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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 Transformation of the Teamsters Union

by Frank Lovell

In a year that saw the replacement of Union heads in four major rail unions and the strengthening of opposition groups in some industrial unions including auto, plus the upset victory of a new leadership in the West Coast longshore union, the announcement of the election of Ron Carey to the presidency of the 1.6 million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) on December 19, 1991, marked a sea change in U.S. unionism. Repercussions can carry a tidal wave of revolt through the labor movement of this country, sweeping away a raft of entrenched union bureaucrats. And this could be the beginning of a new era of economic and political relations between the working class and the employing class. In this year of apparent "labor peace," with few strikes and unemployment lines replacing picket lines, worker discontent flashes from despair to rage and back again.

The Teamsters union has a long history of resurgent militancy and repressive corruption, beginning with the rise of the modern industrial union movement in the 1930s and sinking to gangster-ridden

depths in the post-World War II period. During the nearly half century since the war this union has slid jerkily under the control of corrupt officials who conspired to blackmail employers, bribe politicians, swindle workers, and cover up their own crimes. They worked out deals among themselves and with their political and business associates for mutual protection, their motto being "don't get caught." But they did get caught, partly as a result of what they thought was a clever maneuver to escape prosecution in an anti-racketeering suit brought by the federal government. A deal was struck three years ago. The union executive board and its figurehead president, William McCarthy, agreed to government supervision of union elections in exchange for withdrawal of the lawsuit.

Thunder Came

Under this arrangement, even though it directly affected only top officers, a succession of local union officials were voted out at different times in various parts of the country. And union members generally were emboldened to challenge the heavy-

handed officialdom. A test of the bureaucratic grip came last November when McCarthy, having declined to run for IBT president, stood for reelection as head of his home local in Boston. For 35 years he and his cronies, in collaboration with the employers and as part of the bureaucratic structure of the international union, had run the 7,000-member local to suit themselves. It was thought unlikely that the long established system of membership controls would be broken. But when the votes were counted George Cashman, a business agent of the local, was the new president of Teamster Local 25. Cashman had campaigned against McCarthy as a member of the Carey reform movement in the international. He and his entire local reform slate in the Boston election swept out the old McCarthy crowd. This victory was widely hailed as signaling a victory for the Carey slate in the three-way race for international president. An anonymous McCarthy supporter was quoted in the *Boston Globe* (the big daily in the city) as saying McCarthy's lopsided defeat (by 2 to 1) reflected the demand for change sweeping both unions and the nation's political scene. "People want change, and there's no stopping it," he said. The news from Boston was heartening to Carey supporters everywhere, but few were predicting victory in the final days of the election for international officers.

(Continued on page 2)

Editorial

But Zionism Remains Racist Nonetheless

On Monday, December 16, the United Nations General Assembly voted by an overwhelming margin (111-25 with 17 countries not participating) to repeal a 1975 resolution which stated: "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination." But no such vote can change the facts. Zionism is an ideology based on a simple idea: that the territory of Palestine belongs to the Jews and the Jews alone, and that the Jewish people have a right to construct a state there, excluding all others from participation in the process. Carrying out such an ideology in practice has meant not only racial discrimination against the Arab population native to Palestine, but even its physical liquidation.

How could it be otherwise? Perhaps the great thinkers at the United Nations now believe that the Palestinian people will passively sit by and submit to being deprived of their ancestral territory and stripped of human dignity? Yet there are only two other alternatives: Either 1) Arab rights to full political and social equality in Palestine are recognized, or 2) the racist genocide that has in fact been practiced by the Israeli government for decades must continue. Clearly, the only nonracist possibility requires the complete repudiation of Zionism.

Of course, the UN General Assembly knows as well as everyone else in the world that the Palestinian people are not going to begin submitting meekly to their oppression. This has been demonstrated clearly enough over the years. And it is hard to believe that most

of these diplomats now actually believe that the rights the Palestinians are legitimately fighting for can be granted while an exclusively Jewish state continues to exist on Palestinian territory, i.e., as long as *Zionism itself* is not renounced. How, then, can we account for the UN vote? The bottom line was acknowledged by the *New York Times* in its December 17 article reporting on the UN action: "For the United States, the heavy vote in favor of repeal was a demonstration of American diplomatic power. After President Bush called for the repeal in September in a speech to the General Assembly, United States embassies around the world were instructed to put maximum pressure to secure the repeal."

That is clear enough. The UN's decision does not reflect an honest registry of international opinion—even on the part of the governments involved. It represents nothing more than the ability of the United States, in the aftermath of the Gulf war and in the context of the collapse of the USSR, to exert pressure on other countries. The cynicism inherent in such a process should be clear enough.

Genuine supporters of human rights and democracy around the world will not change their attitudes or actions even to the slightest degree based on this hypocritical vote of the United Nations General Assembly. We will continue to fight for Palestinian rights and human dignity, against Zionism, and against racism wherever it raises its ugly head in the world. □

Lightning Struck

Carey's victory came as a surprise to many. But it was substantial and impressive. The Carey slate with 48 percent of the vote won all contested posts for vice president. The R. V. Durham slate, representing the entrenched bureaucracy, mustered 33 percent. And the Walter Shea slate, comprised of disgruntled incumbents, got 18 percent. The 424,000 total votes cast was only 28 percent of eligible voters.

Those inclined to disparage signs of rising union consciousness and the progressive significance of the election point to this fact that only slightly more than a quarter of union members voted. But the truth is that a high percentage of drivers and warehouse workers and other industrial workers voted. The bulk of those who failed to vote are on the fringes of the union, garnered through sweetheart contracts and sometimes unaware that they are in the union. This is one of the many problems the new Carey administration faces. An article in *Labor Notes*, a union reform publication and consistent campaigner for the Carey slate, quotes a University of Chicago clerical worker represented by the Teamsters who says, "We need to get the members involved in this union . . . to show them that this is a union worth belonging to." Many who failed to vote this time will likely take more interest in their union as reforms become manifest.

Counting Votes

The vote reflected the relationship of forces in the districts. Carey has most strength in the South and West. In the Southern Conference he won with 54 percent, and in the Knoxville, Nashville, Atlanta, and Memphis locals by more than 2 to 1. In the Western Conference Carey got 53 percent of the vote, and in the former Shea stronghold of Los Angeles he won 63 percent. In Northern California where Durham's running mate, Chuck Mack, has long held control, the Carey slate won 42 percent. In the East, throughout New England and in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the Carey slate won with 42 percent, losing locals with closest ties to organized crime, according to the breakdown by *Labor Notes*. In McCarthy's local in Boston Carey won 70 percent of the vote, much more than Cashman got in his landslide defeat of McCarthy in the local election. Carey's home local, United Parcel Service workers Local 804 in Long Island City, New York, gave him a 10 to 1 preference. Local 138 in New York City where top officials advised a vote either for Durham or Shea also gave Carey a 10 to 1 margin.

The race in the Central Conference was closer. But even in highly bureaucratized, business unionism locals in Chicago, Minneapolis, and other Midwest cities the

Carey forces made deep inroads. Carey's slate won in the Central Conference with 48 percent to Durham's 38 percent.

The small Canadian Conference (where Durham won 2 to 1) was the only loss suffered by Carey. But even here he won in British Columbia, home base of Diana Kilmury who got the highest vote for vice president on the victorious Carey slate. All 16 vice presidential posts challenged by the Carey team fell to them. Two Durham candidates for vice president from the Canadian Conference were elected at the June IBT convention where they were unopposed. Also John Morris of Philadelphia, a onetime militant on the Shea slate, won an Eastern Conference vice presidential seat that the Carey slate did not contest.

New Quality

The composition of the new IBT executive board is qualitatively different from any other leading body in the labor movement. It consists mainly of workers not long removed from the point of production. They see the problems of their union and its place in the social structure differently than career labor leaders.

The Diana Kilmury victory was by all counts the most promising for the future of the union. She is the first woman ever to sit on the Teamsters executive board. She is an outspoken, determined advocate of women's rights. Her persistent demands in the union for recognition of her rights as a union member equal to all others, including appointed officeholders, is also a record of struggle against gangsterism. In his book on the 15-year history of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the 10,000-member organized opposition movement, Dan La Botz says the high point of the 1981 IBT convention was Kilmury's speech for the creation of an ethical practices committee. She concluded her plea to the delegates with the question, "What are you afraid of?" They all knew the answer. That was ten years ago. In those days the union was ruled by fear.

Kilmury is a TDU veteran, co-chair of the organization. A politically conscious feminist, she is an active member of the New Democratic Party, the Canadian labor party. In her Teamsters union campaign she defeated Edward Lawson, the incumbent vice president. Lawson lost his paycheck from the Teamsters. But he is still a millionaire, a member of the big business Liberal Party of Canada, and was a member of the Canadian Senate. Kilmury says it is good to get such people out of the unions, and out of government as well. She is an inspiration to women members of the Teamsters. *Labor Notes* quotes Margaret Farrell, a Northwest Airlines flight attendant: "This has always been a male-dominated union. Now we have people on

the Executive Board who will pay attention to working women's issues." The hope is, according to others interviewed, that the union will now "raise issues that affect working women—child care, pay equity, health insurance—and it will address the concerns of those low-paid, \$6-an-hour Teamsters, who are primarily women."

The IBT's new executive board also includes the first Hispanic and one of the few Black leaders ever to break into the top rungs of union officialdom. This augurs well for the future of the Teamsters and organized labor.

Victory Explained

Addressing the reasons for the victory of the Carey slate, *Labor Notes* writers Phill Kwik and Jim Woodward list the main ones:

1. *Years of organizing by Teamsters for a Democratic Union.* During this time, TDU developed an impressive group of leaders in locals across the country. Some won local office. A few sold out. Some became discouraged and dropped out. But many more were recruited. All across the union, there were hundreds of seasoned activists—ready to take advantage of the big break when it came.

2. *Carey and his slate.* Carey had a sterling record of fighting for his membership in Local 804, representing United Parcel Service workers in Queens, NY. While he was not a member of TDU, he never hid his disgust with the top Teamster leadership. Carey and his running mates campaigned tirelessly. Carey often worked until midnight, and then was up four hours later to head for the next stop.

3. *Weak opponents.* The incumbent leadership could not remember—if it ever knew—how to take a message to the membership. "Durham's people didn't know how to campaign, because they never had to," said (union member) McIntosh. "They told the members VOTE, and never had a strategy for how to turn people out."

4. *Government intervention.* Though many activists opposed the government's intervention in the union, the reformers needed it to win at this time. Without the feds, there would not even have been an election in 1991, let alone a fair one.

Their conclusion is, "It's impossible to say how the process of reform in the Teamsters would have played out if one of these four elements had been missing." We can add that it remains impossible to know how this process *will* play out now that the election has been held. But there has been

considerable speculation (if not always well considered) on this score.

Plausible Scenarios

Steve Early, union reformer and knowledgeable commentator, has listed (*Wall Street Journal*, 12/23/91) some moves to expect from the Carey administration: 1) house cleaning of gangsters and racketeering elements; 2) renegotiation of union contracts and more sophisticated collective bargaining; 3) more membership involvement and better education of the rank and file in union affairs; 4) union organizing drive to reclaim lost members; 5) new political alignments, probably with Democrats instead of Republicans; 6) an open door to reformers in other AFL-CIO unions; 7) closer ties to the United Mine Workers. On this last point Early explains that Ed Burke, a strategist in the 1989 Pittston mine strike and Carey's campaign manager last year, is now a top aide to Carey.

Early believes that "with new friends, programs, and politics, the Teamsters can do more than just rejoin the 'mainstream' of labor." He says, "The AFL-CIO's largest blue-collar union can help set a tone for labor-management relations in the '90s that is a far cry from the disorganized and embarrassing worker retreats of the last decade."

David Moberg, labor writer for *In These Times*, the nationally circulated social democratic fortnightly newspaper, is in general agreement with Early. Looking to the coming struggle within the union, Moberg says Carey and his newly elected executive board will find limits to their powers, and will probably be able to appoint "only about 100 international representatives, organizers and heads of various conferences." He reminds readers that in his first public statement after election, Carey promised to "forgo \$50,000 of the \$250,000-a-year salary to which he is entitled and called on Teamster officials to give up their multiple union salaries (165 officials collect over \$100,000 a year, a few as much as \$500,000)."

Moberg attributes to TDU organizer Ken Paff the opinion that "either old-style deal-making (with corrupt elements of the bureaucracy) or constant warfare would undermine Carey's program." Moberg says there are indications that many local officials who opposed Carey in the election are now ready to cooperate or are even quite pleased with his victory. He cites opinions of Shea slate supporters who quickly switched to the Carey camp after the election returns were known. New York City was one of the main centers of Shea support. Bill Nuchow of Local 840 in New York, a principal organizer of the Shea campaign, hailed Carey's election as

"a real mandate of the rank and file." He said, "They voted to make this a better union with more rank and file participation," etc. Similar sentiment was expressed by a former Durham supporter and local official in Saginaw, Michigan, who said he went along with Durham because "he was part of the overall system that was in place. That system was working fairly well and I was convinced that no challenger had a chance."

Now, after the election, he thinks Carey "has good ideas," and plans to continue to "work within the system" as long as he can stay on the union payroll. That way "you'll get along," he says, "and if you don't you'll be in trouble." This attitude of complacency and conformity is common, but no longer predominant in the Teamsters union. The Saginaw local voted 2 to 1 to kick out Durham and the old guard, and the old system.

Bureaucratic Potholes

The new system that Carey projects, an administration free of company kickbacks and other forms of corruption, cannot be built on complacency and conformity. The formidable obstacles it faces *within the union* are represented by the beneficiaries of the old system such as Bobby Holmes, continuator of the Hoffa/Fitzsimmons network in Detroit, who announced that he will withhold union dues to the international if Carey interferes with Michigan locals.

In New York City one of Shea's key supporters, Barry Feinstein, head of Teamsters Local 237, remains silent. He is the beneficiary of a carefully cultivated system of connections in the local labor movement, in city government, and among sectors of the employing class. He inherited his position as head of Local 237 from his father who organized a breakaway from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to get a Teamster charter in 1952. Since then Teamster Local 237 has been a factor in city and union politics, and has played a role inside the Teamsters international in support of the old system.

In 1980 Barry Feinstein faced a State Investigation Commission probe. It revealed that two of Feinstein's associates, Calvin Winick and William Wallach, looted the local union welfare fund over an eight-year period, through excessive commissions, phantom contracts, and double billings. Feinstein escaped criminal charges of collusion in the matter. But the commission called for his ouster as the fund's chairman, citing "clear evidence" of complicity.

Feinstein's wife, Maggie, was on the Teamster payroll (\$60,000 per annum) until her death last August. She was the founder in 1980 of Local 237's Retiree

Division; also director of the Women's Division.

At the 1986 Teamster convention in Las Vegas, Feinstein delivered a laudatory speech in support of international president Jackie Presser against government charges of racketeering. "When one of us is under attack," Feinstein thundered, "our family joins hands and forms a bond that the media cannot break, that government cannot break, that no man can break." In this way he identified himself with the interests of the mob and sought to demonstrate his usefulness to it. He was a candidate for vice president on the Shea slate, and is solidly ensconced in the leadership of the Teamsters Eastern region. Feinstein is not one to quickly relinquish his six-figure paycheck and the extra benefits attached.

The Feinsteins and the Bobby Holmeses are typical of the solid bloc of middle layer Teamster officials that cannot compromise with the new Carey administration. They are entirely dependent on the old system of political and economic ties to the employers in their areas of operation as representatives of *their* Teamsters union locals to which thousands of working people belong and pay dues through the checkoff system. These "duly authorized union officials" are committed to the defense of this system.

They regard it as their "business," and some of their lieutenants think that's why they are called business agents.

These archetypal union bureaucrats are not the most difficult problems that will arise in the course of transformation of the Teamsters union. The remaining bureaucratic obstacles are formidable, but they can be dealt with through greater membership participation in union decision making. And this, of course, will entail internal union struggle. The bureaucrats by nature will continue secret bargaining with the employers, and continue to grant special favors to influential politicians as required by past commitments.

When union members try to speak up on crucial matters in their local unions (as many did before the recent election), the local business agents move in, often in collaboration with the employers, to try and curb TDU and other dissidents. Whether this results in "constant warfare" will depend largely on the skill of the organized opposition and its success in winning greater membership participation.

Greater Dangers

The more difficult problems in the union's future are the same as in the past: those created by the employers, and others created by the government.

The employers in the trucking industry no longer have an authoritative association

that bargains with the Teamsters union and comes to agreement on standard wages and working conditions. A quarter century ago the National Master Freight Agreement was regularly negotiated and union members looked to those negotiations knowing that a new wage scale would be set. But over the years great changes in both union and industry have brought exceptions to the standard wage pattern (negotiated by local officials with approval or encouragement of international officers) which tend to undercut wages and destroy union controls on working conditions.

In 1990 there were 45,000 licensed interstate carriers, many of them one-truck driver/owner operations with no union connection. A mid-sized company in the Minneapolis-St Paul area, Midwest Motor Freight, operates 50 trucks and last year provoked a strike which has dragged on several months. The company hopes to rid itself of the union. All its trucks are operating with scab drivers. The employers believe the union is weak and constantly seek different ways to further undermine its influence.

A favorite trick of the larger trucking firms is to open subsidiaries and hire non-union labor. Gradually the subsidiary replaces the home office. Such practices usually involve bribery and other forms of corruption and can be eliminated by greater membership control in union locals and a national campaign to organize the unorganized in the industry. This may be the major task of the Teamsters union at this juncture.

Corporate restructuring has chopped up the National Master Freight Agreement so that half the workers that should be covered by it are left out. In many cases their wages are half the union scale and they have no health or social security benefits. They are casual workers, subject to layoff at the end of every working day.

The Teamsters union represents many thousands more workers than truck drivers and warehouse employees. It takes in just about anyone seeking union protection who thinks the Teamsters might be the right place to go: factory workers, printers, health-care workers, police, flight attendants, pilots, firemen, municipal workers, brewery workers, etc. This has led to jurisdictional disputes with other unions in the past, and can now be corrected through an organizing drive in collaboration with the rest of organized labor of a general workers and unemployed union. Such a project is not yet on the Teamsters agenda, and may never be. But the need for it is indicative of the scope of existing problems between the union and the employers, the ceaseless conflict between labor and capital.

Employing-class newspapers throughout the country, the big city dailies,

have been supportive of what they call "cleaning up the Teamsters," attributing success thus far to the Justice Department's anti-racketeering drive. The election of the Carey slate got "good press." This is likely to last only until union reforms become effective and power to challenge the employers' anti-union offensive returns to the Teamsters.

Government Bias

Federal and state governments, almost invariably behind the employers in strikes and other struggles where the rights of workers are at stake, present problems of a different nature than the direct and immediate attacks of the various employer groups. The federal government is responsible for regulating industry and tries (in times of economic depression) to regulate the economy. These regulations have different effects from time to time, depending on the political climate and the perceived needs of the country. Whenever government regulations are imposed (or relaxed or neglected) they are always intended to help the employers, and rarely help the workers or their unions. The regulation and deregulation of the trucking industry is a case in point.

For most of this century railroads and trucking have been regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). In 1980, when Carter was still in the White House, the Motor Carrier Reform Act was signed into law. Carter congratulated Senator Edward Kennedy "in helping the whole nation understand the advantages to be derived from this trucking deregulation bill." Actually trucking deregulation was part of a broad political movement for government regulatory reform sponsored by powerful financial interests which began as early as 1970, heartily endorsed from the start by both Democrats and Republicans. It was managed by the Reagan administration. It devastated the industry and weakened the union. Its beneficiaries were banks and insurance companies, and the three largest trucking firms.

Before deregulation ICC granted operating licenses to 17,000 carriers. Of the top 20 at the time Railway Express, Consolidated Freightways, and Yellow Freight System were the largest, raking in about a quarter of all revenue. More than half the other 17 most profitable carriers were destroyed. Only 7 remain. The others merged or went under. The top 3 remain tops, only larger. They now garner about half the cartage profits in the industry. Banks and insurance companies gain from high-interest loans, time-payment plans, and pension fund frauds.

Many truck drivers today are painfully aware of unemployment. They look to

government to create jobs, one way or another. The union can find better answers.

In the Teamsters union the government presently enjoys an undeserved respect for the Justice Department's crackdown on the mob, but this is illusory. Union reform groups, TDU especially, have gained freedom to make recruits and win elections under the court-ordered supervision of federal monitors. And militants, anxious to get rid of corrupt union officials, would be fools not to take advantage of the situation. But it is more foolish to expect the government to give assistance to the union against corrupt employers. The most recent history, particularly government prosecution of striking coal miners and their union, is evidence to the contrary.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union, in conjunction with the Carey administration of the international, will soon confront this problem of government intervention at a new and different level as the Teamsters begin negotiations for new contracts. Negotiations have already begun with the car haulers, and hardly a day will pass without contract negotiations in other parts of the trucking industry or for workers in other industries represented by Teamster locals.

New Relationship

Relations between the Carey administration and TDU are different now than before the election. Carey campaigned against the old system of labor-management relations. TDU endorsed his campaign and provided the necessary troops to make it succeed. Many newly elected officials are TDU members, now part of the official union leadership and responsible for future union-management relations and agreements. But TDU, responsive to the needs of the union membership and duty bound to carry on education and increase rank-and-file participation in day-to-day life of the union, will soon come in conflict with segments of both the old bureaucracy and the new officialdom. How these conflicts will be resolved depends largely on the skill of TDU leadership, and its ability to bring new understanding of the union's problems and to mobilize the membership to get the problems solved. This entails, first of all, a new appreciation of relations between members and leaders.

Class Action

All these problems that millions of workers in this country face every day will not and cannot be solved by union officials. Only working members of the Teamsters union and other unions can address these problems with any measure of success. And this requires vision beyond union

(Continued on page 16)

A Winning Strategy to Safeguard Reproductive Rights

by Evelyn Sell

Independent political action—in the streets and in the electoral process—is urgently needed to ward off the blows against abortion rights.

Marches, rallies, demonstrations, and mobilizations are forms of *mass lobbying*. This kind of political action—when it involves tens and hundreds of thousands of people—is a most effective way to make officeholders act in accordance with the demands of the majority. State legislators, governors, county officials, and city council members dare not ignore the majority if their goal is to remain in office or to use local and state offices as stepping stones to higher positions. History proves that the U.S. Supreme Court responds to mass pressure—as a comparison of decisions before and after the 1950s and '60s civil rights movement shows. At the same time, Supreme Court justices have life tenure and, unlike politicians, do not have to win votes in election after election.

