



All Out for April 5!

Defend Reproductive Rights!

Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) Speaks Out on Negotiations in South Africa	1	Struggles for Women's Liberation: An International Perspective	19
The National Question in the USSR—Still Unresolved The Case of Nagorno-Karabagh	5	by Carol McAllister	
Urgent Appeal for Protests Against Political Repression in Syria	8	Harry DeBoer, American Trotskyist: 1905-1992.....	25
Sendero Luminoso Assassinates Feminist Leader in Peru.....	9	by David Riehle	
Dhoruba Bin Wahad— Ex-Black Panther Fights to Remain Free	10	Inaugural Address of Teamster President Ron Carey	27
by Manjula Daminda Wijerama		Lenin's Heritage.....	28
FIT National Conference Sees New Opening for Unity of Fourth Internationalists	11	by Ernest Mandel	
by Steve Bloom		Where Now for Socialism?	30
Independent Political Action and Social Struggles in the United States	14	by Michael Löwy	
by Evelyn Sell		Reviews:	
Conference on Black Independent Politics	18	Literature from a Marxist Perspective	32
by Claire M. Cohen		by Sarah M. Springer	
		Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer	33
		by Paul Le Blanc	
		An Exchange Between the FIT and Socialist Action	34
		The Workers' Movement in the Heartland	36
		by Igor Pykhalov	

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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South Africa is in the news again these days. The current process of dismantling the legal structure of apartheid was launched by the representatives of the major South African capitalists with enthusiastic support from international imperialism. But these forces have no desire to change the real substance of apartheid—a vicious social and economic discrimination against that country's Black majority—which will inevitably remain under a program of reform from above.

For their part, the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP) have chosen to participate in the process of negotiating a transition with the de Klerk regime. But opposition voices have been heard in South Africa on both the right and the left.

The U.S. media is full of reports about the rebellion of reactionary whites, led by the Conservative Party, which has forced de Klerk to call a referendum—in which only whites can vote, of course—to affirm or reject the reform process. De Klerk has pledged to resign if the vote goes against him.

Less well known in this country, however, are the voices which are attempting to articulate an alternative to the present process from the point of view of South Africa's oppressed majority. For example, both the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) have turned down invitations to participate in the negotiations.

In fact, by endorsing de Klerk's initiatives, the ANC and SACP have joined with those "representatives" of Blacks and other "races" (as defined by apartheid) who have, in the past, been most subservient to the white regime. Inkatha leader Buthelezi is the best known of these, but also involved in the negotiations are the chiefs of the Bantustans and the Colored Labor Party. All of these "leaders" have an equal voice with the ANC.

Thus, of all the organizations that have consistently fought against apartheid in the past, only the ANC and SACP have chosen to participate in the negotiation process. Given their weight and prestige—resulting from the real and important role they have played in past struggles—their decision to work with the government has had a somewhat disorienting effect on the mass movement.

In order for U.S. readers to get a better idea of what alternatives actually exist for the oppressed in South Africa we are publishing here the slightly abridged text of a pamphlet issued last November by the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA). It was written before the formation, in December, of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA)—the form through which negotiations for a governmental transition are presently taking place.

Nevertheless, the pamphlet makes clear that a different course is possible for Blacks and others than relying on negotiations with and the good faith of those who have oppressed them for decades. It recognizes that the old, still repressive regime is intent on maintaining the privileges of the white minority, and that these will not be simply negotiated away. What is suggested is an alternative of renewed mass mobilizations around the struggle for a truly democratic constituent assembly—one that could draft a new constitution based on the elementary idea of one-person one-vote, or, in the South African context, Black majority rule.

Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) Speaks Out on Negotiations in South Africa

An Open Letter To All Organizations of the Oppressed
Comrades and Friends:

We believe that some important questions need to be asked about the ongoing negotiations process. Should we participate in the Multi-Party Conference to discuss the drafting of a new constitution? Has government had a total change of heart and are they now willing to accept majority rule? Will they negotiate the transfer of power to a democratically elected government? Can the reforms they promise really change our lives?

We don't think so. We think that the rulers of South Africa are seeking ways to include yesterday's liberation movements in a POWER SHARING deal. Certain political leaders (ANC and Inkatha) will be invited into government to share responsibility for the transition to a post-apartheid South Africa. We believe that this controlled reform of apartheid from above is intended to ensure that a socialist revolution from below never occurs.

Apartheid laws will go but the social structures of apartheid and the capitalist market economy will remain. The farms, mines, and factories will still be privately owned. The exploitation of the Black working class will continue along with mass unemploy-

ment. For the majority of the poor the social structures of apartheid—the segregated townships and schools, etc.—will still remain.

It serves government's purpose to present the changes now taking place as well-meaning reforms from above. But these so-called reforms, like the lifting of certain apartheid laws, are a result of our mass struggles. They are not gifts from the oppressors.

Government uses talk of reform to demobilize mass anti-apartheid struggles. The Congress Alliance (ANC, SACP, COSATU) uses mass struggle as a threat to win further concessions from government.

How far can reforms go? Given the backwardness of apartheid some changes can and will be made, but these changes will benefit only a small layer of middle class Blacks. Yet, talk of negotiations has cruelly raised the false hope in very many people that reforms will bring relief to their daily hardships. They won't.

The promise of progressive reforms under market capitalism is false. Capitalism, in its greed for profit, will refuse to pay for the major changes needed to improve our lives. Reforms will therefore

stop long before the living conditions of the vast majority are radically improved.

To win improvements at a mass level we will be forced to extend our political and trade union struggles to include making changes in the ownership of wealth. This means putting the demands for socialism back on the mass agenda.

We give our reasons, in the attached pamphlet "The Politics of Negotiations," for calling on organizations now involved to stop negotiating and return instead to the mass mobilization of our liberation forces as the only way forward.

We also call for the formation of a National United Front of the oppressed and exploited to agree on a program of action which

will lead to the early convening of a Constituent Assembly. We are NOT asking your organization to accept our political positions. The National United Front could agree on a common platform around which we can mobilize to win the demand for a Constituent Assembly.

We do not believe that government has to agree to anything before this can happen. We are opposed to any formation other than a democratically elected Constituent Assembly deciding upon a new constitution. We should aim to constitute ourselves as an alternative social power capable of deciding our own future.

The Politics of Negotiations

The South African ruling class has decided, in conjunction with imperialism, that apartheid must go and that Blacks should be represented in a new government. They decided this in order to ensure a longer life for the capitalist profit-making system in all of Southern Africa.

We must look reality in the face. The ending of apartheid will extend some political rights to the Black majority and will bring them some social relief when the post-apartheid development programs are implemented. If negotiations succeed the working people and the unemployed will be able to vote for a new government. We fear that their vote may not be free and equal.

De Klerk is trying to determine the shape of the new government by reaching agreement with participants in his planned multi-party conference. De Klerk is talking about a supercabinet involving the leaders of the main major political parties. He is also prepared to consider other proposals.

We do not accept that such a government would be able to solve our social problems or grant all the rights we demand. The only chance for significant changes will be if a constituent assembly is won through mass struggle with the potential of becoming an alternative government in its own right.

Negotiations, we believe, is about De Klerk winning agreement from our liberation organizations that the transition to a new South Africa will be limited to removing apartheid laws and limited to introducing a reconstructed social system in which the capitalist market system could flourish.

If that happens, the political system of post-apartheid South Africa will be similar to, but not the same as, that of the USA where racial inequality still predominates. Working people will still be exploited by their bosses and the weak and the poor will still be deprived, simply because these are not matters that are changed by simply having the vote.

