



Reprinted from *La Gauche*

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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.

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The Tragedy of Kurdistan The Devastation of Iraq

by Hatice F. and Tom Barrett

Euan Baird, the chairman and chief executive officer of Schlumberger, Ltd., one of the world's largest oilfield services corporations, writes in his quarterly report to shareholders: "The aftermath of such a stunning military victory [in the gulf war] is, predictably, a letdown intensified by the realization that it probably created more problems for the region than it solved." As reports from medical teams and relief agencies filter back to the United States from Iraqi-held Kurdistan, from Baghdad, and from Iraq's U.S.-occupied southern provinces, it is becoming clear how much of an understatement Baird's remark is. It is especially significant coming from an oil-industry executive.

In what may be the greatest historical irony of the twentieth century, those who are suffering the most in the aftermath of the gulf war are those in Iraq who have been in opposition to Saddam Hussein. A war to "kick Saddam's butt" has ended with Saddam still in power. The attempt by opposition forces—both Kurdish and Arab—to overthrow Saddam was defeated when the U.S. and its allies made sure that they were denied any assistance or diplomatic recognition. The U.S. government, which did not hesitate to depose the governments of Grenada and Panama, which supplied arms to the terrorist contra forces of Nicaragua, and which dispatched the marines to Lebanon in alliance with openly fascist forces, now piously refuses to intervene in Iraq's "internal affairs." After encouraging the people of Iraq to rise up against Saddam Hussein, it is clear that Bush only wants him replaced with a "Saddam Hassan," that is, a twin.

As has been the case since the gulf crisis began, even the slightest examination of the facts reveals the thorough dishonesty of President Bush and of the entire administration—and of most of Congress as well. Bush claimed that Saddam was another "Hitler." If so, why did Bush deny any support to the opposition forces? Bush excoriated Saddam for "using poison gas on his own people"—that is, the people of Kurdistan, who do not accept the "honor" of being Saddam Hussein's "own people." Yet, when the Kurds rose in revolt against Saddam's dictatorship, the U.S. stood by as Saddam's loyal regiments slaughtered them and drove the civilian population into the mountains, where children are

dying of exposure and starvation by the hundreds. And, in a statement which will surely come back to haunt him, Bush claimed that, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all" and "I see no antiwar movement." If that is true, then Bush's decision to stand aside while Saddam Hussein crushed the uprising is his alone. There is no one, not Congress, not the invisible antiwar movement, not the USSR and China, whom he can blame for the consequences of his policies. *The Kurdish people's blood is on George Bush's hands as much as it is on Saddam Hussein's.* In his desire to "kick the Vietnam syndrome" Bush may very well have created a syndrome far worse for him and his class. Instead of a reluctance to support the use of force because of a defeat, he may well have en-

gendered reluctance to support the use of force because of a *victory*—a victory which strengthened dictatorship and increased the suffering of the peoples of the region. As the American people line the parade routes to welcome their family members back from the war, in the back of their minds will be a nagging question: What did this war really accomplish?

When the War Ended

When the United States and its allies ceased military action on February 27, they had won a decisive victory over the demoralized Iraqi forces. Tens of thousands of Iraqis, both civilians and soldiers, had been killed by aerial bombardment, and the Iraqi troops in Kuwait and southern Iraq were stranded, cut off from supplies and reinforcements. Thousands surrendered without a fight, and thousands of others, angry at being

betrayed by the Baghdad government, turned their weapons against Saddam Hussein in open rebellion. Simultaneously the people in Iraqi-occupied Kurdistan, inspired by "Hajji Bush" (a cynical expression to indicate U.S. presence in the Islamic holy lands), were overjoyed by Saddam's defeat and rose against the Baathist dictatorship. They thought that they would receive weapons and support from Saddam's enemy; they were to be disappointed.

In the southern provinces, rebellious troops were joined by the predominantly Shiite population, which has always opposed the rule of the Sunnite Saddam Hussein and his clique.



They were able to capture most of Basra and the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. Kurdish nationalists took control of the northern city of Kirkuk, an important oil-refining center.

The Kurdish Nationalist Struggle

After their betrayal by Washington it is not surprising that the Kurdish leaders signed an agreement with Saddam Hussein on April 25. The agreement provides for limited autonomy in the Kurdish region of Iraq, and of course the Kurds are expected to end their armed resistance against Iraqi occupation. Such an inadequate substitute for true national self-determination may very well be better than the continuing suffering of the Kurdish civilians in the mountain camps along the Turkish border. It remains to be seen, however, if the Iraqi dictatorship will live up to its part of the bargain. The Kurdish people are dubious, with some justification.

The struggle of the Kurdish people, of course, did not start with the U.S. military presence in the region. Divided among four states—Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey (plus additional numbers in the Soviet Union)—Kurds for decades have refused to accept the identities and the political rules imposed upon them. The history of the Kurds, another of the stateless people of the Middle East, is a record of struggles for self-determination, freedom, and independence, as well as of betrayals, deportations, and bloody repressions. Since the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, the Kurdish people's fate has been placed on the negotiating tables of imperial and regional powers, whose interests rarely coincided with the Kurds'. The imperialist powers' rhetoric in favor of Kurdish self-determination was sharply contradicted by their actions. Since the 1920s history has witnessed numerous uprisings by the Kurdish people.

The largest and most populous part of Kurdistan remained within the borders of Turkey. Following the victory of the Independence War of both Turks and Kurds against the imperialist invasion of Anatolia, the defensive nationalism of the rulers of the new Turkish republic was replaced by an offensive nationalism against the Kurds. Kurdish revolts and peasant uprisings broke out between 1925 and 1940. Violently repressed, the Kurds were forced to live under constant national, cultural, political, and physical repression. Towards the end of the 1970s and through the 1980s, Kurdish popular resistance in Turkey gained Marxist tones. In the late 1980s alongside the guerrilla tactics of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey, the Kurdish population gained increasing political and national consciousness as the killings, harassment, and the abuse of the Kurds by the Turkish army created rage within the population.

Various Kurdish nationalist groups in Iraq fought a war of liberation between 1961–1979. Even though the Kurds supported the 1958 July "Revolution," in which a bourgeois-nationalist replaced the British-imposed Hashemite monarchy, the military dictatorship quickly forgot about Kurdish aspirations. Furthermore, the class struggle against the rule of tribal leaders, combined with the national question as a whole, led to splits among the major Kurdish political groups. The shah of Iran succeeded in manipulating these conflicts in his fight against the Baath regime in Iraq. The cooperation between Mustafa Barzani, who is the father of Kurdish Democratic

Party (KDP) leader Massoud Barzani, and the Tehran government caused irreparable hostilities among Kurds of different regions. The "shelter" provided by the shah to Kurdish fighters was effectively used to control the Kurdish movement both in Iran and in Iraq. The same shah, while supporting the Iraqi Kurds, brutally repressed the Iranian Kurds.

The Kurdish revolutionary forces managed after a long period of struggle to reach an agreement with the Baathist regime for the creation of an Autonomous Kurdistan. The project for an Autonomous Kurdistan was never realized and instead a Baathist puppet regional administration was imposed by the Iraqi government. The Baath party offered Barzani a position in the Progressive National Front, but he refused it on the basis of the assimilation program, which was under way. In the meantime Iraq was receiving arms from the USSR which, in 1963, was referring to Baathist deportation policies vis-à-vis the Kurds as "Hitlerian" and keeping close contact with the KDP as well.

A number of the Pesh Merga (in the Kurdish language "those who face death") groups continued guerrilla warfare, and Barzani Senior's KDP continued to consider the Tehran government as its ally. The struggle against the Iraqi regime during 1974–75 was suppressed the moment Iran and Iraq reached an agreement over their border disputes. The whole operation was designed by Kissinger's large-scale plan for the Middle East at the Kurdish people's expense. The agreement, known as the Algiers Treaty, meant an unconditional surrender of the Iraqi Kurdish movement. This defeat had long-term effects on the Kurdish struggle for self-determination.

During the Iran-Iraq war new Kurdish organizations emerged along the border between the two countries. The "friendly" relationships between the Iranian revolution and some Kurdish groups was soon supplanted by a series of negotiations between Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani and Saddam Hussein. These negotiations failed because of the intolerant attitudes of the one-party regime in Iraq. From that moment on, major Kurdish organizations sought to establish the unity of the movement. The insistence of the Kurds on having their own control over the oil lands in Iraqi Kurdistan, together with other demands for self-determination, continued to be the cause of long-lasting guerrilla warfare. After the war, Saddam's decision in 1988 to transfer the Kurdish population from the strategic and frontier regions culminated in one of the cruelest massacres in human history when 5,000 Kurdish children, women, and elderly people were killed by chemical weapons and hundreds of thousands had to seek shelter in Turkey, where they were kept in camps in miserable conditions.

Kurdish Alliance

Since the invasion of Kuwait, the representatives of the Kurdish organizations have created an alliance among the dispersed forces. This alliance consists of all Kurdish organizations from Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The Kurdistan Front, formed by the five major Kurdish opposition groups, has been leading the alliance. These five groups are the Iraq-based Kurdish Democratic Party of Barzani, the Kurdish Patriotic Union of Talabani, the Kurdistan Socialist Party, the Kurdistan Democratic People's Party, and the Kurdistan section of the

Iraqi Communist Party. The Iraqi opposition, including Shiite groups and other Arabs, agreed on a platform in December 1990. This platform demands democracy in Iraq, and a new constitution guaranteeing minority and religious rights. It denounced the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait from the very beginning, whereas the Kurdish alliance had a very cautious attitude about taking sides in the war. Some Kurdish groups developed an attitude of attempting to take advantage of the U.S. presence in the region; many others, based on the Kurdish struggle's past experiences, knew that their demands would never coincide with U.S. interests in the Middle East.

During and after the gulf war the traditional "one card in the game" attitude vis-à-vis the Kurds continued. Turkish president Turgut Özal declared himself as "the father of the Kurds," while the hands of the Turkish security forces were still covered with the blood of tortured, exiled, and murdered Kurds. Özal's intentions vary from his need to neutralize the popular Kurdish movements in the region to the old Turkish claims of extending the republic's borders to Mosul and Kirkuk. Apparently, the Bush administration is not sympathetic to any border changes in the region, but the control of the Kurdish population, which has been a potential and actual threat to a number of U.S. allies, is a major task which the U.S. government is undertaking at the moment. The U.S. media already has even started saying that basically Saddam had not done anything harmful against the Kurds. After decades of resisting oppression at all levels, now the Kurds are coming into confrontation with the army of a superpower. Since the U.S. government is the beloved ally of Turkey, the recent partner of Syria, and the long-time collaborator with Saddam Hussein, the Kurdish people do not expect it to treat them as anything more than a pawn in its imperialist chess game.

The question is not whether certain Kurdish groups have had any "deal" with the Bush administration. It was the Kurdish people themselves who heard the "get rid of Saddam" rhetoric coming from the CIA radio broadcasts and took action to bring about Saddam Hussein's overthrow. After all, the Kurds did not discover Saddam's cruelty in August 1990. They had known it for decades, even when his rule was directly supported by the United States. Revolts appear to have broken out in the Kurdish cities spontaneously upon news of the Iraqi army's defeat. Even the Pesh Merga guerrillas were not prepared and were caught by surprise. A number of observers have indicated that the Pesh Merga arrived in the cities well after the uprisings began. The speed and extent of the popular resistance was astonishing for all sides of the conflict, including the Kurdish leaders who were meeting in Beirut at the time the uprising began.

What deceived the Kurdish people was not necessarily a "promise," but Bush's call for the end of Saddam. At the moment the rumors of a "promise" only help to muddy the waters and create further confusion while the U.S. troops establish their presence. To what extent the grassroots Kurdish movements, both in Turkey and Iraq, actually follow the Front's leadership is open to some question. Yet, the restlessness of the Kurdish population creates an enormous threat for the regional powers. The Kurdish people's national memory has recorded as many betrayals as promises. Rumors of U.S. "promises" to the Kurds, coupled with the "relief program," so far only help to legitimize U.S. military intervention.

The Uprising in the Southern Provinces

After the crushing defeat inflicted on the Iraqi forces in Kuwait and southern Iraq, thousands of conscript soldiers, who justifiably felt betrayed by their own government, rose up in revolt. Their anti-Saddam sentiments found an echo among the population of Iraq's southeastern region. Fifty-five percent of Iraq's population adheres to the Shieh sect of Islam, and most of the Shiite population is concentrated in the southeastern region. Saddam Hussein and his associates in the leadership of the Baath party are Sunnites (in fact, most of them are Saddam's close friends and relatives from Tikrit, a city just to the north of Baghdad). The Shiite clergy has for centuries worked to sustain the resentments between Sunnites and Shiites going back to the seventh century; however, the exclusion of the Shiite majority from any role in Iraq's government is a legitimate and widely felt grievance and most certainly has much more to do with Shiite opposition to the Saddam Hussein regime than does the dispute over who was the rightful successor to the prophet Muhammad. There continues as well to be Shiite resentment stemming from the war with Iran, in which Shiite Iraqis were conscripted to fight against a people with whom they had no quarrel, and with whose revolution many were sympathetic.

There are three organizations which claim to lead the Shiite people in Iraq: the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution and the Higher Islamic Council, both of which are Iranian-influenced, and the Dawa Party, which has carried out violent actions in a number of countries. (Ironically, among Oliver North's activities in the Middle East, besides selling weapons to Iran, was an attempt to gain the release of Dawa members held prisoner in—of all places—Kuwait.) The Dawa and the Higher Islamic Council are participants in the Iraqi Salvation movement, a coalition which also involves the Kurdistan Front, pro-Syrian Baathists, and the Iraqi Communist Party. As in Kurdistan, however, it is doubtful that any of these organizations played a significant role in leading the actual uprising. The revolt was led and carried out by the soldiers and civilian population themselves, with little or no influence from outside.

Because none of the traditional leaderships either in the Kurdish north or the Shiite south was in control of the revolt, there has been no way for the United States or any Middle Eastern state to insure a friendly government should Saddam Hussein be overthrown. The Syrian, Saudi, and Iranian governments have throughout the postwar period attempted to gain control of the anti-Saddam movement, but their attempts have only widened the gap between the leaderships and the masses. U.S. support for Saddam throughout the 1980s has created distrust of Washington among Iraqis who are interested in his overthrow. It is for this reason that the U.S. and the states in the region cynically allowed the "Hitler" Saddam Hussein to crush the opposition and reconsolidate his power.

Saddam Hussein's Counterattack

Within a week of the U.S. victory, Saddam moved decisively to crush the revolt. On March 6 he named his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, to the post of interior minister, with responsibility for internal security. Al-Majid is considered to be the man responsible for the poison-gas attack on the Kurdish city of Halabjeh

in 1988. Within a day, loyalist forces recaptured Basra and moved on the Shiite centers of Najaf and Karbala.

At the same time that al-Majid took over as interior minister, the Iraqi government expelled all foreign journalists, cutting off the flow of information on what was actually happening inside Iraq. However, refugees arriving in the U.S.-occupied area near the Kuwaiti border report hundreds of corpses rotting in the streets of Najaf and Karbala.

Once the southern revolt had been defeated, Saddam was able to turn his attention to Kurdistan. There was never any doubt about the outcome, since the United States had made the decision that there would be no diplomatic recognition, no military aid, no help whatsoever to the popular forces attempting to overthrow the Baathist dictatorship. Bush hypocritically refused to intervene in "Iraq's internal affairs," leading one to question why for over a decade the U.S. government was willing to intervene with money and weapons in Nicaragua, in Angola, and in Afghanistan. Surely giving money and weapons to outright terrorists in those countries was interference in their "internal affairs"; however, there was never any question that the Nicaraguan contras, the Angolan UNITA, or the Afghan Mujahedeen actually represented anything other than the interests of the native bourgeoisie and, by extension, imperialism. In Kurdistan and southern Iraq the oppressed working people, peasants, and soldiers were taking matters into their own hands. To Bush and his class, Saddam Hussein is far more preferable.

Kurdish Self-Determination: the Only Viable Solution

At the moment, the leaders of the Iraq-based Kurdish organizations are seeking a "realistic" solution and apparently shaking hands and exchanging hugs with Saddam. Obviously, the policy of reconstructing the Kurdistan Autonomous Region in Iraq, based on the March 11, 1970, agreement, seems to be the resolution supported by the Pesh Merga groups and the Kurdish people. To what extent this short-term "realpolitik" may lead to true self-determination is a very controversial question, which will determine the outcome of centuries of misery in the Kurdish lands.

What is crucial at the present time is to be able to move beyond "humanitarian" policies that only serve to justify the U.S. presence in Kurdistan and to support the Kurdish people's right to self-determination. The humanitarianism as practiced by the U.S. and its allies is far removed from the *political* solutions which the Kurds demand. The question is this: Will the Kurds ever be able to control the rich resources of their homeland? Will they be able to speak, to write, and to get an education at all levels in their own language? Will they ever be able to develop their own culture, free from the assimilation threats of Turkish, Arab, and Persian governments? Will they have the right to unite among themselves as one nation and enjoy their right to choose their own political representatives? What Kurds need is not the charity of big powers but their own democratic and political rights as a nation.

The Effects of the U.S. Bombing

Medical teams and relief workers who have gone to Iraq since the end of the war report a society which has been completely shattered. The U.S. military boasted about the accuracy of its weapons and the limitations on "collateral damage" (a euphemism for the killing of civilians); however, the so-called military targets which the air force is so proud of destroying were the things which are necessary in twentieth-century life: electric power, telephone communications, water purification, medical technology, and many other things. Their destruction has led to continuing human suffering and a death toll which will rise for months. Cholera and typhoid have already broken out, and as the weather becomes warmer, the bacteria which cause these diseases will grow rapidly, with antibiotics in short supply. Long after the fireworks displays above Baghdad are forgotten, the people of the Iraqi cities will continue to pay the price for a war which they did not choose.

In the face of widespread shortages of food and fuel, the Iraqi government has made sure that the military's needs are met first. This has brought justifiable condemnation from the Western media and resentment within the Iraqi population. But what does one expect? Did anyone really think that Saddam Hussein would suddenly turn into a democratic leader with genuine concerns for the Iraqi population? On the one hand George Bush (who repeatedly claimed to have "no quarrel" with the Iraqi civilian population) insists that there will be no assistance in rebuilding Iraq as long as Saddam is president; on the other, the U.S. has assured the defeat—and slaughter—of those who would replace military dictatorship with popular democracy. The result is that Saddam Hussein, his Tikriti cronies, and the Republican Guards and other loyal military units are suffering the least of anyone in Iraq. They have food; they have gasoline; if they cannot get proper medical care in Iraq, they can fly to Switzerland (where Saddam's family was sent). This is the meaning of the "New World Order" to the working people of the Middle East. Friendship with the United States is of great benefit to their kings and presidents, but it brings only added hardship to the people themselves.

The gulf war and its aftermath have demonstrated once again the immense gulf between the self-styled popular leaderships and the people themselves. Those bourgeois nationalists who are in power and those who would like to be in power continue to play by the imperialists' rules—diplomatic horse-trading, conventional warfare, and parliamentary shell-games—while the working people and peasants who have consistently trusted them go unrepresented. The Kurdish and Arab masses have proven that they can fight effectively for their own liberation: when a leadership emerges from within their struggle and decisively supplants those forces which have proved their bankruptcy, the people will be able to create their own "New World Order" based on self-determination and freedom. □

May 4, 1991

Workers' Protests in USSR

As most of the striking coal miners continued to hang tough into the third month of their strike, workers' protests spread swiftly through the Soviet Union in the wake of the central government's drastic price rises of April 2. Although in Byelorussia a general political strike called for April 23 was not as large as the earlier walkouts on April 4 and April 10–11, the strike movement in that republic continued for several days, particularly in the capital, Minsk, and a rail center, Orsha. Other important industrial towns in Byelorussia, such as Vitebsk, Soligorsk, Zhodino, and Rechitsa, were also affected. At the April 23 rally in Minsk, a worker named Vladimir Tsitron told the crowd: "There are no good tsars. There were no good tsars. There will be no good tsars. We must look out for ourselves."

Reports of strikes in other areas—Kiev, the Urals, Norilsk, dockworkers in Klaipeda, Lithuania—continued to filter out, but the Western capitalist press and the official media controlled by the Soviet bureaucracy resembled one another in the grudging and minimal coverage given to these actions. The bosses in both "social systems," both the capitalists and the bureaucrats, considered striking workers a threat to economies in a downturn. In the USA the Congress banned a rail strike while repeated bans on strikes came down in the USSR.

Perhaps the most glaring capitalist bias against in-depth coverage of Soviet workers' protests became evident in relation to Friday, April 26. The biggest sign of worker opposition to Gorbachev's economic policies came on April 26, although the U.S. capitalist press paid it scant attention. On April 25, for example, Serge Schmemmann of the *New York Times* wrote a story on Gorbachev's offer to resign as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee (a ploy previously used by Stalin several times in the 1920s, and by Gorbachev himself last year) and the predictable rejection of that offer by the Central Committee plenum. The focus of Schmemmann's article was entirely on the maneuvering among the top bureaucrats. Toward the end of the article mention was made of the April 24 joint statement by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and the heads of eight Soviet republics, calling for an end to strikes and political demonstrations (more about that statement below). Almost as an afterthought Schmemmann's last paragraph stated: "But the limits to any Government authority were quickly demonstrated when coal miners refused to heed the call [to end the strike], and when *independent labor unions announced they were going ahead with plans for nationwide warning labor actions on Friday* [April 26; emphasis added]."