Since abortion was legalized in 1973, politicians have played political games knowing that no matter how they voted, the results would be of no consequence because courts would uphold the principles involved in *Roe v. Wade*. The rules of the game have now changed. Politicians can no longer utilize vote-catching maneuvers or point to other women's rights issues they have supported. Their votes on proposed laws now count in crucial ways either to uphold abortion rights or to deny women's ability to determine their reproductive choices.

Speaking for many legislators, Representative Myron Kulas explained in 1989 that most officeholders "wished the Supreme Court would have left [the abortion law] where it was at." The Chicago Democrat had voted with abortion opponents but said he was "leaning toward pro-choice" in the aftermath of the Court's 1989 *Webster* decision. Similar shifts were voiced by other elected officials who found themselves caught between an increasingly conservative Supreme Court and pro-choice supporters who expressed themselves through the massive November 12, 1989, mobilization and continued widespread protest actions. The reproductive rights movement must keep the heat on elected officials—and on judges who are influenced by the political climate.

Mobilizations magnify our impact on political life, energize activists to carry out more effective local and state pro-choice projects, inspire people to become politically active for the first time, and attract more allies to our cause.

A Mass Action Approach

The majority of the U.S. population continues to support a woman's right to choose. But numbers in public opinion polls are obviously not enough to safeguard and extend women's reproductive rights. The majority's pro-choice sentiment needs

to be expressed forcefully and *repeatedly* in massive public demonstrations which deliver the clear demand to keep abortions legal, safe, accessible, and affordable.

When tens and hundreds of thousands gather together *in one place at one time for one purpose* it inspires a unique sense of unity and power.

The enthusiasm created by national actions helps sustain activists through difficult battles at the state and local levels. When we are interconnected through national events and campaigns, each local and state victory will invigorate pro-choice fighters in other parts of the country. Weaknesses in a particular regional, state, or local situation can be compensated and overcome by strengths at the national level.

National Organization for Women's call for the two mobilizations in 1989 (April 9 and November 12) spurred the creation of local groups and citywide coalitions, and attracted many thousands who had never been involved in such activity before. Major unions endorsed the national mobilizations and helped organize labor delegations. A host of new student feminist groups sprang up across the nation, and many continue to be active today. NOW estimated that 40 percent of the marchers on April 9 were men; a large proportion of the November actions also included males. The extraordinary turnout of men shows the wide support for women's rights which exists in the U.S. As with numerous female marchers, many males said they were participating in such an event for the first time in their lives. The Women of Color for Reproductive Rights contingent in the November mobilization in Washington, D.C., marked a significant involvement in the struggle by African American, Latina, and Asian women.

NOW's call for a national mobilization in the spring of 1992 is exactly the right step in mobilizing the forces needed for a sustained campaign to preserve and expand women's reproductive rights. As with the 1989 mobilizations, building the 1992 event will:

- draw individuals out of the "silent majority" and start them on the road to persistent activism;
- spur the formation of ongoing groups which help provide a solid basis for continued efforts at all levels—local, state, regional, and national;
- create connections between women's rights activists and those fighting battles on other fronts.

Marching Shoulder to Shoulder

Mass actions serve as a way to dramatize the support of our allies. Civil liberties organizations have consistently aided our efforts. Many religious groups have voiced unconditional sup-

port for women's right to choose, and have helped swell the ranks of clinic defenders facing attacks by Operation Rescue. Catholics for a Free Choice and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights participate in demonstrations and carry out activities to educate the public about the diversity of opinion within the religious community on the abortion issue. The lesbian and gay rights movement strongly supports feminist demands and provides large contingents in demonstrations.

Mass actions bring together all of our allies. This has an impact on general public consciousness. When people see television news programs, read newspaper and magazine reports, and see the photographs, they learn that reproductive rights is not a narrow matter of interest to a small dedicated band of feminists—it's an issue of concern to broad layers of U.S. society. This helps us gain support from more groups and from more sections of the population. Each time we win a new ally in our struggle to control our own bodies, it promotes collaboration with other forces. And the most vivid way to display the wide-ranging support for choice is by joining together in massive public events *again and again*.

Experience has shown that one huge demonstration was not enough to gain female suffrage, to win civil rights demands, and to end the war in Vietnam. *Repeated mobilizations are necessary*. Those who oppose our goals need to be convinced that we will not give up and that we will prevail! Silent supporters need to be encouraged to express open solidarity with our struggle—and history proves that they will join us in the streets when they see our determination to keep on fighting until our goal is won.

Independent Electoral Action

Mobilizations are invaluable vehicles for publicizing and organizing the kind of independent political action we need at this time. Let your imagination run free. Imagine what could

Building for the April 5 March For Reproductive Rights

Outreach by National Organization for Women (NOW) organizers to students and progressive organizations is underway and the response has been unquestionably positive.

NOW Action Vice President Rosemary Dempsey has undertaken a campus speaking tour which began in November. After visiting five campuses in Connecticut Dempsey remarked, "I was impressed with the level of organization on the campuses and I was struck by the anger the students expressed. If Connecticut is any indication of what we can expect, then the campuses are primed and ready to come to Washington on April 5th." Dempsey is touring campuses in Ohio during January.

Similarly, the reaction from national abortion rights groups has been tremendous. In view of recent events, progressive groups are eager to unite with the march on Washington D.C. "We've not met with a negative response," said Dempsey. "People are fed up with the attack on reproductive rights and will fight back. People want to come to Washington and declare that We Won't Go Back!"

be done when 600,000 gather in Washington, D.C., or 100,000 rally in Los Angeles, or 20,000 march in Austin, Texas, or 14,000 hold a mass action in Jefferson City, Missouri, or 6,000 demonstrate in Seattle (as happened in November 1989).

Tables can be set up to register voters. Millions of eligible citizens do not vote in elections because, according to many studies, they are alienated from the existing political process, frustrated over politicians' broken promises, and not convinced that either major party will help resolve critical social and economic problems. Given a real alternative—a new party with a program to meet their needs and accountable candidates—they can be convinced to register and vote. Others will happily reregister—out of the Democratic and Republican parties and into a new independent political party.

Volunteer campaign workers can sign up to help get a new party on state ballots, and to elect a new breed of candidate. Demonstrators can sign petitions to get candidates and new party tickets on state ballots.

Rally speeches can promote the organization of a new independent political party. Instead of the usual program overloaded with Democratic and Republican officeholders and candidates, demonstrators can hear talks by independent candidates and new party builders.

Banners, signs, T-shirts, and buttons can be utilized to promote independent political action. Leaflets, educating about and promoting a new party, can be distributed. Collection buckets can be circulated to gather money for independent political activities.

Buses and trains going to the mobilization and returning home can serve as moving meeting rooms for discussions about the need for breaking out of the Democratic-Republican trap. Petitions can be passed around. Voters can be registered. Plans can be made for postdemonstration activities.

Mobilizations can stimulate movement in the direction of independent political action, and can provide means for sustaining independent political activities.

New Party Developments

Feminists are taking significant steps on the road to independent political action. NOW is playing a key role in this development by: pointing out the failures of the Democratic and Republican parties, exploring the possibilities for creating a new party, and offering an outline of a broad political platform addressing the needs of both women and men, working people, youths and old persons, racial and ethnic minorities, lesbians and gays, opponents of war, and environmentalists.

Young women are among the most enthusiastic supporters of the new party concept. At the New York hearings of the NOW Commission for Responsive Democracy, support for a new party was voiced by a representative of Students Organizing Students, a national organization formed the day after the *Webster* decision and with chapters on over 100 campuses. At the first-ever Young Feminist Conference, organized by NOW and held in February 1991, a majority of the young women voted for a resolution recommending "that NOW join forces with other interested groups to initiate a call for a new party."

Young females are a special target of anti-choice forces. The tragedy of 17-year-old Becky Bell, who died in 1988 from a

botched illegal abortion, is remembered at rallies and public meetings, and in the film "Abortion Denied: Shattering Young Women's Lives." Bell felt unable to tell her parents about her pregnancy and could not obtain a legal abortion because of an Indiana law requiring parental consent. To protest such laws, Karen and Bill Bell have been speaking at events around the U.S., talking to the media, and testifying at legislative hearings. The father told a reporter that "when Becky made her decision not to come to us, the laws, the way they are now, prevented her from getting safe medical care. So the pain that we live with now, the nightmare we face every day, is because others dictated what she must do when she needed help the most." [*On the Issues* magazine, Winter 1990]

At the time Bill Bell said that, 33 states had laws in place requiring parental notification or consent before a minor female could get an abortion. Most laws faced legal challenges or were declared unconstitutional by lower courts—but the Supreme Court has now issued its ruling upholding a state's right to enforce such a law. As of the fall of 1991, 41 states have passed parental consent or parental notification laws. Although many are involved in court proceedings, the Supreme Court has decided that such state restrictions are constitutional. A drastic change in political power is obviously a life-and-death question for young women.

Women are not the only victims of politicians' betrayals and judicial actions overturning previous gains. Women are not the only ones alienated from "politics as usual" and, in particular, from the Democratic and Republican parties. Feminists are not the only ones talking about and taking steps toward a new political party. There are also promising developments in the labor movement and in communities of oppressed racial and ethnic minorities.

Labor Party Activities

Research studies and polls have repeatedly shown that trade unionists feel that neither Democrats nor Republicans represent the interests of working people, that the two major parties "care more about Big Business than they do about working people," and that "it is time for the trade unions to build a new political party of working people independent of the two major parties."

Labor Party Advocates was launched early in 1991 by Tony Mazzocchi, a well-known and respected leader of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union. In his invitation to potential Charter Members, Mazzocchi explained:

For the past fifty years, the labor movement has been trying to pressure the two major parties, especially the Democrats, to adopt a more pro-worker agenda. Millions of dollars, thousands of volunteer hours, and hundreds of endorsements later, what do we have to show for our efforts?... The people who actually call the shots in the Democratic and Republican parties long ago gave up even pretending to represent the interests of working people. . . . The Democrats in Congress blame the Republicans in The White House. The Republicans in The White House blame the Democrats in Congress. In fact, both are to blame. And millions of Americans know it. In the 1990 Congressional election, only 35 percent of the electorate bothered to go to the polls. The rest of us stayed home—voting, in effect, for None of the Above.

Enough is enough. The bosses have two parties. Working people should have at least one. It is time for the labor

movement to organize its own independent party of working people.

The response from union members around the country has been immediate and favorable. Mazzocchi and other Labor Party Advocates members have spoken at meetings in many cities, and the media has been publishing reports about LPA.

In considering the labor movement—organized and unorganized—it's important to remember that women now make up almost half of the workforce and a growing percentage of union members. This gives women additional reason for supporting and building a new party.

Women of Color and Political Action

Sentiments for independent political action exist among African Americans. A leading figure in this regard is Ron Daniels, formerly a deputy campaign manager for Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign. Daniels is projecting an independent campaign for the 1992 election for U.S. president. He testified in favor of a new party at the final hearing of NOW's Commission for Responsive Democracy and has talked with Labor Party Advocates about "how we can work together, even combine our efforts." In an article entitled "How Labor Can Regain Its Vision and Vitality," Daniels proposed:

Break the monopoly of the two-party system. As the Democratic has followed the Republican Party to the right, the agendas of African Americans, minorities, poor and working people and labor have become viewed as "special interests" which are a liability to the Democratic Party. The "competence not ideology" line in the 1988 election was a reflection of this tendency within the Democratic Party. What we have is a tired labor movement tied to a tired Democratic Party. The progressive movement must build an independent third party which can clearly and unapologetically articulate a vision, a progressive program for a new society. Labor should play a leading role in that process. . . .

We face a life-and-death challenge of building a new majority for a peace dividend and a socially responsible economy, an economy which places people over profits in providing for full employment, housing, health care, education and a wholesome environment. [*Labor Notes*, May 1991]

Women of color have a special stake in asserting their independence from the Democratic and Republican parties.

The Winter 1990 issue of *Vital Signs*, the newspaper of the National Black Women's Health Project, carried articles analyzing the impact of the *Webster* decision, the racist character of Operation Rescue, Black women's abortion experiences, reproductive health as a global concern, participation in the abortion rights struggle, RU486 and new contraceptive developments, and the lack of Medicaid funding for abortions. Here are some of the points made:

- "Women will not stop having abortions; they will stop having safe abortions."
- "Because the majority of women seeking services from public hospitals are women of color, laws similar to Missouri's [upheld in the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision] would severely limit access to not only abortion services, but also information, counseling, and funding for all related reproductive health-care problems."

Webster demonstrates that the anti-abortion war is being fought primarily against poor women and women of color. We cannot permit our lack of economic clout nor our limited political clout to strip us of our right to bodily integrity and self-determination.”

- “Black women exist in a mass of contradictions about abortion. News cameras usually don’t find us when we speak out for abortion rights, so we are assumed to be anti-choice because of the strident voices of anti-abortion Blacks. Yet we silently speak with our feet, walking into abortion clinics in a 2-to-1 ratio. . . . Of course, Black anti-choice activists call abortion genocide. We should not be surprised or confused by this tactic . . . we should see this tactic as a diversion, one we easily recognize as a familiar tune.”
- “We know the consequences when women are forced to make choices without protection—the coathangers and knitting needles that punctured the wombs of women forced to seek back-alley abortions on kitchen tables at the hands of butchers. The women who died screaming in agony, awash in their own blood. The women who were made sterile. All the women who endured the pain of makeshift surgery with no anesthetics, risked fatal infection.
“We understand why African American women risked their lives then, and why they seek legal abortions now. It’s been a matter of survival. Hunger and homelessness. Inadequate housing and income to properly provide for themselves and their children. Family instability. Rape. Incest. Abuse. Too young, too old, too sick, too tired. Emotional, physical, economic, social—the reasons for not carrying a pregnancy to term are endless and varied, personal, urgent, and private. And for all these pressing reasons, African American women once again will be among the first forced to risk their lives if abortion is made illegal.”
- “Oppression is the absence of choice.”

La Gente, a student newspaper at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), described in a February 1990 article “what’s it like to be dark, young, poor, and pregnant.” The writer explained that Latinas “are the ones most affected by any decision the Supreme Court makes regarding abortion.” Outlining the conditions in public health clinics, *La Gente* noted: “It is no surprise that most women who have had late abortions are poor women. These women can’t afford a trip to Paris or the nearest free state and pay a private doctor for a safe and legal abortion.” Rosie Jimenez, a 27-year-old mother who died in 1977 from an illegal abortion in Texas, remains a potent symbol for pro-choice activists today. Jimenez could not pay for a safe and legal procedure after Medicaid funding for abortions was cut off by the federal government.

While Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas was dodging questions about his views on abortion, newspapers reported the latest survey on reproductive health attitudes of minority women. The results were clear: a majority want to keep abortion legal. The National Council of Negro Women along with a New York research and consulting firm interviewed 1,157 Black, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American women. About three-fourths agreed that the decision to have an abortion must be one made by each woman for herself.

Among Hispanic women, 55 percent agreed it was a woman’s choice alone. The director of the National Latina Health Organization explained, “Some of us who were Catholic left the church over these issues. Some of us who remain Catholic continue to use birth control and get abortions in spite of the teachings of the church. . . . Even though we are only 8 percent of the population, we get 13 percent of all abortions. This is proof that despite any moral, cultural, or religious teachings, we will do what our realities dictate.”

Independent political action—to meet their reproductive, economic, educational, and equality needs—is the most promising route for women of color who have been pushed down into the bottom of U.S. society.

An Exciting Potential

The three current developments toward independent political action have their own dynamics and priorities. But their demands are not counterposed nor mutually exclusive. On the contrary, there is a substantial overlap of human forces, goals, and needs. Women are involved in all of the movements currently projecting some form of new party activity. We must make sure our objectives are incorporated into independent political action efforts. We can help provide common links between all new party forms.

The potential exists for incorporating many millions into an independent political party launched by any of the forces prepared to reshape U.S. politics. Feminists, working people, and members of racial and ethnic minorities who support a break with the Democratic and Republican parties are raising political discussions to a new level, are helping to break through old habits, and are challenging traditional ways of thinking. Any one of the movements, or a combination of two or all, could make the giant leap necessary to turn political power into a real force which will begin answering the needs of the majority of the population. □

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In Response to Imperialist Blackmail 'Commonwealth' Replaces USSR

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The significance of the December 8 announcement that a Commonwealth of Independent States had been formed and that the "Soviet Union as a subject of international and geopolitical reality no longer exists" can be best understood by examining the contradictory forces at work since the bureaucratic rulers launched the economic and political reforms.

Gorbachev and the Kremlin introduced glasnost and perestroika in response to the economic and social stagnation caused by decades of bureaucratic planning. The rulers turned to imperialism and restoration of market mechanisms to help pull the economy out of stagnation and thus regenerate the basis for the bureaucracy's precious power and privileges. They did not set out to disintegrate the Soviet Union or restore capitalism or see themselves replaced by a capitalist class which would own the wealth and take over the state to defend its own interests.

However, once set in motion, the economic reforms took on a dynamic of their own. They caused a progressive dismantling of the central planning institutions that held the economy together, ended subsidies to "unprofitable" industries whose goods and services had been essential, and required that industries be "profitable" to survive even when there was no hope they could be. This led to the economic breakdown of production and distribution and to chaos. The chaos nourished the black marketeers and profiteering apparatchiks whose position in the economy allowed them to turn the economic disintegration into a profitable personal venture.

The ruling bureaucratic caste launched glasnost in 1986 to loosen up the political environment in an effort to restructure the political institutions to serve the needs of the economic reforms. This policy, too, set in motion an uncontrollable dynamic. Masses of workers, students, and intellectuals have crashed through the proclaimed democratic openings to form their own movements independent of the bureaucracy. These social protests—the massive strikes of 1989 and 1991, for example—as a result of the creeping price increases and worsening shortages of all basic goods — had forced the government to promise to retreat from some of the market-oriented reforms it had managed to impose. In reality, neither Gorbachev nor Yeltsin had been able to implement the major market reforms and privatization imperialism demanded because of the responses—and fears of the responses—from the workers.

Not only were no major infusions of foreign capital rushing in to salvage the economy, there was no hope that capital could emerge from somewhere inside the USSR. The wealth being accumulated by the marketeers ("black marketeers" or otherwise) and the bureaucrat-mafia seems immense relative to the

generalized impoverishment of the ordinary workers, and these elements have justly earned the hatred of ordinary workers off whose misfortune they are feeding. But this dubiously acquired wealth is only a drop in the bucket compared to the immense investments the ruling bureaucrats have been seeking abroad.

They had great hopes in the June meetings in London of the seven most powerful imperialist powers, where Gorbachev's economists were suggesting imperialism bail them out to the tune of \$35 billion over seven years. They even offered to turn the administration of the economy over to the imperialist leaders in exchange for such an advance! But they got virtually nothing. For all their protestations of loyalty to the superiority of the market and repeated readiness to cooperate with imperialism abroad, imperialism was not interested in propping up the bureaucracy's system. Total foreign investment was only approximately \$2 billion—1 percent of the total investment—by autumn. The privatization the bureaucrats had looked to for their salvation affected only a minute share of the property on the fringes of the economy.

After the Coup

Those in the "new" section of the bureaucratic caste that grabbed all the power and property after the August coup was defeated were for the most part reincarnated Communist Party apparatchiks who had abandoned the party when it became clear that its fate was sealed. In the three months after their August counter-coup, the economic situation for the masses deteriorated at a rapid rate. Production was down 5–10 percent in basic industries such as oil, gas, coal, and metals. Grain production had dropped drastically—to 170 million metric tons—from last year's 235 million metric tons. Official sources reported that 55 percent of the population was living below the poverty level. This was a considerable increase over the official figure of 32 percent living *at or below* the poverty level in 1988; it was also a vivid indictment of the "reforms."

The imperialists had observed the collapse of the Stalinists' system with uncontrollable glee and reacted with demure coyness to the bureaucrats on their knees pleading for funds. But by autumn, the situation suddenly wasn't funny to imperialism anymore. After all, the Soviet Union owed the imperialists and their lending institutions somewhere between \$60 billion and \$81 billion in loans that were falling due.

The terms of the discussion switched as the Soviet Union collapsed with the declarations of independence by all the republics from August to October. It was no longer a question of how much money the bureaucrats could squeeze from the imperialists and their lending institutions but how the imperialists—considering the all-encompassing political and economic

chaos in the former Soviet Union—were going to get their loans repaid.

By October, the central government in the Kremlin represented nothing meaningful. All that remained functioning was Gorbachev and the foreign ministry. Even the defense ministry was only a shell. The Supreme Soviet, when it opened October 20, was attended by only seven of the former republics. A new economic union announced October 18 managed to pull in ten former republics, but a political union—which Gorbachev hoped would be a future Union of Sovereign States—failed from the start.

The new bureaucratic amalgam that wielded power—only the former republics of Armenia and Georgia had governments with an authentic popular base—was paralyzed. Each local apparatchik chief in the former republics (Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan, Ayaz Mutalibov in Azerbaijan, Leonid Kravchuk in Ukraine, etc.) had his hands full. These local economies are devastated and social problems are mounting.

They are under immense pressure from the massive anti-Kremlin sentiment from below, especially aggravated by Yeltsin's moves to grab more and more institutions from the Kremlin in the name of the Russian republic. The local bureaucratic hacks have a tight wire to walk, and rejoining a union with Russia in the wake of their loud and recent proclamations of loyalty to independence was not so easy for them. But since their fate is tied to the survival of the center and its policies and not to popular control from below, they had no other choice.

Imperialism Steps In

The bureaucrats could not proceed with further market measures because these were so unpopular; and besides they hadn't the means. Nor could they go backward and revert to the old command system if they ever hoped to entice imperialist funds. It was at this time that imperialism stepped in with its own demands.

On November 19, while ordinary people were photographed by the *New York Times* scrounging in the garbage for usable items, representatives of the international capitalist class came to Moscow and sat down with Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and the heads of seven other former republics to discuss how the roughly \$80 billion debt would be paid. The bureaucrats were about to default.

Representatives of eight republics—Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Turkmenia, Moldova, Tadzhikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kirghizia—agreed to take responsibility for the payment to imperialism of the principal due in exchange for a moratorium for three months (!) on the \$5–6 billion due in interest payments. Imperialism agreed to provide a “bridge” loan of \$1 billion during the difficult months ahead—a negligible sum in light of the catastrophic needs.