We dare not forget the lessons of independent Black Africa. They show that having the vote does not mean that we will have a job with decent pay, or that peace will come to our land, or that our housing, health, and education needs will be met, or that our many other social demands will be realized.

Which Way Forward?

What is the overall strategy proposed by the Congress movement to get the best deal out of the reform process? What political goal lies at the end of the negotiations process?

Is it freedom, equality, democracy, jobs, and socialism? Is it the minimum conditions as laid down in the Freedom Charter, the Azanian Manifesto, and the Ten-Point Program? Will it satisfy the more radical demands raised during the upturns in our struggle? Or is there still another harder struggle to be waged later once

reforms have run their course? What are the traps and dangers that need to be avoided?

The Strategy of the Congress Alliance

Is this the way forward?

We believe that when the Congress/SACP [African National Congress (ANC)/South African Communist Party] leadership agreed to negotiate the sharing of power with government they understood the full implications of that decision. Their task now is to persuade their membership, and then the rest of South Africa, to accept their decision as a wise one. How they plan to do this is quite clear from the strategy they propose.

STEP 1

The Patriotic Front (PF) and All-Party Conference (APC)

Their first task is to appear as legitimate, as having the support of the popular majority and the endorsement of other liberation movements. To achieve this is the essential role of the Patriotic Front (PF) and of the All-Party Conference (APC).

The Patriotic Front, as Congress originally proposed it, was to call together the liberation organizations to seek a common platform which they would take forward, as a left-bloc, to a broader All-Party Conference. If not, as Comrade Mandela made plain, the Alliance would go it alone with its other democratic allies.

However, the Patriotic Front Conference, as convened by the ANC, PAC [Pan-Africanist Congress], and AZAPO [Azanian People's Organization], to meet in Durban on October 25-27, 1991, has invited a very wide range of organizations, including the Bantustan parties and the Tri-cameral parties. Hope of finding a common position as a left-bloc is now virtually impossible.

Congress hopes to win support from the broadened PF Conference for its proposals on an interim government (IG) and a constituent assembly (CA). To date no other liberation organization supports an IG (PAC seeks a form of interim authority), PAC and AZAPO are not in favor of an APC but the way the PF Conference has been called in fact substitutes for it in every respect!

Government, for its part, has thus far refused to concede either an interim government or a constituent assembly. It plans to call a multi-party conference (MPC) to discuss the way forward for South Africa, to agree on terms for a constitution and to agree on transitional government arrangements. This MPC will exclude organizations who refuse to negotiate a settlement.

The Congress Alliance intends participating in the multi-party conference. In view of this the Patriotic Front/All-Party Conference is clearly an attempt by the Congress Alliance to win broad support for the positions it intends taking into the government's multi-party conference. In this way it seeks to hook the other liberation organizations onto the negotiations bandwagon.

Just as it happened with the peace talks, these conferences (the APC and MPC) constitute a clearing ground for both Congress and government. Congress needs to look legitimate by bringing over significant organizations behind it. Government cannot delegitimize state power by handing over rule to some unacceptable authority. Yet both have to arrive at a point of common agreement. This is the purpose of the conferences.

STEP 2

Interim Government (IG) and Constituent Assembly (CA)

The purpose of the APC/MPC is to lay down the ground rules for the IG and the CA. The APC/MPC will agree on a formula for selecting (not electing) the IG and will define the authority of the IG. The expectation is that the NP [National Party] will stand down from single-party government on condition that it is included in the multi-party interim government.

This is where the sharing of power begins in a formal sense although the many Joint Working Groups (between government and the Congress Alliance) are already a sort of dress rehearsal where Congress learns the rules of the game.

Congress doesn't expect the IG to last more than 18 months. Basically, its task is to supervise the constituent assembly and then be replaced by a government of national unity elected under the new constitution. The IG will not make new laws nor abolish old ones—it will serve as a "neutral" supervisory body. In practice this means it will defend the status quo.

The interim government proposed by Congress is simply another version of the same class animal as the super-cabinet proposed by de Klerk. Although neither of them claim to formally constitute a new government, and project themselves as a neutral form of civil administration, they will in fact have to rule the country.

Neither of them will be democratically elected bodies. Both of them exist for the central purpose of supervising the legal (but not social) transition from apartheid-capitalism to a new form of racial-capitalism. Either form of interim government will do no more than supervise the army and police, administer the civil service, and enforce the laws of the land. It will carry out all the essential functions of a state.

The interim government will serve as a midwife to the birth of post-apartheid racial-capitalism and, in the event of any upsurge of mass worker struggles threatening stability during the change-over, will serve as caretaker of capitalism's interests.

The political purpose of the interim government is to preserve the legitimacy of the capitalist state while it switches over from its present undemocratic form, with its tri-cameral parliaments and bantustan outposts, to a more democratic state form with a central parliament legally created by the CA.

Illusions of Power

Congress argues that the fairness and justness of both the CA and IG will depend on who is chosen to constitute the transitional government. This is the same kind of mistake as talk about de Klerk's personal integrity or the professionalism of the police!

In reality the political authority and form of the interim government will be settled once sufficient checks and balances are agreed upon between Congress and government to convince the bour-

geoisie that its class power is protected. Thereafter, who gets named to sit on the IG depends upon deals made in the PF, the MPC/APC and in the Joint Working Groups.

One politically sensitive difference between the interim proposals of Congress and that of de Klerk is that, under a super-cabinet, the NP doesn't have to pretend to stand down from government—it simply absorbs Congress & Co. It is this degree of blatant co-optation that Congress can't accept, because it will lose too much credibility.

Congress needs a form of interim government to which the NP at least appears to be handing over power. The NP, for its part, can't appear to abdicate social power—that would raise the risk of social instability from the far-right and left. The shuffleboard will therefore be very busy until a formula acceptable to both sides is agreed on.

Delusion of Power

Congress argues that if the PF and its allies in the APC become a majority, they would hold real power in both the IG and the CA—and later, through an electoral pact, a majority in a government of national unity.

This is a complete misunderstanding of what bourgeois parliamentary politics means. Its success depends upon convincing Black South Africans, whose experience with Bantustans has taught them otherwise, that the number of seats you hold in parliaments is a reflection of real social power.

The numbers game Congress is involved in serves to legitimize what Congress is promoting—namely, that the oppressed accept less than the democratic programs of our liberation movements because that's the best deal Congress can hope to get. The Congress argument amounts to this: We must accept sharing power because we are unable to take power!

The Logic of Power Sharing

When the Congress/SACP leadership entered the negotiations process they effectively gave up the revolutionary struggle in exchange for a government-led reform process which offered them a share in state power.

To carry their membership with them the Congress/SACP leadership had to disguise the enormity of what they intended doing. They tried to make people believe that government is negotiating from a position of weakness. The propaganda chorus began to persuade people that accepting only a share of power was an important first step.

The Congress/SACP leadership argued that by working from inside a new post-apartheid government they could gradually increase popular control until one day the workers would run the country. Some Congress/SACP people call this their hidden agenda, but neither government nor the bosses are fooled by rhetoric. They know that to share power means you can't govern as you choose.

What Congress can and cannot do will be settled during the negotiations process. Government will demand certain assurances from the Congress/SACP leadership, and will insist that they demonstrate their acceptance of the rules.

Already Congress has had to jump the loop. First they had to disband MK [armed wing of the ANC], then they had to disband the self-defense committees. Next they will have to curb mass political actions or reduce them to insignificant activity. If Congress/SACP refuses to accept the rules they will not receive the share of power now offered them.