There were no details about these "independent labor unions," the number of workers they represent, how they got started, who their leaders are, or how they were able to coordinate a nationwide warning strike. Apparently that wasn't considered newsworthy by the *Times*. In contrast, on the next

day, this august journal of the world's financial capital featured a detailed article about a different kind of organization in the Soviet Union—a newly formed club for young millionaires. And just below the millionaires' club story, the *Times* ran a headline: "Gorbachev Stand Is Strict on Secession and Strikes." The focus was entirely on Gorbachev's "hard line against strikes and secession." Mentioned in passing was a seemingly insignificant fact, one not at all worth elaborating on. It was this: "50 million workers in the giant Russian federation staged brief walkouts or protests against poor living conditions and steep price increases."

Fifty million! Isn't that worth more than a single mention? Some background information? At least a few paragraphs? After all, at the height of the Polish workers' upsurge in 1980–81 it was considered fairly important when *ten million workers*, virtually the entire

working class of Poland, joined Solidarity. The Soviet working class is probably the largest organized labor force in any industrialized country in the world today. If Poland's Solidarnosc shook the world, what would a Soviet Solidarnosc do? No wonder the owners of the U.S. "free market" press aren't eager to cover this story.

If the April 26 actions are any indication, the Soviet workers are taking the road of independent unionism, just as the Polish workers did. Yet they are fully aware of the significance of the workers' upsurge. Commenting on the Byelorussian strikes in the Sunday *New York Times*, April 14, Serge Schmemmann rather pathetically tried to suggest that the workers were standing Marx's ideas on their head, that they were striking against "communism" and in support of capitalism. In fact, the workers are defending their own interests against the privileged bureaucratic caste disguised as "the Communist Party" and against having to shoulder the burden of "transition to a market economy." As Fred Weir of the radical U.S. paper the *Guardian* pointed out in the May 1 issue (and as is evident from the articles by David Seppo, reprinted in this issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, on the growing self-management movement among Soviet workers), "it was primarily economics that drove Byelorussian workers into the street, and their demands on this front are consistently—even severely—*egalitarian* [emphasis added]." The tremendous power and portent of the Soviet workers' mobilization was unintentionally voiced by Schmemmann in a quotation from a textbook about Marx (which Schmemmann apparently thought was disproving Marxism).

Marx, it said, "revealed in the working class a social force that in its historical development is capable through revolutionary means of bringing about the annihilation of capitalism and all [!] forms of exploitation of man by man." One form of exploitation has resulted from the bureaucratic usurpation of political and economic power after the workers' revolution of

Soviet Workers Protest Gorbachev Policies

by George Saunders

October 1917, and Soviet workers are indeed showing they are the social force that can end that usurpation.

The *Boston Globe* was just as tight-lipped as the *New York Times* about the April 26 actions. The regular news stories from the Soviet Union, where the *Globe* has a fulltime reporter, said nothing whatsoever about the nationwide warning strike. But these capitalist news managers were well aware of the event. They simply preferred that American workers not know too much about it, because it might give them ideas. Besides, they want their readers to think Soviet workers favor capitalism. Instead of news coverage, the *Globe* editors hid a reference to the April 26 actions in the last paragraph of an April 27 editorial focusing on "Gorbachev's defensive gambits":

"Meanwhile, more than 50 million workers conducted strikes or job actions in the Russian republic. They were reminding Gorbachev that not even a Mozart can produce music from a broken instrument."

Actually the workers hardly consider Gorbachev a "Mozart" and they weren't discussing music. Their demands (not reported in the *Globe* or *Times*) can be gathered from the following report by Fred Weir in the *Guardian*:

The Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, representing some 6 million workers, is planning a massive May Day rally in Red Square. The slogans are likely to make Gorbachev and Yeltsin squirm in unison. "No to [the] free growth of prices," "No to the speculators who rob Moscow working people," and "Immediate and full indexation of wages" [i.e., adjusting wages to rise with the cost of living].

At the time of writing, it was unclear whether the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions is actually an independent formation or just the local branch of the official unions, which changed their name to General Confederation of Trade Unions of the USSR (the VKP—or *Vseobshchaya Konfederatsia Profsoyuzov*) at their Nineteenth Congress in October 1990. They were trying to change the image of conservatism and stagnation connected with the old name, All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (*Vsesoyuzny Tsentralny Sovet Professionalnykh Soyuzov*). The nationwide actions on April 26 may also have been a token gesture by the official unions to try to look more militant. But what is significant is how widespread and powerful an opposition among workers to Gorbachev's policies was revealed by the April 26 actions.

May Day Demonstrations

Certainly on May Day, as it turned out, there was no massive demonstration in Moscow. The authorities closed off the center of Moscow and allowed only those with passes to attend the rally on Red Square, sponsored by the official unions and estimated at 50,000. Even there, the main message was discontent over the central government's economic policies. "No to Unemployment" was a slogan.

The striking coal miners in the Kuzbass region of Siberia used May Day for their own mass rally and show of strength. They invited Yeltsin to address them, but many miners questioned him sharply on why he had signed a joint statement with Gorbachev calling for an end to strikes and rallies. Yeltsin used the occasion to build support for his candidacy for president of the Russian Federative Republic in the upcoming elections June 12 (where he will be opposed by former Soviet premier

Ryzhkov). Yeltsin did not ask the miners to end their strike; he repeatedly said that it was solely their decision. But he claimed that the Kuzbass mines were being turned over from a central government ministry to the government of the Russian republic, that miners would have more autonomy in running the mines and could keep a part of the earnings for themselves.

Yeltsin is known for his responsiveness to the mood of his audience, for saying things off the cuff that reflect not his own considered position, but his sense of what his listeners want to hear. This may have been the case when he declared that the miners' movement was the "embryo" or "prototype" of future government power in the USSR.

On April 27 the *Boston Globe* reported that "thousands of police and unarmed Interior Ministry [MVD] troops closed off the center of Moscow surrounding the Kremlin, in preparation for the May Day parade on Wednesday and possible [!] antigovernment demonstrations." Not a word about the Moscow unions, or their strength, or their definite (not "possible") demonstration plans, or their demands.

Pressed by the workers from one side, the Soviet bureaucracy was under pressure from international capital on the other. This became evident during April. On April 21, during Gorbachev's visit to Japan, an official of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) declared that no funds would be forthcoming for the USSR until it fixed up its "rotten economy" (read: "stop the strikes") and reached "political agreement on a union treaty." (Thus international capital expressed support for the Gorbachev central government's "union treaty.")

At the same time, Japan's capitalist class essentially turned a deaf ear to Gorbachev's plea, during his visit to that country, for credits, loans, and investments to help the Soviet Union make a "transition to a market economy." Their reasons? They felt there was too much instability—that is, the working class needed to be bridled. "Mr. Gorbachev pleaded for money to restore political stability and overcome resistance to a true market economy," reported David E. Sanger from Kyoto in the *New York Times* April 22. But the Japanese "business leaders" he was addressing told him no. "Those changes had to come first," they said. In other words, the capitalists want the bureaucratic government to restore order and overcome resistance to market reforms. After all, how could profits or the repayment of loans be assured if workers wouldn't agree to be exploited on whatever terms were set by an agreement between the bureaucracy and the big firms of the capitalist countries?

Gorbachev and Yeltsin Meet

On April 24, a few days after the IMF official's pronouncement and the meeting with Japanese "business leaders," a surprise statement was issued after a secret meeting between Gorbachev and the presidents of nine Soviet republics, including Yeltsin. (The proindependence leaders of the three Baltic republics and of Moldavia, Georgia, and Armenia were not included.) Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and the other eight top bureaucrats appealed specifically to "the miners and all workers to call off strikes [inspired by] economic and political motives and to catch up on production shortfalls quickly."

(Continued on page 23)

Urgent Appeal for International Solidarity by the Ford Workers in Cuautitlan, Mexico

After four years of intermittent strikes and mass demonstrations against brutal repression and murder at the Mexican facilities of the Ford Motor Company (see Bulletin in Defense of Marxism #76, July-August 1990), the workers at the Ford plant in Cuautitlan have finally won a favorable court decision. This announcement and appeal for support was received here May 9. Messages should be sent to all bureaus and agencies of the Mexican government as listed. This is a long struggle and the immediate goal is to establish close ties between workers in Mexico and the U.S. The AFL-CIO, and the United Auto Workers especially, have much at stake in the outcome of this struggle for independent unionism in Mexico.

In a strong appeal for solidarity Labor Notes, upon receipt of this news from Mexico, advised its extensive network of readers and supporters: "With the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement well in the works, this is a matter of immediate interest to all North American working people. The CTM is the only labor federation in North America that supports the free trade agreement. If the Ford workers at the Cuautitlan plant are able to gain their own democratic union, they will open the possibility of working with other non-CTM unions in the Mexican auto industry to establish genuine collective bargaining."

To all our readers whose unions have not yet acted in support of this long struggle in Mexico we urge prompt consideration. Individual expressions of support are also helpful. It is never too late to join the battle for union solidarity on the North American continent.

- Victory in the legal appeal opens the door to an imminent vote recount regarding the workers' representation.
- International observers will be vital in assuring justice for the Ford workers.

One year after the January 8, 1990, armed assault against the Ford workers, the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board implemented a new maneuver on January 11, 1991, by indefinitely suspending the vote recount that would allow the Ford workers to put an end to the CTM's gangster-style control over their local union and affiliate to a different union central. Two weeks later the workers appealed this decision before a superior labor court. On May 2, this court ruled in favor of the appeal, recognizing that the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board had violated the workers' rights and ruling that the federal board must go ahead with the recount. The only thing left now is the realization of the recount which the workers have fought for, and this could take place any moment.

However, there is a real danger that the labor authorities may once again give into the combined pressure of the CTM and the transnational Ford management and implement new maneuvers. One possibility is that the date of the recount could be set suddenly without sufficient notice with an aim toward taking the workers by surprise thereby facilitating fraudulent changes in the lists of workers allowed to participate in the voting. At the same time this would make it easier for the CTM to implement other favorite tactics like bringing in external supporters in an effort to intimidate plant workers and at the same time exclude non-CTM observers.

In an effort to respond to such a threat an Observer Tribunal made up of Mexican personalities is being formed with an aim toward guaranteeing the right of the workers to freely decide on the union of their choice.

International participation in this tribunal is of decisive importance. The participation of international unions and unionists, human rights organizations and other personalities could prove decisive in assuring the workers' rights are respected. As a culmination of a year-long battle that has become one of the most important union struggles in the history of Mexico, a successful recount would prove a victory for all Mexican workers as well as for those in other countries

committed to the cause of labor rights. For this reason we put forward this urgent call for action which may be required in a matter of days. We ask you to:

Redouble your solidarity efforts by making public declarations of support and by sending telegrams demanding respect for the Ford workers' rights to the following authorities:

- Minister of Labor/Secretario del Trabajo, Arsenio Farrel Periferico Sur 4271 Mexico, D.F.
- Miguel Angel Pino, Presidente de la Junta Federal de Conciliacion y Arbitraje/Chairman of the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Board Dr. Lavista y Dr. Andrade C.P. 06720 Mexico, D.F.
- Ulises Schmill, Presidente de la Suprema Corte de Justicia/Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Pino Suarez 2 Mexico, D.F.
- Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari President of the United States of Mexico Palacio Nacional Mexico, D.F.

Ask your organization to agree to form part of the International Observer Committee that will work to assure that the Ford workers' rights are respected.

Assure that your organization send observers the day of the vote recount. We will inform you of the exact date as soon as it is made known.

Should your organization decide to adopt any of the above suggestions please send copies of support statements and confirmation of your participation to the addresses and telephone numbers that appear at the bottom of this letter or to:

Corporativo Juridico
Dr. Lucio 103
Edificio Orion, A-4, Despacho 103
Colonia Doctores
Mexico, D.F.
Mexico
Telephone: 578-5133, 578-1516, Fax: 578-1599

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Solidarity versus competition

The following interview with Hector de la Cueva, adviser at the Centre for Research on Labour and Trade Union Aid (CILAS) in Mexico, was conducted by Gonzalo Molina in February 1991.

WHAT will the "Latin American Initiative Plan" (LAIP) proposed by Bush mean concretely for Latin America, and more particularly Mexico?

The United States is seeking to respond to growing world economic competition and to assert its hegemony at all levels. Europe is going forward in the constitution of a more united entity and Japan has formed a block around itself in Asia, the United States is thus trying to create another in the American continent.

The LAIP is intended to overcome the existing obstacles which would prevent the multinational companies and the US government from organizing the economy of the whole of the continent according to their needs. When the United States speaks of "free trade" agreements or of the creation of a "big market" with the Latin American countries, this has nothing to do with the accords signed in Canada; the initiative is not going to create a big market, because the relations which exist between the United States and Latin America are marked by inequality.

■ What is the real goal of the US government?

First, it wants to control the future potential market. Then, and this is essential, the US wants to be able to count on cheap labour to be able to compete with the other economic blocs; in other words, it is not about winning new markets, but primarily about being in a better position to compete economically. Finally, the United States wants to exercise a downward pressure on the standard of living and the gains of the working class in Canada and in the United States itself. The Free Trade Agreement signed between the United States and Canada has already meant unemployment for thousands of Canadian workers (15,000 redundancies are spoken of). The Canadian bourgeoisie has taken advantage of the signature of



this agreement to make attacks on the standard of living of the workers, their gains, benefits, social security and so on, which were better than those of the US workers. We are witnessing then a process of levelling down of the standard of living which, with the Free Trade Agreements, will descend from the north towards the south.

The multinationals exert blackmail against the workers; the Canadians will be forced to accept worse working conditions, otherwise — and this is where the blackmail comes in — the factories will close and go south to the United States. If the US workers do not accept lower wages, the firms will close down and move out, and transform themselves into *maquiladoras*², in northern Mexico or wherever the labour force is cheaper — the Americas initiative has a tendency to become continental.

■ If this agreement has already been turned against the interests of the workers of two of the seven most powerful countries of the western world, what will happen to the Latin American workers?

In Mexico, as elsewhere in Latin America, the signing of the free trade agreements will underpin the maintenance of a very low standard of living, for the only way a country like ours can enter into competition on the open market is through the availability of a cheap labour force. Our government thus tries to keep wages very low.

The workers of the industrialized coun-

tries will see themselves forced to accept worse working conditions, and those of Latin America will hardly be able to survive.

This deterioration is the direct consequence of the economic projects being applied in Latin America — with the multiplication of the *maquiladoras* in Mexico (in a few years, the number of workers employed there has gone from 100,000 to 500,000), where the workers have no social protection and very bad working conditions, the level of trade unionization being very weak. The Mexican workers have despite everything extracted some gains — it is necessary to fight for these to be extended to this sector.

The free trade agreements also affect the small and medium bosses. In Mexico, some industrial branches like those of toys, shoes or textiles have suffered since the beginning of the 1980s because of the changing of the law on foreign investments and the opening of our frontiers — other countries have been able to penetrate our markets. With the Free Trade Agreements this situation is going to worsen; the big multinationals and their local associates will be the main beneficiaries of it.

■ This offensive obviously takes other forms...

We are seeing the emergence of other phenomena, such as privatization on the grand scale. In Mexico, nearly 85% of nationalized enterprises have been sold or put up for sale. There is also the "national agreement on productivity", which seeks to impose norms on the trade unions to increase productivity without wage rises. The labour laws are also being reformed.

At the same time, in some countries some kinds of "social programmes" are applied which, beyond their political objectives, seek to replace rights gained and established by laws and institutions by public charity, with state expenditure supposedly being directed to the aid of the most deprived sectors. This is part of the logic of the dismantling of the *benefactor* state and its replacement by what is called in Mexico the "solidarity state" — a state which is supposed to channel its resources to those most in need. In Mexico there is already a National Programme of Solidarity and in Peru a Social Compensation Programme.

In sum, the United States is trying to put all America on the same level; equalizing of levels of productivity, work methods, and so on. Only the workers will be differentiated; the Mexican workers will still earn 11 or 12 times less than the North Americans.

■ But at exactly what stage is this process of economic integration?

In certain countries, such as Mexico, the negotiations are going forward very quickly. The objectives are well defined; in the last report of his government, Presi-

dent Salinas de Gortari defined things very clearly: "We want Mexico to be part of the 'first world', not the third world". But it is attempting to get there not through the independent development of the country, but, on the contrary, through a total and absolute subordination to US imperialism.

Mexico is trying to enter the "first world" by the same path as Puerto Rico, which is a totally dominated country. The free trade negotiations are a violation of national sovereignty. Mexico also serves as a platform to advance the LAIP in the rest of the continent. Negotiations have recently begun with the countries of Central America; Salinas has travelled in South America to encourage free trade agreements with the countries of that region.

The Mexican government paved the way for the United States, but it hopes also to become a bridge for trade between imperialism and the rest of the continent.

This "free trade" zone has nothing in common with the project of European economic unity. If it is true that in Europe there are also hegemonic temptations on the part of certain countries, the inequalities are not so marked and the countries have a similar level of development — in America this "unity" would be between some industrialized countries and others which are extremely backward, it would be subordinated to the big multinationals of the United States and Canada.

At this level, it is necessary to differentiate between the defence of the rights of workers, even those of Canada and the United States, and the appearance of chauvinist manifestations — campaigns of this type have already been seen, and they certainly do not represent an alternative. So far as Canada is concerned, we can agree with the numerous trade unions which are opposed to integration, but we are not in agreement with opposing "Canadian nationalism" to "Mexican nationalism".

■ Concretely, what should be the response of workers and trade unions to Bush's project?

Contacts, links and meetings between workers and trades unionists of different countries — notably with those of North America, with which the negotiations are most advanced — are beginning to spread; this is the way to find an alternative to respond to the process of integration. In 1990, a meeting of Mexican and Canadian trades unionists took place, ending with a common communiqué concerning the Free Trade Agreement. There has also been a meeting between US and Mexican trade unionists, with some Canadians also present.

In 1991, a Canada/US/Mexico meeting should take place; some meetings of branches or service sectors are planned to seek common solutions and above all to break the competition that the multinationals and imperialism attempt to sow

between the interests of the North American workers and those of Latin America.

The response which the workers must make can be situated at three levels. First, they must show a clear political opposition to the Bush project, for it is by its nature totally antidemocratic — in Mexico, for example, the agreement has never been submitted to the population, or to its political or social representatives; it has been negotiated by the governments, the multinationals and their local acolytes.

Then, it is necessary to underline that this process of integration subordinates the national economies to the big multinational companies. This does not mean having an autarkic position, saying that each country should go its own way, but rather preventing these agreements from blocking the possibility of an independent development of the Latin American countries.

Mexico, for example, could demand that measures of compensation are established in relation to its foreign debt or other elements which have aggravated its economic backwardness; such conditions could be imposed in all the negotiations which are undertaken with other countries.

The economic subordination imposed on Latin America vis-a-vis the United States affects its sovereignty; this could have repercussions in the political domain.

However, to the extent that this project of economic integration advances, and to the extent that the relationship of forces today does not allow its defeat, it is necessary to prepare a practical response.

The social organizations must make concrete propositions for negotiation, for example concerning the labour force. The US is trying to put pressure on Mexico for the agreement to include oil — up to now the Mexican government has refused.

The problem of immigration of Mexican workers to the United States also fits into this framework. It is necessary to fight so that wages are levelled up, not down. If there are agreements on free trade and productivity, it is necessary that the wages go up and that the conditions of work and standard of living are raised to the level of the north. The same goes for the rights of workers and for problems like those of the environment.

Foreign companies subject to severe environmental protection legislation in the United States often shut down and move to Mexico where they dump their toxic waste and contaminate the environment.

The laws should be the same, so that the US bosses cannot escape their own rules and go to pollute elsewhere. Labour legislation and human rights also are more and more violated in our country; the social organizations and the trade unions must demand that they are respected. But all this can only be achieved through struggle.

Everything that is happening in our country is part of a strategy designed by the multinationals; the trade unions and the workers must oppose common strategies to this project. The "multinationalization" of the trade unions has even been suggested, going beyond frontiers.

■ But in the current situation that is not easy....

Effectively, this would be difficult and complicated. In the United States and in Canada, there have already been some experiences of this kind and the results have not been very good — the auto trade union in Canada ended up by separating from its equivalent in the United States. But we can go forward with common actions, common demands, common platforms, cooperation agreements; all this is possible and necessary.

We have already made some steps forward in this direction culminating in the meetings I mentioned. What has been done in relation to Ford is a good example. The Canadian trade union, some sections in the United States and Mexican Ford workers decided that January 8 would henceforth be the international day of Ford workers (on January 8, 1990, the hired thugs of the Mexican Confederation of Workers — CTM — attacked the Ford workers of Cuautitlan, in Mexico, leading to nine injuries and a death). This date has become a symbol and Ford workers in Mexico, the United States and Canada put on a headband with the name of the dead worker; Cleto.

Such an action shows that very concrete international workers' actions can be taken; this case could be extended to different branches and to other countries.

From this we could go forward to symbolic demonstrations and more important actions, and a greater coordination in the sense of meetings between branches. A meeting of the car workers of other countries of the continent, like Brazil, is already planned, as well as in the telecommunications sector; such coordinations could end up with engagements, agreements, declarations or joint actions. It is essential to develop this type of initiative; from this a concrete alternative could emerge, which is not merely ideological.

The workers of the United States and Canada are becoming conscious of this necessity. During a meeting in Minnesota, in the United States, an appeal was launched "For solidarity and against competition". North American trades unionists have understood that the best way to defend all workers is to defend the lowest; only in this way can we defend living standards, and stop blackmail and lock-outs. ★

1. See *International Viewpoint* no. 191, October 1, 1990.

2. See *International Viewpoint* no. 196, December 10, 1990.

Report on 1991 Labor Notes Conference

by Frank Lovell

The sixth Labor Notes Conference was held this year at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dearborn, Michigan, April 19-21, attended by over one thousand union activists and others interested in progressive unionism. They came from 39 states, including Hawaii, and from Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Western Europe, the Philippines, and Japan. Phill Kwik, conference organizer, announced that this was the largest to date. In terms of worker participation it was most successful.