Despite threats from international capitalism, the representatives of the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia refused to sign the agreement. According to the *Financial Times* report on November 22, “Western officials expressed confidence that the holdouts would accept their share of the Soviet debt service, saying all had been warned that any republic's refusal to shoulder its share would have serious consequences.” They were right.

The signers agreed to reach an agreement by the end of November allocating shares and “mobilizing” the foreign currency needed to pay the debt. This most certainly presented the signers with a problem. Not only was there no functioning central government, the idea of a national budget “had been largely abandoned” during 1991. The projected budget had been roughly 600 billion rubles, but the funds did not come in.

Adding to the problem, the former Soviet Union's gold reserves—which were expected to be used as collateral—have virtually “disappeared.” Market “ideologist” Georgi Yavlinsky reported on November 19 that the gold reserves had “shrunk” from 2,050 tons in 1953 to 240 tons. However, Aleksandr Orlov, head of the audit commission for the Soviet parliament said November 15 that the Soviet central bank had “no gold.” *Izvestia* in mid-November reported that five tons of “hard-currency freight,” presumably gold and platinum, had been taken (it was not indicated by whom) out of the country since October 1!

In addition to agreeing to continue paying the interest on the debt, the signers of the accord on debt payment rescheduling agreed “as a matter of the highest priority” to work with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) “to adopt and implement during the first quarter of 1992 comprehensive and ambitious macro-economic and structural adjustment programs.” (*Financial Times*, November 22, 1991.) The deferred interest payments amount to roughly \$6 billion, most of it due to German creditors.

November 25 was supposed to be the signing ceremony launching Gorbachev's new Union of Sovereign States. However, only seven of the expected twelve former republics (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenia, and Kirghizia) sent representatives. To add insult to injury, even these seven did not actually sign the accord but said they wanted to take it home to think about it.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, on the eve of the independence referendum scheduled to take place in Ukraine on December 1, Washington reversed its policy, abandoned Gorbachev and slapped Yeltsin in the face by announcing that it would recognize an independent Ukraine. Ukraine then agreed on November 30 to take responsibility for paying 16 percent of the \$80 billion Soviet debt.

On November 28, the Soviet foreign currency bank shut its doors because it had no foreign currency that could be withdrawn. The central government had been so short of funds that it had been able to buy only half the usual quantity of grain, a further explanation for the food shortages since the bakeries are still 90 percent state-owned. To make matters worse, in the last days of November, the moribund Soviet parliament could not get a quorum to grant Gorbachev's request for operating funds for the Kremlin's remaining institutions for the rest of 1991.

Yeltsin Takes Over

Yeltsin withheld crucial Russian funds from the Kremlin's central bank and took over the finance and foreign ministries and the foreign embassies. As of December 1, 80 ministries were closed because Yeltsin ceased funding them. He further took control of the press printing the money, and of the gold and diamond supplies. He also took over responsibility for

salaries to some military, scientific, cultural, and budget organizations. However, his cuts in the military budget affect 60 percent of Russian industries. In addition, he announced that the exchange rate for rubles starting December 1 would be 1-47, the black-market rate.

Yegor Gaidar, the new Russian deputy prime minister, had asserted earlier in the discussions about rescheduling payment of debts to imperialism that Russia would assume responsibility for the payment of the whole debt if necessary. This initiative was apparently aimed at holding together some sort of agreement between the imperialist creditors and the former republics, giving other republic chiefs time to sell the idea at home, and reassuring doubting imperialist creditors. He and other Yeltsin marketeers have theorized that if Russia through its projected "plunge" into the market December 15 could stabilize the ruble, other republics would perhaps not issue their own currency as they were threatening to do, and trade among the republics and privatization could be facilitated.

Meeting in Minsk

Within a week after Ukraine's voters approved the referendum that "The Ukraine considers the 1922 Treaty about the creation of the Soviet Union and all subsequent constitutional acts of the USSR to be null and void with regard to Ukraine," Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk was meeting with Yeltsin and Belarus president Stanislav Shushkevich in Minsk, where they announced the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Meanwhile, Yeltsin's economic advisers were in Moscow meeting with Jeffrey Sachs and other imperialist architects of austerity programs for debtor nations to discuss the implementation of measures to "plunge" the already suffering Soviet workers into the market. But now the terms of the discussion had changed and become more urgent to imperialism, for the measures were no longer being implemented in order to save the bureaucracy but to insure the payment of the debt to imperialism.

Within days, the Ukrainian parliament—still dominated by former CP members—voted 28-10 with numerous amendments in favor of joining the Commonwealth. Approval was motivated by claiming that joining the Commonwealth was a way to formally leave the Soviet Union. This must have sounded hollow to a population that had just days before declared themselves independent! Within a week, eight other former republics had asked to join, leaving only Georgia outside. Its popularly elected government was soon overthrown by a military putsch that left dozens dead.

Russia postponed until January 2 the drastic reforms originally scheduled for December 15. While the other republics protested that this was too soon and they weren't ready, Russia—now with an IMF gun at its head—insisted no further postponements were possible. In the end, the other non-Russian Commonwealth members had no choice but to go along, while adopting measures aimed at cushioning their doubly oppressed populations from some of the most disastrous consequences of the reforms and forestalling rebellion.

In the days and weeks before the January 2 reforms were instituted, Yeltsin and local Russian governments decreed sweeping privatization measures of housing, shops, and land. Yeltsin on December 29 issued such an order to privatize the

land that calls for rapid reorganization of collective and state farms and encourages sharp increases in private plots before the spring planting season.

On December 30 in Minsk, the Commonwealth members issued their own two-phase privatization plan envisioning phased privatization of the food industry (60%), starting January 2, construction (70%), light industry (70%), retail shops (60%), among others commencing in mid-1992. Exempt from privatization would be territorial waters, main transport, gold, platinum, TV and radio. Privatization of the oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, or firms employing more than 10,000 or worth more than 200 billion rubles would need Commonwealth permission. Workers are allowed preferential access to shares amounting to 20-25 percent of their enterprise and additional shares at a 30 percent discount, which they may sell immediately. If a foreigner buys a plant outright, 10 percent of the shares will be distributed to workers and 20 percent of the revenue will be earmarked for "social" expenses. (*Financial Times*, December 31, 1991.)

The original Commonwealth agreement, which on paper appeared little different from Gorbachev's proposed Union plan, has undergone considerable amendments and amounts to little more than a last-ditch effort by the ruling bureaucrats to hang together rather than separately. Gorbachev resigned on December 25 as president of the USSR, which no longer existed anyway. The Soviet parliament could not get a quorum together to disperse formally.

Following the January 2 price increases that were sure to "plunge" millions more Soviet workers into unemployment, poverty, hunger, and homelessness, no plethora of goods appeared in the stores as some marketeer ideologues had promised. Many shops remained closed and those opened had few goods and they were at prices most people could not afford.

Moreover, that was the day Yeltsin had decreed that the ruble's value would finally "float," or no longer be exchanged with other currency at a rate fixed by the government. Georgy Matykhin, chairman of the Central Bank of Russia, said of this measure that its consequences would be "much more destructive than an atomic bomb." (*Washington Post*, December 30, 1991.)

Even imperialist commentators do not place much stock in the claims by Yeltsin and his advisers to the Soviet people that although conditions will continue to worsen for a while, they should start improving by the end of 1992.

"The Soviet economy will collapse under the pressure of hyper-inflation. . . ." is the assessment of investment house Morgan Stanley's David Roche. (Reuters, December 20, 1991.) *Washington Post* commentators Rowland Evans and Robert Novack on December 30 reported similar assessments by White House advisers. Why, then, is Russia doing this? Evans and Novack answer that it is due to the pressure of the IMF and pressure from Western capital, especially European creditors led by Lazard Freres "which unlike the Russian peasantry will get its debts paid in hard currency."

Workers' Response

While some social rumblings began to be heard in the days right before and after January 2, it appears that the population as a whole was stunned, "like someone who had just received

a hard blow to the head” was the way Moscow socialist activist Boris Kagarlitsky described it in a phone conversation with *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* January 6.

While Stalin’s heirs launched the market reforms to try to get money from imperialism to buttress their own position, by the logic of what they did, they ended up in the palm of imperialism and they can do nothing at all about it.

Only the workers, whose response the rulers in the Commonwealth and in imperialist capitals fear so much, have the capacity to respond effectively. It is they who are suffering under the blows for the sake of those on top, and they have the power to fight back and win.

On January 3, the news agency TASS reported that the Ukrainian Federation of Independent Trade Unions had formally protested the lack of social protection from the price

increases and demanded that the Ukrainian government insure that there is a guaranteed minimum wage that escalates with the cost of living and an indexation of wages with prices and that it “guarantee the distribution at established norms of essential products at fixed state prices.” While it did not call workers to action, such demands—which directly challenge the premises of the marketization programs being instituted—will certainly have the potential for mobilizing millions.

Three men in Minsk may be able to declare a Commonwealth and get eight other men to go along with them to please imperialist creditors; and they with the creditors may hatch a grand scheme to line their pockets through savage generalized austerity. However, there are some 279,999,999 or so others in the former Soviet Union who will ultimately decide what will really happen. □

January 6, 1992

New Russian-Language *Inprecor*

A new historic stage has been reached with the publication of a new journal of the Fourth International in Moscow in the Russian language. It is called *Inter-Vzglyad—Inprecor*—a combination of the titles of United Secretariat journals *International Viewpoint* and *Inprecor*. The first issue, dated Summer 1991, actually appeared in early October. Its appearance was delayed due to a number of practical difficulties exacerbated by other uncertainties following the August coup attempt.

Regular issues of *Inter-Vzglyad—Inprecor* will contain the same types of articles about international events relevant to revolutionary struggles that one finds in *International Viewpoint* and *Inprecor*. However, its first issue contained some basic material about the Fourth International to introduce the FI to readers. The contents are: “Trotsky’s Last Battle,” by Daniel Bensaid, “The Economic Alternative” by Ernest Mandel, “Marxism and the National Question” by Catherine Samary and Entso Traverso, “Fourth International Conducts Its Thirteenth World Congress,” and the “Resolution on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe” and “Declaration on the Events in the Baltic Republics” adopted at the World Congress.

The following “From the Editors, To the Readers” opened the journal:

For someone living in the Soviet Union, perhaps it is not easy to understand how a person living in France, Switzerland, the USA, or Japan could remain committed to socialist goals. It will unquestionably be easier for those who struggle against the inequalities of real existing capitalism to understand the strong attraction capitalism may have in countries of the former countries of “real existing socialism.” However, it is not easy to reconcile oneself with this. Our journal *Inter-Vzglyad—Inprecor* strives to overcome tendentious and apologetic interpretations of social and political events in all parts of the world. We have

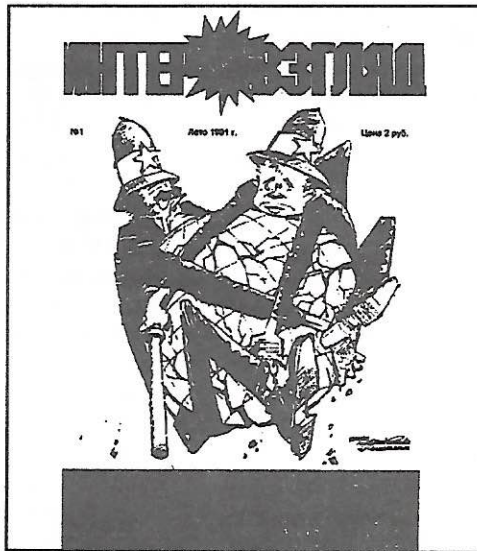
always condemned bureaucratic dictatorships which claim that they rule in the name of the people while in fact they are standing on the people’s necks. But we also reject the views of those in the Soviet Union today who now paint a rosy picture of reality under capitalism after having not so long ago—and for decades—depicted capitalism in the most negative way. We want to see the reality that is hidden behind the slogans and “isms.”

Inter-Vzglyad—Inprecor reflects in its Russian-language edition (and also in its English, Spanish, French, German, Czech, and Polish-language editions) the living experience of and analyses by organizations from several dozen countries on all continents who are members of the Fourth International. Even though our resources are modest, our international organization has allowed us to counter official propaganda which seeks to justify a system linking power and privileges to property and

bureaucratic posts.

Inter-Vzglyad—Inprecor presents the point of view of an organization which had its origins in sources that emerged in the antibureaucratic struggle of the Left Opposition in the 1920s, a point of view which is the result of a pluralistic and democratic method of functioning. We reject dogmatism and sectarianism and are open for debates with everyone who is fighting for democratization of the society in all spheres—in political, economic, and social life; in relations between nations, men and women, and in the relationship between humanity and nature.

Inter-Vzglyad—Inprecor was printed in a run of 1,500 copies, contains 36 pages, and costs a reasonable 2 rubles. Inside the front cover, the editors indicate that the first issue was produced on the initiative of a “charitable, scientific, international, social-political association called Grazhdanin [Citizen] (a volunteer political society on the strategy of international relations). □



David Duke: The Pretty Face of American Fascism

by Tom Barrett

In 1974, after nearly 20 years of retreat, American racism went on the offensive. It started in the city of Boston, where a federal court decision had mandated busing across district lines to correct racial imbalance in the public schools. The school committee, dominated by representatives from white enclaves in South Boston ("Southie") and East Boston ("Eastie"), mobilized misguided working people from those communities against the busing plan. It did not take long for the confrontation to attract national attention. Thomas Atkins, president of the Boston branch of the NAACP, approached the Socialist Workers Party for help (which the SWP provided). The racists also turned to outside forces, among them the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, whose young leader came up from Louisiana to help organize racist resistance to school desegregation. Speaking in a South Boston high school auditorium he asserted, "There is no place for the Negro in modern society," to which someone in the back of the hall replied, "In Southie we call 'em niggers!" The Klan representative was 24-year-old David Duke, already a veteran Klan and American Nazi leader.

During the "Battle of Boston" then-president Gerald Ford came out clearly on the side of the racist forces by denouncing "forced busing" and calling for the overturn of Judge Garry's decision. Though the ruling class's police and intelligence agencies had already been carrying out violent repression against Black nationalist and civil rights organizations for a number of years, Ford's statement marked the first time in the post-World War II period that a national leader had come out clearly on the side of open racism. It gave the rabidly anti-African American mobs in Boston—and elsewhere—a legitimacy which they had not enjoyed in decades.

It also provided an opening for fascist-minded scum like David Duke to enter the mainstream political process, culminating 17 years later in his second-place finish in the Louisiana gubernatorial primary. (Louisiana elections are nominally nonpartisan. All candidates for governor compete in a single primary election, and if no one receives a majority, the two highest vote-getters compete against each other in a run-off election.)

Duke's use of President Bush's own rhetoric to defeat incumbent governor Buddy Roemer, the candidate favored by Bush, is threatening to undo a great deal of progress in winning African Americans and other formerly loyal Democratic voters to the Republican Party. The ruling class media whipped up anti-Duke hysteria on a nationwide level, which succeeded in bringing about Duke's defeat in the run-off election against former governor Edwin Edwards. In the course of the recently concluded Louisiana election campaign, however, the harsh realities about the fundamentally racist nature of capitalist rule in the United States have been exposed, and in spite of his

election defeat David Duke will be haunting the Republican Party for some time.

The KKK and the American Far Right

Does the presence of a former Ku Klux leader warrant the hysteria which the administration and the media are exhibiting? Does it indicate a growing fascist threat? Can he succeed in getting elected to high public office? Can he build a mass-based movement which can threaten the trade unions, the African American people, and the movements for social change? The truth is somewhat contradictory, for, as racist politicians go, Duke is no worse than many who have held higher office than he, and if his rhetoric is to be trusted, he is no worse than President Bush himself.

Strictly speaking, fascism is a political import into the American scene, and as such has had a difficult time emerging from the political margins. Fundamentally, fascism is the highest form of imperialist bourgeois nationalism—and Nazism is based on *German* nationalism, Mussolini's fascism on *Italian* nationalism, and so forth. Such movements have had some echo in immigrant communities, but their dynamic has been *contradictory* to American nationalism, especially since Nazism and Italian fascism were the U.S.'s enemies in World War II.

The Ku Klux Klan, on the other hand, is strictly homegrown. It was the spearhead of the counter-Reconstruction during the post-Civil War period, and in a resurgent form in the 1920s and 1930s was instrumental in combating trade unionism and the socialist movement, using prejudice against Blacks, Jews, and immigrant Roman Catholics, combined with anticommunism, as its principal weapon. There have been many different organizations using the name "Ku Klux Klan," and there have been many other organizations with similar aims and tactics. Together they have had a significant influence on the history and politics of the United States, especially in the South. *David Duke is only marginally connected with that political tradition.* His brand of fascism is essentially self-styled; one might even describe him as a "lunatic fringe" politician. One should not minimize the danger Duke represents—after all, Hitler was ridiculed as a nut case during the 1920s—but it is important to recognize the *real* danger of David Duke, which increases as Duke distances himself from his Klan and Nazi past.

The KKK and Its Role in U.S. Politics

Today the KKK is a marginal political movement on the fringes of the far right. There are several different Klan organizations claiming to be the "true" Ku Klux Klan. In spite of the alarming racial polarization in the U.S. none of them have been able to gain much credibility. It has not always been so, however.

The KKK was originally formed as a paramilitary organization to combat Reconstruction in the former Confederate states. Though it is the best known it was not the only such organization, nor even the largest. The counter-Reconstruction organizations' purpose was to intimidate the newly freed African Americans from voting and from emigrating from the cotton-growing areas of the South, thus depriving the plantations of their cheap labor. They went by different names in different areas, the most common of which was "Democratic Party Rifle Club."

The Ku Klux Klan combined college fraternity-style rituals and pranks with racist violence, which included whippings, arson, and murder. By 1868, however, it had become so corrupt that its "Imperial Wizard," former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest, called for its dissolution. As a new cotton and tobacco economy was being built in the former Confederacy, the bankers, railroad barons, and plantation owners all found that it was in their collective best interest to put an end to radical Reconstruction and return the African Americans to providing cheap labor through a system of tenant farming known as "sharecropping." Night-rider vigilantism was no longer necessary, and the first incarnation of the KKK withered away with Reconstruction itself.

The Klan was reborn during the first decades of the twentieth century, consequent to the imposition of the "Jim Crow" system of racial segregation during the 1890s. By the 1920s it had become a mass organization, with over one million members, and had extended its geographical reach into the northern Midwest—in fact, its strongest state organization was in Indiana. It was a violent, xenophobic, and ruthless organization, targeting not only Blacks but Jews, Roman Catholics, immigrants, and—especially—socialists and trade unionists (who were often foreign-born Jews or Roman Catholics). It was part of a wave of racism which swept the entire United States and even affected the socialist movement. (The writer Jack London, for example, participated in attacks on Chinese immigrant workers and asserted that he was a "white man first and a socialist second.")

The most dangerous aspect of the KKK and groups like it was their respectability. Today shock is expressed that a former Klansman is able to win elective office. However, during the 1910s and 1920s, active KKK leaders were routinely elected to local and national political office. Southern politicians gave speeches at lynchings, which were gruesome spectacles in which the victims were beaten and tortured before they were hanged and burned. Liberal northern Democrats, locked into an unholy alliance with the "Solid South," turned a blind eye to white supremacist brutality. "Progressive" Republicans used white supremacist notions to justify imperialist expansion in Latin America and Asia. Though African Americans resisted their oppression through formations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, very few whites questioned that white supremacy was the natural order of things.

After World War II the U.S. ruling class made the decision to abandon its support for the Jim Crow system. There were many complex reasons for this, not the least of which was the mass-action civil rights movement itself. The Ku Klux Klan found itself in a losing battle to defend the old system of legally mandated segregation, and its continued terrorism against Blacks and civil rights activists contributed to its further deterioration into the fringe group that it is today.

Of course, recognition of the KKK's marginal role in U.S. politics today does not mean it should be ignored or not taken seriously. An organization does not have to have a mass membership in order to carry out terrorist actions. It takes only one person to plant a bomb. It is also the responsibility of the labor and socialist movements to stand up and resist racism wherever it appears, especially when the threat of violence is involved.

So, countermobilizations to any public KKK activity are entirely appropriate and indeed necessary. It should, however, be recognized that George Bush has done far more real harm to African Americans than David Duke and that the worst racist violence is carried out by men in blue uniforms, not white sheets.

Who Is David Duke?

Though different organizations using the name Ku Klux Klan have had some significant impact on the course of U.S. history, David Duke has had no connection with any of them. None of the groups with which he has been associated has ever had any mass following. When Duke's political activity began, Jim Crow was already dead and buried, with Lyndon Johnson's signature on the Civil Rights Act of 1964. His association with racist causes did not come from any connection with his family or community but almost by accident. It was a case of an impressionable boy being influenced by a strong adult figure.

As a high school student in New Orleans in 1964 Duke was assigned to write a report opposing desegregation. In researching his assignment he visited the headquarters of the White Citizens Council, the largest of the anti-civil rights organizations in the 1960s. There he met a wealthy realtor named James Lindsay who had strong pro-Nazi views. The 14-year-old Duke looked up to Lindsay and began assimilating Lindsay's Nazi views as his own. As a student at Louisiana State University (LSU) at Baton Rouge, Duke distributed Nazi literature and spoke frequently at LSU's "Free Speech Alley" in favor of exterminating Jews and deporting Blacks back to Africa. In 1970, wearing a Nazi uniform and swastika armband, he picketed a speech by William Kunstler at Tulane University in New Orleans. A well-known photograph from the same period shows him similarly dressed carrying a sign reading "Fry the Chicago 8" (the group of antiwar activists and Black Panthers put on trial for their activities during the 1968 Democratic convention).

In 1971 James Lindsay founded the "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," one of several competing racist terrorist groups using the KKK name. Duke joined it in 1973 and became its Louisiana "Grand Dragon." In that capacity he went to Boston to whip up racist sentiment against school desegregation and participated in a vigilante patrol at the Mexican border to stop the entry of Mexicans into the United States. In 1974 a factional struggle broke out in the Knights of the KKK between Duke and Lindsay on one side and an opposing faction which accused them of turning the Klan into a Nazi organization. Lindsay was murdered in 1975, after which Duke became the Knight of the KKK's "Grand Wizard," its national leader.