We have always said that the bourgeoisie will never hand over power to the working class. At very best, and only under extreme circumstances, they will negotiate a deal with reliable partners who are willing to rule on their behalf in exchange for the trappings of

public office. The bourgeoisie will only allow the executive of the state to be changed at elections if they are assured that the rules of the power game are well respected.

History has taught that the only way real power can transfer to the people is by them seizing it through popular revolutionary struggle. Whenever power has been shared its purpose was to block the transfer of real power to the people. The bourgeoisie make the people believe that when their leaders are allowed to take office, they are taking power.

The Power They Won't Share

As the whole of Black Africa discovered to their cost, real social power is about far more than being in parliament. It is about who owns and controls the means of production and therefore the creation and distribution of wealth in a society.

In South Africa today, de Klerk's government, like every government before it, rules the country on behalf of the bosses who own the mines, the factories, farms, and banks, etc. Ownership and control over the economy is the power the government won't share. Which is why they make such a fuss every time Mandela mentions nationalization.

Another Road Forward

There is an alternative. If a United Front could be formed which is prepared to stand firm on key political issues, then the MPC/APC would be paralyzed because "the democratic allies" will find our positions unacceptable. Negotiations would break down because they only work if both sides remain flexible and are prepared to yield. A United Front committed to promoting mass struggles rather than endorsing negotiations can shift the balance of forces.

We would then be on the road to a democratically elected government, not an interim government. But such a government won't come about without a serious contestation of power in the streets. One way of building that power is around a mass political campaign for a popularly based constituent assembly built from below. That is what WOSA proposes.

Without such a mass campaign based on popular struggle the constituent assembly, if it happens, will be a concession from de Klerk to Congress, negotiated in exchange for checks and balances on class power during the period of IG. If this happens the CA becomes no more than a forum where a new constitution is written. Any notion that the CA can become the political focus of an alternative social power is excluded.

Unless a united front launches a militant national campaign out of which we build a popularly based CA, the new constitution will be written by lawyers and then circulated by Congress to the mass structures for comment. Without an active political base this is a futile and bureaucratic exercise.

The voice of Congress members, if they get a chance to express it, will be composited at local, regional, and national level until it suits the needs of lawyers. Non-Congress members will only get a chance to express their opinion if they have some direct way of influencing an elected representative.

Unless the CA is built from below, it will be a hollow shell with the job of legitimizing the negotiated settlement. It will become a site of negotiations where the interests of labor and capital, of oppressed and oppressor, will be compromised in a so-called constitution of national unity which the state will enforce.

This is why we say that the NP and other "democratic allies" will only endorse the new constitution once they are convinced that it protects their political, social, and economic interests. The interests of the organized working class and of other oppressed could not possibly be accommodated by the bourgeoisie.

AZAPO, PAC, and WOSA all support the call for a CA. WOSA sees the CA as expressing the interests of an actively involved mass movement, with united front structures implanted all over the country to mobilize and to act as a guardian of our interests.

Arriving at a common position with Congress would be hard to accomplish. Finding agreement with opposing class parties like Inkatha, the Bantustan parties, the Labor Party, or the Democratic Party and National Party would be impossible for WOSA.

WOSA will attend the Patriotic Front Conference to present its proposals for a Fighting Alliance of the Oppressed and Exploited based on a common platform and a program of action. WOSA will propose the following principled basis for the national united front (NUF):

1. A democratically elected constituent assembly as the only acceptable means of arriving at a new constitution.
2. All members of the NUF totally reject the apartheid system. Organizations presently working within the apartheid system must resign from (and leave) these structures before they can become members of the NUF.
3. Because it is an alliance of the oppressed and exploited, no representatives of capital can become members of the NUF.
4. The NUF must be structured at grassroots, regional, and national levels and will be based on a mass campaign for a constituent assembly. (The NUF is *not* a leadership forum.)
5. The NUF will seek to harness all the mass organizations of the oppressed and exploited, including trade unions, civic, youth, church, and sporting organizations in joint campaigns.
6. The principles of public accountability of representatives and delegates to the structures of the NUF will guide the workings of the front.
7. The agreements and decisions of the front will be the property of all our rank-and-file members and will thus be binding on all provided that such decisions are not in conflict with the unifying principles adopted by the front.
8. Over and above the unity achieved in the front, each component organization has the fullest right to propagate its program and slogans.

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The National Question in the USSR—Still Unresolved

The Case of Nagorno-Karabagh

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Marxists need not mourn the disintegration and collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Union had long ago ceased to be a voluntary one.

The Soviets (the Russian word for councils) of workers, soldiers, and peasants—organs of democratic power that had served as the basis for revolutionary government established by the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917—had long ago ceased to function as such. The destruction of the countryside and of industry in the cities caused by the imperialist-backed counter-revolutionary war 1918-1921 meant that such local organs of workers' control had to be reconstituted under highly difficult circumstances after the Red Army finally won. This had only barely been achieved when the USSR was constituted in 1922.

This is one reason why the revival of the economy in the 1920s was accompanied by the political degeneration of the revolution; the bureaucratization that progressively engulfed the Communist Party apparatus also infected the functioning of the workers' and peasants' councils. Soviet democracy was stifled and crushed and the soviets were converted from institutions for democratic rule from below into conveyor belts for decisions from the consolidating bureaucratic caste on top, crystallizing around Stalin.

The totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy, which destroyed the soviets and crushed the Marxist opposition led by Leon Trotsky, was not socialism. The populations of Russia and of the 14 non-Russian republics that were to ultimately be established had no right to self-determination. The 1922 constitution, under the impetus of the original principles of the Bolsheviks and Lenin, guaranteed the right of republics to secede. However, under Stalin, all national movements were crushed again and again. Even after Stalin's death, as late as 1961, Ukrainian activists who simply advocated a referendum for an independent Workers and Peasants Soviet Ukraine were arrested, charged with treason, and sentenced to death. One of these activists, Lev Lukyanenko, whose sentence was commuted to 15 years' imprisonment, was

among the last political prisoners to be released by Gorbachev.

The process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union was vastly accelerated by the events in August 1991 when, in the aftermath of the defeated coup attempt, the new government formed by Boris Yeltsin banned the Communist Party in a counter-coup. The decentralization of the economy and the dismantling of the centralizing ministries during Gorbachev's reign, and the democratization that had been opened up by the glasnost policies, had set centrifugal forces in motion. The widespread understandable and justified hatred of Kremlin rule and of Russian hegemony and domination nourished powerful and popular independence-minded movements among the non-Russians. In the weeks after the failed coup attempt, there was no longer any power able to force the republics to stay together.

However, although all the non-Russian republics have officially declared themselves independent—even if 11 of them quickly joined the loose Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—the nationalist and independence-minded democratic forces are far from victory. Only in Armenia and Georgia have popular nationalist leaders been elected president and the old apparatus at least partially displaced. In the other republics, the old CP chiefs—yesterday's pro-Moscow oppressors of the movements for national rights—were able to switch camps overnight and unabashedly put themselves forward as champions of national rights. Such characters are now serving as presidents of the "independent" republics.

Despite the strength of the democratic and nationalist aspirations in Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan as well as in Uzbekistan, and the other Central Asian republics, the bureaucratic apparatus born during the Stalin years still holds the reins of power. Although functioning in vastly transformed circumstances, this bureaucratic apparatus still has hegemony over the police apparatus and the army and still has the backing of the Kremlin. Major struggles lie ahead if they are to be overthrown, i.e., if there are to be political revolutions that turn power over to

democratic workers' and peasants' councils or soviets where it belongs.