The conference was structured around three "main sessions," a banquet, and a conference summary (also listed as a "main session"). These five events, organized to accommodate all participants, were intended as the highlights of the conference.

The first, at the start of the conference on Friday night, was called "Organizing the South," and consisted mainly of reports from worker activists, union organizers, strike leaders, and victims of open shop conditions in the Deep South. Several of these reports were given by members of Black Workers for Justice, an African American organization based in North Carolina.

The second main session, Saturday morning, was called "Building Our Strength at the Workplace," and consisted of reports by accomplished organizers on the strategy and tactics of successful organizing and the techniques of mobilizing on-the-job worker support and active membership participation in union politics. Jerry Tucker, national organizer of the UAW opposition caucus *New Directions*, gave a brief well-organized review of the continuing struggle against the UAW bureaucracy.

At the banquet Saturday night the principal speaker was Ron Carey, candidate for general president of the 1.6 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), introduced by Diana Kilmury, a member of IBT in Canada and co-chair of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). Carey spoke about the need to clean up the Teamsters union and promised democratic control when elected. He is endorsed by TDU and by the monthly publication *Labor Notes* under whose auspices these conferences are organized.

The Sunday morning main session was devoted to the concerns and victories of women workers, called "Making 65

Cents on the Dollar—Organizing Women Workers." The speakers addressed the problems of women workers in the U.S. and Mexico, reporting firsthand experiences.

Electoral Politics

The conference closed with a brief evaluation of its work and accomplishments, and a talk by Ron Daniels on electoral politics and the bankruptcy of the Democratic Party, concluding with the announcement of his candidacy for U.S. president in 1992. Daniels was a central strategist of the Jesse Jackson campaign for president in 1988. He now contends that the "inside-outside strategy" of the Rainbow Coalition, which powered the Jackson campaign, failed because the entire effort to mobilize Black and disillusioned white voters was too quickly diverted into the Democratic Party electoral machine. Jackson and his supporters were bypassed at the Democrats' rigged convention, and the Rainbow dissolved. Daniels says he is determined to pursue the Rainbow goal of mobilizing non-voters, this time through an almost exclusive "outside strategy" which leaves open the possibility of collaborating with "progressives" inside the Democratic Party. While denouncing

Democrats and Republicans for their racist policies and their attachment to the existing corporate structure, he did not proclaim the need for a new party to oppose them nor declare his intention to help build such a party.

Daniels is no stranger to the electoral frustrations of African American voters and Black elected officials. He was a founder of the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP), which failed in the 1980s to get beyond the planning stages. He presently heads the Institute for Community Organization and Development in Youngstown, Ohio.

These "main sessions" defined the purposes of the conference: to explore possibilities and promote organizing efforts to transform the labor movement in the U.S. from its present lethargic condition into a vibrant social movement of the working class in defense of Blacks and other minorities, against all forms of chauvinism and racism, and for international solidarity of workers of all nations. Within these broad policy parameters the conference participants

attended more than 50 scheduled workshops during the three days, seeking answers to problems that arise in the course of routine union activity and exchanging ideas on politi-

1991 Labor Notes Conference

Organizing For the 1990s

★★★

April 19-21, 1991
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Dearborn, Michigan



cal strategies for transforming existing unions or long-term plans to organize the vast majority of workers still unorganized.

Time to Talk

The brochure advertising the conference promised that separate workshops would explore more than 20 identifiable problem areas ranging from "What Does War Mean for Labor?" to "Finding Your Boss's Weak Points." None who registered was disappointed in this respect. There were workshops for almost every kind of union situation and problem: how to organize effective women's committees, fight racism in the ranks, organize a national contract campaign, win union elections and what to do after you win. All this, besides workshops on the labor movement in Mexico, in Japan, and how to build international solidarity. The agenda also allowed for industry meetings with activists and union officials in auto, health care, garment, transit, postal service, telephone, and the building trades. Time and meeting rooms were available for those interested in advice on labor law, the environment, labor against war, labor education, the labor press, networking in support of organizing the South, how to become a successful union organizer, and the U.S.-Mexico-Canada solidarity network.

Amidst this welter of meetings three projected actions, initiated prior to the conference, attracted attention and probably gained new support as a result of the conference. The first of these is the Southern organizing campaign which Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) has been trying to launch since its formation a decade ago. Its monthly newspaper, *Justice Speaks*, now in its eighth year of publication, is produced in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and reflects the tone and temper of Black workers North and South. BWFJ is wholly independent, nurtured in the struggles and suffering of cruelly exploited workers in the textile and poultry-processing industries of North Carolina. It seeks recognition and support of organized labor but does not wait on rescue operations from established unions. It believes in organization as a self-help operation and has recently helped push the North Carolina Occupational Safety and Health Administration to impose fines on Perdue Farms, Inc., for violations of health standards and safety laws. Under a settlement negotiated by the N.C. Department of Labor Perdue has agreed to new improved working conditions at its nonunion poultry-processing plants. The current issue of *Justice Speaks* says "this may be the first time this Dept. of Labor provision [allowing workers direct representation] was utilized by workers at a nonunion plant," and urges "workers' power" for enforcement of the agreement.

In the textile industry BWFJ's organizing efforts resulted in the firing of a veteran worker of 18 years' service at the Goldtex plant in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Her name is Ina Mae Best and she was fired for promoting the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Now she's demanding her job back with lost pay and has joined BWFJ's campaign to organize the South. Already she is a recognized campaigner, having spoken at union and support group meetings in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, New York, and other Northern cities.

BWFJ's singing group, *The Fruit of Labor*, adds zest to its Organize the South campaign and was prominently featured throughout the conference at all the main sessions, at the

banquet, and at a special musicians' meeting. This Southern organizing movement intends to be a singing movement.

Past Failures

The compulsion to organize the South, of course, is not new. In January 1930 at a conference in Charlotte, N.C., the old AFL launched a drive to organize the textile industry, supplied with ample funds and competent organizers. It resulted eventually in 1934 in the national cotton-textile strike that spread up and down the Atlantic states from Maine to Alabama under the leadership and control of the United Textile Workers headed by the appointed business-minded AFL official Thomas F. McMahon, a typical craft union bureaucrat of the time. More than 400,000 mill workers had walked out. Their strike was quickly "settled" by the frightened union officials at the request of the Roosevelt administration. They got nothing more than Roosevelt's empty promise to make another government survey of conditions in the industry. During the short one-month strike 16 workers were killed and hundreds beaten and wounded in battles with state militia and company gunmen. More than 15,000 strikers were blacklisted, never again to find work in the mills. While local battles for union recognition were being won in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco the great 1934 textile strike was quickly clubbed and gunned into submission for want of a militant class conscious leadership. It was the worst defeat of the early waves of labor resurgence in the 1930s, a defeat from which textile workers never recovered. The South remains unorganized.

At the 1941 CIO convention a campaign was initiated to organize the South, "Task Number One" according to then CIO president Philip Murray. But Pearl Harbor interfered. The task was postponed for the duration of World War II. In 1946 the CIO launched "Operation Dixie." Four hundred organizers were dispatched to the South and a million dollars was allocated for the drive. It was conceived as a military operation, but it soon faltered and finally bogged down completely. The reason was political. The CIO bureaucracy refused to challenge the Jim Crow system in the South for fear of shattering labor's fragile coalition within the Democratic Party which depended on the support of the Southern ruling class.

Compared to the formidable resources of the CIO at the conclusion of World War II, the meager forces of Black Workers for Justice today must seem hopelessly inadequate to the task of organizing the South. But BWFJ has the key to a secret weapon that was lost by the CIO during the Second World War, the explosive power of the oppressed workers. This is what the CIO unions found in their formative years of the sitdown strikes. No army of organizers with a million-dollar bankroll called those strikes. And no high-paid union officials were able to call them off. So it is possible that the indigenous army of Black workers in the South can now be mustered to win the crusade in which all others have failed.

Teamster Elections

The second most interesting campaign featured at the Labor Notes Conference is for president of the Teamsters union. Ron Carey made a favorable impression on all present. He has self-confidence and speaks well. He has 23 years' experience as president of the New York United Parcel Service (UPS) Local 804 in the Teamsters, and at the conference banquet he

spoke to a friendly audience with a large representation of TDU members and other Teamsters to cheer him on. He spoke as if he were addressing the membership of his home local, and twice he seemed to forget others who were the majority on this occasion. The first time was when he referred to the Teamsters' official endorsements of Republican candidates for public office. He said he intends to reverse this sorry practice. Instead of rewarding labor's enemies he promised "to reward our friends and punish our enemies." This was greeted with silence. Carey went on to say that he will bring democracy to the Teamsters if elected president, which is not what some TDU members understand as the way the Teamsters union will be democratized. But under the circumstances these were considered matters of little consequence. The task at hand is to win the election for Carey. What happens after that will depend on the strength and skill of the TDU caucus in the union. The general consensus at the conference was that if Carey gets elected big changes in the affairs and fortunes of the union will follow, and this can lead to the beginning of a rejuvenation and democratization of other AFL-CIO unions.

Two workshops took up problems relating to the Teamsters union and the coming election. The first was on "reforming the Teamsters union," where TDU national organizer Ken Paff and others spoke. There is optimism in the TDU, tempered with caution.

The other Teamster-related workshop was called "private sector contract campaigns and strikes," devoted to a rather sober appraisal of strike situations and the relative strengths of unions and employers in the present political climate. The speakers were the mine workers' strike leader, Eddie Burke, who is Ron Carey's campaign manager; Juan Gonzales reporting on the recent strike of the Newspaper Guild at the New York *Daily News* (Gonzales also spoke at the banquet with Carey); and Charlie Ruitter, business manager of International Union of Electrical Workers Local 201. Steve Early, now an official of the Communications Workers of America, chaired. They all hold responsible positions in their respective unions, and their discussion of selective strike strategies and the need to organize effective in-plant support was suited to the present unfavorable political situation. Discussion of the problems addressed in this workshop carried over into the corridors of the conference site, and those who participated felt they learned from it.

North American 'Free Trade'

The third major issue that seemed to catch wide attention at the conference was the "free trade treaties" of the Bush administration to integrate the economies in Mexico, the U.S., and Canada under the domination of U.S. capital. The U.S./Canada treaty was signed in 1988 and a U.S./Mexico treaty is being negotiated by the administration and debated in the U.S. Congress and in Mexico. While this was not a "main session" subject it came up in several workshops: one on "contracting out/privatization," dealing partly with the auto industry and *maquiladora* plants on the U.S.-Mexican border; another on "building a North American auto workers network," which included a report of the MEXUSCAN Solidarity Committee at UAW Local 879 in St. Paul, Minnesota, by the local's recording secretary Tom Laney; and at another workshop later in the day, "Mexico's Democratic Labor Movement," where Jose Santos, a fired Ford worker and strike leader, explained

depressed wages and working conditions at U.S.-owned Mexican auto plants; and finally on Sunday, "Economic Integration of Three Nations," discussing "the effects of the Canadian-U.S. Free Trade Agreement on working conditions in Canada and what an expanded U.S.-Canada-Mexico agreement [will] mean for workers in all three countries." Speakers were Hector de la Cueva from Mexico, Tom Laney for U.S. auto workers, and Laurell Ritchie, vice president of the Confederation of Canadian Unions. This workshop was chaired by Ken Traynor, Common Frontiers, Canada.

At the end of the conference, "Main Session: Conference Summary," it was announced from the podium that general agreement was reached in reports and discussions on the Bush-sponsored free-trade treaties, "that progressive unionists in all three North American countries will oppose them because the effect of these treaties will depress the continental wage level and workers in all three countries will suffer more unemployment and lower wages." This means in the U.S. that progressive unions will oppose the U.S./Mexico treaty for different reasons than the reactionary protectionist motivation of Kirkland and the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. In Mexico the officially recognized union movement—the CTM—supports the treaties, as it does nearly all other acts of the government.

In Canada almost all the unions, both in Quebec and English-speaking Canada, oppose the free trade pacts. Discussion and debate will undoubtedly continue until the treaties are in place and their effects begin to be felt. But at the conference there was complete agreement that U.S. unions must fight to retain present real-wage levels and to create more jobs for workers presently unemployed and those who will be laid off in the future.

In Mexico the struggle of the labor movement is to raise wages, and it is the obligation of the U.S. unions to support the struggle in Mexico as UAW Local 879 in St. Paul has been trying to do. But the unresolved questions are how Mexican and U.S. labor can coordinate their struggles, and what demands they must raise to achieve their clearly defined goals.

The Progressive Trend

Many who participated in this Labor Notes Conference, perhaps a majority, had attended one or more of the five previous conferences. Many were mutually acquainted through union activities, or work in the antiwar movement or other movements of social protest. I guessed at least a third were of the 1960s generation, now in their mid-40s. A large number of this group work for unions today as organizers or otherwise in staff positions. A sprinkling of retirees, union activists of earlier times, showed up. Younger workers and students were the majority. Women took an active part in all aspects of the conference, as did African Americans. A young woman member of Plumbers Local 693 in New England chaired a workshop on "Fighting Back in the Building Trades" which addressed such issues as corrupt hiring hall practices (common in the building trades), racism and sexism in the local and on the job (also common), union democracy (uncommon), and organizing unorganized trades workers (difficult).

A teacher in the New York university system who is active in his union and attended the 1989 Labor Notes Conference said that he discerned two distinct groups in the overall composition of these conferences: one group of radicalizing

workers trying to get a sense of what is wrong in the unions and what needs to be done, and the other group of mostly radicals from the 1960s and 1970s who are now becoming seriously interested in the union movement. Undoubtedly such types were present.

It seemed to me that most who attend these conferences do so because they are interested in making connections and building alliances to promote progressive union policies and undermine the power of the union bureaucracy, called "building networks" or simply "networking." Probably these rather commonly used terms mean different things to the many different people who use them, but in the unions they are associated with and used by the progressives who oppose the bureaucrats. So these Labor Notes conferences serve a useful purpose in this respect, and deserve support. The fact that they can bring together a thousand union activists and others who endorse progressive unionism is an achievement.

The organizers try to give a focus of sorts to each conference, judging by the last two. The 1989 conference was focused to a large extent on the need to build a labor party based on a new labor resurgence. This year's focus was on "organizing for the '90s" and the labor party idea was almost forgotten. One workshop, "Independent Political Action," gave Labor Party Advocates representative Joel Carr a chance to speak on a panel with two others and answer a few questions.

News of the congressional action against the rail strike broke a day or two before the conference but the schedule by that time was fixed and it wasn't possible to make time for rail workers at the conference to explain the political significance of compulsory arbitration imposed by an act of Congress, and the danger inherent in this for the entire labor movement. Mention was finally made of this at the "Conference Summary" as deliberations ended.

Whatever deserving criticisms may be made of the 1991 Labor Notes Conference and those before it, the fact remains that these conferences provide a clearing house for union activists much in the same way as the monthly publication *Labor Notes* supplies timely news and analyses of union developments.

An instructive case in point, illustrating the pervasive and pernicious influence of government in union contract settlements, is the way the Mail Handlers Union is being tricked and manipulated by the government arbitration system. At the 1989 Labor Notes Conference Glen Berrien was a prominent participant, recounting his struggles to free MHU from the corrupt parent organization, the Laborers International Union of North America, and in the process getting himself elected president of MHU. His accomplishments were hailed as a model for building African American union leadership. But in contract negotiations Berrien gave away the right of MHU membership ratification to a federal arbitrator whose decision is final and binding. Berrien now says, "I can only ask my members to forgive me for that judgment."

At this year's conference Al Lewis, vice president of MHU Local 329, reported that the membership is unlikely to forgive or forget. Berrien is expected to be replaced by Larry Adams, president of the big New York/New Jersey Mail Handlers Local 300. Part of the MHU problem is inexperienced leadership, but the source of all postal worker problems is government/management interference and manipulation in the affairs

of the postal workers' four separate unions. Basic issues of this kind are not subjected to review and analyses at Labor Notes conferences.

Early Predecessor

The Labor Notes Conference idea and method is a product of the 1960s radicalization, and the rapidly changing character and composition of the workforce and the union movement. It is unique in the post-World War II period. There is nothing else like it. But there was a somewhat similar formation at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the Great Depression. It was called the Conference for Progressive Labor Action (CPLA). This was supported by prominent progressive unionists of the time such as Powers Hapgood and John Brophy who bucked the John L. Lewis dictatorship in the mine workers union, and by most other prominent progressive unionists who opposed the brazenly reactionary policies of the AFL bureaucracy. A.J. Muste, founder of Brookwood Labor College, organized CPLA. The monthly publication *Labor Age* was identified with CPLA. The goal was to clean up and transform the AFL craft unions. In February 1929 the CPLA issued a manifesto, published in *Labor Age*, which called for industrial unions, trade union democracy, the five-day week, independent political action, social insurance, and other progressive social demands. This is how CPLA began, by issuing a program of action to transform the union movement. *Labor Notes* has not yet reached that point. It has no program because a program is divisive, separating those who agree from those who disagree. This is unsuited to the purposes of a clearing house which seeks to cover all kinds of activities that appear to be going in the right direction and sincerely motivated. Further experience along this line may convince the editorial staff of *Labor Notes* to issue programmatic statements from time to time, or try and formulate a set of demands on what ought to be done in the unions in the interest of all working people.

The times were very different in the early months of 1929 from today. Few expected what was about to happen later that year, and all the years that followed until the advent of World War II. But CPLA gained support and grew from its inception, partly because it had a program of action to organize the American working class and improve the world.

What happened to CPLA in the early 1930s, when the social forces that created the CIO movement began to change the consciousness of the working class, may be helpful in trying to understand the present changing political situation. In the closing months of 1933 the CPLA began transforming itself from a loose grouping of union activists into a working class political party. This is not indicated for *Labor Notes* at the present juncture, but what the CPLA was trying to do is. Labor Notes conferences still have a progressive role to play in the union movement if militants like those in the leadership of TDU can be brought together around the implied program of progressive unionism, but to accomplish its purpose the program must be made explicit to unite all those who agree. In this way *Labor Notes* (the publication and the conferences it sponsors) can help assemble the forces for the formation of a working class political party that can challenge the parties of the employing class (Democrats and Republicans) for control of government in this country. □

Women at the Labor Notes Conference

by Melanie Benson

From the very beginning, we knew it was going to be a little different for us. Many of us got calls at home before we even arrived at the sixth Labor Notes Conference, asking us to facilitate small-group discussions during Sunday morning's Women's Caucus meeting on "concrete steps we can take to eliminate sexism from our unions." Many more of us got up bright and early on Saturday morning at the conference for a special women's meeting to "discuss ways to play a leadership role this weekend." Two workshops entitled "But Will They Listen to a Woman?" featured women speakers from a variety of traditional and nontraditional jobs; and women were well represented in the other workshops as well. Sunday morning's main session was entitled "Making 65 Cents on the Dollar—Organizing Women Workers."

Women today compose the fastest growing section both of the workforce and of union membership. But this doesn't mean that the problems of women workers are identical to those faced by men.

Many women have been tracked into lower-paying jobs; those who have broken into higher-paying male-dominated industries are treated as pariahs. And, whatever their jobs, women workers have additional problems because they are usually responsible for childcare and housework.

But, today, women workers in garment shops, offices, and industrial worksites from Texas to Connecticut to California are fighting back. The Sunday panel speakers will tell how they are organizing themselves, building women's leadership, and developing new tactics to organize their sisters in traditional, nontraditional, and unorganized workplaces. They will also discuss how they are getting their unions to deal with these issues.

Women in the labor movement—often undervalued there just as we are in the workforce—were finally going to have a strong presence and a strong voice.

But there were obstacles to overcome—obstacles we had to recognize before we could get beyond them. Saturday morning's meeting was a good way to begin. Joanie Parker, president of the Boston chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) warned us of some of these challenges: the isolation many women feel at work and in our lives; the sheer amount of work we have to do; the competition we sometimes feel even among ourselves; and the internalized oppression we experience as women—the belief that we're somehow not as capable or smart as men. We listed our hopes and expectations of the conference and the possible barriers to their fulfillment. We encouraged each other to speak up, to go out of our way to talk with others, to prioritize, to stay focused, to give ourselves time to discuss *and* to rest, and above all to constantly remind ourselves that "*This labor movement is mine!*"

By Sunday's Women's Caucus meeting we had already had several opportunities to exercise those skills. We had also, unfortunately, experienced what many felt was sexism right at the Labor Notes Conference: The attendance at the main ses-

sion on women workers Sunday morning was noticeably lower than at the previous main sessions. One woman observed that she had seen at least 50 men in the lobby outside the main hall conversing among themselves as the presentations were being given. To her, and to others, this indicated a tendency among many men, even in progressive circles, to minimize the importance of women's participation in and contributions to the labor movement.

At the caucus meeting, almost 200 women, sitting in groups of ten, discussed 1) ways we've experienced sexism in the labor movement; 2) ways we've fought sexism in the labor movement; and 3) ways to eliminate sexism from the labor movement. Each small group assigned a reporter to address the larger group on the third point. Since we had about 40 minutes to work with at each table, the talk was fast and furious. It was absolutely clear that we could easily have spent an entire week on this topic. The tremendous diversity among the women even at each table provided for a rich, though rushed, exchange.

Despite the diversity of experience, however, several themes emerged in the reports on eliminating sexism from the labor movement. There was wide agreement on the need for *education* of ourselves and others, for organizing women's conferences, caucuses, and support groups, for getting valuable leadership training, attending labor education classes, and for taking the time to spend with other women.

We agreed on the need to *participate* in our unions, to attend membership meetings with other women, to run for office, to organize childcare at union events, and to incorporate "women's issues" (reframed as "human rights" and "civil rights" issues) into the bargaining process. We recognized our responsibility to promote democracy in the unions, to set an example as democratic and inclusive leaders who fight on issues affecting both men and women as we work for the good of the group, not for our individual careers.