During this period, David Duke also began running for public office. He ran for the Louisiana State Senate in 1975. He did not deny his Klan membership, but he toned down his rhetoric, using similar language as President Ford. Duke built the Knights of the KKK into the strongest national Klan organization by 1979, and then he resigned from it, explaining that its image was beyond reform. He started a new organization called the National Association for the Advancement of White People (NAAWP), which continues to espouse the same neo-Nazi and KKK views that Duke has been putting forward in other organizations.

Duke ran for president in 1988 as the candidate of the Populist Party, a collection of white supremacists, skinheads, and neo-Nazis. He won his first election in February of 1989 as a Republican, gaining a seat in the Louisiana House of Representatives from Metairie, a well-to-do suburb of New Orleans. Since that election victory, Duke has become a household name on a national level, making the rounds of the TV talk shows and drawing media attention to Louisiana politics.

His record as a state legislator, however, has been less than distinguished. He has spent most of his time promoting his racist views and his own personal career, not necessarily in that order. He has proposed legislation to require drug testing for all recipients of public assistance and managed to persuade the Health and Welfare Committee of the Louisiana House to designate his racist NAAWP as a nominating organization for the proposed governing board for the Charity Hospital System. More than anything else, however, he has spent his time running for office, challenging J. Bennett Johnston for the United States Senate in 1990 and then running for governor in 1991.

Does Duke's Success Mean Fascism Is Coming?

During the 1960s Governor George Wallace of Alabama ran far more powerful racist and reactionary electoral campaigns than David Duke's. He ran in the Democratic primaries in 1964, 1968, and 1972, winning many that he entered. In 1968 he ran in the general election outside the Democratic Party as the candidate of the "American Independent Party," with Air Force General Curtis E. "Bomb 'em Back to the Stone Age" LeMay as his running mate. He generated a great deal more support than David Duke has ever dreamed of, with far less moderate rhetoric. He might have been a serious contender for the Democratic nomination in 1972 had he not been permanently paralyzed by an assassination attempt while campaigning in Maryland.

George Wallace's racism was neither self-styled nor based on any ideological program—rather, it was connected completely with the traditional white supremacist politics of the American South. In fact, Wallace ran for governor in 1958 as a racial moderate and lost. He told his campaign aides on election night, "Boys, Patterson [the incumbent governor] out-niggered me. And, boys, I'm not going to be out-niggered again." He earned notoriety in the early 1960s by "stand[ing] in the schoolhouse door" to block federal court-ordered desegregation of the University of Alabama. During 1963–1965 Alabama was the scene of bloody civil rights battles, including the dog attacks on civil rights activists in Birmingham and the voting rights struggle in Selma. Wallace became the national symbol of the stiff-necked segregationist and as such was in much closer touch with the racist inclinations of many whites than David Duke ever could be. As governor, he did far more direct harm to African Americans than David Duke has ever dreamed of doing. Had Duke defeated Edwin Edwards in the November 1991 run-off election, he probably would not have been nearly as effective in reversing African American gains (insufficient as they have been) as Wallace was in resisting them in the 1960s.

And yet, no Democrat raised any objection to Wallace's endorsement of Jimmy Carter in the 1976 election. No one

demanded from Carter an explanation of how he could accept the support of such a man. When Wallace was elected to a fourth term as governor of Alabama in 1982 (his terms were not consecutive), very little attention was paid to it.

In some respects, the consternation expressed over Duke's limited electoral success is a positive thing. It shows that in spite of continued racism and the attempts by the Reagan and Bush administrations to roll back the gains which the civil rights movement made in the 1950s and 1960s, overt racism is less tolerable today than it was 30 years ago. However, if Duke had never been associated with Nazi causes or if anti-Semitism and quack genetic theories were not part of his message, he might not have aroused quite as much concern. The view is often expressed by people who oppose racism and are working to end it that a Duke electoral victory could bring about fascism—and that view is compounded by Duke's own political record. After all, when someone parades about with a swastika on his arm, it is logical to draw the conclusion that he is a fascist.

The fascist movements which took power in Italy in the 1920s and Germany in the 1930s were qualitatively different from David Duke's relatively puny "National Association for the Advancement of White People" or any of the other organizations with which he has been associated. Mussolini's Blackshirts and Hitler's Brownshirts were mass extraparlimentary forces, with a social base in the petty bourgeoisie, which directly confronted the socialist movement and trade unions. They physically broke up workers' meetings and demonstrations and carried out acts of terrorism against the labor movement. Worse, they capitalized on the false policies of the existing labor leadership and took state power. One cannot begin to imagine Duke's supporters physically taking on the trade unions, even in the open-shop South. The whole idea is ludicrous. Furthermore, in Italy and Germany the fascist movements were built on nationalist foundations within their own countries. There is no worse way to appeal to American nationalism than to wear a swastika, the symbol of the German Third Reich, against whom the United States went to war. David Duke is himself well aware of that, which is why he is trying so hard to distance himself from his "youthful indiscretions" as an American Nazi.

How to Fight David Duke

Recognizing that an electoral victory for Duke does not bring about fascism or even the imminent danger of it does not at all imply that Duke should not be taken seriously. However, by exaggerating the danger that Duke represents, one can be persuaded to attempt to fight him in ways which actually *weaken* the struggle against racism.

It should first be recognized that racism—the racism represented by George Wallace in the 1960s—is part of the *foundation* of American capitalist society. It is no accident that David Duke is completely comfortable with the same kind of rhetoric that Ronald Reagan and George Bush have used. It is absolutely correct that the Bush campaign's "Willie Horton" ads helped to give someone like Duke a respectability which he might not otherwise have had. Lee Atwater, the architect of the "Willie Horton" smear, expressed regret over those ads in the final weeks of his life. One should not be misled by George Bush's condemnation of Duke: Bush's actions are as viciously racist as Duke's rhetoric. Violence against people of color is not a

potential threat; it is a day-to-day reality throughout the United States.

The absolute worst way to respond to David Duke is to attempt to “defeat him at all costs” in an election. Racist oppression will not become qualitatively worse if Duke were to win election to high political office, nor will it end if he is defeated. The notion that electing a bourgeois politician who gives lip-service to racial equality will in any way bring about racial equality—let alone liberation from national oppression—is a disarming one. That could be no clearer than in the recently concluded Louisiana gubernatorial election. Duke’s opponent, former governor Edwin Edwards, is an old-style southern politician, completely corrupt and no friend to African Americans. He is from the same political tradition that produced George Wallace, a political tradition with firm roots in American capitalism.

Even though Adolf Hitler technically came to power through an election, the reality was that his victory was won through extraparliamentary means, and he could only have been defeated through extraparliamentary means. That applies to the United States as well.

We have argued that Duke’s movement is small, ineffectual, and indeed rather silly, and that is true—now. However, the same things were said about Hitler’s movement in the early 1920s, and they were true—then. It is more than likely that if a fascist movement develops in the United States Duke may not be involved in its leadership. However, it would be foolish to act on such a speculation. In the present political and economic context, in which masses of working people and even lower- and middle-level corporate managers are facing reduced living standards, unemployment, and even outright poverty, a fascist demagogue, especially one as articulate and as boyishly good-looking as Duke, can win a following and become a serious danger, even if he is not dangerous in the immediate period. If fascist victory is to be prevented, steps must be taken long before such a victory is imminent.

The biggest single factor enabling both Mussolini and Hitler to come to power was the criminally stupid policies of the labor and socialist leadership in both countries. In Germany the Social Democrats and Stalinists were too busy fighting each other to worry about the Nazi threat. Even with their massive political bases in the working class, they were unable to lead the workers out of the economic crisis which afflicted Germany in the 1920s. Consequently, the German workers turned elsewhere, and Hitler was astute enough to take advantage of the situation. *The labor leadership in the United States is no better.* High-level trade union bureaucrats encourage workers to vote for liberal politicians who have no intention of making fundamental changes in the oppressive political and economic system. Low-level bureaucrats in some instances echo the racism, sexism, and militarism of their white male members, especially in the higher-paid skilled trades. We have all experienced discussions in our workplaces of the current economic problems in which someone—as likely as not the foreman—attempts to blame the whole thing on “welfare,” by which he really means people of color. Duke is doing the same thing. Without a labor leadership which can counter such lies, fascism can indeed grow to become a viable political force in the current economic climate.

If the labor movement stands up against racism and begins to fight back to stop the erosion of workers’ living standards, it will earn working people’s respect, and David Duke will remain a silly little geek on the lunatic fringe. If the alternative to Duke is not Edwin Edwards but a labor party which truly represents working people, then it will be possible not only to defeat Duke himself, which is not so important, but the racist and reactionary movement which he could potentially lead, and that is vitally important. *Today* Duke’s movement—in spite of his limited electoral successes—is small and ineffectual. Therefore *today* is the time to defeat it, before it has the potential to become a serious threat. □

December 30, 1991

Teamsters (Continued from page 4)

politics and union-management relations, a broader view of what is being called these days “the free market society” and how this impinges on the lives of workers and their unions.

In the Teamsters union comparisons are often made to the resurgent Teamster movement in Minneapolis in the 1930s.

TDU historian Dan La Botz, in *Rank-and-File Rebellion*, writes:

The Minneapolis Teamster strike had become a national issue [summer 1934], and Democratic President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was supported by the Farmer-Labor Party, feared that if the strike continued it might hurt the Democrats in the fall elections. Roosevelt wanted the conflict ended before November, and sent a new

federal mediator, P.A. Donoghue, to settle the strike. Under the combined pressure of the strikers and the federal government, the Citizens Alliance (anti-union employers) was forced to yield.

La Botz further reports that the three Teamster strikes in Minneapolis that year were organized and led by Teamster members of the Communist League of America. They were men of experience in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) before World War I and in the old AFL craft unions after the war. They had recently been expelled from the Communist Party for “Trotskyism.” They were well known in the Minneapolis labor movement as uncompromising defenders of union democracy.

In the strikes they were joined by Farrell Dobbs, later to become IBT international organizer of over-the-road drivers, who said that he thought at the time that if he joined the communist group he “might be able to learn some of the things they knew.” He did. They taught him that the working class and the employing class have nothing in common, which they had learned in the IWW. And they taught him never to trust or support politicians who are controlled by the employers or in any way connected to the Democratic or Republican parties.

These are good things for TDU members to know and remember as the Teamsters union begins its march into the new era of labor resurgence. □

January 6, 1992

Ron Daniels Campaign Makes Slow Progress

by Claire Cohen

Pittsburgh, Pa., January 2, 1992—The Ron Daniels/Project New Tomorrow Campaign is an effort within the African American community to build independent political action which hopefully will lead to an independent third party. (For more details refer to three previous *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* articles—Oct., Nov., Dec., 1991). Daniels's main goal is the building of independent, Black-led political structures, locally and nationally, rather than winning the presidency. Although the campaign appears to be slowly building it is uncertain that it will gain enough momentum to reach its goal. That is because the response in the African American community has varied widely.

Most non-activist Blacks in Pittsburgh (e.g., Arlington Heights Tenants Mom's Council and people attending a Kwanzaa, an African American cultural event) and Black rank-and-file union members (e.g., SEIU Local 29 civil rights committee in Pittsburgh, members of 1199P in New York) have responded enthusiastically upon reading his platform or hearing him speak, frequently volunteering to work on the campaign. On the other hand, the response of Black activists has tended to be more uneven.

In Pittsburgh most Black activists have expressed support and a small layer has been actively involved in the campaign. One of them is an organizer for SEIU Local 29. The New York campaign consists of about 30 activists, mostly from the Unity Party. In Cleveland there has been verbal support but apparently not much mobilization. And some activists have expressed grave reservations about Daniels's presidential campaign, holding back from any involvement. The most negative response has come from activists tied to the Democratic Party and most—but not all—members of the former League of Revolutionary Struggle. Reasons given for negative responses are: residual tensions from factional fights in the National Black Independent Political Party in the early '80s; feeling "burned" by the experience with the Rainbow Coalition; and reservations about Daniels's strategy for building independent political action.

Some revolutionaries are understandably worried because Daniels has said, when asked, that he would support progressive Democrats. However, when questioned more closely, both in private and in public, Daniels consistently says that the campaign and Project New Tomorrow should leave it up to individuals whether or not they want to endorse or support certain progressive Democrats. His rationale is that there are activists "who are nominally Democrats but are coming around to the idea of independent political action who would be 'frightened off' by an absolute ban on voting or supporting Democrats." He points out, "It took 20 to 30 years to build the New Democratic Party [Canada's labor party]. So in the transition to building a third party we should prioritize supporting independent candidates but not demand that people vote exclusively outside the Democratic Party until there are viable independent structures capable of running candidates." Members who have strong principles against voting for any Democrat should have their viewpoint respected "and not be pressured even if a majority of members choose to support a certain progressive Democrat." (Daniels admits that the majority of those participating in this effort may be for a clear break with the Democratic Party and against an inside/outside strategy. Daniels is comfortable with this if this is the decision of the majority.)

In Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York, Daniels has attended fund-raisers, appeared on local radio shows, and had his

campaign covered in local Black newspapers. Recently Rev. Calvin Butts of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem expressed his support for Daniels and pledged to give a reception for him sometime in January. Significant amounts of money were raised at an event in Cleveland several months ago, although nothing else appears to have happened there since. He had a fruitful visit with the United Electrical Workers when in Pittsburgh. Volunteer cards have been received from over a dozen other cities around the country. In D.C. alone over 150 people have volunteered to work on the campaign. However, the D.C. campaign has had difficulty getting organized. Few of the volunteers are politically experienced and seasoned activists are holding back.

Although Daniels is targeting the Black community, several progressive predominantly white groups have expressed support, the most significant of which are the Greens. The Green parties in various states have expressed interest in placing him on their party ticket. One requirement for receiving federal matching funds is to be on a party's ballot in at least two states. So the Greens' endorsement would help him overcome that hurdle.

Black activists in Pittsburgh who are supportive of the Ron Daniels campaign see it as complementing grassroots community efforts, not replacing them. It has been a major breakthrough in legitimizing Black-led independent political action in the African American community here. Activists also feel it is a chance for people to learn skills which could be invaluable in the future.

Nationally, the impact of the campaign is not as clear. It remains to be seen if it will gain the necessary critical mass to be truly successful. □

What Is the New Alliance Party?

The New Alliance Party (NAP) is a political group organized by a psychoanalytic cult headed by a white therapist, Fred Newman. NAP bills itself as "a Black-led, women-led, multiracial, pro-gay, independent political organization." It has had ties to the right-wing cult leader Lyndon LaRouche which it has never repudiated. Its core members must undergo "social therapy," a unique form of group therapy similar to the type of "therapy" some members in LaRouche's organization are subjected to. It has "therapy centers" in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and other cities in 24 states. It has 17 known front organizations, including the "Rainbow Lobby," not connected to the Rainbow Coalition, though NAP has opportunistically exploited the understandable confusion between the two. It frequently files defamation lawsuits against critics, and is known to have informed the FBI on at least one former member who made revealing criticisms of the organization's real nature. It has also been known to infiltrate and try to sabotage left organizations in the same way that the LaRouche group has. Currently it is cultivating working alliances with the Nation of Islam and the Rev. Al Sharpton in New York.

In 1988, the NAP ran an eloquent Black woman, Lenora Fulani, for president. She raised \$2.7 million, including \$1 million in matching funds, and got on the ballot in all 50 states. She received almost a quarter of a million votes, mostly in the African American community.

This year Fulani is running again. Thus far, she has raised over \$600,000 and qualified for federal matching funds. She is aggressively attacking the Ron Daniels effort and has developed a significant base of support in New York City and Washington, D.C. In Pittsburgh, she doesn't have a base among working people, but a few key Black student activists are supporting her.

For further information read: 1. *Clouds Blur the Rainbow: The Other Side of the New Alliance Party*, by Chip Berlet. Political Research Associates, December 1987. 2. *The New Alliance Party: A Study in Deception*, The Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'Rith, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017. C.C.

Communist Party USA: On the Way to a Split?

by Samuel Adams

A deeply divided Communist Party USA held its 25th convention in Cleveland, Ohio, on December 6-8, 1991. Within days after the convention adjourned, the deep fissures tearing the party apart erupted into a public brawl.

The CPUSA has been among the most monolithic Stalinist parties anywhere in the world. For virtually its entire existence, the party has parroted whatever the Soviet bureaucracy said. It obediently adapted to all the twists and turns of the Kremlin line—defending, justifying, and praising that line, no matter what it was.

Following Khrushchev's report to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's 20th congress in 1956 and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1957, the CPUSA experienced a split. A wing of the party, led by *Daily World* editor John Gates, became disenchanted with the Soviet "model" and urged the CP to pursue a more independent course. But Gates and his followers never found their way to revolutionary socialism. In the CP's internal debate, they raised questions about even those precepts of Marxism that the CP continued to pay lip service to, and they were soundly trounced by the "orthodox" William Z. Foster wing of the party. They left it—for social democracy, for liberal causes, or for private lives devoid of political activity.

The party, much reduced in size, reconstituted itself under the leadership of Gus Hall. For the next three decades it functioned pretty much as it had before, with due allowance made for denouncing the "cult of the individual," the Soviet bureaucracy's explanation for what went wrong during the Stalin period. The "Eurocommunism" phenomenon found little support in the ranks of the CPUSA, although one longtime leader (Gil Green) disagreed with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and said so publicly without getting expelled.

When Gorbachev first announced his program of perestroika and glasnost, the CPUSA enthusiastically endorsed it. But as the economic crisis in the Soviet Union deepened and as the country was wracked with ethnic and national conflict, the CP's central leadership—led by national chair Gus Hall—became increasingly critical of Gorbachev's policies.

Hall's contention was that Gorbachev had abandoned the Soviet Union's system of centralized control (Hall, of course, does not refer to it as being bureaucratic)

without having a system in place to substitute for it. The predictable result, Hall says, was chaos. In an earlier period, Hall had targeted Yeltsin as leading the drive for capitalist restoration. But now Gorbachev is portrayed as having laid the basis for these policies.

Carl Bloice, an African American leader of the party and associate editor of its publication, the *People's Weekly World*, had served during the last few years as the paper's correspondent to the Soviet Union. Bloice in his weekly articles was an apologist for Gorbachev and his policies, and remained so virtually to the end. But Bloice also began to search for a deeper explanation of the deteriorating situation in the Soviet Union than Hall's simplistic analysis, attributing it all to poor planning.

Bloice concluded that there was something *systemically* wrong with how the Soviet Union functioned and he began raising questions about the nature of the Soviet bureaucracy itself. At the same time, Bloice and others criticized bureaucratic and undemocratic tendencies within the CPUSA. In fact, two years ago a piece appeared in *Dialog*, the party's internal organ, that challenged the concept of a leadership that never changed its composition.

Hall argued that while the crisis of the capitalist system was systemic, it was incorrect to say the same about the "socialist" system in the USSR. Its problems, he insisted, simply flowed from "human error." Hall also discounted all talk of undemocratic procedures in the CPUSA.

There the differences lay until the attempted August coup. Hall took a position "to neither condemn nor condone" the coup. This provoked an explosion of protest by many in the CP's ranks. A meeting of the CP's National Committee held September 8, by a vote of 33-30, passed a resolution condemning the coup. That was a sharp setback for Hall.

Internal debate—conducted with an almost unprecedented freedom of expression for the CP—heated up as the party moved toward its December convention. "An Initiative to Unite and Renew the Party," drafted by 18 leading CPers, was circulated and reportedly signed by over 800 party members, about a third of the entire membership. The "Initiative" notes the tremors shaking Communist parties around the world, warns of the CP's "stagnation in theoretical concepts," "isolation from

progressive developments in our country," and "attempts to stifle debate [that] threaten our party's very existence." It says participation in mass struggles should be "our primary task and yardstick" and emphasizes the "need to update our concept of socialism" and "make our party much more democratic." It asserts that "the style of leadership of our party in the past period has appeared more concerned with fending off any admission of error than in coming to grips with the challenges of the moment."

This talk of "stagnation in theoretical concepts" and "need to update our concept of socialism" gave Hall and his camp the excuse to denounce the Initiative signers as a "right opportunist faction." Hall appealed to CP trade unionists to rescue the party from those he stamped as reformers and revisionists. By the time of the convention, the Hall grouping had consolidated a sizable majority.

The minority, signers of the Initiative, included such well-known party figures as Angela Davis, James Jackson, Charlene Mitchell, Daniel Rubin, Barry Cohen, Carl Bloice, Kendra Alexander, Ishmael Flory, Herbert Aptheker, and Gil Green. Angela Davis was unable to attend the convention but she sent a message which said in part:

I was one of the original signers of the Initiative because I believe that the Communist Party will become ever more rapidly obsolescent—more fossilized evidence of past struggles won and lost, past theoretical stances effective and not, past modes of practice with their limitations as well as strengths—if it is afraid to engage in rigorous self-evaluation, radical restructuring and democratic renewal.

The sharpest discussion at the convention centered around the challenges the party's central leadership had previously made to the delegations from New York, the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Alabama, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Northern California. The minority charged that many of its representatives were denied seats at the convention on technical grounds by a leadership in control of the party apparatus.

Gus Hall's report to the convention focused on the need for the CP to involve itself in the survival issues facing the working class and the oppressed. He deplored the devastating setbacks suffered by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and said: "The socialist world as a coherent world entity, with influence and power, is just about nonexistent." With regard to the party's internal situation, he said:

Starting about two years ago, the developments in the Soviet Union and

the catastrophic developments in the Eastern European countries hit our party's shores like political and ideological shock waves.

The setbacks and defeats in Eastern Europe socialist countries and the road to ruin that the Soviet Union has been traveling is having a profound impact on the ideological and political trend toward right opportunism in our party.

The factional fire has been greatly fueled by the right shift in world socialism. The factional center has used the situation to raise basic ideological questions about the class struggle, Marxism-Leninism, the role of the Communist Party and more.

The convention was structured to preclude genuine debate on the major issues. Minority spokespersons had little opportunity to speak. There were no minority or dissenting reports, as in the Trotskyist tradition. Delegates asked for the floor; some got it and some didn't.

One who did was venerable party academic and theoretical leader Herbert Aptheker. Countering Hall's failure to identify the bureaucratic rule of a dictatorial clique—rather than just poor planning—as the Soviet Union's fundamental problem, Aptheker said:

The main source of the collapse that Comrade Hall describes—not only in the USSR but in every part of Eastern Europe—lies not in socialism, but rather in the distortions and vitiation of the essential nature of the party as conceived by Marx and Engels and Lenin into an organization eaten up by bureaucracy, tyranny, authoritarianism, repression and finally human annihilation.