Behind Crises in Nagorno-Karabagh

Understanding this background is extremely important to understanding what is behind the violent struggles and conflicts taking place in the Caucasus, specifically Nagorno-Karabagh and Georgia.

Nagorno-Karabagh, a predominantly Armenian region, was incorporated into the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in July 1921 by a decision of the Russian Communist Party's Caucasus Bureau (Kavburo) headed by Stalin—even though the Azerbaijan Republic leadership had in December 1920 declared Nagorno-Karabagh to be part of Armenia. The Kavburo became notorious—even ultimately to Lenin—for its abuses against the local populations. (For the history of this episode, see *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, No. 62, April 1989.)

The population of Nagorno-Karabagh was the first, in February 1988, to launch sustained massive mobilizations for self-determination. Like the other non-Russians, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabagh were denied any say whatsoever over their economy which was in a state of neglect and deterioration. They had no schools, newspapers, TV, or other institutions that functioned in the Armenian language, and they were perpetually dominated by either Azeris sent from Baku or Russians sent from Moscow. It is important to be aware, at the same time, that the majority of the Azeri working population in Nagorno-Karabagh, like the Azeris in the rest of Azerbaijan, also suffer from national and political oppression. Some of the Azeris, in fact, had initially joined with the Armenian majority in demanding local self-rule.

Through their mass mobilizations, petition drives, and referenda, the Armenians in the region, with the support of mass mobilizations in the Armenian Republic that quickly developed, clearly advanced their aspiration to secede from the Azerbaijan Republic and be incorporated into the Armenian Republic.

The Stalinist bureaucracies, reform or otherwise, have consistently refused to allow this. Their response has been economic blockades, martial law, military raids plundering and destroying villages and expelling the Armenian residents, arrests and repression. (See a two-part series on this subject in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, Nos. 72 and 73, March and April 1990.)

The Azeri bureaucracy, notorious for its corruption and gangster methods of rule, has no interest in allowing a democratic

enclave to be born right in its midst. Moreover, the apparatus has long been accustomed to seeing Nagorno-Karabagh as part of its domain, a source of produce, and a place for its resorts. The Kremlin and Gorbachev stood behind the Azeri rulers in their refusal to give an inch.

By November 1988, the mass mobilizations for self-determination and independence in Nagorno-Karabagh and in Yerevan, capital of the Armenian Republic, had spread to Baku, capital of the Azerbaijan Republic. It was then, under the watchful eye of thousands of Ministry of Interior troops, that the Azerbaijan apparatus began the expulsions of Armenians in Azerbaijan. Rumors of pogroms were released, Armenians were fired from their jobs, organized mobs attacked Armenian homes and destroyed them, forcing residents to flee.

Similar rumors began to spread in Armenia that Azeris living there would become or already had become victims of some alleged Armenian terror, and tens of thousands Azeris too fled for their lives. These events were orchestrated by the local party bosses and their economic and police apparatuses. They created more than 300,000 Armenian and Azeri refugees from both republics.

On the heels of this attack came the earthquake that destroyed the cities of Spitak and Leninakan and dozens of villages and settlements in northern Armenia in a minute's time on December 7, 1988. It killed some 25-30,000 people, including refugees from Azerbaijan who had sought shelter there, and shattered the lives of the survivors.

The destruction caused by the earthquake remains largely unrepaired. Nothing has been done to punish the criminals who were responsible for the mass expulsions and to address the needs of those expelled—such as the need to return to their homes and jobs. The only political initiative from Gorbachev and the Kremlin was to arrest the Armenian leadership of the Karabagh Committee in Yerevan and institute its own direct rule over Nagorno-Karabagh. In January 1989 it sent Ministry of Interior troops to occupy the territory, placing it under martial law.

Since January 1989, the Armenian nationalist movement has continued to be the backbone of the republic's democratic movement. It forced the government to release arrested leaders. Its deputies are now a majority of the elected Armenian legislature, and one of its key figures Levon Ter-Petrosyan was elected Armenia's president. The Armenian parliament, in fact, voted to start confiscating the Communist Party's property on May 1, 1991, even before the Russian government did.

However, the nationalist leadership, like those in power in the Baltic, is primarily intellectuals and not workers. It appears to have no economic program to offer besides market measures and privatization, essentially the same thing that the reform Stalinists are imposing.

Meanwhile, Armenia, already suffering from economic stagnation, dilapidated housing and infrastructure, severe industrial pollution, and shortages, has since 1988 only received a severe deterioration in return for its mass mobilizations. An industrial park causing deadly pollution has been closed in Yerevan but nothing has been done to create new jobs or clean up the mess. The nuclear reactor just 20 miles from the center of Yerevan, which posed a deadly threat to the population but provided a large percentage of its electrical power, has been closed, but no new source of power has been developed to replace it. Joblessness and housing shortages have been magnified tenfold by these factors along with the earthquake and the inflow of refugees.

To this has been added the economic blockade against Armenia inspired by the Baku mafia/bureaucratic elite—the old privileged apparatchiks and their hangers-on—whose anti-democratic motives are often masked by chauvinist rhetoric. The entire situation, furthermore, has been drastically worsened by the institution in Armenia, by the Armenian government, of the same type of price increases as were introduced in Russia and elsewhere in the CIS in January—causing prices of the limited available goods to skyrocket.

The democratic rights and nationalist movement of the Azeris has also been dealt severe blows. As a result of mass mobilizations in December 1989 and January 1990 that threatened to unseat the Kremlin's trusted Baku apparatchiks, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet sent 30,000 troops to occupy Azerbaijan, half of them in Baku, and establish martial law that essentially continues today. At least 160 protesters were killed by the invading military forces.

It was on the basis of this invasion that Ayaz Mutalibov—a party henchman since the Brezhnev era who was forced by mass protests to resign March 5—was placed in power.

Yeltsin Is No Solution

The rise of the Yeltsin government has made no difference in this general policy, though previously he made a great deal of noise about supporting self-determination. He has not supported self-determination for Nagorno-Karabagh. His government's idea of a "political settlement" there was

the September 1991 accords signed by Presidents Ter-Petrosyan of Armenia, Mutalibov of Azerbaijan, Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, and Yeltsin for Russia (no representative of Nagorno-Karabagh was a party to the accords!) calling for "both sides" to disarm by January 1, 1992, a return to the pre-1988 conditions (which precipitated the crisis), and "free elections" and "full self-rule" in Nagorno-Karabagh while maintaining Azerbaijan's "territorial integrity," i.e., refusing to accept Nagorno-Karabagh's demand to be allowed to secede.

These accords failed to condemn the brutal measures the Azeri rulers had applied against Armenians even though the negotiations followed months of attacks on Armenian villages in Karabagh and in Azerbaijan by Azeri special forces (OMON) and other armed bands causing at least 80 deaths and creating 4,300 refugees. These attacks, which began in late April, occurred despite the presence of thousands of Ministry of Interior "peace-keeping forces" stationed in the region.

The Yeltsin government was in effect continuing what the Kremlin had consistently done, backing the Azeri rulers. The day after the accords were signed, Azeri "commandos" attacked the Armenian village of Chaparin in Nagorno-Karabagh killing six people. (*New York Times*, September 25, 1991.)

The Azerbaijan parliament, still controlled by the apparatchiks and former Communist Party elite, used the helicopter crash in November 1991, which it blamed on the Armenians, as an excuse to annul Nagorno-Karabagh's status as an Autonomous Oblast, cut phone links with Armenia, and closed fuel pipelines to the Armenian Republic. As a result, already fuel-starved Armenia had virtually run out of fuel by mid-December: 30 percent of industry that had still managed to remain open throughout the period was forced to close down, and the rest is only operating at reduced capacity. The dark and cold schools are open only 15 minutes each day when students can come in to get assignments. People are packed into unheated housing with no hot water, and with electricity only a few hours each day, if at all.