We agreed on the principles of *advocacy* and *support*, emphasizing the importance of *always* confronting sexism directly and unequivocally, of speaking up and speaking out. One woman noted, "Women are afraid to say smart things, but men have no problem saying stupid things." We talked about how to fight sexism through union avenues and in the courts ("kick ass and take names!"), to channel our anger, and to link the struggle against sexism with the struggle against racism and other social ills. There was no question that we must work to eliminate sexism in society as a whole in order to get rid of it in our unions, and we knew that we could do this more effectively if we believe that *we can* and value ourselves in the process.

While we all felt a great deal of frustration and anger about sexism in the labor movement and wished we had more time to talk about it, we also felt a sense of camaraderie and good humor. Women belonging to unions that included the word "brotherhood" in their title suggested changing the names of unions to reflect the changing composition of the membership to, for example, the "International *Bunch* of Electrical Workers (IBEW)."

The organizers of and participants in the sixth Labor Notes Conference deserve to be commended for providing space for the spirit of sisterhood, in all her diversity, to show her strong and beautiful face. □

Socialist Educational Conference To Be Held July 11-14 in Pittsburgh by FIT

The second national educational conference sponsored by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency will take place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from Thursday July 11 through Sunday July 14. It promises to be an exciting experience for all who participate.

Not only are most members of the FIT expected to attend, but it is also anticipated that there will be significant participation from members of other revolutionary socialist organizations as well as many independent socialists, activists of the trade union, women's liberation, Black liberation, antiwar, and student movements, and others. Participation from Canadian and Mexican socialists, and perhaps from additional countries, is also expected.

Major Sessions, Classes, Workshops

The conference will have sessions, featuring speakers and panels, focusing on major issues facing today's activists.

A session on war and imperialism will include Jeff Mackler, a leading member of Socialist Action who has played a key role in West Coast antiwar efforts from the time of the Vietnam conflict down to the recent U.S. intervention in the Middle East. And also Manuel Aguilar Mora, a leader of the Mexican PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party).

The USSR: What next? is the topic of a session whose participants will include: George Saunders, translator of Roy Medvedev's monumental *Let History Judge*, among other notable works; and Marilyn Vogt-Downey, translator of the *Baitalsky Memoirs* and editor of the forthcoming *Marxist Views on the USSR*.

A panel on African American struggles will include Dr. Claire Cohen, a founder of Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom, formerly a prominent activist in the Rainbow Coalition of Western Pennsylvania, who is a frequent writer for *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*; there will also be a representative from Black Workers for Justice.

A session on global feminism will feature a major presentation by leading FIT member Carol McAllister, who has had extensive experience in feminist struggles and is former director of the women's studies program at the University of Pittsburgh.

A panel on U.S. labor struggles today will feature: Jerry Gordon, formerly a central leader of the national movement against the Vietnam war, and presently a union organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers; Barney Oursler, a founder and leader of the Mon Valley Unemployed Committee; and a leading representative of Black Workers for Justice.

Socialist activists from various countries will participate in a special session on revolutionary internationalism, with a particular focus on the work of the worldwide revolutionary socialist organization, the Fourth International. Also participat-

ing in this session will be David Finkel, a leader of Solidarity and editor of *Against the Current*.

In addition to these sessions, conference participants will be involved in various classes. One of these will deal with developments in the world capitalist economy, with Carol McAllister. Editor of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* Steve Bloom will lead a class offering an introduction to Marxist economics. Long-time Marxist educator Evelyn Sell will provide an introduction to Marxist philosophy. And Paul Le Blanc, author of *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, will be featured in a class on the Leninist party. Also, there will be a series of activists' workshops on labor struggles, antiracist struggles, women's liberation struggles, and the current activism among students and youth.

Films, Videos, Literature, Music

Another feature of the conference will be the screening of a number of films and videos at various times. These will include: "Perestroika from Below"; "With Babies and Banners"; "Pink Triangles"; "Controlling Interest: The Role of Multinational Corporations"; "We Shall Overcome"; "Women of Steel"; "Eugene V. Debs"; "Diego Rivera"; "C.L.R. James"; "Workers of All Lands . . . Introduction to the Fourth International."

The conference will also provide a rich array of literature on the labor and socialist movements, Black liberation, women's liberation, gay and lesbian rights, the ecology, U.S. politics, war and imperialism, social problems under capitalism, the crisis of Stalinism, liberation struggles in many lands, world revolution, Marxist theory, and much more.

A special concert by the dynamic women's group "Cross-current," featuring songs and skits about the struggles of working people and the oppressed, will be one of the highlights of the conference. Another attraction is the location of the conference, among the rolling hills and wooded areas of Pittsburgh's beautiful Chatham College. Children are welcome, and childcare will be available.

How to Register

The total cost for the conference—including registration fee, three nights' lodgings, all meals, the concert, all sessions, workshops and classes—is \$99.

To register, or for more information on the conference, contact one of the Local Organizing Committees of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency listed in the FIT Directory in this magazine, or contact the FIT National Office at: 27 Union Square West, Room 208, New York, NY 10003; telephone: (212) 633-2007. In Pittsburgh, call Paul Le Blanc: (412) 682-5484. □

Matt Lee—Poll Tax Prisoner

This appeal on behalf of Matt Lee and all poll tax victims was received from Peter Bloomer, Marian Brain, and Damian Finnegan, supporters of Socialist Outlook.

On the first of April 1989 in Scotland, and the first of April 1990 in England and Wales, the Tories (British Conservative Party) introduced a form of taxation known as the poll tax, whereby every adult regardless of ability to pay or earnings was expected to make the same contribution. An example of this: a working family of four adults living in a Birmingham flat would pay 1,624 pounds, whereas the leader of the Tories in Birmingham living in a huge mansion would pay 406 pounds. (The last time this form of taxation was introduced in Britain in 1381 the chancellor of the exchequer was beheaded!)

The tax met with massive opposition throughout Britain. (Incidentally, the tax was not introduced in the six counties of Ireland occupied by Britain. It would have certainly been uncollectible there as previous rent and rates strikes have proven to be. Or was it because the British government feared some sort of solidarity between Nationalists and Loyalists?)

A nonpayment campaign was set up and approximately 12 million people are refusing to or cannot pay. Due to the mass pressure of working people in this country, as expressed in the mass demonstration of March 31, 1990, and the many local demonstrations that took place up and down Britain as the tax was being set, along with the mass nonpayment campaign, the Tory government was forced to retreat. This was a major factor in the resignation of Margaret Thatcher, a resignation that represents a victory for the working people of Britain. These events show that at times it is necessary to break the law in order to protect our interests. This tax was seen as unjust, and it was therefore unenforceable.

The poll tax will be in place until 1993. However, the Tories have reduced the bill by 140 pounds per person (at the same time they have put an extra 2.5 percent on the Value Added Tax).

Hopefully the Tories will be ousted by then and replaced with a Labor government. With a few honorable exceptions (a number of Labor members of Parliament refused to pay the tax), the Labor Party leadership, much to their shame, refused

to back the nonpayment campaign, saying it was not right to break the law.

In fact the Labor Party expelled (and is still expelling) members who advocate nonpayment—including two *Socialist Outlook* supporters in Lambeth who have been suspended as councillors.

It has been said if any single day helped to defeat the poll tax then it was the 31st of March 1990, the eve of the implementation of the tax in England and Wales, when a quarter of a million took to the streets to protest against it. This was a considerable number since the demonstration had no backing from either the Labor Party or the Trade Union Congress.

The demonstration started peacefully with a carnival-like atmosphere until a massive premeditated police attack took place. Mounted and riot police attacked with batons. They punched and kicked demonstrators.

At the end of the day over 300 demonstrators were injured and scores of people had been arrested; no one will ever forget the brutality meted out by "the fine British bobby."

Video evidence of the police attacks are not allowed in court. Defendants are receiving severe sentences. One defendant received two years for kicking a police car which had just run over his foot! Over a hundred people have been given custodial [prison] sentences, many more have received noncustodial punishment. Around 30 are still in prison.

Police brutality was not reserved to the 31st of March. On the 17th of that month, in Colchester, and October 20th in Brixton, the police systematically attacked and intimidated demonstrators on smaller anti-poll tax protests.

One of the people arrested on what has been dubbed "the Battle of Trafalgar" was *Socialist Outlook* supporter Matt Lee. Matt is the chair of the Birmingham Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions. Like many on the demonstrations, in the face of massive police attack, Matt defended himself along with his fellow protesters.

On the 25th of March 1991, Matt was imprisoned for two and a half years for "violent disorder." The conviction was based solely on three minutes of video evidence and falsified police statements. *Unedited* video clearly shows the horror of the police brutality, charging mounted police officers and riot police beating demonstrators to the ground.

Harsh sentences handed down to the demonstrators have shown that the government, courts, and police are willing to go to great pains to enforce the poll tax and silence any opposition.

On the 26th of March 1991, the Birmingham Poll Tax Prisoners Support Group was formed in response to the savage sentencing of Matt and other poll tax prisoners. As the Tories move towards scrapping the tax, it is vital that the prisoners are not forgotten.

Our aims:

- To provide material assistance for all those imprisoned for their opposition to the poll tax in Birmingham and surrounding areas.
- To support the Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign Prisoners Group which provides solidarity for poll tax prisoners from all over Britain.
- To campaign for an independent public inquiry into the police attacks on various anti-poll tax demonstrations.
- To campaign for the immediate release of Matt Lee and other poll tax prisoners.
- To work and campaign for every anti-poll tax union, trade union, Labor Party, community, and political group to support our aims.

As a *Socialist Outlook* supporter Matt Lee should be defended by all those who read *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* and supporters of the Fourth International. Internationally, we call for the following:

- Publicity for Matt and the other poll tax prisoners
- Material support for Matt Lee (papers, books, etc.)
- Financial support
- Campaigning for the release of all poll tax prisoners
- Support for a public/labor movement inquiry into the events of March 31, 1990.

We therefore take this opportunity to ask you to send donations and/or messages of support to:

The Birmingham Poll Tax Prisoners Support Group

C. O. 5 Exton Gardens, Blackpatch, Smethwick, West Midlands, England, B66 2LT.

Anyone who desires further information and copies of our petition can contact us at the above address. □

China's Worker Activists Targeted in New Wave of Repression

by Yang Hai

The 1989 student democracy movement in China, which was violently crushed on June 4, 1989, in the massacre at Tiananmen Square, saw the rise of an independent workers' movement as well. A New York Times report from Beijing, dated April 29, 1991, states that "thousands of young people, mostly workers, appear to have been sentenced to prison or to 'labor re-education' camps because of their involvement in the Tiananmen movement, and a small number were executed." A later Times report, May 8, says that Li Jinjin and Han Dongfang, described below, appear to have been released from jail, but it's not "official." "Official" or not, their freedom is far from secure.

The following article and leaflet are reprinted from the March 1991 issue of October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong.

Immediately after the Chinese New Year in mid-February 1991, the Chinese government announced that all trials related to the June 4 "incident" were over. And yet, on March 5 and 8, Beijing's courts have conducted trials of Chen Yanlin, Zhang Yafei, and Han Binglin on charges of counterrevolutionary acts. All three of them are workers and had been active in organizing workers during the Democracy Movement 89.

On March 18, friends of Zhang Yafei said that he had been sentenced to seven years, charged with leading a counter-revolutionary organization and publishing an anti-Communist publication after June 4 until his arrest in September 1990.

Meanwhile, the main leaders of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAFF), such as Han Dongfang, Liu Qiang, Li Jinjin, and He Lili, have not yet been put on trial.

Earlier, in February, the regime had refused to make public the sentence of Liu Zhihou, a worker. However, a court notice in Beijing on March 18 announced the death sentence for Han Weijun, aged 24, for the "serious crime" of "setting fire to a car and an armored personnel carrier on June 4, 1989." He is the first to be sentenced to death since the initial wave of executions immediately after June 4, 1989.

This execution could represent a new phase in the policy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to present a moderate image to the world. It is also increasingly clear that workers are the main target of this renewed wave of repression.

Why is the regime striking so hard against the workers? While it denounces some intellectuals as "black hands" behind the student movement, it tries to dissociate the worker activists in the democracy movement from the student movement by denouncing them for hooliganism and other ridiculous charges. What does this reflect?

During the Democracy Movement 89, after more than a month of preparation and organization, the BWAFF officially declared its foundation on May 20 and published its provisional statutes on May 30. A few hours after that, three leaders of the BWAFF were arrested, well before the arrest of any students or intellectuals. On June 3, just prior to the massacre, the BWAFF issued a call for a general strike on June 4. While the massacre might not have been in direct response to the actions of the BWAFF, it is quite clear that, since mid-May, the regime and the

BWAFF had been in a tense race for time. While the BWAFF had not yet reached the conclusion that the regime was beyond reform, the regime saw the BWAFF as its grave-digger and the destruction of the BWAFF as a necessary and urgent task to save itself.

Ever since the June 4 crackdown, the discontent of the Chinese working class towards the ruling bureaucracy has been growing. While the regime has tried to pacify the workers by allowing some wage increases, more and more workers have been affected by production stoppages and unemployment, as well as other problems and grievances, which are reflected in the speeches of the bureaucrats and in the media.

For example, a news dispatch by the China News Agency on December 10, 1990, reported that the president of the official All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) said in an Executive Committee meeting that "all levels of trade unions must work hard with a great sense of political responsibility to

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help the government solve properly the problems of production stoppages and waiting-for-employment, as well as other problems affecting the mood and livelihood of workers.”

As reported in a news dispatch by AFP [Agence France Presse] on January 25, 1991, the *Workers Daily* acknowledged that the confidence of the workers in the Chinese leadership had fallen to a dangerous level and appealed for immediate action to prevent turmoil and unrest. It said that workers hate the negative phenomena of corruption in the party and society, and that there are many other factors leading to discontent: the low social status (of workers); high profits of private business merchants; poor public facilities, housing, and benefits; price rises and the sluggish economy; and so on.

Workers Autonomous Federation: Workers' Vanguard In Democracy Movement 89

The role played by Chinese workers during Democracy Movement 89 should not be forgotten by history. The event with the greatest historic significance must be the formation of the Workers Autonomous Federations (WAF) in Beijing and all over the country, raising, for the first time in China since 1949, the banner of independent trade unions.

The members of the WAFs were mainly industrial workers, workers in the services, construction workers, and worker intellectuals. Their ages ranged from 20 to the 40s. These workers attempted for the first time to spontaneously form autonomous organizations outside the official ACFTU.

The Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAF), in its preparatory program published on May 21, 1989, emphasized the need to form an autonomous organization that spoke for and served workers, and stressed that the BWAF should be joined voluntarily by workers, be formed through democratic procedures as a completely independent and autonomous organization, not controlled by other organizations. Its ultimate aim was to have the right, in state-owned and collectively owned enterprises, to take all legal and effective measures to supervise their legal representatives and guarantee that the workers become the master of these enterprises, and, in other enterprises, protect the rights of workers through negotiation with enterprise owners and other legal means.

Organizers of the BWAF insisted that its members take the following pledge: “I voluntarily obey the constitution and laws of the state and work incessantly for the overall interests of workers.”

In the early stage of preparations, the leaders of the BWAF had attempted to get

it registered with the municipal Public Security Bureau (PSB) and the Municipal Office but were refused on the grounds that “illegal organizations cannot be formed.” Although hampered by the authorities, the leaders of the BWAF persevered and in mid-May, in extremely difficult conditions, set up a tent in Tiananmen Square as its headquarters and began recruiting. Over ten thousand workers joined and several hundred workers became “correspondents” (activists) of the BWAF. They established a broadcast station and read messages from workers and citizens. The broadcast was very popular among worker citizens. Later, it strove to link up with autonomous workers’ organizations in other cities throughout the country and build liaison networks with rank-and-file workers.

In addition to Beijing, similar independent workers’ organizations were formed in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Xian, Suzhou, Changsha, Fuzhou, Jinan, and Hohhot. At the end of May 1989, the tension in Beijing heightened. The secret arrests of three core members of the BWAF immediately triggered protests and demonstrations by workers, students, and citizens. Under the leadership of Han Dongfang and legal adviser Li Jinjin, members of the BWAF tried to negotiate with the PSB. After much difficulty, the three were released the next day. This incident was later declared by the Chinese government as a crime of “attacking the PSB” and is the main charge against Han and Li today.

At the end of May, core members of the BWAF and their families were constantly followed, harassed, and threatened by PSB personnel. On June 2, the Beijing government declared both the BWAF and the High Schools Students Autonomous Federation “counterrevolutionary organizations” and banned them. During the June 4 massacre, many members of the

This explains the regime’s policy of continued and intensified repression of the workers: a reflection of the CCP’s consciousness of its crisis among workers.

Today, besides an international petition campaign launched by the Tiananmen University of Democracy among non-governmental organizations and the broad public against the repression of democracy activists by the Chinese regime, there is, among other campaigns, a petition campaign by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) among trade unions and labor groups in Hong Kong specifically for the release by the Chinese government of all arrested democracy movement worker activists, in particular the members and leaders of the BWAF. □

BWAF died or were injured. Afterwards, the authorities launched an all-out hunt for leaders and activists of BWAF.

From June 6 to June 10, citizens’ demonstrations took place in over 20 cities in China to protest the bloody repression of Beijing students and democracy movement activists. Banners of WAFs appeared in many of them. In many places, there were calls for workers’ protest strikes, and some factories stopped work for a period of time.

According to estimates, thousands of workers were arrested and detained after June 4 for participating in Democracy Movement 89. Almost all of the main leaders and members of the WAFs across the country were arrested; most of them have been illegally detained for a long time, tortured, and tried secretly. Some were even executed. Today, WAF leaders like Han Dongfang, Li Jinjin, He Lili, and Liu Qiang are still in jail and awaiting trial. To demand the release of these outstanding and brave democracy movement workers should be the most urgent task of labor movement leaders in all countries. Furthermore, we should pay close attention to the right of Chinese workers outside jails to association and other basic rights of worker citizens.

The 1989 workers’ autonomous movement is a historic and brave act. It marks the first open attempt by workers to fight for the right of independent organization since 1949. The aims of the WAF’s are revolutionary, their will sincere, their action brave, their means peaceful, and they have won the heart of many. The banner of a Chinese independent trade union movement will one day see the light of day as well as a struggle for the rights and democracy for the Chinese working people!

Hong Kong Confederation of
Trade Unions

In Bulletin in Defense of Marxism's continuing attempt to inform readers of new socialist and working class initiatives in the USSR, we print below material received from the Revolutionary Proletarian Cells, a group formed in Leningrad in the fall of 1990. Basing itself on the Marxist assessment of and opposition to the degeneration of the Russian Revolution advanced by Leon Trotsky, RPC advances the need for a mass proletarian revolutionary vanguard party to lead the Soviet Union out of crisis through the establishment of democratic workers' rule. The group distributed more than 11,000 copies of its leaflets at factory gates and other sites in Leningrad between August 1990 and March 1991, according to one of its founding members Georgi Motorov in a March letter. In addition to leaflets, the RPC also prints a newsletter called Workers' Struggle.

We print below the RPC "Declaration" that appeared in the first number of its newsletter, as well as three leaflets: one dated November 29, 1990; the Workers' Struggle statement on the eve of the March 17 referendum; and "What It Means To Be a Trotskyist in the USSR."

The remarks of another founding member of the RPC, Dmitrii Zhvaniya, at a Moscow meeting on Trotskyism in August 1990 were printed in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism No. 78, p. 21.

Declaration of the Revolutionary Proletarian Cells

The Working Class Needs a Revolutionary Party!

The economy, the state, the policies of the bureaucracy and its international relations are thoroughly imbued with a social crisis that demonstrates the society's prerevolutionary state. The main obstacle on the road to transforming this prerevolutionary situation into a revolutionary one is that the working class does not have a proletarian leadership.

Because it is outside the political arena, the proletariat is being manipulated by political forces alien to it. The experience of the strike struggle has shown that without its own political organization, the proletariat cannot defend its economic demands. The organs of self-management and the strike committees are inundated by "bureaucratic bastards" and the working class aristocracy. This will continue to be true until the proletariat creates its own political party—a party of the revolutionary vanguard. Its aim: the conquest of power by the proletariat and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy.

This is especially important now as part of the Stalinist bureaucracy is striving to transform itself from a section of the privileged caste into a neobourgeois class. Its perspective of capitalist restoration and deals with international imperialism threaten to liquidate the economic foundations of the workers' state and transform the USSR into a semicolony. This will cause tremendous hardship for the working class which, even without that, is suffering from the bureaucracy's hands around its throat. What the "reformers" are preparing the way for is a monstrous mutant with the worst features of capitalism and all the "charms" of Stalinism.

Unless the workers unite politically, it will be impossible to effectively resist this process.

The revolutionary proletarian cells have begun a movement for the creation of a revolutionary workers party. But this movement will suffocate without mass proletarian support.

Workers, unite in struggle!

- Against the continued existence of the bureaucratic system!
- Against the restoration of capitalism!
- For workers' power instead of a dictatorship of either the bourgeoisie or the bureaucracy!
- For world proletarian revolution!

We must remember the words of Trotsky when he said that the crisis of proletarian leadership can become the crisis of humanity's survival.

* * *

DECLARATION NO. 2 OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAN CELLS

Political Crisis and the Split in the Ruling Caste

V.I. Lenin noted more than once: The fundamental issue of the revolution is the issue of state power. The same is true in reverse: the fundamental issue of the counterrevolution is also the issue of state power.

The crisis, which has engulfed every sphere of public life, inevitably finds expression in the ruling counterrevolutionary bureaucratic clique. We are witnessing just such a crisis of those on top. The corrupt oligarchy has split into two basic camps which are fighting between themselves but are politically necessary to one another.

First, there is the camp of those who want to restore capitalism. The so-called reformers, who had earlier been loyal lackies of the Stalinist system—Yeltsin, Afanasyev, Popov, and Co.—are now singing the praises of Western capitalism and discussing ways to accelerate the imitation of capitalism's experience and a constructive dialogue with imperialism.