The CP's convention was closed to party members who were not delegates. It was also closed to representatives of the foreign Communist parties and to the media. But 200 rank-and-file CP members, part of the minority tendency, came to Cleveland anyway and met in a room directly across the street from where the convention was held. Delegates shuffled back and forth between the convention and this "Room 211."

The Hall majority totally dominated the convention and won approval for all of its reports and resolutions. One of the most significant results of the convention was the major revamping of the CP's leadership. Signers of the Initiative were purged from the new National Committee (they had constituted about 40 percent of the outgoing committee). Again, this is in stark contrast to the tradition of the Trotskyist movement, which ensures minority currents representation in leadership bodies in proportion to their support.

In the aftermath of the convention, the staff of the *People's Weekly World* prepared the next issue of the paper, which contained a section on the convention proceedings. It quoted generously from Gus Hall's report, but it also reflected what some of the minority had to say. For example, Aptheker's remarks to the convention were reported as well as comments by some of the CP members in Room 211.

When the issue of the paper was printed, however, much of this had been deleted. Without knowledge of the *People's Weekly World* staff, the party's central leadership had substituted its statement of what happened at the convention, omitting all reference to the minority viewpoint.

But that was not all. Since Barry Cohen, the paper's editor, and other staff members were Initiative supporters, they were removed. Without having been told this, they reported to work only to find the building closed and the locks changed. In a December 18, 1991, letter sent out to *People's Weekly World* readers, Cohen and other staff members said:

The changing of the locks, decided upon a week before the convention, can only be seen as evidence of the plan which emerged at the convention to purge people of the Initiative tendency, which includes a majority of the staff of the *PWW*, from the leadership of the party.

Meanwhile, a new editor for the *PWW* and some new staff were appointed by top CP leaders.

This December 18 mailing could, of course, result in disciplinary measures being taken against the party dissidents. How far the Hall leadership is prepared to move in this direction remains to be seen.

For their part, those supporters of the Initiative who met in Room 211 have decided to launch a "Committee of Correspondence," establish a newsletter, begin to work on the 1992 elections and the mayors' march on Washington next spring, "launch a labor project," and meet again in about six months.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency distributed "An Open Letter to the Communist Party USA" to delegates at the CP's convention. This letter, published in the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* (November No. 90), expresses the Trotskyist analysis of events in the Soviet Union and projects the revolutionary socialist alternative for CP members searching for a new political course.

The situation inside the Communist Party USA today can best be described as one both of turmoil and fluidity. Party members, whether supporters of the majority or minority, have been thoroughly disoriented by developments in the USSR

and Eastern Europe. They are now locked in a factional battle over differences that have not yet fully crystallized. Anyone searching for clear-cut and definitive programmatic differences will simply not find them in the CP today. At least not yet.

What is clear, though, is that the CP remains a profoundly undemocratic party, with no tolerance for minority views and with a top leadership seemingly incapable of shedding its Stalinist past. But there is no doubt that that very leadership, for the most part, retains the allegiance of the CP's working class and trade union membership.

The opposition is a hodgepodge, heterogeneous grouping which has yet to come up with a clear alternative to the Hall line. What binds them together is more the demand for greater democracy in the CP and a greater openness to new ideas than anything else. But as important as these are, they hardly constitute a program.

In the early 1930s, the CP experienced a split which saw some of its members form the Proletarian Party. An opposition group developed within that party with which James P. Cannon, principal founder of the Socialist Workers Party, saw some areas of agreement. But Cannon said:

On all these points the opposition is undoubtedly in the right as against the leadership. But when all is said and done these questions have a secondary importance. They are by no means an adequate armament for a real political struggle. The opposition must equip itself with an all-around platform. It must take a position on the basic questions of principle, and make its tactical deductions accordingly. Otherwise it will not be able to avoid a rapid disintegration. Such a fate will threaten it immediately. (*The Communist League of America 1932-34*, p. 25)

This would seem to apply equally to the opposition group in the CPUSA today.

For now, revolutionary Marxists may be able to establish dialogue with some CPers who are open to discuss ideas which the party shunned in the past. In addition, every effort should be made to forge united fronts for action in areas of agreement, such as opposition to U.S. intervention in Cuba.

Further developments within the Communist Party together with the deepening of the crisis of capitalism may well lead some CPers toward genuine proletarian internationalism, to democratic instead of bureaucratic centralism, to building workers' united fronts instead of reformist multiclass popular fronts, and to help construct an urgently needed mass revolutionary workers' party in the United States. □

January 3, 1992

The Renewal of American Trotskyism

by Frank Lovell

The October 1990 issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, No. 78, carried the call of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency: "For the Reconstitution of a United Movement of the Fourth International in the U.S." This call came from decisions taken at FIT's sixth national conference at Wilder Forest, Minnesota, September 1-3. It was prompted at the time by the formal severance earlier that year of all remaining ties, ideological and organizational, between the Socialist Workers Party in this country and the Fourth International. Responses to these developments confirmed our belief that a new U.S. section of the FI was necessary and possible. The final break of the SWP leadership with the Trotskyist movement convinced several loyal SWP members that their leaders had forsaken the programmatic and organizational principles of their party. They began to review the SWP's recent past, encouraged by the call for a new section of the world Trotskyist movement.

Others who had been expelled almost a decade earlier, when the central leaders of the SWP began their piecemeal repudiation of Trotskyism, were cautiously responsive to the call. Likewise readers of *BIDOM* expressed both hopes and skepticism about the prospects of a new FI section here. Some felt the reactionary political climate, the decline of the union movement in the 1980s, and the absence of a massive upsurge of the working class against its impoverishment were insuperable barriers to regroupment of revolutionaries.

The Problem

The problem for us in FIT from the beginning was not whether a new section of the FI was necessary, but how to create it. There was divided feeling among FIT members that joint action of the three indicated groups—Solidarity, Socialist Action, and FIT—on agreed-upon projects could lead to better understanding and eventually to merger of the groups. It was hoped that discussions among the leaders would facilitate this.

Everyone agreed that most members in these three small organizations shared common political backgrounds and socialist perspectives. But there was not much agreement among the leaders on the character (or even the need) of the new FI section, even though SA, FIT, and the group called Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity (FIC) were (and remain) fraternal affiliates or sympathizing sections of the Fourth International, and are entitled to participate in its conferences. Most members and nearly all leaders of these separate groupings had at one time or other been SWP activists, and in some instances prominent representatives of the SWP from its founding in the pre-World War II period. But in the history of the SWP these groups represented different political tendencies inside the party. Their most recent common bond was the fact

that most of them had been expelled as Trotskyists in the anti-Trotsky purges of 1983 and 1984. Once outside the party they soon gravitated in different directions and formed separate groups, each with its own independent existence and public identity. SA publishes the monthly newspaper *Socialist Action*; FIT produces this magazine, *BIDOM*; and FIC identifies with the magazine *Against the Current*. All three subscribe to and help circulate the fortnightly *International Viewpoint*, the English-language magazine of the FI published in Paris.

These three separate Trotskyist groups here in the U.S. have existed more or less independent of each other since 1984 and during these eight years antagonisms and rivalries have developed within each of them and among them, reinforcing a kind of organizational fetishism endemic to all small political groupings. This must be recognized and overcome in the course of bringing together the combined forces of the Trotskyist movement.

New Start

We are now at the start of a second year since the call for a new FI section was issued, beginning the process of restructuring. Some progress has been made, but not what was hoped for. This major task has been before us constantly. We have continuously reminded ourselves that ways must be found to accomplish it. During the past year well intentioned letters and negotiations between FIT and SA, and between FIT and leaders of Solidarity, seem now to have removed at least one stumbling block: the problem of finding agreement among the leaders of all three groups. The leaders of Solidarity have announced their firm intention not to participate. This clears the way for FIT and SA to seek a solution.

From the beginning Solidarity and SA have been unequivocal and adamant that their differences over the concept of a vanguard working class party are irreconcilable. Both have discussed their differences with FIT, and both have invited FIT to join them with the understanding that we in FIT accept their method of party building and abide by their discipline within their existing party structures. All of the extensive correspondence among the groups has been published in FIT internal information bulletins, and some of this material has been available to members of SA and Solidarity. Also *BIDOM* has published several articles on Trotskyist unification since the initial call.

The first was in response to a letter from a *BIDOM* reader in Seattle who concluded as follows: "I fully agree that a united Trotskyist movement in the U.S. is desirable. Much needs to be done to rebuild what Barnes and Co. [the anti-Trotsky faction in the SWP] tried to destroy. I only wish the FIT's desire for unity was as strong as they'd have me believe. I am

disappointed, comrades, because I somehow expected better from you." One specific problem of this reader was that of "a principled difference that prevents FIT and Socialist Action from uniting with Solidarity."

Evelyn Sell who had represented FIT in some of the correspondence with SA leaders replied directly to this and other misunderstandings in the form of an article, "How Will a U.S. Section of the FI Be Rebuilt?" (*BIDOM* No. 81) She presented the problem differently. "Our call does not propose uniting with Solidarity," she said, "although, here too, a question of principle is not involved. The history of the Trotskyist movement in this country and around the world offers many examples of fusions, mergers, regroupments, etc., involving Fourth Internationalists being members of formations that do not strictly follow our conception of a Leninist organization. Whether this is a correct political *strategy* and whether Leninist principles are involved must be evaluated on the basis of concrete situations in each case." Reader response, although low key, indicated general agreement with the approach reflected in Sell's article. The problem remains to be explored even though the question of a difference of principle between SA and Solidarity is moot because of refusal by Solidarity and FIC leaders to participate in the restructuring process.

In the September issue of this magazine (No. 88) Paul Le Blanc presented a roundup of negotiations at that point, "What has been attempted, what has been accomplished, where do we go from here," in which he concluded that "it is far better to have an honest, thoroughgoing exploration of the prospects for unity that clearly lays out and enriches our understanding of Marxist theory and social realities—even if it doesn't yield immediate organizational unity—because this process provides something that all of us can learn from and build on." He invited everyone interested in rebuilding Trotskyism in the U.S. to "join in the process now taking place."

Breakthrough

The next issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* (No. 89) carried the founding statement of the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group (MRSRG), consisting mostly of ex-SWP members who consider themselves Trotskyists and are "committed to socialist regroupment." Obviously they are comrades who want to become part of the process. And in their statement they add another unmistakable indicator of their character. "We do not intend to sit on our hands until that day [of regroupment] arrives. We plan to build our organization. We will intervene in the class struggle and in the political life of Milwaukee and the region. We intend to strengthen our work in the trade unions (the majority of our members belong to unions). We want to deepen our collaboration with all three revolutionary groups—SA, FIT, and Solidarity—as well as with organizations like the Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party. We plan to continue our study of the publications and documents of the various organizations so as to clarify the political views of our group. Above all, we're going to step up our agitation for revolutionary regroupment."

Seeking a Solution

An important meeting of the United Secretariat of the FI was held in Europe in early October 1991, participated in by repre-

sentatives of FIT and SA, where it was agreed that renewed efforts should be made to reconstitute a new section of the FI. The FIT proposed that the United Secretariat consider authorizing a discussion bulletin open to all members of the three groups (SA, FIT, and FI Caucus of Solidarity) to take up such questions as: 1) "lessons of our experience in the Socialist Workers Party"; 2) "a balance sheet of our evolution as separate currents since 1983-84"; 3) "the future development of our movement in the United States"; 4) "the broader social, economic, and political reality in the U.S."

The December issue of *BIDOM* (No. 91) carries the text of a report by Paul Le Blanc to the October meeting of the United Secretariat on "the current political situation in the U.S." This report concludes with an appeal for decisive intervention in the political process unfolding here:

It is essential that a substantial revolutionary socialist organization be developed that is capable of participating sensitively, coherently, effectively in the various struggles of the unions and social movements. This involves bringing to these struggles and movements serious analytical and organizational skills, political energy, and a programmatic orientation that makes sense and is persuasively expressed. The involvement of such an organization in these struggles could contribute to their success and to the growing authority of the revolutionary socialist organization and its ideas. Whether it is able to help bring into being a mass labor party, it will have plenty to do in helping advance nonelectoral class struggle efforts, carry out general socialist education, and develop a body of Marxist analysis that can help move the popular struggles forward.

Such an organization does not exist in the United States. Its potential components exist but are scattered. To the extent that the U.S. forces of the Fourth International are able to overcome their own fragmentation and present a common revolutionary Marxist orientation, they will be an extremely compelling pole of attraction for serious-minded socialist activists. This could create a dynamic that would culminate in significant political breakthroughs as the capitalist crisis continues to deepen.

This is where matters stood at year's end. FIT, SA, the Milwaukee group, and the United Secretariat seemed to agree that reunification is necessary. This is not far removed from where we were a year ago when it was generally agreed that a new FI section was a good idea. The problem then was how to create the new section, and that problem remains. We have learned from our contacts, discussions, and correspondence of the past year some things we did not know before. The leaders of Solidarity and FI Caucus of Solidarity have impressed upon us their unswerving opposition, at this time, to the reconstitution of a U.S. section of the Fourth International. That much is clear. This does not mean, however, that they cannot or will not change their minds. If we respect their present decision and try to understand the problems they confront in their most important areas of work, especially the unions, it may result in collaboration that can later prove mutually beneficial.

Our urgent problem is how to bring together those of us who agree that a new FI section is needed and want to help bring it into being. Those who have stated agreement are members of FIT, SA, and the MRSRG. At least all three groups say they agree on the goal. None can reach it alone. But together they may succeed.

A Practical Suggestion

A practical means, at this juncture, of beginning to lay a solid foundation for the rebuilding of the new FI section would be the announcement of issue No. 1 of the discussion bulletin as proposed at the United Secretariat meeting last October. But nothing has so far happened with it. Discussion Bulletin No. 1 remains a practical suggestion, not yet a serious experiment.

No one can predict how this will turn out. But is it worth trying? It can be undertaken only if agreement is reached among leaders of the three groups that say they want to create the new FI section.

Such agreement ought not to be difficult. It doesn't commit anyone to anything beyond support of a responsible discussion mechanism. How would this mechanism work? All that is required is a postal address to receive documents, and someone responsible to see that this material is printed and distributed to mailing lists provided by the sponsoring organizations. The cost of mailing and other expenses can be easily managed, covered partly by a small charge to readers for each issue of the bulletin not exceeding one dollar.

The proposal that the United Secretariat authorize the publication of the discussion bulletin, if approved, may serve to give it an authentic FI stamp and encourage support and interest from other sections, especially in North America. But its essential character must be determined by the participating groups in this country. They have the responsibility of rebuilding the section.

If a start can be made with this project as indicated, some *BIDOM* readers will miss articles of this kind on the progress of Trotskyist unification. This will make room for other material better suited to the public needs of the magazine. But I would suggest that readers who are especially interested in Trotskyist unification could be invited to subscribe to the discussion bulletin and submit their own contributions.

At this time of economic crisis and social tension *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* needs more in-depth analysis of capitalist economy and class struggle politics. The pressing need of an FI section in this country follows from the present political situation, and certainly an early solution of the party question is better served by a publication sponsored by all participants rather than this magazine of only one group.

Past Experience

Since we all trace our heritage to the SWP it will be helpful to review how the SWP was formed. The most authentic source of information on this subject is a book titled *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party: Minutes and resolutions 1938-39*, edited by George Breitman. This book contains all available documents of the first two conventions and explains how the party was formed and the changes that had to be made on questions of program during this period of regroupment and reevaluation.

The forces that constituted the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 were probably more diverse than those that will reconstitute the new FI section in this country, and this would be true even if the leaders and all members of Solidarity were suddenly to decide to become part of a united Trotskyist movement. At the 1938 founding convention three main politi-

cal currents were represented: the original oppositionists expelled from the Communist Party for Trotskyism in 1928; those from the progressive wing of the pre-CIO unions who were the core of the American Workers Party when it merged with the Trotskyists in December 1934; and the militants in the Socialist Party and Young Peoples Socialist League who were an organized opposition to the Socialist Party leadership prior to the entry of the Trotskyists in the spring of 1936. Inside the Socialist Party the militant opposition was not a highly centralized, politically homogeneous group. Rather, it was critics who found themselves more or less in agreement on the fundamental class question of the Popular Front. As representatives and supporters of working class politics they were in principle opposed to electoral blocs with bourgeois parties and to accepting posts in bourgeois governments. These critics coalesced in an opposition caucus called the Appeal Caucus, taking its name from its internal news bulletin *The Socialist Appeal*. The reformist SP leadership, consisting mostly of Norman Thomas followers, branded these critics "Trotskyists." It is true the original Trotskyist nucleus that was expelled from the CP ten years earlier was part of this Appeal Caucus. They tended to exert major influence within the caucus, but they were not the same as they had been when they first discovered that they were Trotskyists inside the CP. They had undergone an intensive learning process in the interim, and they were prepared to learn from their latest associates and comrades inside the SP.

The entrenched Thomasite leadership banned criticism of the Popular Front government of Largo Caballero which in the spring of 1937 had brought the Spanish revolution to the brink of defeat, and of the labor-endorsed Liberal Republican candidate Fiorello LaGuardia for mayor of New York in whose favor the SP candidate (Norman Thomas) had withdrawn. When the sharpest critics refused to abide by the ban on political debate the party apparatus expelled them and finally all adherents of the Appeal Caucus, totaling an estimated 1,500 SP and YPSL members. The manner of their expulsion was in some ways similar to the 1983-84 purges of Trotskyists from the SWP 46 years later. Bureaucratic methods still haven't changed much, whether in a monolithic "Leninist" party or in an all-inclusive "democratic socialist" party.

When the Appeal Caucus found itself outside the organizational structure of the SP in the fall of 1937 many individuals who had been attracted to it tended to drift away. They had the benefit of a lively political debate conducted by the Appeal Caucus inside the SP but this was directed mainly against the bureaucratic attitudes and practices of the party leadership, and the evils of class-collaborationist politics were not explored as fully as they might have been. Breitman says that within the Appeal Caucus those "who had differences or grievances usually and voluntarily postponed them until a time when raising them would not benefit our common opponents." This was one reason to postpone the founding convention of the new party until the end of the year and provide for the broadest possible preconvention discussion. Delegates were elected on the basis of this discussion. There were no cut-and-dried decisions prior to the convention. Everything had to be decided there, even the name of the new party.

Our problems and the overall objective political situation are very different from 1938, but we may benefit from a comparison of what was done then with what needs to be done now.

There was no other way to bring the supporters of the new party together except in a convention to found the new party. In the present circumstances there is no other way to found a new FI section except in a delegated convention of all who support the idea. To prepare the convention in 1938 the SP expellees found it necessary to organize a preconvention discussion open to all who supported the basic idea of a new revolutionary proletarian party, and who had been in the Socialist Party at the time of the expulsions. Likewise today a preconvention discussion is necessary, open to all who want to help found a new section of the FI and who are members of the sponsoring groups.

Not all questions could be resolved prior to the 1937-38 convention, and not all questions can be resolved in preconvention discussion now. The discussion itself must determine when sufficient clarity has been reached and the FI body politic is prepared to proceed to a delegated convention and set a date for its convening. Just as in 1938 we may not find it possible to resolve, or even to properly formulate, all questions prior to the convention. Back then some questions were referred to referendum vote of the membership. Others remained unresolved (including some that were undisputed and seemed to be more or less settled matters).

The 1939 SWP national convention addressed some of the unresolved questions of the founding convention. In the year and a half between conventions the newly created party had to come to terms with a revision and strengthening of its position on the Black struggle, the labor party question, and the concept of a transitional program for socialist revolution. All this was accomplished with the assistance and advice of Trotsky, then living in Mexico. But the final decisions on all these matters were made by the party membership, by referendum in the case of the labor party and the transitional program.

There are, of course, no guarantees that an organized open discussion of Trotskyist forces today will lead to an equally successful outcome as in 1938 and 1939. But the first step on that road must be taken. This is the joint responsibility of leaders in FIT, SA, and the Milwaukee group. It will redound to the credit of those who are able to take the lead in this crucial matter. They should welcome all the support and assistance they can get from the United Secretariat. The discussion can prepare us for the founding convention of the new FI section. Such an outcome will be seen as a symptom of recovery and return to sanity amidst the wreckage of the depressed and disoriented radical movement of this country. □

December 2, 1991

A Proposal for Joint Political Discussion

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has sent the following letter to Socialist Action, the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity, the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group, and a group of FI supporters in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

January 13, 1992

Dear Comrades:

At a recent meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency proposed: "The United Secretariat should consider the feasibility of authorizing and publishing a discussion bulletin, open to contributions from comrades in all three groups, to take up the lessons of our experiences in the SWP, a balance sheet of our evolution as separate currents since the 1983-84 expulsions, and prospects for the future development of our movement in the United States."

This proposal was referred to the USec Bureau, and we have been told that the Bureau has referred it back to the United Secretariat.

The fragmentation of the Fourth Internationalist movement in the U.S. is a serious problem which warrants special attention and initiative. Discussion alone is not sufficient to overcome the separations which currently exist — but a common discussion bulletin, open to all Fourth Internationalists in the U.S., could be an important step forward in the

process of strengthening relationships and advancing collaboration in political activities. The objective situation calls out for combined efforts and a unified organization.

World-shaking developments which can be best addressed by a united Fourth Internationalist movement include: the continuing and mounting crisis of Stalinism; U.S. imperialism's efforts to stabilize a "New World Order" in which it will play the dominant role; inter-imperialist rivalries and the deepening deterioration of the capitalist system which threaten the world with military and environmental disasters; and, the assaults against working people's employment and living standards, against women's rights, against oppressed racial and ethnic groups, against lesbians and gays, against youth and other vulnerable sections of the population.

Each of our groups encounters opportunities for political activity—as shown so vividly by our involvement in fightbacks by workers as well as in caucuses to democratize and invigorate unions, the protests against the Gulf War, the fight to

preserve legal abortions and extend reproductive rights for women, anti-racist and anti-apartheid struggles, campaigns to combat homophobia, and a host of other social, economic, and political battles. Many young people are seeking socialist solutions and becoming active in radical organizations. The current situation reinforces the need for a united Fourth Internationalist organization in this country.

We urge you to respond positively to this proposal to participate in a discussion bulletin open to members of Socialist Action, the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity, the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group, a group of FI supporters in New Jersey, and FIT. We are, of course, open to your ideas on this matter. The FIT pledges to devote resources to making sure that such a bulletin will be reproduced and circulated. Please contact: Paul Le Blanc, 357 Gross Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15224, phone (412) 682-5484.