In early December, the government of Nagorno-Karabagh again declared independence and announced that a referendum to show support for independence would be held December 29, along with elections of a new parliament. Azeri military attacks on Armenian villages in Nagorno-Karabagh escalated by mid-December with dozens of Armenians reported killed and thousands left homeless, according to Reuters on December 20.

Military Attack

The day of the referendum, Azeri military forces positioned themselves on the outskirts of Stepanakert, the Nagorno-Karabagh capital, and began shelling the city, killing at least 12 people and wounding dozens. Despite the shelling, however, a majority of Armenians managed to cast ballots in the elections and voted overwhelmingly for independence. Meanwhile, large battalions of Azeri forces were massing in villages surrounding Nagorno-Karabagh in preparation for new assaults.

On December 30, Azeris in a referendum in the rest of Azerbaijan also voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence.

As the shelling and military attacks on Stepanakert escalated, the Nagorno-Karabagh parliament made an urgent appeal to the international community for help. The only response appears to have come from the Russian Academy of Sciences which called for the troops of the CIS and the United Nations to intervene. (Reuters, December 31.)

Meanwhile, however, the CIS (formerly USSR Ministry of Interior) troops—which had never once defended Armenians from brutal attacks over the past year—by mid-December began to withdraw from Nagorno-Karabagh. It is important to bear in mind that they remain stationed in Azerbaijan. TASS reported that as the CIS troops were withdrawing, Azeri forces were “stopping them for their weapons.”

The shelling of Stepanakert and other Armenian towns by Azeri forces continued throughout January. Stepanakert was under siege. By January 23, the parliament of Nagorno-Karabagh reported that 25,000 Azeri troops were massed on the border with tanks and armored vehicles. The Armenian defenders apparently had a makeshift army that numbered somewhere in the neighborhood of 7,000 but they were poorly equipped. The majority of the population of Stepanakert had spent most of their time in underground shelters. The economy had ceased functioning.

Caroline Fox of the *Washington Post* visited Stepanakert in late February and reported conditions there.

The war had prevented the harvests. Livestock had been stolen. The Azerbaijan blockade had stopped food, fuel, and medicine from being delivered. Because of the intensity of the shelling, even the fact-finding mission authorized by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in early 1992 had not been able to visit.

The small, ill-equipped Armenian self-defense units can hardly prevail against larger and better-equipped Azeris, she said. There were, moreover, disturbing reports of brutal treatment of Armenians who had

As We Go To Press:

Press reports of March 12 indicate a deepening political crisis in Baku since the mass protests forced Mutalibov's resignation. After several days of “closed door” discussions between the “parliamentary majority” and something called the “independent Azerbaijan faction,” the formation of a five-member “National Defense Committee” was announced.

It brings the notorious Gedar Aliyev back to power. He is former Azerbaijan party chief, head of the Azerbaijan KGB, and member of the ruling CPSU Politburo in the Brezhnev years who had been deposed in 1987 as some of his more obvious abuses of power became widely known.

The other figures on the committee—which has been granted by the parliament emergency powers—are Rakhim Gaziyeu, head of the

Azeri city military command in the Nagorno-Karabagh city of Shusha; Gasan Gasanov, the Azerbaijan prime minister; Yagub Mamedov; and Abulfas Elchi-Bei, described as “a People's Front leader,” but obviously from its anti-democratic and chauvinist wing that showed its face.

This gang is obviously expected to use its emergency powers to restore order and suppress protests in Baku as well as in Nagorno-Karabagh.

—M.V.D.

been captured by the Azeri forces and were being kept in makeshift prisons.

“Conditions in Stepanakert are appalling. The hospital and maternity unit have been shelled. Babies are born in the basement beneath the Town Hall. Many are premature and many mothers have inadequate milk, but there is no supply of baby formula. Electricity has been cut by the Azerbaijanians so there is no heat or light. Supplies of candles are running out. Running water has been cut off, causing severe sanitation problems and forcing people to queue for hours to fill buckets with potable water. . . . Because of the constant sniping and shelling, women and children live underground in dark, unheated, unventilated cellars and basements. While I was in Stepanakert, 53 rockets fell on the city in one night.”

Armenian Counteroffensive

It was in this context that the Armenian forces began in late February what appeared to have been a successful offensive. What weaponry they had and where they had managed to get it is still unclear, although there was one report that some CIS troops—connected with the 366th motorized infantry that had been “holed up” in Stepanakert and had been ordered to withdraw had stayed on—joined the Armenian forces and assisted in their offensive.

The major attack was directed against Khojaly, the site from which Azeri forces were shelling Stepanakert. According to Reuters, on Wednesday, February 26, “backed by heavy weapons,” the Armenians overran the Azeri town of Khojaly.

It was only after the Armenians began to be successful against the Azeri forces that both the U.S. government and France, on February 27, began to take an interest in the conflict. Their new interest in the region coincided, it happens, with the appearance of reports from the Azerbaijan government that the Armenian forces had massacred up

to 1,000 Azeri civilians fleeing Khojaly, complete with videos and photos of stacks of hacked bodies.

Denying that such atrocities had been committed by the Armenian forces, however, the Nagorno-Karabagh parliament announced its condolences to the relatives of the victims.

The widely publicized reports were at least partially responsible for the mobilization of thousands of protesters in Baku who by March 6 had maintained a two-day siege of the Azerbaijan parliament where Mutalibov and the deputies were “holed up.”

Just what forces were mobilized and by whom and what issues were being raised is far from clear.

The initial press reports tried to depict it as a rather bloodthirsty mob angry at Mutalibov for “abandoning the republic's combatants.” (*Washington Post*, March 7.)

However, this version lacks the ring of truth. Mutalibov seems to have been about as aggressive as was possible under the circumstances. Since the signing of the accord, a continuing escalation of the Azeri military offensive against Armenian settlements had taken place.

It is also important to note that just who the armed Azeri forces are remains cloudy and has been cloudy for many months. However, they certainly must include irregular mercenary forces hired by the Baku ex-CP and mafia bosses who have an interest in maintaining the status quo. These are undoubtedly the same types behind the pogroms and mass expulsions of Armenians and Azeris in 1988.

It is certainly possible that the protesters in Baku in early March were angered at the needless loss of life caused by the continuing conflict over the region and demanding a peaceful settlement. UPI reported that among the demands being raised was for Azerbaijan—having recently voted for independence—to withdraw from the CIS. The most prominent demand, however, was for Mutalibov's resignation.

Under such pressure and obviously unable to mobilize any forces in his favor, Mutalibov resigned on Friday, March 5. Before he did so the parliament voted to grant him immunity from prosecution for any crimes he might have committed, allocated for him a pension of 10,000 rubles per month (twice what Gorbachev receives), and provided him with a home in the country and ten permanent bodyguards. (*Washington Post*, March 7.)

As all this was happening, a new Azeri offensive against Armenians caused dozens more deaths near Askeran and elsewhere (Reuters put the number dead at 200 by March 7). "Thousands of Azeri troops poured into Nagorno-Karabagh on Friday." The Azeri forces were characterized as "a rag-tag force of irregulars, special police, and the seeds of a national

army." The Armenian death toll continued to rise.