The road these people offer is one that undermines the economic foundations of the workers' state in the USSR: denationalization of the basic means of production, privatiza-

tion of industry, restoration of private property and market relations. These measures are advantageous above all to that part of the bureaucracy which, taking advantage of its privileged position, and by means of shady manipulations, has grabbed for itself enormous wealth. It is prepared to sacrifice part of its political might for the sake of legalizing its thievery. This explains its impertinent chatter about the advantages of the legalization of private property and of market relations. This part of the bureaucracy is basically in the service sectors and the light, textile, and food industries; but it is also in the juridical structure of officialdom where it plays the mercenary role of intellectual servant. It was the middle section of this layer that during the first years of "perestroika" constituted the noisy pack of democratic hounds who have now "grown up" to become the watchdogs over the capitalism that is being restored.

The bureaucrat-reformers today openly fraternize with the speculators and mafiosi, legitimatizing their criminal activity.

The restoration of capitalism is a fundamental social break, fraught with unforeseeable consequences. This process can be completed only by relying on extraordinary authoritarian measures and dictatorial rule. The fairy tales about the "Swedish paradise" will mean only pauperization for the Soviet working masses and a dictatorship of the fascist Pinochet type.

The reformers understand this. They already occupy many key posts in the state power structure. Having scored points with populist demagogy, today they proclaim the need for military-police measures. There is no other way to describe such statements as, for example, those of the chairman of the Leningrad Soviet, Sobchak, who, after having initiated a free economic zone in Leningrad, demands special police measures be implemented throughout the country. Whose interest does this serve? He is only licking the boots of the capitalist restorationists. We, workers and communist revolutionaries, will wage an uncompromising struggle against them!

The second camp is the belated followers of the Stalinist regime, that is the section of the bureaucracy which will lose its privileged position if capitalism is restored. These criminals, whose hands are dripping with the blood of the proletariat, say they are fighting for socialism. But in fact, they want to continue parasitically feeding off the gains of the October revolution: the nationalized and planned economy. This part of the bureaucracy plays a decisive role in the army, the military, heavy industry, and coal mining. The collapse of Stalinism and of the Stalinist parties has fully exposed how rotten the bureaucratic caricature of socialism is. Stalin's successors, the pillars of his system, can also save their positions only by means of the cruelest dictatorship.

President Gorbachev, in light of this split in the ruling caste, is no longer able to maneuver between the two opposing camps. He is forced to come down squarely on the side of one of these two fascistic cliques.

We, proletarian revolutionaries, believe that the only alternative to either a bureaucratic or bourgeois dictatorship is a proletarian revolution which will sweep the bureaucratic parasites and the bourgeois nouveau riche from all spheres of public life and establish workers' control—rule by democratic workers' councils. The RPC is struggling for the creation of a party of the proletarian vanguard. We call on all revolutionary

forces to join in a united workers' front against the impending danger that a dictatorship will be imposed—either pro-Stalinist or pro-bourgeois—and to radicalize our methods of struggle to establish a system of democratic workers' rule.

(Accepted by a general meeting of RPC, November 29, 1990.)

* * *

WORKERS' STRUGGLE

**For an alliance of workers and of all who toil!
Against the alliance of the oppressor bureaucrats!**

Comrade Workers!

The powers that be are preparing another political spectacle—the March 17 referendum—which "will decide" the fate of the union. No worker can stand by indifferently while the country is destroyed. It can only lead to a worsening of the situation of all workers independently of their nationality, language, or place of residence.

The main ones responsible for the breakup of the USSR are the ruling Kremlin parasites. These shameless low-lives with their chauvinism and their oppressive policies have caused nationalities to prefer to secede from rather than to remain a part of the USSR. Many people are fighting for independence even when it is clear to them that their national leaders—Landsbergis, Gamsakhurdia, and the others—are no more democratic than those who bear the responsibility for the bloodletting in Tbilisi, Baku, Vilnius, Riga, etc. The nationalist leaders want independence so they can exploit their workers without having to pay any tribute to the Kremlin. In the RSFSR itself, social forces are at work that want to dismantle the union so as to accelerate the transition to a market system. Their spokespeople—Yeltsin, Popov, Sobchak, and Co.—want capitalism restored.

**Workers and Toilers of the Country
— No Matter What Their Nationality—
Must Not Unite with These Cilques**

A second variant—to support Gorbachev—is also unacceptable. Gorbachev was the one who initiated this course toward capitalist restoration and bears enormous responsibility for the deepened crisis for which the workers above all are paying.

To vote "Yes" on the referendum means to support the bureaucratic gang that for decades has plundered the toilers and intends to continue doing so. Workers must not give their approval to Gorbachev or Yeltsin or Landsbergis or Gamsakhurdia or any of these filthy politicians. Despite their differences, they are united in an antiproletarian policy: to force the workers to remain silent and work in order to safeguard and strengthen these politicians' privileges.

- **Workers Must Not Solidarize Themselves with Their Oppressors and Exploiters.**
- **Workers Must Wash Their Hands of the Political Intrigues of Those on Top.**
- **Boycott the Referendum—That Is Our Policy!**

* * *

What It Means To Be a Trotskyist in the USSR

It means to persistently oppose the bureaucracy's privileges, the black "Volgas," the dachas, the special stores, the luxurious hotels, and the millions in bank accounts abroad. At a time when the bureaucrats have established the strictest control over everything, including the distribution of produce, who will control the bureaucrats themselves?

To be a Trotskyist means to fight for the establishment of maximum freedom, for the removal of the passport system, for the freedom to travel and change your place of residence, either inside the country or outside it. It means fighting to abolish the political police and for the right of nations to self-determination.

To be a Trotskyist means to oppose any attempt to dump onto the shoulders of the people—the toilers—the burden of the economic crisis brought on by the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy itself must pay for it. The resources for industrial renewal must be obtained at the expense of the special food supplies and transport of the bureaucratic apparatus, at the expense of the nationalized property controlled by the CPSU, the trade unions, and the Young Communist League.

It is necessary to dismiss the entire state bureaucratic apparatus, its institutions and its ministries. The workers will carry out their decisions through democratic councils, workers' committees, and trade unions freely chosen and deserving confidence.

It is necessary to organize popular control over the large centers for the distribution of food products and other consumer goods in order to destroy the nomenklatura with its mafia nouveau riche. The property as well as the foreign bank accounts of the nomenklatura must be confiscated. With these resources, that have been stolen from the people, economic renewal can begin.

In order to avoid decisions contrary to the interests of the workers, the workers must have veto power. The workers must make the decisions about the income of the enterprises, changes in the working conditions or wages. When it comes to economic renewal, the voice of those who labor must be decisive; and for it to be heard and respected, workers must everywhere set up their own committees.

To be a Trotskyist in the USSR means to oppose the plans to shift to a market economy because it is all being done behind the backs of the people, the plans have not been publicized, and it is not those who created the crisis who will be paying for it.

To be a Trotskyist means to oppose those who have provoked the crisis, the so-called "renewed" nomenklatura, the new privileged class that aspires to transform itself into a capitalist class, taking state property for itself.

To be a Trotskyist means to unite everyone who is fighting more or less consciously for these ideas. It means to unite with the aim of creating a revolutionary party that can be an independent organization of toilers and in whom the people would entrust the power stolen from them by the CPSU.

It means to unite all who are fighting within the Soviet Union with those who are fighting abroad. We cannot expect anything

from those who awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Gorbachev or those who organized the imperialist war in the Persian Gulf, or who in their own countries are organizing an economic war against the workers.

In order to strengthen this unity, a new Fourth International needs to be created. Our address: 198334, Leningrad, a/ya 121. Join the Revolutionary Proletarian Cells!

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Writings By and About Trotsky Published in the USSR

Georgi Motorov, the young Trotskyist from Leningrad active in the Revolutionary Proletarian Cells initiative, has sent an extensive listing he and one of his comrades have compiled of works by and about Trotsky that appeared in the Soviet press in 1989 and 1990.

"You asked what works of L. Trotsky have been published," he said. He then reported the following which are summarized below:

- Published books: *Toward the History of the Russian Revolution*, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, and *The Communist Opposition in the USSR: 1923-1927*. He indicated that although *Revolution Betrayed* has been scheduled to appear, so far it had not. (Several publishers are apparently planning separate editions of this work.)
- Writings by Trotsky published in journals: The 24 sources listed included works or sections of works that appeared in the above books as well as: *Their Morals and Ours (Problems of History*,* No. 5, 1990); "The German-Soviet Alliance" (*Dauzaba*, monthly journal of the Latvian Writers Union, No. 3, 1990); chapters from *Literature and Revolution (Problems of Literature*, No. 7, 1989); the "Thermidor" chapter from *Revolution Betrayed (Novoye Vremya*, No. 22, 1990); and other chapters from *Revolution Betrayed* that appeared in *Soyuz*, Nos. 44 and 45, 1990. The mass weekly *Argumenti i facti*, with a run of 30 million, printed chapters from Trotsky's book *Stalin*, in issue No. 34, 1989; and the monthly *Znalya*, with a circulation of one million, featured "Exile, Expulsion and Death," in Nos. 7 and 8, 1990. Writings of Trotsky also appeared in the following journals: *History of the USSR*, *Sociological Investigation*, *Problems of Philosophy*, *Theatre* (2 articles), *Problems of Literature*, *New and Newest History* (2), *Slovo* (2), *The Teachers Newspaper*, *Izvestia* of the Central Committee of the CPSU, *Problems of History of the CPSU*, *Art of the Theatre*, and *Soviet Bibliography*, as well as three articles by Trotsky in a new book about Lenin.
- Significant scholarly articles about Trotsky's life and work. Six were about Trotsky during the civil war: four in 1989, one in *Political Education*, two in *The Military-Historical Journal*, and one in *Philosophic and Sociological Thought*; two articles appeared in 1990, one each in *Scope*, No. 6, and *History of the USSR*, No. 2.
- Two entries were recorded—one each year—about the Left Opposition in 1923. One of these was chapters from Pierre Broue's biography of Trotsky that appeared in *EKO*, Nos. 8, 10, and 11 in 1989.
- One article about Trotsky in exile (the chapter "The 'Hell Black Night,'" from Isaac Deutscher's *Prophet Outcast*, which appeared in *Foreign Literature*, No. 3, 1989;
- One "political portrait," "Trotsky" by A.V. Pantsov appeared in *Problems of History*, No. 5 1990.
- Fifteen articles were printed on "Trotsky's theoretical heritage," fourteen of them in 1990. Among them were "The Organization of Social Labor During the Transi-

tion to Socialism," in Ukrainian in *Ukrainski Istorichnii Zhurnal*, No. 3; "Morality and Violence," in *Problems of Philosophy*, No. 5; "We Begin to Know Trotsky," by V.P. Danilov, *EKO*, No. 1; "Trotsky's Last Political Programs and Forecasts," *Sociological Investigations*, No. 5; "Russia's Road to Socialism: Leon Trotsky's View," in the book *Marxism and Russia*, published in Moscow; "The Notion of a Soviet Thermidor," V. Kozlov and E. Plimak in *Znalya*, No. 7; "The Concept of Socialism," by C. Leonov, in *Economic Science* No. 8; and four articles by Vadim Z. Rogovin—"L.D. Trotsky on NEP," *Economic Science*, No. 1; "Trotsky Against Stalin," *Economic Science*, No.9; "The Unknown Trotsky," *Argumenti i facti*, No. 38; "L. Trotsky on Social Relations in the USSR," *Sociological Investigations*, No. 5.

- A bibliography of Trotsky's works appeared in *Soviet Bibliography*, No. 1, 1990.
- Reminiscences about Trotsky: "Diary of My Meetings," chapters from a book by Yu. Annenkov, *Rural Youth*, No. 121, 1989, and *Soiuz*, No. 24, 1990; and P.G. Lokkart, "Memoirs of an English Agent," *Echo of the Planet*, Nos. 40-41, 1990.
- Artistic literature: "Trotsky in Exile," P. Weiss, *Theatre*, No. 4, 1990.
- Literature about Trotsky's life and work. This category included five listings, all in 1990: The *Ogonyok* series by Yu. Paporov about Trotsky's assassination (See *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 82); "I Was a Supporter of Trotsky," an interview with I.Ya. Vrachyov, in *Sociological Investigation*, No. 8; "Behind the Facade of Discussion," A. Kozlov, *Kommunist*, No. 13; "Trotsky's Train," *Military-Historical Journal*, No. 9; and a section from the book *Historians Answer Questions*, printed in Moscow.
- One political portrait of Trotsky was listed: in *People's Deputy*, No. 11, 1990: "Leon Trotsky: Strokes Toward a Political Portrait," by V. Bessonov.

Although a large portion of this material appeared in journals with a relatively small circulation, the sectors reached by them are significant. Some of the articles, as indicated, did appear in mass circulation periodicals.

There is no doubt that the appearance of such materials has contributed to the formation in the public mind of a new image of Trotsky different from the false one established by the Stalin school of falsification and propagated by his heirs until the Gorbachev era. A review of the content of all these articles about Trotsky would help one arrive at a conception of what this new image might be.

But most important is that Trotsky's own writings are now beginning to be available and can be widely read; and more works are surely soon to appear. They are undoubtedly finding fertile ground.

The fact that new groups such as RPC have formed and activists such as Georgi Motorov have emerged are certainly hopeful signs.

*The English translations of most of the journal titles have been listed here for the readers' convenience. □

Marilyn Vogt-Downey

They added that "the leaders of the [Soviet] Union and the [nine] republics regard as intolerable [!] any attempts to attain political ends through incitement to . . . strikes or calls for the overthrow of the existing lawfully elected government bodies."

The statement by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, & Co. was full of promises:

- To cancel "within a week" the 5 percent sales tax on all "goods in everyday demand," but what goods this meant specifically remained to be determined.
- To reconsider the price increases and "take coordinated decisions on issues that heighten social tension most of all." This vague promise was to be carried out "within two weeks."
- To take measures to make up for price increases at school and university cafeterias and to consider lowering the charges for rail and air travel. (No deadline was given for these promises.)
- To make a decision "within a month" on the "indexation of incomes" (presumably meaning to grant cost-of-living allowances).

The statement might have been more impressive if, before issuing it, the leaders had actually implemented the measures they talked about. On the national question and on the question of a change of government, the leaders of the nine republics proposed to sign a new union treaty "among sovereign states" and to do so "soon" (i.e., as soon as they could reach agreement among themselves). No later than six months after the unspecified time of signing of such a treaty, a new constitution based on that treaty would be brought for adoption to the existing Congress of People's Deputies. After that, new elections would be held, based on the new treaty and the new constitution.

Whether such elections would be democratic or continue to be rigged, as the ones in 1989 were, would depend on the terms established under the new treaty and constitution—which of course are to be drawn up and adopted by "the existing government bodies." And in the meantime the "normal functioning" of those bodies was to be ensured "throughout the transitional period"—a time of undetermined length.

In other words, the statement called on the miners and other workers to stop their strikes and protests; believe in promises—again; wait and see what the "leaders" would do; and in the meantime, be sure not to disturb "normal functioning." The workers would be far more gullible than they've shown themselves to be recently if they accepted this on face value.

One gain may have been registered in the joint statement by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and the eight other heads of republics. They recognized "the right of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Moldavia, Georgia, and Armenia to independently decide on the question of accession to the union treaty." In an attempt to lure those republics into joining the "new union," the statement declared that "most favored nation" status would have to be established for any republic signing the union treaty.

The local bureaucracies in each republic are seeking to enhance their own powers and prerogatives at the expense of the central government, but their interests are separate from those of the working class, the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed in the USSR. The road forward for the workers and their allies in Soviet society, particularly the oppressed nationalities, is to continue to build their own movements, keep them independent of any wing of the bureaucracy, and continue to fight for their own interests. □

May 4, 1991

The following articles are reprinted from *International Viewpoint* No. 201, March 4, 1991, which conclude the series of articles by David Seppo. Part one appeared in the May issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

The difficult birth of a workers' movement

THE growing prominence of the question of power in the Soviet economy, as well as the accelerated decline in the general economic situation, have had a direct impact on the labour movement. Labour conflicts in the first years of perestroika generally centred around issues of wages and conditions, with demands addressed to the enterprise management and sometimes to the ministry.

Although these remain important, a new type of conflict has emerged over the past year. Rather than putting forth economic demands and pressuring management to meet them, workers are themselves seeking an active role in the management of their enterprises.

THESE conflicts, which are more offensive in nature and pose directly the issue of power in the enterprise, have been especially prominent in the crucial machine-construction industry, which, unlike coal-mining, has not seen any coordinated, inter-enterprise strike movement.

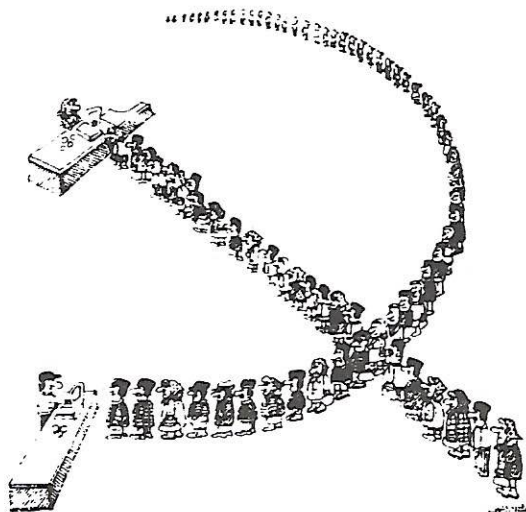
At the start of 1990, Moscow's AZLK auto factory, which makes the "Moskvich", seemed to even the handful of activists an unlikely place for an "uprising". Like many of Moscow's factories with large semi-skilled and unskilled labour forces, about two-thirds of the workers here are *limitchiki*, workers from the provinces with temporary Moscow residence permits that can be revoked upon dismissal from the factory. They are therefore especially vulnerable and generally quiescent. But even the settled Muscovites felt the pressure and corrupting influence of the internal distribution system, which expanded as shortages in the state shops worsened.

True, the year before, something unheard of had occurred at the factory's trade union conference: someone complained about the purchase of machinery from Western Europe. Some speakers blamed this on management's decision to send the director's son (travel to the West being a coveted privilege) rather than workers and engineers who had first-hand knowledge of the specifications. AZLK's workers also remembered how the previous year the director had ignored the decision of the work-collective (self-management) council and adopted a 120,000-car plan target. He went so far as to dismiss his popular assistant director, who had insisted that the plant's capacity was only 80,000. In fact, only 74,000 cars were made in 1989, but the workers received their bonuses anyway, since the director is well-connected and was able to persuade the ministry to "correct" the plan.

Foolish decision to consult workers

The adoption of the original plan had allowed him to obtain additional funds, some of which went to buy the machinery that was lying about uninstalled. 1989 also saw the workers reject management's proposed schedule of fifteen "black" (working) Saturdays, when the director, in a nod to the current fashion (since then abandoned, as we shall see), foolishly decided to consult the workers. But otherwise, the workers looked on in their usual gloomy silence at management's inability to rationally organize

production and provide normal work conditions as well as its deepening corruption (the huge sums involved in the shadow economy and the great demand for the attractive new Moskvich have opened up new vistas in this area). Then came an article in *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, written on information provided by factory activists, describing the poor management at the enterprise. If in 1985, 17,500 workers produced 175,000 cars, in 1989 16,900 workers made less than half as many. This was followed by a television report that the factory was being fined one and a half million convertible rubles for non-fulfillment of a contract to build a sports car for a West German



firm. The final piece of tinder was the news that the retail price of the Moskvich would be raised 50% to 13,500 rubles, although no substantial improvements had been made. The factory would be allowed to keep 1,000 extra rubles for its needs.

In January 1990, the work-collective council of the assembly shop, led by a group of activist workers (who are also party members), called a shop meeting to discuss the situation. To the surprise of the initiators, workers streamed in from all over the factory and filled up the 800-seat hall and adjacent corridors to overflowing. The following demands were put forward: dismissal of the director and election of a new one; reinstatement of the dismissed assistant director; new elections to the enterprise work-collective council, since the present one was subservient to the administration; no price rises (speakers explained that it might permit the factory to raise wages, but if all enterprises made unjustified price rises, wage gains would soon be wiped out); equalization of the rights of the *limitchiki* with those of permanent

residents; a regular work process, without idle time, "storming" and violation of internal supply schedules; real cost-accounting; and wages paid according to labour (large wage differentials exist from shop to shop for the same kind of work). Some speakers demanded that supervisory and technical personnel be cut and the savings be used to raise the salaries of the remainder in accordance with results.

In a letter to *Pravda*, Sergei Novopol'skii, chairman of the assembly shop's work collective council and head of a brigade of mechanic assemblers, explained the underlying impulse behind the explosion: "The main thing is that we are convinced that *perestroika* does not need silent workers of the kind the present management would like to see but workers who think, who understand, and who know how to work in a way that is useful for the country."²

But the director, on his part, attributed it all to the "intrigues of the apparatus" which he accused of abusing the new democracy and *glasnost*. He agreed to hold a referendum on his administration, which he won.³ The main results of the meeting were new elections to the work-collective council and a halving of the price rise.

Explosions of discontent expected

The workers were obviously not prepared for sustained activism. In part, this can be attributed to the influence of the economic crisis and the internal distribution system. However, the latter's arbitrary and corrupting nature, while effective in the short run, is particularly degrading to the workers and eventually adds fuel to the explosions when they finally occur. And most Soviet observers expect these to occur soon. More importantly, perhaps, the autoworkers' demands were addressed to the enterprise management, but many of their problems could be resolved only at higher, essentially political, levels. Any new movement will have to link up with workers in other enterprises if it is to be effective and take on stable, organized forms.