Comradely,

/s/Tom Barrett, National Administrative Secretary, Fourth Internationalist Tendency

Reexamining the Economic Program of the Left Opposition in the USSR—Part 2

by Barry M. Lituchy

Part 1 of this article appeared in issue No. 92 of the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism.

Despite a relatively brisk pace of economic development in the last 30 years of tsarist rule, the Russian economy of 1914 was still underdeveloped when compared to more industrialized nations.¹⁴ With its New Economic Policy (NEP), the Soviet government had, by 1926, successfully restored the output of both industrial and agricultural sectors to their pre-war levels, and then some. However, having achieved this goal, and wishing to advance on the path to socialism, the next important task was the expansion and modernization of its industrial base. Thus, the main economic goal of the Communist Party in the twenties was to create a modern industrialized society, albeit of an entirely unprecedented kind.

During this decade an extraordinary debate took place in the Soviet Union among party and government leaders on how best to accumulate and employ the necessary economic and human resources for a program of rapid industrial growth and modernization. The two central economic questions which divided them were: 1) if new industries were to be built, where would the resources come from for the necessary capital investments? and, 2) how could industrialization best be accomplished without antagonizing the peasantry?

Today, this debate is still of great importance to students of economic history because it represents the first attempt, either academically or politically, to understand and resolve the problem of underdevelopment, and because it proposed an approach for doing this without relying primarily on market forces. This debate is also useful for understanding the economic dynamics behind the process, and what roles agriculture and collectivization were expected to play in the early phases of Soviet industrialization. It is also very important to consider how the main arguments developed during these debates offer insights into the way Soviet industrialization actually unfolded during the first five-year plan, especially since some of these arguments—namely Stalin's—were not advanced for economic

reasons at all, but out of political considerations.

The Industrialization Debate and the Future Evolution of Stalinism

The Soviet industrialization debate sheds light on Stalin's program of forced collectivization in three ways. First, it was during this debate that the feasibility of industrial expansion under the NEP system was originally questioned, thereby raising doubts about the long-term desirability of that system. Secondly, it was this debate which ultimately convinced Stalin that he could win the support of a large segment of the Communist Party by claiming that the peasantry and the system of private agriculture was an unavoidable and hostile threat to the immediate economic goals of the socialist regime. These two points are generally accepted by historians of this period. However, the third connection between these debates and Stalin's forced collectivization is much more problematic: to what extent were the economic ideas of the Left Opposition reflected in the logic and methods behind Stalin's decision to collectivize agriculture in one blow?

This is a matter of considerable controversy—not only among historians, but also among contemporary Gorbachevite reformers, intellectuals, and politicians, who have succeeded for the most part in convincing people that there was no real difference in the ideas of the Left Opposition and those of Stalin and his successors. These demagogues base themselves on the arguments of Western bourgeois historians—like Alec Nove, who has long argued that Stalin's policy was a logical and necessary continuation of the policies of the Left Opposition. Nove contends that both the Left Opposition and Stalin believed that the peasantry would have to bear most of the costs of industrialization. And Nove portrays things as though expropriation of the peasantry was the only possible source for capital investments:

There was in fact a real contradiction in the Trotsky-Preobrazhensky attitude. They believed in rapid industrialization, feared the rich peasant, and urged the imposition on the peasants of a price

structure which would permit the state to accumulate and which would be unpopular. Yet they did not face the measures of coercion that would be required if this policy were to be put into effect. Peasants who do not obtain the prices to which they believe themselves to be entitled have powerful means of redress, so long as they retain control of the land and produce. Yet the Trotskyist opposition did not advocate forcible collectivization or expropriation. It is perhaps because they felt that their policy led into a blind alley that they denied the possibility of socialism in one country. . . .¹⁵

Other historians who have dared to question this old Cold War consensus between bourgeois and Stalinist "intellectuals" have pointed out that Stalin's policies were, at best, a highly distorted reflection of Left Oppositional thinking, and may not have had any economic rationale at all. Following the line of reasoning developed by Moshe Lewin in his *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*, James Millar sees collectivization as "merely the culmination of a process of escalating bureaucratic violence against the peasantry," and, in fact, in contradiction with the economic arguments of the Left Opposition.¹⁶ Consequently, Millar, Lewin, and other historians who do not see a continuum between the policies of the Left Opposition and those of Stalin also do not believe that the peasantry or the agricultural sector had to bear primary responsibility for providing economic resources for early Soviet industrialization. However, they do believe that, because of the validity of the Left Opposition's approach to these questions, the process of development in the USSR can be better understood if we reexamine the economic arguments of this tendency during these debates—specifically the theory of "primitive socialist accumulation" and the role assigned to agriculture in that process.

Background to the Debate

The industrialization debate began as both an economic and political attack upon the leadership of the party in the early 1920s. It can be said that this debate was as

much a cause of the Left Opposition as a result. Bourgeois academics usually attempt to divorce the economic issues in dispute from their political and temporal context. But this not only oversimplifies ideas and overlooks key theoretical distinctions among the participants,¹⁷ it also tends to disconnect the real historical economic alternatives for socialism from the far better known story of the struggle against Stalinism. Some critics have pointed out that even the primary theoretical contribution of the Left Opposition—the concept of primitive socialist accumulation—has been inaccurately explained,¹⁸ because its meaning has been lost in the condensed and narrow interpretation of most scholars. This concept was widely used by Trotsky earlier than it was by Preobrazhensky—though Preobrazhensky gets almost all of the credit from economic historians. However, the term itself was actually first used by another early figure in the Left Opposition, Vladimir Smirnov, a former supporter of the Workers' Opposition and an official in the Soviet central planning agency, Gosplan, during the twenties.¹⁹

There were three major concerns that arose in party discussions almost from the very beginning of NEP (but especially in 1922) which drew together the diverse personalities of the Opposition of 1923 and shaped the economic program of what later became the Left Opposition. The first of these was the immediate and strongly negative reaction felt by many left-wing and rank-and-file members of the Communist Party to the compromises and concessions given by the government to capitalist tendencies under NEP. In the immediate aftermath of the civil war, many Bolsheviks were incensed by the impression that the class which should have benefited most from the dictatorship of the proletariat now seemed to be suffering even more. At the same time, former enemies of the government, like the upper peasant and commercial strata, were reaping the real benefits of NEP.²⁰ Indeed, some party members had been opposed to the entire free-market approach of NEP from the start. Members of the Workers' Opposition claimed that NEP really stood for the "new exploitation of proletarians," while Marxist theoreticians like Evgenii Preobrazhensky warned at the party conference of December 1921 against the danger of developing a kulak-farmer type of economy.²¹

Another widely felt concern, which increased in intensity during the "scissors crisis" of 1923, was the desire to insure a more rapid expansion of the industrial and socialist sectors of the economy. In 1922 and 1923 industrial recovery lagged far behind the growth of the agricultural sector giving rise to a sharp rise in industrial prices and an equally acute drop in agricul-

tural prices (the "scissors"). In 1922 the only significant growth experienced in the industrial sector was in textiles and in one or two other light industries.

Thirdly, there was a minority of leading party and government officials, including Trotsky and Preobrazhensky, who believed that under NEP the need for centralized economic planning was greater than ever. It was around this call to insure "the necessary proportionality between various branches of the economy" that Trotsky had attracted criticism from Lenin. But others who followed Trotsky's lead on this issue agreed that if market forces were to be controlled and employed to the benefit of the socialist system—and not just private entrepreneurs—a greater amount of sophisticated statistical information on prices, banking, state revenues, and other factors would be needed.

During 1922 these three concerns were usually voiced by separate individuals, sharing no particular philosophy. What ultimately brought them together was the demand for a quickened pace of industrial expansion. Discontent around this issue increased and reached a boiling point during the summer and fall of 1923, when Moscow and Petrograd experienced a series of industrial strikes by workers complaining of low wages and intolerable living conditions. On October 15, 1923, a letter was sent by 46 prominent party members to the Politburo criticizing its economic policy. "The extreme seriousness of the position," they wrote,

compels us to state openly that a continuation of the policy of the majority of the Politburo threatens grievous disasters for the whole party. The economic and financial crisis beginning at the end of July of the present year, with all the political, including internal party, consequences resulting from it, has inexorably revealed the inadequacy of the leadership of the party both in the economic domain and especially in the domain of internal party relations.²²

The Opposition of 1923 formed the nucleus of what would later be called the Left Opposition. Its criticism went beyond economic policy to include failures in international policy and a bureaucratization of internal party relations as well, but the economic crisis and the political struggle were closely linked with each other. The protest issued by the Forty-Six was precipitated by a letter sent to the Central Committee by Trotsky on October 8 protesting the Politburo's economic policies. They echoed Trotsky's concern that the party leadership had grown complacent and even smug over the success of the economic recovery. They also supported demands made by Trotsky for

economic planning and a more rapid growth of the industrial sector. Although Trotsky had become a leading spokesman for those in the party critical of NEP after his "Report on Industry" at the twelfth party congress in April 1923, his views were not immediately associated with some of the more left-wing critics of NEP, such as Preobrazhensky and Yuri Pyatakov. Unlike these critics, Trotsky had been an early and staunch supporter of NEP; in fact, he had been the first one to propose it.²³ But in his "Report on Industry" he foresaw a gradual growing out of NEP as planning and increased capital investment expanded the industrialized and socialized sectors of the economy—at the expense of the private sector in industry and, eventually, in agriculture:

Our new economic policy was established seriously and for a long time, but not forever. We introduced the "new" policy in order on its own foundation and to a large extent by using its own methods to overcome it. . . . Ultimately we shall extend this planning principle to the whole market, and in so doing swallow and eliminate it. In other words our successes on the basis of the new economic policy automatically bring us nearer to its liquidation, to its replacement by the *newest* economic policy, which will be a socialist policy.²⁴

Trotsky went into the details of how industrialization would be financed under NEP. He emphasized the fact that the inflationary imbalance between agricultural and industrial prices was due to the weakness and backwardness of industry, and that until the industrial sector was strengthened the economy would float from crisis to crisis. Furthermore, agriculture could not progress without the benefits of industrial products such as fertilizers and farm machinery.

The Actual Views of the Left Opposition

I have already mentioned the basic concept that the Left tendency in the party put forward to explain the process by which industrial expansion would be financed: "the stage of primitive socialist accumulation." Trotsky first used this publicly in a speech to the fifth Komsomol congress in October 1922.²⁵ In 1924 this concept was given its broadest explanation in a theoretical work by Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*. Despite differences in emphases and in articulation of this concept (things which enriched it theoretically and politically), the theorists of the Left Opposition were in total agreement on its fundamental importance as a model for socialist economic development.

The goal was to furnish the party with "a correct scientific theory of the Soviet economy" in the twenties.²⁶ On a purely methodological level, defenders of NEP (particularly Bukharin) argued that it was pointless to try to develop a theoretical analysis of the dynamics behind the Soviet economy during this period because, first of all, NEP was conceived as only a temporary economic policy, and, secondly, because it had been in effect for only a few years. Therefore, there was insufficient data from which to generalize.

The Left countered this argument by pointing out that the transitional period toward socialism, through which the Soviet economy was passing, should not even be referred to as NEP, but rather, as "the period of primitive socialist accumulation," as Trotsky had called it at the twelfth party congress. Preobrazhensky noted also that a NEP period never really existed since at no time was the Soviet economy a purely commodity-directed system. The Soviet Union had actually moved directly from a wartime state economy (War Communism) to the period of primitive socialist accumulation. Those who continued to describe the system as a "NEP economy" also tended to overlook the fact that capital accumulation in the socialist sector was the primary objective of this system. Consequently, "it is necessary to do away with this term," wrote Preobrazhensky.²⁷

According to the left critics, the outstanding characteristic of the Soviet economy in the twenties was the fact that within it there were two fundamentally different economic dynamics or tendencies operating in direct conflict with each other: the law of value and the law of primitive socialist accumulation. Since the state sector was the preeminent regulatory body within this historically novel system, they emphasized the critical and practical significance that a greater understanding of the nature of this conflict between capitalist and socialist economic forces had for both the economy and the government. In his 1924 book, *The New Economics*, Preobrazhensky went to great lengths to explain the critical need for an understanding of this problem and its ramifications for constructing a socialist economy:

In conclusion, I should like to say a few words on the practical significance of serious theoretical study of the Soviet economy. The heads of capitalist enterprises, and also capitalist governments, can permit themselves the luxury of ignorance in the field of economic theory. The law of value fulfills, more surely than they or their managers, professors, and parliamentarians, the function of regulator of their economy and corrector of all their cal-

culations. In the Soviet Union, where there is a centralized state economy of the proletariat and the law of value is restricted or partly replaced by the planning principle, forecasting plays a quite exceptional role in comparison with its role in capitalist economy, and mistakes in forecasting, owing to the centralized conduct of the economy, can have graver consequences than mistakes made by the heads of a private economy, where tendencies in one direction are counterbalanced, often through the law of large numbers, by contrary influences. But if you are to direct and guide correctly, that means forecasting, and forecasting means illuminating with the searchlights of theoretical analysis that field of phenomena where those very causes are engendered of which we want to know the consequences beforehand. This explains the genuinely productive role of a correct scientific theory of the Soviet economy; this also entails the fact, still insufficiently recognized among us, that the socialization of industry means by its very essence a transference of responsibility in economic leadership to science, to an extent quite unknown in capitalist economics. The growing role of the State Planning Commission is a direct index of this process.²⁸

Not only would economic progress be endangered but the political security of the regime was also threatened:

Not to understand that this law exists, that it has a compulsory character for state economy and has an influence on private economy, is not only mental obstinacy and conservatism, but also dangerous practically, dangerous from the standpoint of the struggle for existence of our whole system of collective economy.²⁹

Socialist Accumulation and Capitalist Accumulation

The Left Opposition drew its theoretical analysis of the first stages of socialist society from a fresh rereading of Marx's *Capital*. As Preobrazhensky put it:

In order to understand the present phase of development of the Soviet economy it is extremely helpful to carry out a systematic comparison between the first steps³⁰ of the capitalist mode of production.

Although the concepts are in most other ways different, "primitive socialist accumulation" was to express a process of transition from capitalism to socialism covering an entire historical epoch, just as the concept of "primitive capitalist accumulation" had described the transition

from feudalism to capitalism. An entire section of the first volume of *Capital* (Part VIII) is given over by Marx to explaining this concept of primitive capitalist accumulation.

Since the theory had existed in economic literature prior to Marx, Marx's main goal was to redefine its historical significance. The basic idea was to show how capitalists originally accumulated the resources necessary for the launching of a generalized system of commodity production. The traditional bourgeois explanation, which Marx sardonically compared to the concept of "original sin," was that capitalists had arisen out of an elite group of uniquely diligent, intelligent, and above all, frugal individuals. In truth, this was only an after-the-fact justification for what was basically a process of expropriating previously created wealth.

Specifically, this expropriation transformed church property, state dominions, common lands, and feudal or clan property into modern private property. This private property then provided the necessary original capital for the transition from a feudal mode of production to a capitalist one, with commodity agriculture, a "free" labor force, a dependent home market, foreign colonies, the creation of a public debt and a modern system of taxation.³¹

Marx drew a clear distinction between the ways in which capitalist resources may have been originally acquired and the manner in which further capital is actually accumulated through the production process. He called this latter process "expanded reproduction." Marx chose to isolate all other forms of capital accumulation under the category of primitive capitalist accumulation, first to show that there was a prehistory to the development of capitalist relations (a fact that was of interest in its own right) and also to avoid any possible confusion as to the manner in which capital accumulation actually occurs as a result of bourgeois production itself.

The efficiency of expanded reproduction under capitalism had nothing to do with previously accumulated resources. According to Marx's "labor theory of value," capital accumulation is possible in the capitalist mode of production because of the expropriation of unpaid labor-time in the form of "surplus value" which the capitalist extracts from the workers. This then becomes the source of both the capitalist's personal profit and those funds used for reinvestment.

As Marx had done for his historical study of capitalism the theorists of the Left drew a sharp distinction between the periods of "socialist accumulation" and "primitive socialist accumulation." For Marx, the period of primitive capitalist accumulation marked a historical transformation during

which capitalism emerged out of the feudal system, eventually to dominate it. Capitalism had drawn the original resources necessary for capital accumulation from both expropriations and the surplus product of its own enterprises. Likewise primitive socialist accumulation represented a period of capital accumulation during which additional resources would be acquired from both its own "expanded socialist reproduction" and from capitalist enterprises "lying outside the complex of the state sector":

Primitive socialist accumulation . . . means accumulation in the hands of the state of material resources mainly or partly from sources lying outside the complex of state economy. This accumulation must play an extremely important part in a backward peasant country, hastening to a very great extent the arrival of the moment when the technical and scientific reconstruction of the state economy begins and when this economy at last achieves purely economic superiority over capitalism. It is true that in this period accumulation takes place also on the production-base of state economy.³²

The gathering of resources for primitive socialist accumulation is one of the most critical theoretical points in the historical discussion of the relationship between collectivization and industrialization. It is important to note that in the minds of the Left Opposition, the accumulation of capital for the growth of the state-industrial sector depended not just on resources from the private-agricultural sector, but, significantly, on the extraction of a surplus product from state-industrial enterprises themselves. However, the Left's leaders disagreed over the degree to which the state might actually be able to extract such a surplus product from its own enterprises. Preobrazhensky put forward the following hypothesis:

The more backward economically, petty bourgeois, peasant, a particular country is which has gone over to the socialist organization of production, and the smaller the inheritance received by the socialist accumulation fund of the proletariat of this country when the social revolution takes place, by so much the more, in proportion, will socialist accumulation be obliged to rely on alienating part of the surplus product of presocialist forms of economy and the smaller will be the relative weight of accumulation on its own production basis, that is, the less will it be nourished by the surplus product of the workers in socialist industry.³³

On the other hand, Trotsky emphasized the need to preserve the *smychka* and argued that the workers in state industry would have to shoulder the main burden of primitive socialist accumulation. He expressed this in his April 20, 1923, "Report on Industry" at the twelfth party congress, when he said: "There may be moments when the government pays you no wages, or when it pays you only half your wage and when you, the worker, have to lend [the other half] to the state."³⁴ Trotsky again reiterated this idea in his August 1925 work "Toward Capitalism or Socialism?" where he gave additional emphasis to the increasingly pivotal role industrial expansion would have on the overall economy and the "self-exploitation" of state workers.³⁵

In any case, the difference here was one of degree. Both viewpoints were conditioned by the assumption of balanced growth in both the agricultural and industrial sector.

Indeed, it was the balance between the expansion of the industrial and agricultural sectors that most critically defined the path of primitive socialist accumulation. Unlike capitalism, the development of socialism did not depend upon the utter destruction of the preceding mode of production: i.e., capitalist agriculture. Primitive socialist accumulation was instead predicated on many of the fundamental assumptions of NEP: a mixed economy, with a vital and productive private sector matched to a state-industrial sector, as well as a mutually beneficial relationship or *smychka* between the peasantry and proletariat.

Socialist Accumulation and the Capitalist Market

Although the Left theorists approached the conflict between the laws of socialist accumulation and commodity production gravely, as a "life-or-death struggle," they also believed that a gradual overcoming of the capitalist sector by socialist production could be achieved with a minimum of social disruption if two important conditions were met. The first of these was an absolute increase in total output each year to assure an increase in all marketable resources and in the standard of living of the masses. The second condition was that the expansion of the state-industrial sector of the economy should grow at a relatively faster pace than the private sector. If these things happened, then the economy of primitive socialist accumulation would be characterized "by mutual attraction between the parts, mutual aid and a tendency towards a unified economic complex," unlike primitive capitalist accumulation which had developed "on the basis of competition and mutual antagonism between its parts."³⁶

Thus, unlike Stalinist economists, the Left Opposition never suggested that private agriculture alone should provide the resources for industrialization, nor did it ever contemplate a forced collectivization of private agriculture. On the contrary, it insisted that both the private and state sectors needed to continue to increase their total annual output in order to insure the optimal development of industrial expansion and primitive socialist accumulation. It could not be otherwise if resources were to flow into industrialization from all sectors of the economy. In fact, the Left expected that private farming would continue to be the dominant form in the countryside for a long time to come. In 1922 Preobrazhensky had predicted that private agriculture might collapse by 1970 as a result of long-term credit agreements between the state bank and collective farms.³⁷ Trotsky believed that a gradual collectivization of agriculture would occur only after state-industry could provide the necessary technical base for collective farming. As Preobrazhensky put it, primitive socialist accumulation "would stand at the center of our attention for two decades, at the very least,"³⁸ and this pre-supposed the continuation of the private sector for just as long.

Of course, this did not prevent opponents of the Left from labeling them as anti-peasant. Preobrazhensky was forced to answer distorted attacks, claiming that "primitive socialist accumulation" meant the destruction of private farming for the benefit of industry.

It is . . . Comrade Bukharin's idea that I propose to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs for our state industry, that is, that I propose to hinder the development of peasant economy: this is in crying contradiction with the actual text of my work. . . . When Comrade Bukharin instructs me that accumulation in peasant economy is a function of socialist accumulation, he . . . presents me with my own thesis merely expressed in different words.³⁹

As long as the state-industrial sector grew faster it did not matter how fast production increased in the private sector. Of course, without a carefully managed system of economic planning, which could utilize the advantages of the state-controlled economy to stimulate socialist accumulation, the Left did not for a moment doubt that there was a real danger of backsliding toward capitalism in this period.⁴⁰ However, with proper planning not only could the socialist sector expand, it could do so without the ruinous inflation which characterized the "scissors crisis" of 1923, and without a reduction in produce brought

to market by the peasantry as a result of that inflation.