At the same time "dozens of military vehicles" of the CIS headed toward Nagorno-Karabagh to organize the withdrawal of former Soviet troops. "Nearly 100 tanks, armored vehicles, troop carriers, and missile trucks roared through Agdam toward Stepanakert" to help the 366th motorized force pull out. (Reuters, March 1.)

The Azeri parliament voted to elect its chairman Yagub Mamedov as acting president. With Baku in a state of turmoil, Mamedov called for increased diplomatic measures to find a negotiated settlement, which would seem to reinforce the possibility that the crowds outside in the street demanding Mutalibov's resignation were not calling for Armenian blood but for a way out of the conflict.

It seems unlikely that the masses of Azeris, themselves suffering from the abuses by the privileged band of gangsters who have long controlled their territory, will be much interested in sacrificing and dying to keep the people of Nagorno-Karabagh oppressed by those same rulers.

The majority of the worker and peasant population of Azerbaijan lives at or below the poverty level. The shops are empty. Even matches are scarce so stoves cannot be lit. The environment is badly polluted and the same economic reform measures—lifting of prices, closing of enterprises, ending subsidies—that were instituted in Moscow January 2 have been imposed on them. Moreover, they, too, have experienced the national oppression of the

(Continued on inside back cover)

Urgent Appeal for Protests Against Political Repression in Syria

There are presently 8-10,000 political prisoners in Syria despite the recent release of more than 2,800 Palestinian and other detainees. The great majority are members of the Islamic fundamentalist movement which took up arms against the regime and was crushed in a terrible bloodbath in 1982. (The common estimate is that 10,000 were killed.) However, hundreds have also been jailed simply because of their leftist views and represent genuine prisoners of conscience. They are being held without any sort of trial under a "state of emergency" which has been in force continuously since 1963.

Close to 400 current detainees are from the Communist Action Party (CAP—a revolutionary Marxist organization with fraternal ties to the Fourth International); almost 50 are from the Syrian Communist Party-Political Bureau (SCP-PB) which is a splitoff from the regular Communist Party (allied with the regime). Around 80 belong to the left faction of the Syrian Baath Party, which is known under the name of February 23, and some dozens of detainees are from a Nasserite current. Since the beginning of 1992, six militants from the Committees for the Defense of Democratic and Human Rights in Syria (CDF) are also being held.

Presently close to death due to illness worsened by detention are: Riad El-Turk (SCP-PB, in prison since 1980); Omar Kashashe (SCP-PB, in prison since 1980); Munif Melhem (CAP, since 1981); Abbas Abbas (SCP-PB, since 1982); Adnan Mahfud (since 1987); Aktham Nuaisseh (CDF, arrested January 1992).

Currently in danger of death or permanent disabling as a result of torture are two underground leaders of the CAP arrested on February 1, 1992: Abdul Aziz Al-Khayer and Bahjat Shaabu.

Some of these prisoners have achieved world records for political detention (four have been in jail for 22 years and 13 for 21 years). Two CAP members have died under torture, in 1980 and 1987, as have two SCP-PB members, in 1984 and 1987. A CAP and an SCP-PB member each died from the direct effects of torture after being released in 1987 and 1991.

A recent example of torture and imprisonment helps to illustrate the plight of these victims of the Syrian regime:

A member of the CAP, Jamal Haseino—born in 1948 and employed at the Bank of People's Credit, married with two children—was arrested on May 6, 1990, after being denounced by an informer who had seen him in possession of a political statement

from the party. He was harshly tortured, then thrown into prison despite the fact that he was undergoing treatment for a brain tumor. Keeping him in jail was the equivalent of a death sentence.

Jamal Haseino lost the power of speech and lapsed into a semi-comatose state while in prison. He was released on July 25, 1991, but died a few days later.

**Send messages of protest about these conditions to:
Embassy of the Arab Syrian Republic
2215 Wyoming Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Fax: 202-234-9548**

Send copies to: Emergency Defense Campaign, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009.

Model Letter:

Excellency,

Syria is among the countries of the world with the largest number of political prisoners. Several thousand people are being held without any kind of trial. Those arrested are often systematically tortured. These facts have been stated and regularly denounced by world human rights organizations which cannot be suspected of partiality in the conflicts of the Middle East.

The majority of those detained are prisoners of conscience. This is notably the case of those who belong to the Communist Action Party, the Syrian Communist Party-Political Bureau, and the Committees for Defense of Human Rights, who have done nothing more than exercise political rights considered elementary in any democratic state.

Seventeen people have been in jail for more than 20 years, including Nureddin Atassi (63 years of age), Salah Jedid (62 years), and Muhammad Id Ashawi (62 years). Others are seriously ill, like Riad El-Turk, Omar Kashashe, Munif Melhem, Abbas Abbas, Adnan Mahfud, and Aktham Nuaisseh. Abdul Aziz Al-Khayer and Bahjat Shaabu, recently arrested, are being subjected to intense torture.

I/We ask you, Your Excellency, to transmit to your government my/our protest and request for the immediate release of the above mentioned people and all those prisoners held for crimes of thought. No person should be indefinitely detained without a fair trial and the right of appeal.

Yours faithfully,
Signature

The January/February 1992 issue of Amnesty Action, U.S. publication of Amnesty International, tells of efforts to publicize the "human rights nightmare" in Peru when Peruvian president Fujimori visited San Francisco on November 18, 1991. It reported: "Amnesty International held major demonstrations at the Peruvian Consulate, at the site of Fujimori's major speech to the World Affairs Council, and simultaneously at the organizing base of Sendero Luminoso [Shining Path] in Berkeley, Revolution Books.

"Sendero Luminoso, the Maoist guerrilla army, enters a village at will," according to the Amnesty Action report. "Community leaders are gathered before the assembled villagers and charged with a lack of support for the Sendero movement. Then they are summarily executed. When the senderistas leave, they are followed by units of the Peruvian military. The village is identified as 'subversive' because it has been visited by Sendero Luminoso. More villagers 'disappear,' are tortured, or killed."

Sendero Luminoso Assassinates Feminist Leader in Peru

by David Trujillo

An idea is being promoted by the media that there is a war going on in Peru between two factions violently confronting each other. On the one side is the Peruvian government and all its civilian and military institutions, on the other, Sendero Luminoso. But this picture does not correspond to the reality. It is a biased version which both Sendero Luminoso and the government work hand in glove to present so that the world will believe it is so.

The story is promoted by prominent ideological spokespersons from both sides. "If in this war it is necessary to kill 100 innocent people to finish off one senderista, so be it" says the ex-general Richter Prada, current ideologue of the Peruvian military. For its part, the official line of Sendero Luminoso is: "Whoever is not for the popular war led by the Communist Party of Peru (Sendero Luminoso) is against it."

The fact is that in this confrontation—that has been going on for 12 years claiming about 25,000 lives and denounced by international human rights organizations—there is a third party which is either ignored or victimized: the people.

On February 16 this year, the Peruvian people emerged as an independent protagonist, although this was the result of a fatal deed. A woman, María Elena Moyano, president of the Women's Federation of Peru and assistant mayor of a poor district of 300,000 inhabitants located in the south of Lima, was assassinated by a bullet to her head. Not satisfied with that, the criminals with fiendish cruelty proceeded to blast the body with dynamite.

The assassins were members of Sendero Luminoso's hit squad. The excuse for this crime is that she was opposed to the "popular war." María Elena Moyano was a woman who in her short life had fought against every Peruvian government she had been forced to endure. Some paramilitary gangs, which operated with impunity under the government of Alan García, had threatened her, but she continued to carry the fight forward. She organized mothers' committees and people's kitchens; she cooperated with the trade unions and with all organizations that supported the people and her proud struggle for the revolution and for socialism.