Only a few weeks after the AZLK meet-

1. See D. Mandel, "Revolutionary reform in Soviet factories: Restructuring relations between Workers and Management", *Socialist Register*, 1989, London: Merlin Press, 1989, pp. 102-29. On the miners' movement, see T. Friedgut and L. Siegelbaum, "Perestroika from below: The miners' strike and its aftermath", *New Left Review*, 1990, pp. 5-32; D. Mandel, "Rebirth of the Soviet Labour Movement: The coalminers' strike of July 1989", *Politics and Society*, vol. 18, Sept. 1990, pp. 381-404.

2. *Pravda*, February 8, 1990. This account is mainly based on interviews and a recording of the January meeting.

3. *Za sovetksuyu maliirazhku* (Moscow), February 5, 1990.

ing, a similar gathering took place several thousand kilometers away at the Sibeletrottyazhmash plant in Novosibirsk which makes large electric generators. Here too workers had never shown much concern for the economic fate of the enterprise, their complaints were traditionally about the cafeteria's food, bad ventilation and heating, the periodic absence of hot water. In short, it was a typical machine-construction enterprise, except perhaps for the shiny new Toyotas parked in front of the administration building, though these too were becoming a familiar scene in the fifth year of *perestroika*.

Producing less, with more labour

The initiative for the meeting here too came from a group of activists. A few days before, the head of a brigade of turners, himself a member of the factory's party committee, sounded out the shops and met with an enthusiastic response from the workers. The main issue at the meeting was poor management. The director had been elected a year ago but had not carried out his programme: no new forms of work organization had been introduced. Output was half of what it had been twenty years ago, but the work force was the same size. The assembly brigade stood idle for weeks, while workers in the adjacent shop put in two hour shifts for the same wage.

Copper wire worth thousands of rubles was cut up because there were no reels, technical and production discipline had declined catastrophically. While the director blamed all this on the middle levels of management, which he accused of sabotaging his initiatives, the workers complained that they rarely saw him in the factory and never on the shop floor. While the collective was seething and with the conference already in preparation, he took off to Moscow to attend a branch conference of directors. The chief engineer's assertion that things were not so bad since profits had risen 400% over 1976-88 made no impression of the workers.

But the most insistent accusation against management concerned the cooperatives. These had been created to help the enterprise fulfill the state's directive to increase its production of consumer goods. "Where are these goods?" asked the workers. "We don't see any more [on the market] than before. Who are we fooling? The managers are coddling the cooperatives, and the cooperatives are robbing the enterprise blind. Transformer copper is going to the cooperatives, but who signs it out? We produce no copper waste."

"The superintendent of the first department received 1500 rubles from one of the fifteen cooperatives organized at the factory to produce consumer goods...In essence, this is payment for having ruined the shop — let's tell things as they really

are. The shop is now working to meet the needs of the cooperative, not the factory. Forty welders left the shop for the cooperative, forcing other shops to send their people to help it out. One of the assistants to the chief engineer received 2700 rubles for the construction of a trestle table in his spare time. Where does he get it, if he doesn't have a fixed workday? The party organizer has also dirtied his hands in the cooperatives. He has passed all his work to his assistant and himself is nowhere to be seen. People are sick of all this. It angers us to the bottom of our souls. What is going on around us? We have to change our life, we cannot go on living like this."⁴

The meeting elected a workers' committee (representing only the blue-collar workers) to take power in the factory and decided to hold elections to the work-collective committee (which represents all employees: workers, office employees, engineering and technical personnel as well as management, which has been doing little more than distributing *defitsit* [Soviet term for scarce goods]).

The factory's newspaper was removed from the control of the administration, the party and trade-union committees and made responsible to the workers' conference. Managerial, engineering and technical personnel were to be cut in half, and a new director elected. (The workers' committee later decided to give him six more months, after which he would report back to the workers, who would take a final decision).

Characterizing as one-sided the enterprise's relations with the ministry, regional and union governments (it paid them 70% of its income, leaving little for the collective's social development), the meeting decided to negotiate a reduction in its payments. The workers' committee was instructed to study, with the aid of economists, the question of gradually leaving the ministry (the workers were aware that they might be worse off without the ministry playing its redistributive role within the branch).

Cooperatives viewed as parasites

The cooperatives, accused of "pillaging the enterprise's resources and fostering the moral decay of the collective", were ordered off the enterprise's territory, and administrative personnel as well as employees in the financial and accounting departments forbidden from working in them. Full reports on their activities and finances were ordered from the cooperative chairpersons.

The meeting also turned its attention to the nefarious effect on the collective of the internal distribution system and decided that henceforth, the sale of scarce consumer goods, food, cars and so on, would take place only after this had been approved by a workers' conference. Finally, on the issue of Toyotas, a report

was demanded of the superintendent of the transport department on the cost of maintaining the enterprise's fleet of cars and vans and on his budget in 1989.

The election of a workers' committee is characteristic of many of these conflicts. As one observer put it: "in the majority of cases the work-collective committees [elected by the entire collective] fail to show any independence vis-à-vis management.

Hostility between blue and white-collar workers

The work collective committees were basically created on orders from above [until the government issued a special instruction, they were often headed by the director]. The workers' committees [representing only the blue-collar workers], on the other hand, are not obligated to anyone at their birth, that is, they are not the result of initiative from above, but of the realization that we are all responsible for changing things and that if we do not, who will?"⁵ The formation of workers committees reflects in part the deepening hostility between workers and "white blouses" in the enterprises — the reduction of administrative and technical personnel is a very popular demand.⁶

But it is also a response to the fact that technical, like administrative personnel, have no right of appeal against dismissals and are therefore more dependent on the director. One of the workers' leaders explained: "The shop engineers are our brothers; they work in the same dirt and face the same difficulties...We aren't against them. They should be with us. Our level of knowledge does not allow us to really spread our wings, especially when it comes to economic questions. But for the time being, we have decided to create a workers' committee with representatives only from the working class...we have a good lever — the strike. Management has to consider that possibility and take the proletariat into account...But we do include the engineering and technical personnel in the work collective committee."⁷

Another interesting aspect of these conflicts is the initiating role often played by worker party activists. This occurs against the general background of the party's unpopularity among workers, who are leaving it in significant numbers.

At a Vilnius trucking enterprise, whose

4. "Demokratizatsiya na proizvodstve: vlast' dela i vlast'...ch'ya?" *EKO* (Novosibirsk), no. 8, 1990, pp. 85-102.

5. *Rabochaya tribuna*, June 15, 1990

6. The view is widespread among workers that "those people" do not work. Another contributing factor is the wage reform that began in 1987 and under which the salaries of technical and administrative personnel have risen significantly faster than average wages. V. Pavlov and I. Yurchikova, "Novye usloviya oplaty truda," *Sotsialisticheskiy trud*, no. 8, 1990, p. 89.

7. "Demokratizatsiya na proizvodstve" (op cit) p. 96.

8. *Rabochaya tribuna*, August 15, 1990

existence was threatened in the spring of 1990 by Moscow's oil embargo and the republican government's proposed economic reforms, the workers dissolved the work collective committee and elected a workers' committee, assuming full control of the enterprise.

Workers committee negotiates independently

The committee was instructed to take "all measures to organize the enterprise's complete, normal functioning, which has been undermined of late." Among other things, it independently concluded a contract with the Ministry of Transport of Byelorussia (just across the border from Lithuania) which agreed to supply the enterprise with fuel and parts. "I would never have believed it" commented a member of the administration. "I always thought that the main thing for them was their 19 rubles a day, and to hell with the rest."⁸

At a Voronezh machine-construction factory, the director was misappropriating the factory's equipment and materials for his personal benefit. A small, poorly organized enterprise that was in bad economic shape, it nevertheless maintained seven

well-paid assistant directors. Spurred on by the party committee, a bare majority of the work collective committee called a workers' conference. It elected a workers' committee which it mandated to investigate and restore order in the factory. The director was replaced through competitive election and affairs began quickly to improve.⁹

At a Novosibirsk machine construction factory, the workers shut down a cooperative that management had entrusted with the enterprise's supply and transport services. This occurred after a group of workers forced open the assistant manager's safe and found a contract showing him to be an employee of the cooperative which had been selling the factory's raw materials on the side at two or three times the state price.¹⁰

At the VAZ auto factory, the workers first learnt from an interview with the assistant general director in the enterprise newspaper that, as one worker put it, "our clever managers had already prepared a package of documents for the conversion of VAZ into a concern." In response, the work collective committee declared VAZ and all its production the property of the work collective.¹¹

Conflicts over power in the enterprises, that is over workers' self-management, are destined to grow as the economic and political disintegration of the country continues and factory and ministerial administrations, behind the backs of the workers, who typically suspect the worst, transform enterprises into joint stock companies, enter them into "concerns", transfer departments to cooperatives, establish joint ventures and commercial banks with enterprise resources and funds.

Until recently, however, one could not speak of a self-management movement in the Soviet Union. There were only isolated conflicts over power and committee activity in the enterprises. The organized labour movement, which began with the miners strike of July 1989, has been characterized by a basically, though by no means exclusively, trade unionist orientation. After the 1989 strike, the miners transformed their strike committees into workers' committees, which united on a regional basis. Their main function was to monitor fulfillment of the accord with the govern-

ment, Resolution 608, that ended the strike. The miners have also held two national congresses, in June and October 1990. These resulted in the founding of an independent trade union. Unlike the official union, which embraces all the employees of the Ministry of the Coal Industry, the new union limits its membership to non-managerial personnel employed directly by the coal mines or the coal-enrichment factories. The Fifth Conference of Workers Committees of the Kuzbass, which (along with the much smaller Pechora basin) had been the most militant and politicized region, in September 1990 also set as its central goal the formation of a "normal" trade union movement.¹²

For a movement that arose out of nothing after almost 60 years of very effective repression, these are impressive organizational gains. Nevertheless, this movement is today in crisis. It has not really succeeded in spreading outside of the mines and mining regions. The unions of workers' committees that have arisen in other regions consist mainly of small groups of activists, who emerge out of their isolation only when serious conflict arises in their enterprise.

Independent unions lack mass base

None of the organizations from outside the coalmining areas that attended the Congress of Independent Workers Organizations and Movements in May 1990 in Novokuznetsk (which founded the Confederation of Labour) has anything resembling a mass base.¹³ In the mining areas themselves, rank-and-file activism has declined, and the ties between the unions of workers' committees and the rank-and-file have declined.¹⁴ Many delegates to the Second Congress of Coalminers in Donetsk at the end of October 1990 were not at all certain that the congress's decision to found a new trade union would meet with an active or enthusiastic response back home in the mines.¹⁵

9. *Rabochaya tribuna*, June 15, 1990.

10. A. N. Shkulov, "Na potustoronnei traktorii", *EKO*, no. 8, 1980 pp. 108-9.

11. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 8, 1990.

12. *Nasha gazeta* (Novokuznetsk), no. 33, October 2, 1990.

13. P. Funder Larsen, "Workers of the USSR unite!" *International Viewpoint*, 187, June 18, 1990 and B. Ikhlov, "Neklassovyi vrag," *Rabochii vestnik* (Perm'), no. 5, May 1990, pp. 4-7.

14. This was noted, for example, by V. Golikov, chairman of the Kuzbass Union of Workers Committees, in his report to the fifth conference on September 29-30, 1990. See *Nasha gazeta*, no. 33, October 2, 1990.

15. This is based upon conversations and on the unpublished proceedings.

16. *Kazanskiy rabochii* (Kazan') no. 2, July 1990.

17. People close to the (official) Union of Workers in the Coal Industry claimed that the minister favoured the creation of a new trade union in order to split the workers. While there is probably some truth in this, most of the delegates to the Miners' Congress that founded the new union were of the opinion that any further attempts to reform the old union would be futile.



This is essentially a crisis of political orientation against the background of the deepening economic crisis. The attempt through strictly trade-unionist activity to protect living standards and labour conditions in a collapsing economy has reached its limits. The miners themselves have recognized that the government lacked the means to carry out certain parts of Resolution 608 and that many of those economic gains realized were soon lost to inflation.

Ministry finances miners' conference

Moreover, in existing Soviet conditions, a trade unionist orientation often leads to solidarity between workers and their administration, often at the expense of the rest of the population that ends up with a bill it can ill afford to pay. For example, the one-day mail carriers strike on June 15, 1990 was organized by the Ministry of Communications itself.¹⁶ And the Second Congress of Miners was financed by the Coal Industry Ministry, which had its representatives on the organizing committee. This surely must raise questions about the interests being pursued by the various bureaucratic clans in supporting these movements.¹⁷

The miners' movement did, of course, put forth important political demands relating to the democratization of the state. But the basic question remained unanswered: what to do with this democracy if and when it was won? The most politicized elements (often those most strongly under liberal influence) have tended to advocate a trade-unionist orientation for the labour movement and, to the extent that they put forward a positive economic programme, a market reform borrowed from the liberals. But this is running up against the same reality that the liberals are now being forced to confront.

Representatives of the Kuzbass Union of Workers' Committees, which under the presidency of Vyacheslav Golikov has had the strongest pro-liberal orientation, participated in the work of the Shatalin-Yavlinskii commission that drew up the 500-Day Plan. This is a programme for the wholesale privatization of the economy and the establishment of a market system in which state regulation plays a subordinate role.¹⁸ The Kuzbass union has been a strong supporter of Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament, with whom it concluded a social peace accord in exchange for the parliament's support in creating a "zone of joint entrepreneurship" (free-trade zone) in the Kuzbass.

But Golikov, in his report to the union's fifth conference at the end of September 1990, was forced to recognize the "deformations" (as described in my article in the previous issue of *IV*) that were already occurring in the Kuzbass with the expansion of the private sector and market relations in the region. He appealed "not to leave these processes to themselves with-

out the participation of the toilers. While defending market relations in the economy, we do not intend to allow it to be bought by existing structures and their functionaries". Yet he offered no practical proposals for preventing this.

Similarly, the conference's "Appeal to the Toilers of the Kuzbass" observed that "The programme of transition to market relations and, in the Kuzbass, also the creation of a zone of joint entrepreneurship, are on the whole seen positively by the toilers of the region. But at the same time, the shift of the enterprises to cost-accounting and self-financing is already causing job cuts and the closure of unprofitable factories. The transition to market relations will intensify this process by many times." But rather than question the wisdom of this reform, the document merely calls for the creation of "genuine trade unions" to defend the workers.¹⁸

Kuzbass miners may benefit from market

The liberal orientation of the Kuzbass leaders is to a large extent premised upon their understanding that the region is well-situated to benefit from the market. The cost of extracting coal in the Kuzbass is relatively low, since the industry here is comparatively new and the coal close to the surface, often allowing open-pit mining. Export contracts have already been signed with Japan. (Some economists, however, argue that Kuzbass optimism will be short-lived. The region is 6000 kilometres from a port, and the exports are being subsidized by cheap Soviet freight rates. If these rates were raised to the same world levels at which the coal is being sold, there would be no foreign contracts. How long will the railroad agree to subsidize the foreign-currency earnings of the Kuzbass coal industry?)

The future, however, does not look too rosy for the Donbass coalminers. The mines are old, deep — many are virtually mined out — and their production costs are high. The transition to the market here threatens the region with mass unemployment and the extinction of entire towns and villages.

It is not surprising, then, that outside of the Kuzbass and the Pechora basin (which has export contracts with Sweden

through Arctic ports) the miners movement has been rather less enthusiastic about the market. As the inevitable consequences of a transition to the market, as envisaged by the liberal reformers, become clearer, their lack of enthusiasm is turning into alarm. After the publication of the 500-Day Plan, which calls for an end to subsidies and the eventual freeing of prices, dozens of mining associations and enterprises sent angry telegrams to the government.²⁰

A delegation of miners from the Yakutogol' Association came to Moscow to protest against the intended dismantling of the industry's central administration and the ending of subsidies. "Natural and geological conditions vary from mine to mine," they explained. "Therefore they cannot all be equally profitable. In our association the average cost of coal is from one to eighteen rubles, but in Donbass it is 40 to 120 rubles. Without the centralized redistribution of funds, without subsidies, Donbass will not survive....Without centralized management, all sorts of misfortunes and shocks await the branch."²¹

Miners withdraw support for free market plan

Taking note of these concerns, the organizing committee of the Second Congress of miners decided against endorsing the plan. One of its members, a miner from Karaganda, explained: "There are disputes in the collectives and in the organizing committee [about the transition to the market]. The interesting thing is that we ourselves participated in the creation of one of the programmes — that of Shatalin....But we wavered. Why? First of all because the hardest blow will be struck against the extractive industries, and we wanted to first see a separate programme of transition to the market in our branch.

"Of course, a part of the people understand that it will be necessary to adopt certain sacrifices, but there are also many who say: why do I need the market if my interests are violated, if I lose benefits and job seniority? ...We are also worried by the fact that the realization of the Shatalin programme calls for a strong presidential power. Yet just yesterday, we proclaimed the democratization of society and self-management."²²

The organizing committee demanded

18. A summary of this programme appeared in *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, September 29, 1990. For an analysis of this programme and a comparison with the USSR government's "Basic orientations for the stabilization of the economy and the transition to a market economy" see A. Kolganov, "Doloi Nomenklaturnyi kapitalizm", *Dialog*, no. 17, November 1990, pp. 41-8.

19. *Nasha gazeta*, no. 33, October 2, 1990.

20. The editors of the popular weekly *Argumenty i fakty* rejected, without any explanation, an article by one of their writers about these telegrams. This perhaps has something to do with the fact that five members of the editorial committee are deputies in the Russian parliament, which adopted the 500-Day Plan

with only one opposing vote, even though few of the deputies had seen more than a brief summary of it.

21. *Rabochaya tribuna*, September 25, 1990.

22. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, October 4, 1990.

23. *Rabochaya tribuna*, October 21, 1990.

24. Personal communication. The Confederation of Labour was founded by the Congress of Independent Workers' Organizations and Movements in Novokuznetsk in May 1990.

25. From the unpublished protocols and personal conversations.

At one point, Golikov tried to reassure the Donbass miners, saying that Kuzbass had helped the British miners during their strike: why think they would not help their Donbass brethren?

the maintenance, at least for the transitional period, of the industry's central administration and subsidies.²³ Even the Council of Representatives of the Confederation of Labour, which was subject to strong liberal influence at its founding, also balked at endorsing the 500-Day Plan at its September 1990 meeting in Donetsk.²⁴

The differences in orientation among the mining regions manifested themselves from the very start of the Second Congress of Miners at the end of October 1990 in the debate over the agenda. There were three main items: a report on how the decisions of the first congress had been carried out, the transition to the market in the coal industry, including a report by the Minister, and the establishment of an independent trade union.

Trade unions little use in face of closure threat

Delegates from the Donbass insisted on allotting an unlimited amount of time to the second question. They felt their region was at stake and that trade unions would be little use if the mines were closed. Delegates from the Kuzbass, on the other hand, insisted on unlimited time for the third point, since, they argued, whatever system the workers lived under, they would need strong trade unions to defend them.²⁵

Though the vast majority of delegates were in favour of a new independent trade union (a significant minority wanted to democratize the old one), a split over these differences in orientation was narrowly averted only at the very end of the congress, when the new trade union was established. But the delegates of the congress remained extremely dissatisfied with the report on the transition to the market, even though the minister had assured them there would be no layoffs in 1991 ("If even one miner is dismissed," he declared, "you won't have to ask me, I will resign myself").

The discussion made it amply clear that although many miners fear the market, they certainly do not want to retain the old system.

But the minister offered no new vision, only the need to ask the government for additional subsidies. The delegates responded with the decision to create their own commission of experts to develop a plan for the industry.

This decision was implicit recognition of the limits of the strictly trade unionist approach that some of the Kuzbass delegates, like Gorlikov, were advocating. These delegates argued that the congress's basic task was to create a trade union whose principal function would be to obtain the highest possible price for the labour power the workers were selling to the "employers" (rabotodateli). But most of the delegates obviously felt that the new union could not leave the tasks of managing and restructuring their industry outside its purview. ★

The emergence of a self-management movement

ALTHOUGH self-management has not played a prominent role in the miners' movement, even those leaders closest to the liberals would no doubt say that they support the idea. One often has the impression that their alliance with the liberals is in no small part based on a misconception (fed by liberal rhetoric about "people's enterprises" and "returning property to the people") that the market proposed by the "democrats" is a necessary condition for real self-management.

In fact, the history of market reform in Yugoslavia, which has had the richest experience in this area, shows that self-management poses severe limits to the free circulation of capital and labour, and as such is incompatible with the efficient functioning of the kind of "full-blooded market" that Gorbachev has said he wants to introduce in the Soviet Union. In Yugoslavia, as well as in the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the "radicalization" of the market reform is being accompanied by a retreat from the self-management idea and the restoration of full property rights, including the right of owners to manage and sell their enterprises.

DAVID SEPPO

BUT although the self-management orientation has until recently been a minor note in the organized labour movement in the Soviet Union, it was never completely absent. At the May 1990 Congress of Independent Workers Organizations and Movements, where the influence of certain liberal Moscow intellectuals was strongly felt, a minority "Bloc of 33" delegates (mostly from outside the mining areas and in particular from the industrial centres of the Urals), argued for an independent labour movement within the broader democratic movement (a position firmly opposed by the liberals¹) and proposed the following platform as a response to what they described as an offensive against labour's social and political rights: "In no circumstances to deprive the workers of the right to manage their enterprises and to realize the principles of self-management; not to allow the economic reform to be carried out at the expense of workers' interests, the reduction of their real wages and the spread of unemployment; to oppose the democratization of

property relations through the sale of state enterprises to private individuals."²

The conflicts over power in the enterprise and the deepening suspicion among the workers that destatization will in practice mean the transformation of their enterprises into the property of the bureau-

1. According to the bulletin of the Workers' Group in the Yaroslavl Popular Front, "Many intellectual democrats talk of the need for a union of the democratic intelligentsia and the workers. It sounds nice. But what they mean in practise can be seen from the example of the Yaroslavl Popular Front...They rejected from the very start the idea that the Popular Front should seek a social base in the workers and they observed with gloomy apprehension from the sidelines the activity of the Workers' Group. The Popular Front not only did nothing for the organization of Yaroslavl's workers, but it simply does not want the creation of a real workers' and really independent workers' organizations...They mouth off about 'common human interests' and toss out stupidities from the tribune to the effect that 'the class approach leads to genocide.'" From *Listok Rabochei Gruppy* (Yaroslavl) reproduced in *Rabochaya tribuna*, November 7, 1990. For analyses of the debates at the Congress of Independent Worker Organizations and Movement on this issue see P. Funder Larsen, "Workers of the USSR, Unite!", *International Viewpoint*, no. 187, June 18, 1990, and B. Ikhlov, "Neklassovyi vrag," *Rabochii vestnik*, (Perm') no. 5, May 1990.

