved right. They could allow one letter per month, or one every two months or one every three months or none at all. It is possible to compensate someone with better quality food or medical treatment or by partially freeing someone from work assignments. There are, of course, those incorruptible types who want to prove their reliability asking nothing in return. It was an individual matter.

Without the rats, the Rechlag and the other such camps with their tricky pseudonyms in Karaganda, Norilsk, Magadan, and other places could not have existed. When it came to the common criminal, it was all much easier. If he agreed to work, that by itself meant that he had been internally restructured. But it was not so easy with those who had worked hard before their arrest. How do you assess progress in the reeducation of such people? What norm do you use? They are already accustomed to working and after arrest will not break the habit.

Moreover, the counterrevolutionaries are extremely clever. They work like donkeys but secretly they wish our destruction. The camp major has only one option: to penetrate the counterrevolutionaries' thoughts, since their work proves nothing. However, even on a volunteer Sunday they do work very hard, as is well known by the majors, who have never placed even one shovelful of cement toward the building of Vorkuta. On the other hand, think how much cement my friend Yefim has mixed! And he did it all by hand, with a shovel.

He was born and grew up in a hungry and deprived Jewish family. All his mother had to feed the children were cooked half-rotten potatoes and one herring of which each child got a piece. Yefim taught himself to read and write and then attended a workers university¹ He did not have an easy life there either because he worked while he studied. He finished his studies and became an excellent shopfloor leader. Thus, who is he: an enemy of socialism or its best builder?

The institution of ratting was not an accidental one but a precondition for the existence of camps for the reforging of

political prisoners into good citizens. And the system of informers in the camps was a direct continuation of the informers who had landed us in the camp in the first place. Every epoch bears its own fruit and when at the beginning of the 1950s the demand for nationalist crimes grew significantly, the Stalinist apparatus for saving the homeland from internal enemies reached the summit of its creativity. The doctors' plot was contrived. How much joy this brought the Bandera forces! They listened to the radio religiously and the names of Cohen and Feldman never left their lips.

That case, which brought the misanthropes such satisfaction, has not lost its historic interest even after many years, this being especially true because the page has been torn from the history books. However, I will not describe it in my own words. I will quote an excerpt from the article "Be Vigilant!" that appeared in the March issue of *The Worker* in 1953.

"There is no crime the imperialists and their contemptible mercenaries would not stoop to. The monstrous crimes represented by the band of doctor-poisoners in Moscow is convincing evidence of this. It has been established that the participants in this terrorist group used their position as doctors and abused the confidence of the sick, whose health they undermined in the most malicious manner. The victims of these monsters were A.A. Zhdanov and A.S. Shcherbakov. The band of contemptible degenerates, hiding behind the mask of doctors and professors, first tried to undermine the health of the leading Soviet military cadre so they would be removed from the command system, thus weakening the country's defense. . . ."

(It is not out of place here to recall in brackets the fate of Tukhachevsky and his comrades.² Stalin here is not apparently being held accountable for anything along these lines. But I continue the quotation.)

"It was also established that all those who participated in the doctors' terrorist band were hired agents of foreign intelligence services, who had sold out body and soul. The majority of the participants of this terrorist group were serving American intelligence forces. These degenerate Jewish bourgeois nationalists were recruited by the international Jewish bourgeois-nationalist organization 'Joint,' created by American intelligence, and under Joint's leadership they had carried out wide-scale espionage, terrorism, and other subversive activity in a number of countries, including in the Soviet Union. They receive monstrous directives from the USA from this Zionist espionage organization." (Count how many times in a few paragraphs the words monstrous, contemptible, and degenerate were used.)

At the end the article speaks about the person who informed on the doctors (or signed a prepared statement).

"Supreme vigilance was displayed in particular by Dr. Lidia Feodosev in Timashuk. She helped the government expose the killer-doctors, for which she received the order of Lenin. Workers, collective farmers, war veterans are warmly congratulating Lidia in numerous letters and telegrams from all corners of the country."

Can one speak of a moral community of millions of people, who with pure hearts believed for years the malicious inventions of Stalin and his aides while these very aides consciously circulated their lies? Is the morality of the investigator the same as the morality of his victim, even if the victim signed a false statement under torture? Or is the morality of the authors of

such journalistic works the same as that of the millions of women who subscribed to the journal?