These same organizations not only were menaced by the government but were also subjected to blackmail by Sendero

Luminoso which threatened to kill their leaders if they refused to collaborate with it. For defying this threat, Roberto Chiara paid with his life. He was a worker, a leader of the Federation of Shoe Workers, and militant founder of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), former Trotskyist organization in Peru. His name was added to an already long list that now includes María Elena Moyano, all assassinated by this fanatical sect.

Shortly before her assassination, Moyano had written: "The revolution is an affirmation of life, of individual and collective dignity, of a new ethic. The revolution is not death, not oppression, not submission, not fanaticism. The revolution is for a new life, is a struggle for a just society, worthy of and in solidarity with the organizations created by our people, respecting internal democracy and planting the seeds of power of the new Peru."

More than 100,000 people marched in her funeral procession, extolling her name and demanding weapons for the struggle, for "People's Power." Before this dense multitude neither the senderistas nor the government showed themselves. They assassinate under cover and keep out of sight when the people emerge in struggle. □

(Translation by Sarah Lovell)

Chinese Political Prisoner Released After Ten Years in Jail

This report is reprinted from October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong, January 10, 1992.

Liu Shanqing, a resident in Hong Kong who was arrested in December 1981 in China while he was visiting relatives of detained dissidents, came back to Hong Kong in December 1991 after spending ten full years in CCP's jail on "counterrevolutionary" charges. Liu Shanqing recounted that in the first seven or eight months after his arrest, he was interrogated almost every day. Most of the ten years he spent in solitary confinement. In court, he denied that he was engaged in counterrevolutionary activities and proclaimed that he was engaged in revolutionary activities.

Under very severe pressure, in 1985, Liu wrote a letter to admit that he had done wrong and requested leniency from the authorities.

He was given a radio with which he listened to broadcasts from abroad. A year later, Liu said, his conscience compelled him to deny that he was guilty. The radio was taken away, he was put in isolation and could not work with the other prisoners.

When Liu gave his court verdict to his family to take to Hong Kong and have it published, he was penalized with solitary confinement in a dark room for as long as one month. This was the most difficult period in his ten years.

Just before his sentence was up, the prison authorities were still threatening him with continued detention in the camp unless he pleaded guilty.

Liu recounted this to expose the condition of political prisoners in China. Liu was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd on his return to Hong Kong, and he pledged to continue participating in the movement for democracy. One of his priorities, he said, was to fight for the release of other detained militants including Wang Xizhe and Wei Jingsheng. □

Ex-Black Panther Fights to Remain Free

by Manjula Daminda Wijerama

On the morning of February 13, 1992, a multiracial crowd of about 370 people both inside and outside "part 30" on the 11th floor of the Supreme Court in New York City waited tensely to hear the judge's decision on Dhoruba Bin Wahad's fate. Dhoruba, who had spent 19 years in prison on frame-up murder charges, had been released after a long legal battle on March 22, 1990. At about 9:50 a.m. Tannaqil Jones, Dhoruba's wife and coordinator of his defense campaign, led a jubilant crowd of supporters outside the courtroom to announce to those waiting behind police barricades in the hallway that Dhoruba would remain free on his own recognizance. A feeling of defiant joy and camaraderie swept through the crowd as sister Tannaqil Jones with tears in her eyes hugged and spoke to the crowd about this significant step towards a victorious resolution of Dhoruba Bin Wahad's 19-year-old ordeal with the strong arm of the state.

The crowd of supporters moved downstairs for an impromptu press conference with Dhoruba and Tannaqil outside the court building. It must be stated however that except for a few small "alternative" news groups, notably WBAI radio, none of the major media were present to cover this event; a chronicle of the unseen, unheard oppression of capitalist society.

To cries of "Free All Political Prisoners" brother Dhoruba approached the mike. He began by stating that returning to the U.S. for the hearing had been a "very difficult decision" but a decision premised on the importance of his case for all Black political prisoners. "If they're [the court] going to ignore the facts, if they're going to carry out injustices in this case, they should do it in the light of day, they should not hide behind legal posturing."

He continued by stressing the importance of mass mobilization as a key factor in achieving success in the fight against repression that Blacks and other oppressed communities face today. "We have to turn these hearings into an expose of racism and political repression." He called for a mass citywide demonstration on April 16th, the next scheduled date for his hearing, to protest the racial and political biases of the U.S. judicial system. He stressed the importance of grassroots organizing as an indispensable complement to the legal aspect of his defense: "What happened today would not have happened if that courtroom was empty. You are as much a part of my standing here as the lawyers were." Tannaqil Jones spoke next. She explained how this event showed that "victories were possible" by people working together. In thanking those who have been working for Dhoruba's liberation sister Tannaqil made special mention of Black lesbian and gay groups that had put in a lot of effort. She spoke about the need for the Black community to purge itself of its "homophobia." "One thing we should have learned from our oppression as a people is that we should not be about the oppression of other people. . . . Black men can understand how they are oppressed but they cannot understand how Black women are oppressed. Black men and women can understand how they are oppressed but we cannot understand how Black lesbians and gays are oppressed. We are all a community and these people are part of our community." She urged a dialogue in the Black community to address these pressing problems.

Finally they both reiterated the need for continued vigilance and organizing since, as Dhoruba said, "the war is not over."

His Struggle for Freedom

After 19 years in prison Dhoruba Bin Wahad was released on his own recognizance on March 22, 1990, after proving that the prosecution had withheld crucial evidence during his trial. His appeal was based on more than 300,000 pages of FBI documents that had been gathered with much difficulty under the Freedom of Information Act. "There were 12 years of litigation—it was like pulling teeth," said Robert Bloom, one of Dhoruba's lawyers, to the *New York Times*.

In the process leading up to this, Justice Peter J. McQuilian of State Supreme Court in Manhattan had said in a decision on March 17 that only legal technicalities prevented him from overturning the conviction. Instead, he opened the way for further appeal by Dhoruba's defense. Justice McQuilian noted that had this evidence been present when the case was originally appealed it would have "necessitated a reversal of the conviction." (*Daily News*, March 31, 1989) Indeed under current NYS law a defendant is automatically entitled to a new trial if it is discovered while he is appealing his conviction that the prosecution withheld evidence. However, Dhoruba was jailed after exhausting his appeals. The next highest court, the Appellate Division, 1st Department, ordered Justice McQuilian to investigate whether the withheld evidence had been available to Dhoruba's defense in any form. The Manhattan district attorney, Robert Morgenthau, fearing an investigation that would possibly lead to the complete exposure of the details of this racially and politically motivated frame-up, confirmed in a letter to the NYS Supreme Court that evidence had in fact been concealed during the trial. It was this event that prompted Justice McQuilian to order Dhoruba released from prison.

However, the D.A. subsequently launched an attempt in the Court of Appeals to have Dhoruba's conviction reinstated, and won. On December 19, 1991, the Court of Appeals decided by a 4 to 3 margin that once a defendant's direct appeals are exhausted the defendant must prove that evidence which was withheld would have affected the outcome of the trial. Attorney Bloom told the *New York Times* (December 20, 1991) that this ruling in effect rewarded the prosecution for its misdeeds and "also will encourage prosecution to conceal evidence now that defendants in post-appeal attacks on their convictions will have to prove prejudice." Judge Titone, who dissented on this ruling, charged that "rules of law are merely invoked, modified or simply ignored when their consequences are, in the eyes of four members of this court, inconvenient or undesirable."