2. *Rabochii vestnik* (Perm') no. 5, May 1990, p. 11.

crats and "affairistes" of the shadow economy formed the background for the emergence of an organized self-management current in the labour movement in the late summer of 1990. But the immediate impulse was provided by the passage in the USSR Supreme Soviet on a new "Law on Enterprises in the USSR" at its spring 1990 session.

This law, adopted with suspiciously little publicity, supersedes the 1987 "Law on State Enterprises" that had granted broad self-management rights to the work collectives, including the right to elect managerial personnel and to participate in and monitor the administration of the enterprise through their elected work-collective councils.³ The new law was explained at the time by the need to facilitate the process of democratization and the shift to the market. But the activists who managed to learn of it described it as "depriving the work-collective councils of any real functions in management and in practice reducing them to nothing."⁴ Under the new law, which said nothing about self-management, enterprises are to be managed according to their charters, which are to be established by the owners.

Legislation in secret

A week after the law's adoption, the workers of the main assembly line of the VAZ factory declared: "[We] are deeply angered by the fact that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, on June 4 1990, passed a 'Law on Enterprises in the USSR', in secret from the people, without first even publishing a draft in the press and submitting it to the collectives for discussion. In essence, a gross provocation has been committed against the toilers of the country. A law affecting the interests of every work collective has been adopted without any consideration for the opinion of the toilers themselves."⁵

In fact, the offensive against self-management, which had never become much of a reality anyway, had begun months earlier with the government's instruction to end the practise of electing managerial personnel. "The absurdity of these elections does not require discussion," wrote the management-oriented journal *EKO*. "This has already been recognized by N. I. Ryzhkov. M. S. Gorbachev, who first proposed them, has not expressed any opinion, but his silence speaks loudly."⁶

The liberal ideologues have also participated in this offensive, though often hiding behind self-management rhetoric. Thus, Gorbachev's personal adviser, economist Nikolai Petrakov, has described the creation of councils of stockholders (who are not limited to the enterprise's employees), which will appoint the directors and make key decisions on investments, dividends and profits, as "a sort of step toward self-management free of higher-standing

links."⁷

The convocation of the first All-Union Conference of Work Collective Councils and Workers' Committees in Tolyatti on August 31-September 4, 1990, was a direct response to the passage of the new law. Attended by about a hundred delegates from enterprises employing some two million, it was almost completely ignored by the national media. *Rabochaya tribuna* (Workers' Tribune — published by the Central Committee of the CPSU) was the only central paper to give it any coverage, and this was really incidental to its main interest in responding to the challenge of Nikolai Travkin, leader of the Democratic Party⁸, who said he would eat his hat if the paper published the conference's resolution critical of the government.

The crew of the national news programme, *Vremya*, also came, but its purpose was to film Venyamin Yarin, an "honorary" worker-member of Gorbachev's Presidential Council. Yarin told the conference that the President had entrusted him with the mission of organizing the representatives of the work control councils around himself and the Presidential Council.⁹ Apparently, the conference's failure to respond to this offer explains why no news about it appeared on Soviet television screens.

While the conference approved of the new law's intention of increasing the economic activity of enterprises, it otherwise assessed it as anti-democratic, directed against the self-management, favouring the arbitrary power of the administration and the ministries and holding back the processes of demonopolization and destatization.

Work councils outmoded?

Some did argue that the work collective councils had been subservient to management and, in any case, they were outmoded now that the government had adopted a policy of privatization¹⁰ that allows for more "progressive" forms of enterprise management. The new law states that enterprises are to be administered according to their charter established by their owner or owners. Since, it was argued, the work collectives are about to become the owners, why make a fuss? If they judged the councils to be useful, they could decide to retain it.

But that was the rub: the majority of delegates were not at all certain that the work collectives would inherit the destatized factories. Certainly this was as far from clear in the 500-Day Plan as it was in the USSR government's "Basic Orientations for the Stabilization of the Economy and the Transition to a Market Economy". Both allow for all forms of property and neither makes specific provision for self-management, let alone for ownership or control by the work collectives. Indeed, if one goes beyond the rhetoric and deliber-

ate fuzziness of sections relating to property and management, their entire thrust is against self-management and for the introduction of full private property rights.¹¹

Work councils to choose

Accordingly, the conference demanded that the work collective councils themselves be the ones to choose the appropriate form of property for their enterprises. Specifically, they should have two options: they could either become collective owners, without payment for the enterprise, or they could decide that the enterprise remain state property that would be managed by the councils. In discussing the first option, some argued for payment, since the enterprises were built, not by the collectives, but by the entire society.

But the majority rejected these arguments, not least because the workers simply lack the means to purchase their enterprises. As for management of the enterprises, all were agreed that under both options the administration should be hired employees of the collective and work under its supervision. The meeting declared "impermissible the transforma-

3. For a brief discussion of the ambiguous self-management provisions of the 1987 law, see D. Mandel, "Revolutionary Reform; restructuring relations between workers and management", *Socialist Register* 1989, London, Merlin Press, pp. 102-29, p. 110.

4. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 6, 1990. On the 1988 law, see D. Mandel, "Revolutionary reform..."

5. *Sobstvennoe mnenie* (Tolyatti), no. 7, 1990.

6. "Demokratizatsiya no proizvodstve, vlast' dela i vlast'...ch'ya?", *EKO* (Novosibirsk), no. 8, 1990, pp. 85-102, p. 85.

7. *Rabochaya tribuna*, April 22, 1990. See also, R. W. Davies, "Gorbachev's socialism in historical perspective," *New Left Review*, Spring 1990, pp. 22-3.

8. Of the sundry liberal parties, Travkin's has made the most effort to court workers. Travkin himself, who rather dubiously claims he was once a worker (at present he is a businessman and politician), regularly appears at large worker gatherings, spreading his message of primitive anti-communism. So far he has had little success among the workers, who have generally been withholding their allegiance from all political parties.

9. In December 1990, Gorbachev disbanded this largely symbolic advisory council, one of whose main purposes seems to have been to co-opt potential opposition. Yarin, a metallurgical worker, had been co-chairman of the anti-liberal United Front of Toilers. He liked to say that after 30 years at the factory, all the property he had accumulated was what he was wearing. As a member of the Presidential Council, Yarin enjoyed a spacious apartment, trips abroad, a generous salary, and, of course, much official honour. It did not take him long to come round fully to Gorbachev's policies. The United Front of Toilers, whose fortunes have been flagging since its foundation in the summer of 1989 (its worker support is quite thin) recently ousted Yarin (according to Yarin, he resigned.)

10. "Privatization" and "destatization" are often used interchangeably in the Soviet Union.

11. The 500-Day Plan gives the work collective one month to propose a form of property for the enterprise, but the decision remains that of the state authorities. It also allows that 10% of the stocks "may be transferred" (this apparently also depends on the discretion of the authorities) to the enterprise for sale and transfer on preferential terms to members of the work collective (not the collective as a group).

12. This account is based on personal communications from participants and *Rabochaya tribuna*, September 9, 1990.



tion of ministries into concerns playing the role of leasers of joint stock companies." It called on the Supreme Soviet to suspend the law until it could be revised to take into account the decisions of the conference and it asked republican parliaments to ignore those provisions that contradicted the self-management provisions of the 1987 law. A new draft law should be submitted to a national discussion. The conference elected an organizing committee to co-ordinate the activities of the work-collective councils and workers' committee throughout the country and to act as their spokesperson. It was instructed to participate in revising the law and to convoke a full congress of self-management committees in December that would establish a permanent organization.¹²

This was the first organized expression of how at least a significant part of the workers see "destatization". It made clear the underlying differences between the motives of the workers' support for market reform and those of the liberals. As noted earlier, rhetoric aside, a "full-blooded market", the liberals' ultimate goal, requires the establishment of full private property rights. The workers, for their part, support market reform and the enterprise autonomy that it would provide as conditions for a more efficient economy and real self-management by the collectives. Although the conference was silent on this, it was implicit in its position that enterprises that become the property of the collectives (there is no question for those that remain state property) could not be divided or sold.

Successful conference

Despite the organizing committee's meagre resources and the difficulty in finding a large enough hall, 700 delegates

and 300 observers, mainly workers and engineers, self-management activists from large enterprises that together employ about seven million workers, attended the Founding Congress of Work-Collective Councils and Workers' Committees on December 8-10, 1990. Many of the delegates had to pay their own way, and some had even to brave threats from management.¹³ But the main purpose of the gathering, to create a permanent organization of self-management committees, to reaffirm

the Tolyatti conference's position on the "Law of Enterprises in the USSR" and on destatization, and to develop a plan of action, were achieved.

The congress founded the Union of Work-Collective Councils and Workers' Committees and elected a council of representatives from the major regions, with three co-chairpersons.¹⁴ A heated debate took place over the issue of a warning strike at the start of January to support the congress's programmatic demands. Although a strike was not ruled out, it was decided first to try other means, in particular to act through the Republican parliaments. The chair of the USSR Supreme Soviet A. Luk'yanov tried to reassure the delegates that the Soviet parliament agreed that the self-management councils should have the right to decide all the matters that affect the vital interests of the workers.

He invited them to to work with the parliament on revising the Laws on the Enterprise and on Property, which, he admitted, had already been overtaken by events. But the delegates were not reassured. Sergei Novopol'skii of the AZLK factory explained that: "It does not depend on promises and declaration and not even on the intentions of the other side, but on our decisiveness. If they do not carry out our demands, we will declare a strike."¹⁵

A dominant theme of the discussion was the danger of a quiet appropriation of state property by bureaucratic clans who are adapting the market to their interests. Much evidence, along the lines cited in my article in the previous issue of *IV*, was brought to support that fear. The Union's programme of immediate measures took note of the "critical situation in the country linked to the attempt by the administrative-command system to consolidate its power through the appropriation of the

property belonging to the people and to leave the toilers in the situation of hired labourers deprived of rights." It called on the councils to convene their collectives to hear reports from the administration on its activity, "including [that relating to] joint enterprises, small enterprises, cooperatives, as well as its participation in associations and concerns...and to stop any attempts to transform enterprises behind the back of the collective into concerns, joint-stock companies and so on."

The Union's basic goals are the achievement of "legal guarantees and the realization in practice of the voluntary and free choice by the work collectives of forms of property and management", as well as "drawing of work collectives into the process of managing their enterprises, as one of the main ways of fighting against the totalitarian system with the aim of overcoming the alienation of the toilers from power and from property and the liquidation of the cruel exploitation of the people by the barrack-bureaucratic state." Finally, the "union unites the labour collectives in the aim of mobilizing their civic activity as a factor for the general improvement of the situation in the country, as a factor of constant positive pressure from below on legislative and executive organs, and finally, as a factor that will block anti-popular actions and facilitate the precise and swift execution of plans and decisions in the interests of the toilers."¹⁶

From a socialist point of view, the programme of the new Union is not unambiguous, and it is worth looking first at some of the potential dangers it presents. As already noted, although the inalienable and indivisible nature of the collective's property flows logically from the programme, this is never made explicit.

No economic conception

More importantly, there is no overall economic conception. The Union clearly supports market reform (although this too is not really spelled out), but is this reform to lead to a system defined by market relations, that is, one in which the market dominates and dictates its logic to society, or to one where market relations are a mechanism of economic regulation and coordination subordinated to the collective, conscious will of the society?

It could be argued that the movement's emphasis on enterprise autonomy and on ownership by the collective can serve as a basis for an eventual restoration of capitalism as well as for the construction of a socialist economy based on self-management, depending on whether the accent is on the market or on the collective power of the workers. If it is on the

13. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 8 1990.

14. These are a mechanic-assembler from VAZ, an engineer from the new Elabuga auto factory and the chairman of the work-collective council of the Moscow Kauchuk rubber factory.

15. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 12, 1990.

16. Unpublished document.

former, there seems little more reason to welcome monopolism based upon workers' self-management than bureaucratic monopolism; both involve the pursuit of particular, corporatist interests at the expense of the collectivity.

Gorbachev moves to right

With Gorbachev moving to the "right" (in particular his attempt to shore up the Union and the disintegrating economy through extraordinary presidential powers based upon a greater reliance on the army and the KGB and his appointment of conservatives to certain top posts) and the realization among liberals that "destatization" is not proceeding as they would like (that is, in a way that would give ample influence and reward to the intellectual élite and to a private sector not dependent on bureaucratic whims), some liberals are already proposing the idea of an alliance with the self-management movement, hoping to dominate it.

Gavriil Popov has publicly warned of two possible variants of privatization: "the transfer as property to the bureaucracy (along with the trade mafia) of that which they have, so to speak, already been "managing" so successfully; or democratic privatization, with transfer of enterprises to the toilers."¹⁷ (A supporter of the 500-Day Plan, Popov no more really wants to see the second option realized than do the bureaucrats he is attacking.)

Igor Klyamkin, one of the most insightful liberal ideologues, has now also come round to seeing in Gorbachev the leader of the "revolution from above". Yel'tsin, on the other hand, represents for him "new [unnamed] forces"; Yel'tsin wants a "different [unspecified] kind of market." Klyamkin laments the fact that nationalism cannot serve as a basis for "democracy" (that is, for the liberal intelligentsia and its restorationist project) in Russia, as it does in other republics. He suggests, however, that such a basis might be constructed from the struggles provoked by destatization, and he calls for "a broad bloc of employees and entrepreneurs."¹⁸

The hopes pinned on this tactic of harnessing the popular movement to the liberal programme in the Russian Republic by playing up the opposition of a supposedly democratic republican parliament led by Yel'tsin to the undemocratic central government and parliament led by Gorbachev has some basis.

The tactic has a major trump in Yel'tsin's personal popularity as an outspoken opponent of the establishment — though there are some signs that his star too might be waning. Thus, the workers of the VAZ assembly line, whose resolution was cited above, appealed to Yel'tsin and the Russian parliament to defend their self-management rights against the central government. Their programme of the December Congress called on the collectives to work through their republican par-

liaments and to push for the transfer of their enterprises from Union to republican jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, the liberals' attempt to win the self-management movement to their cause has slight chance of success: their market reform is no more compatible with a revolution from below and genuine self-management than that of the reformist wing of the bureaucracy. And these two groups need each other to realize their programmes, which are really not that different.¹⁹ It was only a little over a year ago that Klyamkin himself wrote that the transition to the market could not be achieved democratically, since the workers are too attached to the idea of social justice.²⁰ Now, after suddenly "discovering" that Gorbachev, in contrast to Yeltsin, has embraced the "revolution from above" he nevertheless still concludes (not at all disapprovingly) that a Gorbachev-Yeltsin alliance is inevitable, though for good measure he concludes that it will be a stormy marriage of convenience.

Ineffective democracy

As Sergei Stankevich, deputy mayor of Moscow and one of the three leaders of the liberal "Interregional Group" in the USSR Parliament put it in the closing days of 1990: "The situation in the country is critical and by ordinary parliamentary methods, using only our newly-born and still-ineffective democracy, it will be impossible to resolve our problems. Therefore, we need a more authoritarian leadership of the reform process."²¹ The liberals' feeble reaction to Gorbachev's shift to the "right" indicates that Stankevich's views are widely shared by his colleagues, or that, in any case, they can find no acceptable alternative to Gorbachev.

Of course, few would deny the need to restore some semblance of order in the economy. The presidential decree reactivating and strengthening "workers' control" of trade (to be aided by the KGB!) should be seen as a populist gesture on Gorbachev's part.²² But this measure is not really intended to change the relations of power in the economy.

The unmistakable thrust of Gorbachev's latest shift (certainly not his last — the "revolution from above" has only one possible programme: the market) is towards bureaucratic recentralization, which in practice necessarily means strengthening the power of the economic managers vis-à-vis the workers. The All-Union Meeting of Managers of State Enterprises that took place at almost the same time as the self-management congress adopted a strong law and order resolution. In contrast to the workers' congress, this gathering, held in the Kremlin's Palace of Congresses, was addressed by Gorbachev himself and received broad press coverage.²³

As the liberal-apparatus alliance

becomes more explicit, so the liberals' success in winning popular support as the only real democrats and most fearless enemies of the bureaucracy declines. On the other hand, socialists, who so far have remained relatively isolated from their potential social base, are the only ones who embrace the revolution from below and put forth a consistent democratic programme. The self-management movement thus opens up new possibilities for breaking their isolation.

Summing up political developments in 1990, Pavel Voshchanov, political observer for *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, lamented "a mass shift to the right in consciousness.... The discrediting of the democratic idea is one of the political outcomes of this last year." By "democratic idea" Voshchanov, of course, means "liberalism". His use of the term "right" is more ambiguous, since it can refer to conservative "defenders of socialism" as well as to genuine socialists (these two groups are indistinguishable to the liberals, who are in complete agreement with the liberals that socialism has already been constructed in the Soviet Union). But there is no evidence of a shift in mass consciousness towards the conservatives, either of the Stalinist or of the Pamyat' (Great Russian chauvinist) type. On the contrary, the emergence of an organized self-management current demonstrates the continued strength of democratic sentiment among the workers.

Weakening liberal influence

The creation of the Union of Work-Collective Committees is itself a sign of the weakening of liberal ideological influence in an important sector of the labour movement. The recognition of the need for coordinating their activities indicates that self-management activists are beginning to discover the limits of a corporatist approach to their struggle for enterprise autonomy. Such an approach, which has received strong encouragement from liberals, was to a large degree a spontaneous reaction on the workers' part to their experience with bureaucratic centralism. But this seems to be changing under the impact of what they have already experi-

17. Radzikhovskii, "Kapitalizm v otdel'no vzyatoi kvartire," *Nedel'nyy*, no. 48, November 25, 1990, p. 7.

18. I. Klyamkin, "Oktabr'skii vybor prezidenta," *Ogonek*, no. 47, November 1990, p. 7.

19. In the view of A. Kolganov, a Marxist economist at Moscow University, the "500-Days" are based upon a bloc between the "new rich" and the party-economic bureaucracy on terms dictated by the new rich. The Union programme calls for a smoother, less painful path of transformation of the bureaucracy into new rich, naturally on its own terms. A. Kolganov, "Doloi nomenklaturnyi kapitalizm," *Dialog*, No. 17, November 1990, p. 45.

20. E. Béard-Zarzicka, "Quelques propositions pour une perestroika autoritaire," *Les temps modernes* (Paris), no. 523, February 1990, pp. 11-22.

21. *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, December 30, 1990.

22. *Trud*, December 2, 1990.

23. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 8, 9 and 11, 1990.

24. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 6, 1990.

enced of the market and the threat posed by growing economic dislocation.

"Certain elements would very much like to split up the workers as potential owners," explained a delegate to the Congress from the Elabuga auto factory. "When they are isolated from each other, it will be easier to manipulate them in the service of alien interests. This is one of the reasons we called the congress."²⁴ Much was said at the congress of the need for a strong central authority capable of restoring respect for laws and harmony among the republics, uniting regions and establishing stable economic relations in a unified economic space. But the congress rejected Gorbachev's authoritarian solution. According to V. Kataev, a delegate from Cheboksar:

"Such an authority cannot be established from above with the aid of a club and decrees. It will be established by the work collectives themselves if they become the complete masters of the socialist property. In that case, as the resolution of the Congress states, the work-collective as owners are prepared to bear full responsibility for the results of the economic activity of their enterprises and for order in the country."²⁵

V. Adrianov, co-chairman of the Union and a mechanic on the VAZ assembly line, expressed the outlook of the self-management movement in the following terms: "The work-collective councils in the enterprises were born of *perestroika*. But from the very start, they were separated from each other. Today the time has come to unite. Why? We are standing on the threshold of the market. We are not indifferent when it comes to who will get that part of the national property that will undergo destatization. The aim of our

union: through common efforts, to win the possibility for every collective to itself choose the form of property, to itself become, if it so desires, the owner of its enterprise without payment. Only the workers, having become the master, the owners of the property, are capable of stopping the advancing chaos in the economy.

"The programmes of transition to the market that have been adopted contain within them the danger of violation of the workers' interests. Exploiting the confusion, the administrative-command apparatus is attempting not only to hold onto the reigns of management, but to become in fact the owners of the means of production, creating concerns, associations, joint-stock companies. As for us, we are left the role of hired labour, the draught force of the economy. We cannot and simply do not have the right to allow that."²⁶

A socialist path

If the workers are really going to prevent this, they will have to take up the fight for a socialist path of development. For it alone holds out the prospect of genuine democratization of economic and political relations. While the liberals form alliances with the apparatus in order to push through by authoritarian means a reform that would leave economic power in the hands of a small élite, the socialists emerge as the only real democrats. In a joint declaration at the end of September 1990, a coalition of left parties and groups in Moscow condemned the official reform programmes as:

"One more social experiment that would maintain power and property in a new form in the hands of the party-state

bureaucracy and the "affairistes" of the shadow economy. The bosses of the [Brezhnev] period of stagnation want to change the form of their domination....And once again, the burden of these transformations will fall entirely on the shoulders of ordinary people....Yesterday's "irreconcilable" fighters against the privileges of the partocracy are prepared today to defend the power of the same nomenklatura, with the only difference that now transactions will occur in cash [pod nalichnyi raschet]....The slogans of justice, humanism, and charity, under which the democratic movement of the *perestroika* period developed, have been replaced with calls for a cruel economy, a firm hand, and the auctioning off of the nation's wealth...