However, a political union existed and still exists between them. We were all betrayed, the betrayers and their victims and the executioners. We all stood and stand for Soviet power, even though the internal motivations of the honorable person and the careerist are different. Many proved their loyalty with their blood, and it is not difficult to tell who shed the most blood.

Since the appearance of betrayers and betrayed, the widely circulated formula "moral-political unity" has acquired a new meaning and a new significance: to help the ranks of the dishonorable hypocrites to join the army of the pure-hearted trusting and honorable people.

The flow of greetings to the informer stopped with Stalin's burial and after that it was suddenly revealed that the doctors had not been recruited by the Jewish espionage organization "Joint" named in the article and that there had been no monstrous and vile directives.

The doctors were freed. Lidia Feodosev was quite by accident run over by a car. Even though an informer can be eliminated forever, history cannot be.

It was some time before we were saved from the rats inside the camps. They continued their work not just one year and not just two years after Stalin's death. Vigilance is a constant necessity. There is a story about a man who kept silent throughout his entire ten years of confinement uttering only the words necessary to daily life: dinner, elevator, mine, sleep. Ten years he lived in a solitary confinement of his own making. So that no one could rat on you about anything, the most reliable method was to make sure that you think about nothing but dinner, the mine, sleep.

In the camp near Moscow where we slept on the nice double-decker bunks, the places were renumbered and each new arrival occupied the place assigned to him by the godfather. Was he dispersing his rats in a checkerboard or in a quadrilateral fashion? There the camp was small, but in Rechlag—more than a hundred times bigger—they were not so successful at this.

The rats were the army corp of the godfather. On his orders on the eve of the revolutionary holidays they arrested—if this is the proper word to use when referring to a person already in a camp—everyone whose name the godfather had marked with his pencil. The godfather was only following orders. On the outside too the highest number of arrests took place at the end of April and at the beginning of November. I was in Butyrka on the eve of May Day in 1950 with Lieutenant Ramensky, and he confirmed my hunch. Throughout the pre-May Day nights there was increased activity in the corridor; the line to the can was more strictly watched (there were more people), two more lodgers appeared in our cell, and the neighboring cells also became more crowded. We would easily tell this from the clanking of the bowls and the tramping of feet.

During the days celebrating the revolution, security was stepped up everywhere. In the top-secret sharashka an extraordinary clean-up was organized to even remove the tins of machine oil from the workbenches—it was flammable! The stupider the orders from on high, the more somber the faces down below.

Stalin thought it was necessary to intensify vigilance precisely around the time of holidays. The masses came out into Red Square and they might shoot at him. Stalin was not distin-

guished by personal bravery; this was a well-known fact. He traveled in a special train—a whole train!—of identical cars so that those trying to assassinate him would not know which car to shoot at. His train was preceded by a freight train so that any explosive would blow up its engineer. In Kislovodsk, through which his train passed, the entire region adjacent to the station was cordoned off for several hours before his arrival with no one allowed in or out until the train passed. All the inhabitants of Kislovodsk knew what was going on. Stalin never traveled by plane. The Politburo passed a special resolution *forbidding* him from flying—the only case in which they forbade him from doing anything. He hid his cowardice behind a resolution.

Stalin was terrified by the columns of people on May Day but who was our godfather afraid of? No columns of ZKS [political prisoners] passed before any tribunal shouting “Hurrah” to the all-seeing and all-hearing godfather. He was simply showing off his vigilance to impress the officials.

There was no more depressing a day in the camp than a holiday. People had a good night’s sleep. The weather was bad, as usual in Vorkuta in May and November, and the barracks were packed with people; almost everyone had the day off. The noise was incredible, with the buzzing of conversation and the cursing from hundreds of throats.

The only table had been expropriated by the domino players, two groups of them, who cried back and forth to one another “Double six!” An argument erupted in one corner and it soon

turned into a fight. Since everyone was within spitting distance of their neighbor, people talked with their friends while sprawled on their cots and shouting at the top of their lungs. Therefore, each person’s neighbor had to shout in order to be heard. In the end, everyone was shouting.

You lie on the top bunk and try to read. What a place! You can hardly wait for the exciting moment when the convoy will escort you to your valorous work.