The key therefore was to make industrial output more profitable. In other words, industrial output not only had to increase, but the average costs of production had to be brought down as well. If costs and output were improved then it would be possible to achieve an optimal coordination of agricultural and industrial production: a decline in industrial prices that would stimulate increased agricultural production and trade between town and country. And since exchange between town and country would always be "consciously calculated to alienate a certain portion of the surplus product of private economy, [i.e., agriculture]," a lowering of industrial costs and therefore the price of manufactured goods would provide the basic condition for an optimal rate of primitive socialist accumulation.⁴¹

An expanded state-industrial sector would also take care of another perceived problem behind the "scissors crisis": the unsatisfied consumer demands of the peasant market. As Trotsky explained in 1925, an expansion of the industrial sector was necessary for the state to provide the peasantry with incentives needed to convince them to bring a larger share of agricultural production to market. This would in turn provide the types of goods needed for foreign trade and feed into a cycle of growth typical of primitive socialist accumulation:

Our economy has entered the world arena, and has thus added new links to the chain uniting city and countryside. The peasant's grain is exchanged for foreign gold; the gold, in turn, is transformed into machinery, agricultural implements, and replacement inventory

for city and countryside. Textile machinery obtained with the gold realized on exports of grain maintains the equipment of the textile industry and thus lowers the prices of textiles sent to the village. The process of circulation becomes quite complicated, but its basis remains a certain economic relationship between city and countryside.⁴²

But there could be no expansion of the socialist sector without new investments in industry.

It must not be forgotten for a moment that this relationship is a dynamic one and that the *dominant principle* in these complicated dynamics is *industry*. In other words, if agricultural production, and more particularly the commodity portion of this production, sets certain definite limits for the development of industry, these limits are not altogether rigid and immovable.⁴³

Thus, according to the economic program of the Left, it was the expansion of the capital stock in industry that set real limits to primitive socialist accumulation at every turn. □

Part 3, which concludes the series, will appear in the next issue, March No. 94.

Notes

14. Paul R. Gregory and Robert C. Stuart offer an interesting comparison of the relative degree of economic backwardness of the 1914 Russian economy and contemporary U.D.C.s in *Soviet Economic Structure and Performance* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), pp. 32-34.

15. See Nove's "Introduction" in Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. xiii.

16. James Millar, "Collectivization and Its Consequences: A New Look," *Russian Review*, vol. 41, no. 1, Jan. 1982, p.63.

17. See for example the mea culpa of Robert W. Campbell in his *Soviet Economic Power* (Boston: 1966), p. 13.

18. Michael Ellman, "Did the Agricultural Surplus Provide the Resources for the Increase in Investment in the USSR During the First Five-Year Plan?" *The Economic Journal*, vol. 85, Dec. 1975, p.860, n.2.

19. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, p.46 or Lewin, *Russian Peasants*, p.168 n.39.

20. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, pp.6-7.

21. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 2 (London: Penguin, 1966), pp.291-293.

22. "The Platform of the Forty-Six," in Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, (1923-1925)*, p. 397.

23. Carr, *The Interregnum* (London: Pelican, 1969), p. 22.

24. *Ibid*, p.32.

25. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, p.43.

26. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, p.6.

27. *Ibid*, pp. 129, 139.

28. *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

29. *Ibid*, p. 68.

30. *Ibid*, p. 79.

31. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1977), pp. 873-895.

32. *Ibid*, p. 84.

33. *Ibid*, p. 124.

34. Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed*, p. 102.

35. Trotsky, "Toward Capitalism or Socialism," in Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, (1923-25)*, p. 338.

36. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, pp. 121-122.

37. Preobrazhensky, *From NEP to Socialism* (London: New Park, 1973), p.23.

38. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics*, p. 267.

39. *Ibid*, p. 255.

40. *Ibid*, p. 131.

41. *Ibid*, pp. 110-111.

42. Trotsky, "Toward Socialism or Capitalism," *op. cit.*, p. 338.

43. *Ibid*, pp. 338-339.

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Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

53. On Very Ordinary Honesty

I am recalling my youth in order to say that I was not a hypocrite then; I became one many years later. The self-education circle could teach us to think and—in so doing—to say what we thought. However, at that time the problems were very clearly posed and the colors of the transitional period were clearly inked in: they were red, white, black, and green. I was all red and never uttered a single hypocritical word. I had the right to ask Misha Yugov anything I wanted to when he presented reports to us at the club.

Could a young Balkar today, still remembering how his family lived in exile in Kirghizia and undoubtedly knowing from his elders (even if they spoke with great caution) what took place on March 8, 1945—could he ask the speaker: Why were we deported and who gave the order? While there is no one in the Northern Caucasus who does not know about the deportation from there of four local populations, at the same time no one would dare to ask a speaker about it; it is clear that hypocrisy has become standard conduct. In Vorkuta and dozens of cities like it, the same applies if in a slightly modified way: it was not political prisoners but Young Communist League members who built our city. Everywhere there is a variant of this theme: there is something that you cannot talk about. If the youth know that asking about it is not permitted, it means they already know something about it and are sure of one thing; you know even more than they do but do not want to tell the truth so you lie instead.

It is not immoral to lie to the enemy. And you, the teachers of our youth, do not want the youth to consider you the enemy. However, you lie to them and force them to lie to you and to pretend that they believe you when you know very well that they do not believe you because it is no longer possible anymore to conceal from them that you are lying.

The problem of the parents and children in our country is the problem of the silence of the parents in response to the questions of the youth. Silence destroys the links between generations and for the youth it is disastrous. It is not frankness that makes youth “cynical” and “skeptical” but the mendacity of the parents who are imposing their morality on the teachers.

Volodya Ramensky was sincere, but a person like him is no longer possible. The more deformed are the stereotypes being beaten into the heads of the youth, the more serious the danger that the tower of absurdities when it finally collapses will destroy the spirit of the youth completely. This, in fact, happened once when the tower of Stalinist clichés began to crumble. However, the whole tower did not collapse and on its remains I can see that they are erecting new, large-paneled ideological blocks. It will crumble again and collapse under its own weight: lies do not have a cohesive force.

Stalinism has no effective means for educating youth in the spirit of proletarian morality because proletarian morality is alien to Stalinism. Like the Saturn of Greek mythology, Stalinism devours its children—it can produce no young. The zealous servants—because they are devoted to it for personal advantages and privileges they have grown used to and because of inertia and ignorance—can train people. One can find a Kunvyebinov. But there will be no fresh ideological reinforcements.

The conscience of humanity has been shaken. The murder of millions, planned at a writing desk, has horrified it. The means for planned murder can vary—from bombs to starvation rations in a forced labor camp. What is important is not how it is done; what is at issue is the value of human life. This is something that everyone begins to weigh in a new light once becoming aware that it is not someone else's life but one's own life that is at stake in a struggle for power and influence over the masses.

The ideological struggle for the minds of the enormous mass of people, all too often showing its physical side, has created the crying need to establish new criteria in order to distinguish social demagoguery from socialist ideas. Is it impossible here to find criteria that a worker could understand? I believe that toiling humanity has already found such criteria. It has found them in conceptions of morality that have nothing to do with professors and ignoramuses, diplomats and dilettantes. They have found them where everyone who is accustomed to living by the labor of his or her own hands is able to form his or her own opinions, no less legitimate than the utterances of the First

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

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

Secretary of the Central Committee. It is important that these criteria be applied to the leaders of the ruling party: positions

of power are fraught with dangerous temptations that should be the subjects of moral judgment.

54. I Hope for an Echo

Writers and journalists who are making an effort to rehabilitate Stalin reduce the entire problem to his personality. Meanwhile, they themselves are firmly incorporated into the infallible caste of his priests who are no less necessary to a cult than the idol himself. What would an idol be without its priests? It would be no more than a piece of wood.

The castes of modern times are not some new kind of class. I believe rather it is as follows: The historic need to strengthen the state leads under a one-party system to the merging of certain elements of the ruling party with a small layer of those who are outside it. They unite because they need one another in the struggle for their common power. Their common involvement in the power structure, their common loyalty to the one who advanced them, unites them more strongly than could any one idea (which cannot last for decades). They have this common secret that none of them can reveal. Their access to privileges is also one of their secrets. The term "group" or "clique" does not convey, it seems to me, the essence of the matter. A clique is united only around a personality, while a caste is united around a throne, behind a shield of administration. The personality will one day pass away but the shield of administration will remain. The caste that clings to it will remain and no one will give it up, even if some part of it—namely the clique around the one who passed away—can be expelled from its midst. On the whole, the caste remains stable and closed unto itself.

No one can predict its future. As with all predictions, these can come true in ways that are most unexpected. However, one conclusion can be drawn by comparing yesterday with today: although the name remains the same, the content is changing.

To an enormous degree, which had been unforeseen until today, this process—making internal changes possible while the name remains the same—is facilitated by the state machine for the intellectual processing of the people. This newest machine is able to transform a living idea into an ossified fetish of ideas that stands above the masses. The state has been fetishized in this way. It stands above all else and nothing can exist outside. However, it can be said that it is only a form, the content of which is a fluctuating, unstable, growing society. When the form ossifies, the content has nowhere to grow. One might say that the state is like a coat of mail. But such a coat, if donned during youth, will suffocate the youth when he becomes a grown man. This is a telling feature of Stalinism which characterizes it in all spheres and in all aspects of development: the primacy of form over content, making their unity unrealizable.

Stalinism is the primacy of dogma over theory, of quotations over meaning, of quantity of products over their quality and usefulness, of the monthly plan over rational planning, of the pretense of truthfulness over the spirit of truth; of 100 percent popular turnout over popular rule, of articles in the criminal code over moral principles, of endlessly checking up on people

over confidence in them, of ostentation over reality, of oaths over sincerity, diplomas over education, homogenous thought over genuine thinking, and certification of personalities over the human personality itself.

This school of thought is able to struggle against ideological opponents only physically: annihilating them but in a very humane way, that is, by reeducating them behind a remote camp fence, far from the eyes of the people, with the help of hunger and of both Samodurovs—the sergeant and the major. One will make us all form up at attention and the other will shave our heads. The hardship is not in being shorn. The real hardship takes in much more than that.

Very likely, the sense of impending calamity arose in me in Artemovsk in 1926 or a little later. Reading the letters of the worker correspondents, I began to vaguely sense that Samodurov was coming. It was he who first issued a trimming order—true, at first it concerned only the wings of geese. Then he called in the militia when things were not going smoothly with the workers. He had also assigned his minions to all the key posts and created his own little fiefdom.

True, all of those who subordinated themselves to Samodurov were hardly aware of their hardship. A certain level of consciousness of one's own personality was necessary for this. During the twenty years after that May day, when I was first arrested for dissenting views, I far more often forgot about my misfortune than remembered it. Working at *Izvestia*, I admired Bukharin's mind and his democratic attitudes and was little aware that this outstanding man had to submit to Molotov at every step. Molotov was in those years the supreme overseer at *Izvestia*. The editors knew that Bukharin called Molotov "the stone rump." This heavy stone rump pressed down on everything. But I understood so little of this!

Little by little I began to understand the nature of my misfortune. Who can experience with me what I experienced in the Stolypin transport cars when the convoy official, a sergeant decked out with metals, threatened not to let us use the toilet if we "chattered"?

Except for several years in the Young Communist League, I always should have been aware of my own hardship; if I could not do this, it was only because I internally accepted the Samodurovs as inevitable. They say: "Can you name a place where there would be no Samodurovs?" True. Where won't they be found? But the difference is in the conditions in which they exist. If you can at least speak out against them, then you have some hope that this will engender an echo of protest. But when you must be silent, what kind of echo can there be?

What is important here is not the eleven years I spent directly under the authority of sergeants who punished you for babbling. What matters is whether or not I was really able during the remaining years to raise my voice to tell people about the eleven years?

To be happy, however, one need only be unconscious of one's misfortune. Such was the case, for example, in the spirit of the Black Uncle Tom.

Today, faith that a god is predetermining each of our fates sustains few people. On the other hand, faith in a god has been replaced by a faith in some higher "inevitability." Millions of people do not imagine that what happened did not have to be. They know only one thing about Stalin: He saved Russia from Hitler, even if it did cost 20 million lives. In their eyes, this price was justifiable. And the life of the collective farm workers in Stalin's time and the deportation of whole populations and the camps holding millions of people and the mass executions—immeasurably surpassing in their scale all the crimes committed by the Inquisition over three centuries—are not discussed. "This didn't affect me!" such people say. A short historical memory is a feature that gives rise to such attitudes, and to Uncle Toms. He did not know how his ancestors were brought from Africa on the slave ships. One can pity this dark-skinned man for his attitudes, but one cannot despise him. Poor, honest, lovely Uncle Tom!

The matter is quite different if a person is educated and able to read well and understand what is printed, but cannot learn to see how poorly things fit together in this history and in the explanation of reality that motivate him. Such a person does not evoke sympathy because the question automatically arises: Isn't the person intentionally being so naive because it is well known that such naivete ensures a quiet life? The higher the level of education in our country becomes, the more numerous become the people who should know better; I will not use words any stronger than that. This is a sad state of affairs and it becomes sadder and sadder all the time.

One is reminded of a simple, really classic case: a letter from several cultural figures appealing to the 23rd congress of the party expressing their utmost concern about rumors that Stalin might soon be rehabilitated. This letter, which one must assume caused a stir in the apparatus, turned out to be impossible to read except in "samizdat" form. It did not slander Soviet reality nor did it call for any pernicious acts to be taken—nothing of the sort. No charges were raised against the authors. However, to read this letter was prohibited. Isn't there something strange about this?

This strange situation upset no one. Moreover, no one appeared to be interested in it. Even worse, no one even wanted to know more about it. And worst of all, if you showed any really intense interest in the matter, your friends advised you to cool down; after all, you wouldn't want something bad to happen. In reality, such is a realistic perspective.

There is a way out: to be happy in your work, doing what you like to do. Many irreproachable people did what they had to do and nothing more, unless it was some innocuous hobby. But I know of someone who was not like this: Zhores Medvedev, a scholar and biologist. It fell to him, it fell precisely to him—he felt compelled by the course of events to write several brilliant books not about biology alone but about what was hindering development of the biological sciences.¹

The methods of Samodurov were impeding it. A genuine heir to the spirit of Herten and Chernyshevsky, as Zhores Medvedev showed himself to be, he could not but collide with Samodurov, who opened his letters and demanded that he shave his head because his ideas had grown longer than they were supposed to be.

* * *

A thinking man who has walked away from the question "how should one live?" and gone into his laboratory, clinic, or technological center, has in my view committed moral suicide even if the retreat was not deliberate. This is true because even a very humane science, like psychiatry, can be used against people as it was against Medvedev. Moreover, Grigorenko is still confined in a psychiatric hospital.² And he is not the only one. Ward No. 6 has been brought back into use to treat dissidents. And cannot electronics serve the same ends? And chemistry? Bacteriology? Mathematics?

This is what I ask myself and how I answer myself in response. Aren't you writing your notebooks for nothing? What is the sense of it? Don't you know that echoes resound from mountains, cliffs, and hard objects but not from flat deserts. What are you writing for? Why are you thinking?

I am writing my notebooks because I cannot do otherwise. I am writing them because I know that physical force will not break moral strength. The force presses it down but moral strength keeps rising up again to its full height.

And I close my notebooks conscious of my moral strength.

M. Baitalsky
1958-1970

Notes

1. Zhores Medvedev (1925-) is a Soviet biologist and social critic, leading authority on biochemistry, gerontology and molecular evolution. His exploration of the fallacies of the thinking of T.D. Lysenko earned him repression. He was forcibly apprehended and placed in a psychiatric hospital in May 1971. A campaign by his brother Roy forced the Kremlin rulers to free him. Because of his persistent critical thinking and writing against the government's repressive policies and practices, he was deprived of his Soviet citizenship in 1973 while on a research trip in London, where he now works and resides.

2. Pyotr Grigorenko (1907-1987) a major general in the Soviet army and dissident communist who was stripped of his rank and expelled from the party for his activities in defense of democratic rights and the rights of the minority peoples, particularly the Crimean Tatars. He was twice forcibly confined in psychiatric hospitals, the second time for over five years. He was deprived of his Soviet citizenship in 1977 while visiting his son in New York where he died ten years later.

Harry DeBoer

Harry DeBoer, veteran Trotskyist and leader of the 1934 Teamster strikes in Minneapolis, died there on January 1 this year. He had been convicted in the 1941 Smith Act trials and imprisoned along with 17 other Trotskyist and Teamster leaders in 1944. A coming issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* will feature a profile of his life.

Final Chapters of the Baitalsky Memoirs

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The final installment of Mikhail Baitalsky's *Notebooks for the Grandchildren** appears in this issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*.

In the five years and two months that have passed since the first chapter appeared in issue No. 36 (December 1986), phenomenal changes transpired in the USSR. In 1986 Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of economic restructuring and political "openness" (perestroika and glasnost) were only barely beginning to take form. As these final chapters were being prepared for publication, the current rulers in the Kremlin were busy hammering nails into the coffin of the old USSR.

Although we received the Russian-language manuscript of Baitalsky's memoirs in 1977, for a number of political and practical reasons, we did not have the possibility to begin publishing them in English until the end of 1986. As it turns out, the appearance of the memoirs in serialized form over the past five years could not have been more timely. Readers of this magazine who have followed the story of Baitalsky's life each month have had an irreplaceable experience because many of the chapters had an almost uncanny relevance to each month's unfolding events in the USSR itself. No one could have predicted that when we began.

This is due, at least in part, to the fact that Baitalsky's key motivation for writing this work was to preserve for future generations the real historic truth in the form of his own experiences, analyses, and observations.

It was fitting, then, that during the time his memoirs were being published that same truth, long suppressed by the Stalinist rulers, began to independently push its way through the thousands of openings created by glasnost. The pressure from below, from the millions who had suffered, could no longer be resisted. And these many individual stories—like Baitalsky's—exposed the accumulation of lies which comprised the foundation of Stalinist ideology.

Thus, Stalinism began to crumble and finally collapsed.

Baitalsky, month after month through his written account, was able to serve as these victims' advocate and eminently qualified proponent. He counterposed the heady democratic atmosphere of his youth—during the revolutionary and immediate postrevolutionary times—with the lies and terror of the Stalin period. And he did this in a way that no other person, living or dead, has been able to do in all of the literature that has become available.

Even in these final chapters readers will notice that Baitalsky's discussion of the nature of Stalinism sheds light on some of the causes for the collapse of the CPSU, the USSR, and the entire structure which had sustained bureaucratic rule since Stalin's time. He describes why the Stalinist rulers are better defined as a caste rather than a class or a cult. He explains how the caste is able to survive only as a closed circle whose stability and cohesiveness are based on a number of factors: the loyalty of those who depend for their positions on higher officials who appoint them, the common privileges all of the bureaucrats enjoy over the masses,

and their monopoly over the levers of state power. This last is particularly important for safeguarding their interests.

Such a closed, ossified system generally serves the interests of the caste. But it leaves no room for the inevitable fluctuations and instability of a living, growing society—and yet the caste must have such a society to feed on.

"Although the name remains the same, the content is changing," Baitalsky explains. Stalinism's firm insistence on form over content leads it into a dialectical contradiction from which there is no escape. The current crisis is a consequence of the process Baitalsky describes.

He goes on: "Stalinism has no effective means for educating youth in the spirit of proletarian morality because proletarian morality is alien to Stalinism. Like the Saturn of Greek mythology, Stalinism devours its children—it can produce no young. The zealous servants—because they are devoted to it for personal advantages and privileges they have grown used to and because of inertia and ignorance—can train people. . . . But there will be no fresh ideological reinforcements."

Stalinism is a system based on lies, Baitalsky reiterates, and lies lack the cohesiveness needed to hold a system together in the long run.

Curiously enough, Mikhail Gorbachev and one of his closest aides at the time of his resignation December 25, Giorgi Shakhnazarov, unknowingly testified that this was true in a conversation with a *Washington Post* correspondent. It took place at Gorbachev's farewell party on December 26 at the Oktryabrskaya Hotel in Moscow. The correspondent reports that Gorbachev "reflected" on "his curious mix of socialist idealism [sic] and contempt for Stalinism":

It is a mix, he said, born of personal history. "I remember my mother's father coming back from prison and telling me stories about the way it was and what they had done to him," he said. "Can you imagine the impression that makes when you are just eight years old? I've remembered it all my life. When I was joining the Communist Party in college, I was made to explain the story of my grandfather."

The correspondent goes on:

Shakhnazarov, who has been at Gorbachev's side from the start, said, "We all change. I can say for myself and my generation, when we returned home from the war, it was obvious that there was a huge gap between the reality of our country and what the propaganda said it was. But to participate in politics, in the system, you had to speak in this Aesopian language, you had to be clever and hold your tongue. . . . We lived in a world where we thought one thing and said another. That's the world Gorbachev and I grew up in, and now, thank God, it is gone."

It is not really gone, but it has indeed been dealt a significant blow.

Neither Shakhnazarov nor Gorbachev can take credit for the emergence of historic truth in the former USSR since glasnost began. On the contrary, it was a process that they fought every step of the way but could not avoid.

*Considerable credit for the monthly appearance of the memoirs is due to Naomi Allen and Sarah Lovell whose patience and expert editing skills ensured that Baitalsky's quality ideas were clearly translated.

In an earlier episode, when speaking about his feelings and those of other prisoners during their long years of confinement, Baitalsky said they took heart from an indomitable belief that “the lie will perish” and that truth would prevail.

As current events unfold, as the Stalinists and the marketeer “wheeler-dealers” (to use Baitalsky’s term) try to navigate the former Soviet Union backward to restore capitalism and anarchy of production, the outlook for the working masses looks grim if they do not mobilize more forcefully in their own interests. However, Baitalsky’s accounts remind us of another important consideration:

Tell me: who is the real optimist? We, who although condemned to indefinite terms of confinement, never lost confidence in the ultimate triumph of truth during all the darkest years? Or those who called their optimism “life-asserting,” while under cover of night they snuffed out the lives of people who had hoisted the red banner over Russia? Are we the optimists or was it those who knew very well that books were being destroyed and history was being falsified, but consoled themselves by thinking that those who were being fooled would never know what had happened? Which of us is looking forward and which backward? (*Bulletin IDOM*, No. 91, December 1991)

All the hopes and optimism that Baitalsky and other prisoners retained have been justified precisely for the reasons Baitalsky predicted: it was impossible for the Stalinists to suppress truth and glasnost—open public airing of views—about the history and public life of the people and still presume that science and technology could continue to develop, keeping pace with the overall needs of the country. This contradiction—or as Baitalsky says, this “dividing of the fruit of knowledge in two”—was the major reason the bureaucracy launched its reform policies in 1986.

The facts that have been revealed since then are momentous and their value must not be underestimated. It is very difficult to gauge the real impact that such revelations about Stalin’s monstrous repression have had on the population at large. Certainly they have contributed to the loss of credibility of the Communist Party and helped convince the new elite in the ruling bureaucracy that the CPSU needed to be dumped, the way parts of Stalin’s legacy was dumped in the 1950s following his death.