"It is necessary to overcome the false alternative between totalitarianism and a monopoly-dominated capitalist market and to take our own path, determined by the creative activity of the people where they live and work and by the unity of their actions as a people. In this work, our sympathies lie with social, production and territorial self-management, though this too cannot be imposed from above."

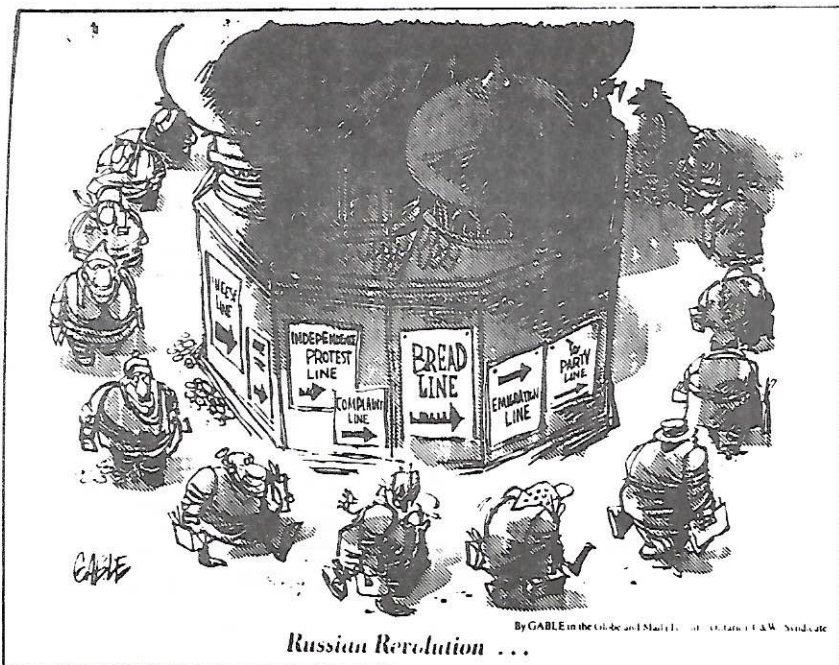
Among the immediate measures proposed in the declaration are: the right of work collectives to determine independently, without purchase, the forms of property, management and self-management in their enterprises; the right of local soviets to manage land and natural resources, monitored by public organizations; the right of republics and other territorial formations to independently determine their status as well as the powers they voluntarily delegate to superordinate organizations; the abolition of presidential power; democratic opposition to the creation of authoritarian national States that refuse national and civil rights to their own minorities; the consistent introduction of full human rights, in particular the abolition of the death penalty, of anti-strike legislation, of all forms of forced labour, of the internal passport regime, and of the political police; the right of the local population through their soviets and through referenda to veto the construction of enterprises on their territory.²⁷

Such is the state of *glasnost* that none of the newspapers would agree to print this declaration. But despite the obstacles posed by the liberal near-monopoly of the mass media (tempered only by the minority conservative media), the profoundly democratic nature of the labour movement, and more particularly, the appearance of an organized self-management current within it, give grounds for optimism about the eventual development of an active, mass base for socialism in the Soviet Union. ★

25. Ibid.

26. *Rabochaya tribuna*, December 8, 1990.

27. For an English translation of this document, see *International Viewpoint*, no. 194, November 12, 1990.



Russian Revolution ...

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

47. A Period of Camp Liberalization

Right next to us, in the Mine No. 3 camp that was divided from the Mine No. 1 camp by a wooden fence and barbed wire, raged supervisor Samodurov, a sergeant. Our camp had at one time been run by another Samodurov, a major. The significance of the name [meaning petty tyrant] was a fortuitous coincidence. They may have been related in some way beyond their kinship in spirit.

After the camp administration had already decided to loosen up somewhat, our major received a directive: it was no longer required that ZKs' heads be shaved. Before transmitting this directive to the underlings, the major issued an order of his own: All ZKs who have hair longer than half a centimeter must get a haircut every three days or suffer a most severe punishment. A big campaign started in the barracks. When we would be walking around outside, the authorities would pull our hats off to check the length of our hair: was it half a centimeter long or was it longer? No one had made such a fuss over us for a long time.

When the measure was finally implemented—after some of the second-rate stooges had made total fools of themselves during the chaotic interval—Samodurov posted the real directive he had received, that you didn't have to have a haircut at all. That is all the attention our major deserves; his true stature has been exposed. Let us focus now on the sergeant.

The camp supervisors, like those in the prisons, were not soldiers serving their required term of service but volunteers, people who had reenlisted. They were, of course, selected for the job. Sergeant Samodurov had been a good choice. He came at least twice a day to do a roll-call in the barracks. If a supervisor in any of the barracks had incorrectly added 49 plus 77, all the barracks had to have roll-call a third time, and sometimes even a fourth time. Samodurov would get us all up each time and order us to form up. Even if we were in our undershorts, we had to "fall in." He didn't care if we had just returned a half-hour ago from the night shift! Nor did it concern him that in addition to having spent eight hours underground, we had also spent six to seven hours being dispatched, searched, on the road, and on other camp traditions. What he cared about was counting and he had no intention of counting us while we slept. That might be a scarecrow there in the bunk instead of a real ZK. Everyone out of your bunk and make it snappy!

The camps and prisons reeducate both those being watched and the watchers. However, no one wanted to notice what this reforge-

ing was doing to the forgers themselves, and through them, little by little, to the society as a whole.

Sergeant Samodurov served meticulously. Somewhere on a collective farm that he had left forever some years ago, an ordinary event had taken place: his father had been arrested, had gotten the sentence he had coming to him, and was hauled off to Vorkuta.

At morning muster, when they gathered the prisoners to lead them to work, the convoy commander recited like a tongue-twister his prayer for travelers: "Either a step to the left or a step to the right I will consider an attempt to escape and I will shoot you without warning." One ZK suddenly took five steps to the left, threw his arms around the neck of supervisor Samodurov and shouted: "My little son, my dear, little son!"

The whole outfit froze. Sergeant Samodurov pushed his father away and yelled:

"Hey convoy? What are you looking at, you bastards! Your people are breaking formation and you're standing there with your hands in your pockets!"

The guards moved into action. They hurriedly took the old man back to the camp zone and that very day transferred him to another Special Camp Point. And the supervisor? What did they do to the supervisor? His job is to keep watch. Everyone out of your bunks and make it snappy!

Other types also turned up among the supervisors—the process of cadre selection was not foolproof. Our camp was put under a special alert. A supervisor had shot himself. This was carefully concealed from the prisoners. I heard that he could not take it anymore.

The day the country learned of Stalin's death, our Mr. Fidgets had to get to work. That morning, remembering the investigator who noticed that I was always smiling at the wrong time, I promised myself that I would keep a glum look on my face.

We had already heard the government's communique on the radio. We listened in silence; the stooges pricked up their ears. They needed such sad events more often to make the fish bite. Someone was bound to say the wrong thing! Those who came in from the night shift fell into their beds more quickly than usual. An unusual silence prevailed in the barracks.

The door opened. Two guards on duty came in. With them was a third person, assigned especially to our barracks as the educator, a head sergeant, small but vicious. An educator is such a noble calling. At that time the person assigned to this post was a common

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

criminal—one considered especially reliable, i.e., one who had turned in at least five of his comrades. Only a person like that was able to cultivate in prisoners a sense of comradeship. Evidently the sense of comradeship developed very slowly because, in the 1950s, the supervisors assigned as educators had to do two jobs: educate and conduct searches.

So, they hurriedly entered and quickly rounded us up from the bunks. Those dressed only in their underpants were ordered to put on their trousers. In truth, it is somehow uncomfortable to mourn properly when dressed only in underpants. At another time the order to put on our pants would have given rise to a handful of innocent-sounding questions, but we were in no mood for laughing; we knew what was up. All three took a hard look at each of us. Now, just any one of you dare to crack a smile!

We got dressed and formed up. The educator read the familiar communique. The supervisors bored holes in us with their gazes. First one of us coughs and then another. The supervisors eye us sharply but cannot find anything wrong: it was only a cough with no smile. We catch colds in the mine, little Boss. Our dear guests stand there for a while and then leave.

The silence in the barracks continued for a long time. It was even underground, where you would often be in twos or threes with co-workers you had known for a long time. This went on for months. Outside, there was a sea of tears. My wife told me afterward that even she had cried. And millions of our wives cried. They knew nothing.

Three years passed from Stalin's death until the twentieth party congress. Did the prisoners really end up having more insight than anyone else and so could understand everything on the very day Stalin died? No, of course, they could not have understood every single thing, but they knew a lot that had been kept secret from society. Almost everyone who had been convicted under Article 58 [betraying the Fatherland] had figured out that they had been imprisoned on Stalin's orders, particularly those who were imprisoned for being captured by the Germans. They saw with their own eyes that all the troops of the allied forces who had been captured were being helped by the Red Cross. But the Russians were not. Why? They were told: Stalin has renounced you. The Red Cross can't help you.

As early as the war against Finland about which our history books generally prefer to remain silent, those who returned from captivity were put in prison camps. These people had also been in Vorkuta. They were kept totally separate from the rest of us. They were not transported to the camp in the usual way but as military personnel, in full uniform, as if they were simply being reassigned. But upon their arrival at the camp, they were taken inside it, locked up, and told that they were traitors. Their relatives were told nothing for a long time. However, in those days, there were still only a few of them.

In our literature and movies, we tell the children how cruelly Hitler treated the Soviet prisoners of war, but we are forgetting an important part of the matter. The executioners knew very well that the fate of this person, this Russian, who ended up their prisoner, was no longer of any interest to his brothers or his state. The Russian Red Cross would not stand up for the prisoner and the International Red Cross would not raise the issue. Hitler had to pay attention to the International Red Cross. His own soldiers were the prisoners of others. Therefore, the dogs could be sent after the Russian prisoners of war. There is a direct connection between the fate of a man chased down by dogs and the fact that Stalin turned his back on him. Only those will not see this who do not want to.

The prisoners of war returned to their homeland. They were singled out and told by an investigator: "You are a traitor. You should have shot yourself. You have obviously come back on a spy mission!" But who really betrayed whom? Did they betray their homeland or did Stalin betray them?

The captives knew all this and they did not cry when Stalin died. Those who had been resentenced to another term in camp just as their first term had ended did not cry either. Those who had become police for the Nazi occupiers positively gloated.

However, there were still people even in the 1950s who imagined that Stalin did not know about all of this. They wrote letters to him. One naive fellow wrote such a letter—this was after the articles appeared attacking the cosmopolitans: "Do you know, Comrade Stalin, that in Saratov Jews are thrown from the tram cars? Goldie Myerson was so well received but now suddenly everything has changed. Comrade Stalin, they are fooling you." He signed the letter and gave his address.

Without ever leaving Saratov, the letter ended up finding a select group of readers. They lost no time in showing up at the author's home in the middle of the night. In their search for the truth, they surmised that the author was not simply a Jew who had been punched on the tram—my goodness, now that is important!—but a secret agent of Zionist intelligence.

I knew also another of Stalin's penpals. I wrote a complaint for him because he was barely literate. He was an electrician from Kherson, he had scrawled his message to Stalin without anyone's help because he thought that if he involved anyone else it would be more dangerous than to do it alone. In his innocence, he could not help using some unrefined expressions, like: "You fraud, you son of a bitch, what are you doing to our people?" He did not sign the letter. What difference did it make? The specialists found him in no time; our investigation sciences, thank goodness, have been developed to a much higher level than, say, our social sciences.

When he, along with a hundred other barely literate people were called in to the military commissar's office and asked to fill out by hand an innocent application, he understood that they were "looking for the handwriting." He got very worried, he told me. Before that very night was over, he was seated in front of an investigator who was shining a bright light in his eyes. It had been decided that those who write anonymous letters must be severely punished. The investigator studied his case and his thoughts at length with the aid of this glaring bulb and he found the key to it all: the scrawler had lived under the Nazi occupation and had once repaired a wire in the apartment of a Gestapo agent. They went and found the landlady and the case was sealed!

"Lenya, you are caught!" the investigator exclaimed to him joyously. The abusive letter, of course, no longer figured in the case. They had a better article to get him on.

"So," the investigator said, "they give you a twenty and you write letters to Comrade Stalin. What a lot of trouble you've caused, you bastard!"

Then Lenya really began writing—or rather we wrote for him. He swamped the camp administration with his complaints. He might just as well have been writing the archangel Gabriel: the complaints went through the camp apparatus where they knew what to do. Unlike the flow of greetings, the flow of complaints—which was much more mighty—got lost in the sands of the Gulag, like water in Arabia, disappearing without a trace.

Besides us, our wives also wrote. Their appeals did not get to the heart of the matter; no one on the outside knew what that was. The assertion "My husband is not guilty. I can vouch for him," was considered unsubstantiated chatter. However, the assertions by the investigator, illuminated with a high-kilowatt bulb, these were not unsubstantiated. The criminal had after all confessed!

After Stalin's death, Lenya kept bombarding the supreme powers with letters for another two years. It just so happened that the time was right. He got his case reviewed and he was freed.

More naive than either of these—one a Jew and the other a Ukrainian—were two Germans whose names were Becker and Berger.

While I was still in the unit near Moscow, I was inspired by Becker's work. A talented mechanic, he had come to the USSR

under a three-year contract. Here, he had been arrested and found his contract amended: it was no longer for three years but for 25, with a prison-camp official providing his lodging. He rejected these conditions and kept a careful record as the weeks passed, announcing in his hut that his voluntary three years would soon be over after which he would stop working. He justified it this way: if you work, do a good job; don't fool around. Either work conscientiously or don't work at all. Whether you were in the outside world or in a labor camp didn't matter. The same applied.

Wasn't he a bit weird? The slogan "an honest day's work" was simply unnecessary for him. The concept of "a worker's conscience" did not need to be explained to him the way our newspapers at one time energetically explained it to Soviet workers (after the sensational letter from workers of the Zaglada collective farm when Nikita Sergeevich [Khrushchev] was in power).

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Becker counted, he counted the weeks. One day, at roll-call, he stayed in his bunk and did not leave his hut, telling the duty officer: "That's all. I have completed my contract. The End."

This was reported to the head of the Sharashkin camp (where tufta, or pretending to work while not really working, was expected). Becker repeated to him his philosophy about a worker's conscience. However, the official took it to mean only one thing: this German wants to go to the punishment cell.

From the punishment cell they sent him to Vorkuta, just the way they had sent the young Lithuanian who wrote the letter to the woman laboratory assistant. Between the two camps there existed, apparently, an ideological continuity: the Sharashka was the first

circle; Vorkuta was the second; the punishment cell was the third, and so forth and so on.

Becker was classified as one who refused to work and was kicked into the third circle. Among those who were not common criminals, refusing to work was a rarity. The common criminals refused to work only because they wanted to get themselves some easier job. They were not afraid of being put in a punishment cell or getting penal rations. They had their boys in the kitchen and they would be fed. Some cultural-educational work was done with them. The head of the camp did not like it when the administration bugged him about having the punishment cell full of prisoners who refused to work. So they gave them some job a little easier and put some "contras" [counterrevolutionaries] in their place. It was into this company that the German was thrown.

However, he knew no one in the kitchen and no one wanted to have anything to do with him. He was not the usual type. It was not easier work that he wanted, the pathetic creature! He gave the Cultural Educational Department a real headache, so they finally sent him off somewhere. Maybe he managed to survive until the time when a large number of the Germans who had been brought into our camps from Germany were sent back home.

The second German I want to talk about, Berger, is not alive today. He was arrested after the GDR had been established. However, since they had no Vorkuta of their own, he was brought to ours. He demanded that he be tried by a court in his native republic and held, if declared guilty, in a prison in his fatherland and not in a corrective labor camp of another state, even though both states belonged to the very same Socialist camp. To satisfy this demand would have meant setting a dangerous precedent. The next day tens of thousands of similar appeals would come pouring in from Poles, Ukrainians, Estonians, and Letts. Of course, Berger received no response. He then began declaring hunger strikes—for three days, for five days, one after the other with small intervals in between. Apparently realizing from the very beginning that his chances for success were minimal, he was trying to drag out his protest for the longest possible time hoping that somehow word of it would get out.

The fundamental idea behind any such protest is for people to learn about it. Unless there is glasnost [open, public airing of information and ideas], protest is impotent. Glasnost is the most powerful weapon in the struggle against tyranny. It is precisely glasnost—and not some outside enemies and their agents—that great power bullies of all varieties fear more than anything else.

However, Becker attained no glasnost. He then declared a total, indefinite hunger strike. In response, an order came down to force-feed him. Our prisoner doctors refused to do this on the grounds that they did not know how it was done. So someone was called in from outside, motivated not by humanitarianism but by a desire for a promotion. There is nothing humanitarian about force-feeding someone who is protesting force and violence. Berger was tied down, a probe was pushed down his throat, and a liquid was poured in. The next day he died; the merciful doctor's probe had perforated his esophagus.

The Germans, of whom there were around 15 in our Special Camp Point, paid their respects to Berger in great secrecy. The surgeon's assistant allowed them to do so quietly in the evening. Among them were both fascists and members of the German Communist Party—they assured me that he, too, had been a party member. Did his party organization ever receive word of his protest? How did it respond?

[Next Month: "A Period of Camp Liberalization" (Cont.)]

New Party? Question for NOW National Conference

As mandated by its 1990 National Conference, the National Organization for Women established the Commission for Responsive Democracy to conduct public hearings exploring the pros and cons of launching a new political party. A report from the commission and discussion and vote on the question will be on the agenda at NOW's National Conference this year in New York City, July 5-7.

The first session of the Commission for Responsive Democracy was held in New York, Nov. 30-Dec. 1 (see report in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 81). The commission has since conducted five hearings—in Atlanta, Houston, Tampa, Minneapolis, and San Francisco. Its final meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., May 31-June 1.

We print below the statement prepared by the Women's Commission of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency for the San Francisco hearings, held May 4.

We Need a Political Choice Now!

In a letter about the Commission for Responsive Democracy, NOW President Molly Yard wrote: "The citizens of this nation need to have *fresh alternatives to the chronic failures of the two major parties.*"

The U.S. military assault on Iraq received overwhelming support from both Democratic and Republican senators and representatives. At the California state convention of the Democratic Party, Dianne Feinstein—backed by feminists in her bid to become governor—gave President Bush "accolades" for the way he carried out the gulf war. Feinstein said she would have voted for Bush's actions if she had been a U.S. senator. Out of 31 female legislators, only Representative Maxine Waters voted against the January 19th resolution supporting the eruption of the shooting war. The record shows that women legislators voted along party lines—there was no feminist "gender gap" among Democrats and Republicans! Simply electing more women and simply electing feminists was clearly shown to be inadequate for pursuing the "Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century" adopted by NOW at its 1989 national conference.

This failure of political leadership on the gulf war can be added to a long list which includes betrayals and neglect on a wide range of issues: women's rights, hunger, homelessness, civil rights, environmental concerns, lesbian and gay rights, unemployment, health care, and a host of social and economic problems.

Forces for a New Party

Activists in the African American community have proposed the establishment of an independent political party. The power of Blacks was proven by their courageous struggles to overcome long-standing patterns of discrimination and brutality. Once committed to building a new party, African Americans can again help reshape U.S. society by their experience and persistence in mobilizing large numbers of people in struggles to achieve their goals. Surely they will welcome a call by NOW for a new independent party.

Such a call will also be well received by other oppressed racial and ethnic groups. Betrayed again and again by Democratic and Republican politicians, minority communities will be inspired to help build a new party truly representing Chicano, Puerto Rican, Latino, Asian American, Native American, and other targets of racist and ethnic prejudices.

The idea of a new party is supported by union activists in the United Auto Workers, the United Mine Workers, the Teamsters union, and other labor organizations. At the commission's first hearings (held in New York City), a representative from the United Electrical Workers explained that UE has called for independent political action in the form of a labor party for some time. It was

also reported that a majority of workers favored a labor party in polls taken in locals of UAW Region 9, a New England Carpenters union, and locals of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union. More and more women workers are union members, and they can have a decisive influence if NOW points the way to a new independent party.

There is a new generation of young people participating in massive demonstrations for abortion rights and clinic defense actions, antiwar mobilizations, environmental activities, and student rights battles. A new party—responsive to their demands—will attract energetic and capable young women and men. Lesbian and gay organizations, environmental groups, coalitions opposed to U.S. wars and interventions abroad—these are additional forces which can be called upon in building a new party.

Current Election Laws Can't Stop Us

The Democratic and Republican parties have legislated election rules which discourage new party formations. But this did not stop Blacks from putting the Freedom Now Party on the 1964 ballot in Michigan, Chicanos from winning offices on La Raza Unida tickets in the Southwest, and small socialist parties from running candidates during 1990.

Immense resources exist right now within the movements and communities which will support a call for an alternative to the major political machines. The women's rights movement includes activists with legal expertise, fund-raising skills, organizational abilities, and media contacts. Similar capabilities exist within the labor and civil rights movements. Media coverage will be achieved by many of the same techniques employed to promote marches, rallies, and other events. Networking, phone-trees, personal contacting—all of these activities can be effective in securing campaign workers for a new party.

Financial resources which have been poured into election campaigns for major party candidates can be rechanneled into a new party. Additional monies will come from groups and individuals enthused about helping to build a party accountable to their concerns. Energies spent in lobbying Democratic and Republican politicians can be redirected into organizing petition campaigns to place a new party on local and state ballots.

Do We Need a New Party? YES!

Is This a Realistic Proposal? YES!

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