From wood-hauler, I was moved into the pit. There is no one in the tunnel. I am alone. The coal will clatter into the cart. I will fill it up, push my back against it to move it along, using all the strength I can muster to move it away; and then edge the next cart forward. Today, the lads in the pit seem to be putting the pressure on; we will fulfill the shift’s quota the officials assigned us. The boss will get a bonus and we will get what they figure we have coming to us. To each his own.

[Next Month: “*To Each His Own*” (continued)]

Notes

1. A system of institutes for workers set up in 1919 and which existed until 1940 in the USSR for the preparation for higher learning of youth who never attended secondary school.

2. Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893-1937) was an outstanding commander in the civil war following the revolution. He and a group of Red Army generals were condemned in secret trial, June 1937, and executed.

Letter from London

Her Maggiesty’s Demise

At least, the War of the Tory Succession provided us with comic relief to the ominously brewing War of the Gulf. It kept the bookies and gamblers happy. Will there be a challenge to Her Maggiesty? What are the odds on Geoffrey Howe? On Michael Heseltine? Then Round Two, with Maggie in till the last moment, the “Gray Men” intervening and the sudden switch. Three candidates to bet on now! Margaret Thatcher’s resignation had enabled the other two, who had nominated her in the first round, to enter the second without disloyalty to her and to provide the party (and Mrs. T.) with a more acceptable choice than Heseltine.

Why did she give up? There was a lot more at stake than her dictatorial personal style, and, according to some, the main issue was Britain’s involvement in Europe. The Tories have not yet achieved their project of breaking the working class. Greater involvement in the European Community would result in increased unemployment and a continuation of the high mortgage rate. The government had already put one foot in when it subscribed to the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM); but Thatcher was not keen on Europe and it seems that her successor, John Major, was the closest to her policy of the three candidates. So it’s doubtful if a significant change of policy was involved.

Individually and collectively, members of the Conservative Party want to win their seats in the next election. It has to take place before mid-1992. Before the Thatcher demise, the polls had been showing the Labor Party well in the lead. Europe was not a high priority issue for the British public though. By comparison, the revolt

against the poll tax (community charge) had resulted earlier in the year in the greatest demonstration on record and has since been transmuted into a colossal refusal to pay. The poll tax was a strategy for hamstringing the Labor-dominated councils; it would force cuts in services and undermine the credibility of Labor councils, especially those that most needed funds for services for low-income residents, and whose residents could least afford to pay the flat rate (i.e., the same as a millionaire). It was preeminently Maggie’s strategy, and one on which she was absolutely intransigent. Even though the Labor Party did not take the lead in the poll tax fight, it became a major cause of the Tories’ poor showing in the polls.

When Heseltine appeared as challenger in Round One, he immediately put reform of the poll tax high on his list of priorities. Hurd and Major felt obliged to criticize the poll tax though they had supported it previously.

There is no question that the mass movement against the poll tax played a major part in the defeat of Thatcher. However, the defeat of Thatcher is not enough. In fact, before she resigned, it seemed quite likely, if not a cinch, that the Labor Party would win the next general election; but now the situation has acquired an apparent flexibility, so that the Tories have caught up with Labor in the polls—at least temporarily.

Has overthrowing Thatcher and getting someone less unpopular made it more difficult for Labor to win? There are several things to keep in mind.

1) It seems highly unlikely that anything will be done about the poll tax before the next election.

2) In general, Major’s policy will not be much different from Thatcher’s.

3) Putting off the election is not likely to help the Tories; the effects of the ERM will be felt increasingly.

4) The U.K. is entering a period of recession. There is no likelihood of a rapid recovery from inflation, unemployment, declining investment and production, and the adverse balance of trade.

On the other hand:

1) Because the Labor Party has not led the revolt against the poll tax, all it has to offer is a *promise* of change—not much better than the Tories.

2) Kinnock is seen by most TV viewers as a wimp. He has a lower public rating than Major.

3) Appalling as it may seem, Thatcher managed to use the Malvinas (Falklands) war to overcome a loss of confidence and get reelected. Unless the situation in the gulf is rapidly resolved, the same thing may happen again. The Labor Party is badly compromised because of its support for the UN resolutions, which amounts to support for the U.S. drive for dominance in the Middle East.

Meanwhile the Tories continue with their stand-up comic act. What do you suppose is their latest privatization?

“Embattled government ministers faced with record numbers of letters protesting over the poll tax have sold off the drafting of their replies to a private company, a Whitehall investigation reveals.” (*The Guardian*)

Eileen Gersh
London

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