However, the most important challenge lies ahead. While much of the truth has been revealed to a large minority of intellectuals, and a great deal of truth about some aspects of the revolution and the postrevolutionary period has made its way beyond the intelligentsia to broader sectors of the population, much work remains to be done.

The positive aspect of all this is that now it *can* be done. For the first time in 65 years there exist in the USSR genuine revolutionary Marxist forces, and worker activists and intellectuals, with whom revolutionary Marxists and militant workers in the capitalist world can openly cooperate. This represents a new generation of individuals like Mikhail Baitalsky and his oppositionist friends who perished at Stalin’s hand. We can help each other by exchanging information and discussing ideas. We can set up joint publication projects and support each others’ struggles. We can speak over the telephone, write letters, and visit.

What a remarkable opening this is and what a remarkable historic opportunity.

As the market reforms instituted by the current-day “wheeler-dealers” continue to cause economic deterioration and human suffering in the former USSR, it is important not to lose the optimism that Baitalsky personified: “Our optimism was our light in the darkness of the Black Marias.”

The triumph of truth has only been partially realized. But even that much is the price the bureaucracy has had to pay to proceed with its criminal and bankrupt market reforms. We must push this

truth forward for its full triumph—which will be realized only when the workers come to understand that they, and not any wing of the bureaucrats, are the ones who must take charge.

The optimism of Baitalsky and the other prisoners he spoke of was justified. Our optimism must be no less strong and it too will be justified by history.

Unfortunately, we must say that Baitalsky’s eloquent opposition to anti-Semitism—of which he was a repeated victim and which plays such a prominent role in his writings—was never more necessary than it is today.

The *Boston Globe* on December 27 reported that the state of “Israel is preparing to evacuate Jews from the former USSR. Simha Dinitz, Director of the European Agency for Immigration who commented on the story refused to give details about the plans that are currently being made. However, Dinitz did say that plans were in the works ‘to evacuate’ to Israel ‘the maximum number of Jews in the shortest period of time,’ and to ensure conditions ‘for every Jew to leave the [former] Soviet Union.’” (Emphasis added.)

Dinitz said there was special concern over the safety of Jews in the Central Asian republics, but gave no explicit reasons why this should be so.

No plan on such a scale could be undertaken by Israel without the complicity of the U.S. government—which funds that state—or without the complicity and cooperation of local governments in the former Soviet Union. What kinds of anti-Semitic campaigns are the local Stalinist gangsters in power in the Central Asian states preparing to use? Are they considering anti-Semitism as a tactic to deflect popular anger from themselves as local living conditions continue to deteriorate? Perhaps the local bureaucrats will find this reactionary ideology to be a useful method for acquiring the apartments and other possessions of Jews the way Mutalibov and the Azerbaijan ruling gangsters have done against the Armenians in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabagh—creating hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees.

Surely Jews in these regions who might become the victims of such a vicious campaign—and of the Israeli plans to evacuate “all Jews”—will not be aware that they are being airlifted to the State of Israel to be used by the Zionists to take Palestinian land and homes!!

Because they are so relevant today, Baitalsky’s memoirs need to be more widely distributed. We hope that they will soon appear in book form in English. But the real audience for which Baitalsky intended these memoirs—the “grandchildren” of his title—is above all in the former Soviet Union. As yet, they are not available there even though Baitalsky’s granddaughter has been seeking a publisher in the Vorkuta region where she lives.

With such a concern in mind and as a fitting way to conclude the publication of the memoirs in this English-language form, the *Bulletin IDOM* is opening a campaign to raise money from our readers to support publishing these memoirs in Russia.

If any other documents and accounts by rank-and-file revolutionists like Baitalsky and his friends who supported the Left Opposition and retained their perspective survived the Stalin period, they have not yet to our knowledge been published in the former USSR. Most of the documents and their authors and supporters were destroyed by Stalin.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance the publication of these Notebooks in Russian can have. They will surely help light the way for the new generation, some of whose own documents have appeared in these pages. *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* readers are in a unique position to facilitate this process.

Those of you who can join in this effort are invited to send your contributions to Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. Please make checks payable to Baitalsky Memoirs Project. □

An Appreciation of the Life of George E. Chomalou (1929-1991)

by Jean Tussey

More than anyone I have known, George Chomalou had warm friends in all socialist tendencies who enjoyed discussing their ideas with him and respected him for his seriousness and his uncompromising insistence on principled politics. Whether they agreed with him or not, they usually found discussions with George stimulating and educational. They also appreciated his ability to separate the personal from the political. He could end a heated debate with a touch of humor, or follow a particularly sharp exchange with a genuinely fond personal embrace at parting.

George's death December 4 was a painful loss for all of his friends and comrades. Suddenly they realized they could no longer call or visit him to ask his opinion of the latest world events, or his advice on how to deal with some personal or political problem.

Some called those of us in Cleveland who were close to George and Sophia Chomalou seeking information for an obituary or a biographical sketch. All we could tell them was that George and Sophia's personal life had been very private, mutually supportive, and separate from their work and political activities. Dealing with George's death and her grief was also a very personal matter for Sophia. George was cremated, with a private family service in Akron, Ohio. It was weeks

before Sophia could start acknowledging the numerous expressions of sympathy received from friends, or begin to talk to us about George's life.

George E. (Eppocrates) Chomalou was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 10, 1929. His parents were from Servia, Greece. His father died when George was eight years old. His mother moved to Akron, Ohio, and remarried when he was nine. George was raised as an only child by his mother and stepfather, Christ Kallas.

George's introduction to politics began during the Great Depression with the Communist Party's Youth for Democracy, which he joined at the age of twelve but left after about a year. He led a student strike at Akron Central High School in his senior year, and joined the Akron branch of the Socialist Workers Party (when later luminaries like Harry Braverman, Jules Geller, and others were active there).

George remained a Marxist and activist with broad multicultural interests. In 1949 he married Sophia M. Pappas, who became his lifelong companion, comrade, and friend. Before, during and after their marriage, George received formal training as an opera singer. He studied at Juilliard in New York City and with private teachers in Cleveland. His singing career was interrupted in January 1951, when he was drafted for military service despite a his-

tory of rheumatic fever in his youth. He was inducted in January 1952, honorably discharged in June, then resumed his musical training and went on to sing professionally.

Most of the rest of his life George was politically active in Cleveland. At the end of 1960 he was in Havana with a Fair Play for Cuba tour. He was involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement and in the struggle against U.S. intervention in Central America. He participated in anti-racist and anti-apartheid movements, and against the U.S. war in the Persian Gulf.

Open heart surgery in 1981 restricted George's physical activity, but that only increased his energetic efforts to build a revolutionary Socialist Workers Party in the United States. For him that meant defense of the Trotskyist working class program that differentiated the Fourth International and the Socialist Workers Party from Stalinism and Social Democratic reformism; and defense of Marxist methodology as developed by Lenin, Trotsky, and James P. Cannon. Critical of the Jack Barnes administration's revision of both the SWP's program and its democratic centralist organizational practices, George was expelled in the 1984 bureaucratic purge. George then became a founding member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, in which he continued to defend Marxist, Trotskyist socialist theory and practice. □

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Letters

An Open Letter Back to Bloom

from Peter Drucker, New York Solidarity

I was frankly disappointed by your "Open Letter to Solidarity's Political Committee." You and I have spent many hours discussing the issues between the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Solidarity. Particularly after our last talk, I had hoped that we were inching toward mutual understanding. But in your "Open Letter" you still get basic facts wrong about what Solidarity's perspective is, how we function, and what kind of people we are.

Specifically, (1) you take offense on FIT's behalf at phrases in the Solidarity Political Committee's *BIDOM* article "On Socialist Regroupment" that did not refer to FIT. (2) You continue to say that Solidarity "rejects Leninism," which we don't. (3) You insist that we're calling on FITers to "renounce" your views, when we've never asked anyone to renounce anything.

Let me explain in a little more detail.

As Solidarity has said many times by now, we think that FIT should choose between Socialist Action's project and Solidarity's. All the counterpositions in "On Socialist Regroupment" were meant to highlight that choice. When the Solidarity PC talked about "seeking regroupment on a broad revolutionary program," it was talking about Solidarity and the possibility of FIT's joining us. When it talked about "seeking yet again to create a single-tendenced Trotskyist sect" and "fake Bolshevik posturing and commandism dressed up as democratic centralism," it was talking about SA and the regroupment option that SA offers you. We don't need to convince you that our description of SA is accurate; you know it is. You don't need to convince us that FIT is different; we know it is. Far from caricaturing you, our PC wasn't even talking about you.

You did caricature us, on the other hand, when you said that we "reject Leninism." As our Founding Statement says, Solidarity is "adapting the historical experience of the international revolutionary socialist movement, notably the practice of the Bolshevik party in the early years of the Russian Revolution, to suit our specific circumstances." That's the starting point for what most of us think of as our brand of Leninism. We do have members who question the desirability of a Leninist party—in that sense the question is "open" for us—but most of us think that a disciplined revolutionary party is not only desirable but essential to making a socialist revolution. Far from putting off practical party building to some misty future, we're doing our best now to lay the foundations for a

U.S. revolutionary party in the best ways we know how.

So what are our real differences with FIT?

Based on the discussions you and I have had, I think our differences revolve around the question of "the vanguard." People in Solidarity tend to use the word "vanguard" to refer to an organization that has *already* earned recognition from the bulk of the working class and oppressed as their leadership. (In this sense the Bolsheviks only became "the vanguard" of the Russian working class in 1912-14.) In this sense (as I know you agree) there is no vanguard organization in the U.S. today. This is why our Founding Statement says that "we are committed to building an effective revolutionary socialist organization in the U.S. capable of acting together without . . . engaging in pretenses of being 'the vanguard.'" We think that a vanguard in this sense will only come into existence through a long process, including regroupment among different revolutionary currents.

How should our organizations function in the meantime?

You and other FITers seem to think that the best way we can help to build a full-fledged vanguard is to act now (within some common-sense limits) as reasonable approximations of vanguard organizations. That is, we should make decisions whenever possible about the strategy and tactics that the movements should adopt, put our conclusions forward forcefully, and thus test our conclusions in practice against reality.

Solidarity has had a somewhat different approach.

In order to create a vanguard, we don't just need to agree among ourselves and promote ourselves. We need to gain confidence and respect from other activists in movements' "class struggle left wings" and in other revolutionary currents. Thousands of these activists would have to converge with us politically and join with us organizationally in order to create a true vanguard. We forfeit their confidence and respect when we pretend to have answers that we really don't, or stake a claim to leadership that we haven't earned. It's as important for us to know when to shut up and listen as to know when to speak up. It's as important for us to know how to follow others' leadership as to know how to take the lead ourselves.

When we in Solidarity *do* have enough experienced activists in a movement, when we *do* have enough of a track record, and when the stakes involved are important enough, then we make a big effort to work

out a collective approach, put forward our positions assertively and play a leadership role—in short, reach collective conclusions and test them in practice. The broad class struggle current in the unions has been one important place where we've done this. The anti-Gulf war movement was another. We formed national and local fractions; took stands on a whole series of controversial issues; and helped lead local, student, and national coalitions. Sometimes you criticized what we did. The criticisms I remember were not that we were ineffective as an organization, though, but that we were too effective in ways you didn't like. Many young activists did like what we did enough to join our organization—about the same number as FIT's whole membership.

Now, as we have repeatedly stated before, Solidarity is open to all views about "Leninism." When we say that these questions are "open" for us, we mean *open*. The idea that we would require people to renounce their views is foreign to us, in fact abhorrent.

People can come into Solidarity and argue with us! But of course, with the understanding that we have our own ideas, that people with other ideas would be a minority for the foreseeable future and would have to live with that. Anyone who came into Solidarity *in order* to argue with us about Leninism would be frustrating us all and wasting everybody's time. But anyone who came into Solidarity in order to build it, to help us along with our collective functioning and programmatic development, and behaved as a constructive activist and honest comrade, would find us willing to continue discussing these issues (before, during, and after conventions, in *Against the Current* and discussion bulletins, in other forums that may be appropriate, *whatever*).

Think about it, Steve, OK? Frankly, I think that FIT's February convention could be a make-or-break moment for your regroupment plans. If FIT decides there that unity with SA is not in prospect and you really want to join Solidarity, then I don't think that there are likely to be major obstacles to unity between us. But if the convention says that both SA and Solidarity are flawed and you need a lot more discussion with both, then I expect that both SA and Solidarity will say, "No thanks, we've made ourselves as clear as we can and we've had enough." That would be a discouraging dead end to all your efforts.

[Note: The substance of this letter was endorsed on December 14 by the Solidarity National Committee.]

Steve Bloom Responds:

Your letter raises three criticisms of my reply to the Solidarity PC. On the first let me say that I took no offense at phrases that did not refer to the FIT. Rather, I was trying to express a strong frustration we in the FIT have felt since the beginning of this process. It results from what we see as a consistently caricatured approach by Solidarity members to the organizational possibilities facing revolutionary socialists in the United States. You pose a choice between two. We see the problem as much richer and more complex. When we try to explain this, you continue to insist that we must accept your counterposition and make a choice between you and Socialist Action. Exchanges between Solidarity and the FIT tend, therefore, to go around in a circle.

Perhaps a first step to break out of that circle can be taken if we look at an obvious contradiction between some things that you say in your letter and what you have actually proposed regarding the unification of our forces during the past year.

You insist that asking anyone to renounce their views is “abhorrent” to you, and that you make no such demand on us. But haven’t you consistently stated that the FIT must renounce our perspective of a reunified Fourth Internationalist movement including Socialist Action as a prerequisite to even talking about unity between FIT and Solidarity? (I could, of course, cite many references if I have to.)

For our part, we have never asked you to accept our views on this. I think that there might have been some honest confusion at the outset, when you complained that we were insisting on a three-way unification process. But that was never true. We have tried to make clear from the start that if the FIT were to merge with Solidarity and at the same time maintain the *idea* that a unified FI movement including SA is both desirable and possible, we would be thinking in terms of a medium- to longer-range possibility, and would depend on a change of perspective on the part of SA.

We know that our views on the possibility of this happening (and the desirability of working for it) would be in a minority not only in Solidarity as a whole, but even among your FI Caucus. We have been willing to accept that, to leave it to future discussion and experience in life to test whether our approach is valid. It is you who have placed obstacles in the way—based solely on the fact that we have this *idea* which you disagree with. Isn’t this asking us to renounce our views as a prerequisite to unification?

All of this leads logically to the question of Leninism and constructing a vanguard, because the FIT’s goal of a reunified Fourth Internationalist movement in the

U.S. cannot be separated from our broader outlook on this point.

You say that Solidarity as a whole does not reject building a Leninist organization and cite what was written in your Founding Statement. But I learned long ago that in politics the application of words in life is much more important than what appears on paper, or is stated in verbal declarations. (A small example: during the Persian Gulf war both of the national coalitions loudly proclaimed their support for “unity” in the movement. But somehow the result was two disunited demonstrations. Most activists correctly judged the commitment to unity on the basis of what was done, not what was said.)

I am sure that members of Solidarity are very sincere when you say you are supporters of Leninism. The problem is that *our* understanding of the tasks of Leninists in the United States today—at least those who identify with the Fourth International—requires that we *make an effort* to overcome not only the division between FIT and those who support the FI in Solidarity, but also our *collective* division with Socialist Action. In short, either we have to unify all of our forces or else demonstrate conclusively, through the process of trying and failing to achieve unity, that one or more of our currents does not really belong in the same international movement.

So when Solidarity (and especially FI Caucus) members say to us that of course they are all for Leninism, in the abstract, but in practice insist that we have to drop all this foolishness about Socialist Action before we can start to talk about unification (that is, you don’t even want to try to understand why we are concerned about this), we can at least be excused for wondering whether we are talking about the same thing when we use the same words.

I don’t quite understand why you make a distinction in your letter between Leninism and constructing a vanguard organization, but in any case what you have to say about a vanguard deserves more than the brief comment I will be able to make here.

You present a fair summary of our approach—what needs to be done by revolutionary Marxists today in order to lay the groundwork for building a real vanguard party of the American working class. One reason why revolutionary politics is an art as much as a science is precisely the difficulty of striking the proper balance here: How much can we/should we *act* like a vanguard before we have in fact become one? It seems to me that you bend the stick much too far on this question—perhaps because you incorrectly see this as the only alternative to “fake Bolshevik posturing and commandism.”

It is certainly true that we will forfeit the confidence and respect of those in other organizations, or of independent activists in the broad movement with whom we want to collaborate, if “we pretend to have answers that we really don’t or stake a claim to leadership that we haven’t earned.” But the only solution that I know is to try to find the answers that are needed and earn the right to lead. No group has ever become recognized as a leadership without consciously trying to provide some, and none ever will. It is impossible to create a real vanguard any other way—one that will actually be up to the task of ensuring a victory for the third American revolution (not a task for those who lack self-confidence).

Of course, this process requires an openness, humility, a willingness to learn lessons from the mass movement and from other political currents, even at times following the lead provided by others—on those occasions when they really are able to provide leadership. But openness and nonsectarianism, while essential, do not provide a sufficient organizational perspective in and by themselves. They can never be a *substitute* for our own efforts to define program and strategy for the class struggle. The key to success lies in understanding the dialectical interrelationship of these tasks—striving in a self-confident way to provide leadership while also learning from our own experiences and the perspectives of others—not their counterposition.

These are some of our ideas about Leninism and building a vanguard. There is obviously much more that can be said. But even on this basis it seems clear that the ideas of the FIT are different from those that all members of Solidarity presently hold in common. The question that we have been posing now for over a year is: Can the FIT, while maintaining our conceptions of Leninism (of building a programmatic nucleus, of trying as best we can to provide leadership to struggles, and of the need for a united FI movement in the U.S.—that is, with a certain specific set of *ideas* that we not only hold inside our heads but also try to apply in our day-to-day activity, and that we do not plan to give up in the foreseeable future), participate constructively as a part of Solidarity’s “regroupment on a broad revolutionary program”?

As of now we still do not know the answer. And we know of no other way to find it except by our two organizations sitting down together, conscious of the differences and difficulties—but also of the opportunities—and discussing things in a serious and mature way. That is what we have been proposing to you, and what I can only suggest here once again. If you are willing to do this—that is, to consider how

we might merge our *perspectives* as well as our forces, rather than either of us asking the other to give up essential aspects of their thinking—then we might fruitfully continue to discuss unity with each other.

Otherwise, if you continue to insist that the FIT's approach to a reunified FI movement (or any other aspect of our commitment to a Leninist outlook) is completely incompatible *even with discussions* about unification, then your continued proposals that we join Solidarity can only be seen as a call on us to renounce those aspects of our views that you presently disagree with. That is unacceptable. If you pursue such a course I will have no choice but to renew my conclusion that Solidarity as a whole rejects *our kind* of Leninism—despite the fact that it is not the “fake Bolshevik posturing and commandism” that you so facetiously caricature. It will be clear that our incompatibility *on this question*, not any sectarianism on the part of the FIT, is the reason we are unable to seriously consider joining forces.

The closing of your letter predicts the possibility of a “discouraging dead end to all [our] efforts” if we do not accept merger with Solidarity on your terms by the time of our February conference. But we take a much longer-range view than this. The results of our campaign to promote revolutionary socialist unity on the basis of a clear, principled programmatic perspective is not going to be determined in the next months, or even within a few years. That is true whether in the short term the FIT merges with Solidarity, with Socialist Action, remains an independent current, or finds some totally unexpected solution. Whatever temporary roadblocks we confront, we will certainly not meet a dead end in this process—because our campaign corresponds to an objective necessity of the Fourth Internationalist movement and of the class struggle in this country. This is a problem that Solidarity and Socialist Action as organizations cannot escape any

more than we can in the FIT—not to mention other groups and individuals who are serious about revolutionary change in the United States.

I profoundly hope, as I have for some time, that you will really start to *show* the openness you *speak* about toward *our* Leninist *ideas*, that we can, without prior demands for either of us to drop essential aspects of our thinking, begin a process which might actually lead us to a merger of FIT with Solidarity. If we can accomplish this it will be an important step forward for both of us, as well as for the revolutionary workers' movement in the U.S. and around the world.

The Gay and Labor Movements

Below are some thoughts on the section headed “Lesbians/Gays and the Labor Movement” of Jeff Brown's article “Marxism and Gay Liberation” (*Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, No. 89).

The fact that most unions, and the labor movement as a whole, have not so far taken up the struggle for gay/lesbian liberation has also contributed strongly to a channeling of the gay struggle into more conservative avenues.

This misses a central point. It is not a flaw in the labor movement or a weakness on its part that it has not taken up the struggle for lesbian/gay rights. In any case, this has nothing to do with “channeling the gay struggle into more conservative avenues.” The weakness is on the part of the lesbian/gay rights movement. Contrary to what is clearly suggested in the piece, lesbians and gays found in the labor movement and in society as a whole regardless of their class are not part of the lesbian/gay rights movement and are in their overwhelming majority closeted.

Those who are part of the movement are a minority who, whether or not they realize it, are privileged compared to those whose lives are stultified by a closeted existence

(most working class lesbians and gays). The movement is channeled in a conservative direction by its composition. It is mostly white, and a college education and a professional career is far more the norm than for society as a whole. The act of coming out is a reflection of a privilege enjoyed by the petty bourgeois class status of the majority of those in the movement. The classism and racism deeply rooted among our lesbians and gays as with other petty bourgeois groups are what divide them from the bulk of the working class.

I would suggest that the labor movement has much to offer lesbians and gays in their fight for social and sexual equality. It is not as clear what a petty bourgeois rights movement can offer to labor with which it has little in common. Being homosexual and suffering an oppression based on that in no way suggests the development of an anticapitalist view. For those whose life situation affords them a chance to live in relative equality with their heterosexual counterparts, the demand for statutory change (gay rights laws) is about the level of political development one could expect from those occasional struggles led by the working class for the extension of basic civil and human rights to which a lesbian/gay rights movement would naturally relate.

At this point, working class gays and lesbians have not organized as a self-identified group. As with their heterosexual neighbors, their principal form of oppression is based on their class status. Fighting for their interests as workers is first on their agenda and understandably so. The lesbian/gay rights movement remains outside of that struggle overall and is likely to remain so. It is the task of revolutionaries to find opportunities to combine the struggles of lesbians and gays with those of the working class. Only in that way can the fight for lesbian/gay rights take on an anticapitalist tone.

Glen Munroe, New Orleans

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