Most significantly this ruling posed a danger of Dhoruba's reincarceration. There was a great deal of anxiety amongst Dhoruba's supporters before the February 13 hearing that his appearance in court would be a mistake. They feared that a racist criminal justice system would force him back to prison. Dhoruba, however, expressed the view that his case would affect the fate of all U.S. political prisoners and that his absence, despite voluminous evidence proving his innocence, would avail the courts the opportunity to falsely condemn him. Dhoruba's defense needs both money and volunteers. Anyone who can help should contact:

**Campaign to Free Black Political Prisoners and
P.O.W.s in the U.S.**

**Kingsbridge Station P.O. Box 339
Bronx, New York 10463-0339
(718) 624-0800**

FIT National Conference Sees New Opening for Unity of Fourth Internationalists

by Steve Bloom

More than 70 delegates and guests, the largest number ever to attend a national decision-making meeting of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (since its formation in 1984), gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, February 15-17 for the organization's seventh national conference.

Since the previous conference of the FIT, which took place in September 1990, membership in the organization has grown 25 percent. The FIT has also considerably expanded its geographical distribution, with Local Organizing Committees in a number of new cities. The circulation of its magazine (the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*) has also increased. The FIT's growth and expanded influence reflect the successful work of its members in the movement against the Persian Gulf war, in unions and on campuses around the country, as well as in other mass organizations.

All of this represents the backdrop for understanding the deliberations of the conference delegates. There were a number of important questions where disagreements had to be discussed and resolved.

Uppermost among these was what, if any, steps the FIT should now take to pursue the main campaign first charted in September 1990: a reunification of the scattered groups and individuals in the United States who remain sympathetic to the Fourth International today—after the definitive abandonment of the FI by the Barnes leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. Presently this includes the membership of Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity in addition to the FIT. All three of these organizations were recognized by the last world congress of the FI as maintaining their fraternal status in that world organization. There are also other groups and individuals, not presently affiliated with the FI, who have expressed an interest in being part of whatever process might take place to reconstitute a genuine sympathizing section of the FI in the United States.

A Division Among the Delegates

The difficulty of the situation facing Fourth Internationalists in this country was reflected in the fact that, going into the conference, five different positions had been presented to the membership of the FIT, advocating distinct approaches to achieving the goal of a unified FI sympathizing section—or else proposing to abandon, at least for now, any such goal as completely unrealistic. However, after a process of discussion and clarification, most delegates ended up voting for one of two distinct positions.

These were not strictly counterposed and a small number of delegates voted for both of the main proposals. And many delegates supported other motions in addition to or instead of voting for one of these two. But most did choose between them, and the emergence of two definite, and basically different, positions on the unification question tended to help define a clear choice on the main point which the conference had to resolve.

Influencing the decision of many delegates were actions taken by both Socialist Action and Solidarity at the conference itself or just prior to it. A few days earlier the SA Political Committee had sent a statement to the FIT strongly objecting to formulations that

appeared in a resolution adopted last November by the FIT's National Organizing Committee. (See material beginning on page 34.) SA's objections were further amplified by its observer at the FIT conference in formal greetings.

Solidarity's greetings to the delegates, however, had a different character. They responded to a number of specific questions which have been under discussion between the FIT and Solidarity over the past 18 months. And they presented a clear invitation for the FIT to join Solidarity while continuing with the publication of the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* and constituting itself as a coherent caucus—continuing to advocate a Leninist-type organization and maintaining the FIT's present attitude toward FI unity in the U.S., as well as toward the FI internationally. (For some of the background to this discussion see the following: "On Socialist Regroupment: Solidarity's Perspective," *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 90; "Open Letter to Solidarity's Political Committee," by Steve Bloom, issue No. 91; the letter to the editor by Peter Drucker and Steve Bloom's reply in issue No. 93.)

Of course, Solidarity's invitation could only be outlined briefly under the circumstances. Nevertheless, it seemed to many delegates that this opened up a new opportunity for the FIT to actively explore the possibility of unification with that organization. This, combined with the clear decision by Socialist Action to shut off, at least for now, any discussion about possible unity, led to the following motion being adopted (54 percent of delegates voting in favor, 39 percent opposed, 7 percent abstaining):

We welcome the greetings delivered to this conference by the Solidarity representative, which marks an important step forward in discussions between the FIT and Solidarity. The perspective that he outlined seems to eliminate some of the obstacles that we in the FIT have perceived up to now with regard to the possible unification of our two groups.

Therefore, this conference mandates the incoming national leadership to vigorously pursue the possibilities raised by the Solidarity representative. If we are actually able to achieve a unification of the FIT and Solidarity it could represent a significant step toward the goal set by our September 1990 conference—of reunifying the entire FI movement in the United States within a common organizational framework.

This motion was jointly sponsored by two different currents among the conference delegates. One consisted of those who supported the outlook of a majority on the outgoing National Organizing Committee. Up to the time of the conference, this grouping had tended, based on their evaluation of the discussions that had taken place over the previous year and a half between the FIT and Solidarity, to reject the idea that there was any realistic prospect for a fruitful unification of the two organizations.

The second source of support for the majority motion came from an organized current at the conference called the "Socialist Unity Caucus." This grouping had emerged during the course of the FIT's preconference discussion, urging an active orientation by the FIT toward joining Solidarity even before that organization's greetings were delivered at the conference.

Differences remained, of course, among those who voted for the motion to "vigorously pursue." In particular these related to what expectations the FIT should bring to such a process, and the degree to which real problems remain that need to be clarified. But there was a general sense among those who voted for this perspective that—assuming the message delivered by Solidarity in its greetings was sincere—these difficulties could be worked out in practice as the process of pursuing unification unfolds.

The alternative resolution put before the delegates (43 percent in favor, 52 percent opposed, 5 percent abstaining or not voting) envisioned "a conference open to all supporters of the USec FI for the purpose of constituting a new formation based on the historic program of the FI." In preparation for this the motion suggested a

Greetings to FIT Conference by Bill Breihan for the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group

Comrades and friends of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, on behalf of the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group I bring you the warmest revolutionary greetings.

Of the eleven members of our organization, six are here today at this conference. For months we've looked forward to this important gathering. We've received the last several of your internal discussion bulletins and have studied them carefully. And we have followed the discussion and debates here at the conference with great interest. Many of the issues you take up are the very ones we as an organization have tried to grapple with over the last year or so.

Most important of these, in our view, is the *party question*. With the sectarian decline and marginalization of the Socialist Workers Party, with its departure from the Fourth International, a huge political void exists on the U.S. left. That political space needs to be conquered and reoccupied. Forces exist which can begin to fill the vacuum but they remain divided and largely ineffectual.

The U.S. working class needs a new communist party, a revolutionary workers party organized along Leninist lines. Now is the time to begin to build that party. To do that we'll need to start with the forces at hand. The Fourth Internationalist Tendency has a particular responsibility in this regard. The fight you've waged the last eighteen months to reunite all partisans of the Fourth International in the U.S. has been a correct and admirable one. But so much more needs to be done.

The Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group remains committed to Marxist regroupment. Though our impatience grows by the day, we have no intention of walking away from this. To the extent that the Fourth Internationalist Tendency stays the course to revolutionary regroupment, the MRSRG will be with you and an ally in struggle.

As you deliberate over your next move, over what to do next, we ask only that you keep your focus on the big picture. Basic programmatic agreement exists amongst all three FI groups in the U.S. Forces in this country outside the Fourth International are also within the parameters of the program of revolutionary Marxism. We must build on this, on what we hold in common. Let's not get sidetracked on disputes over tactics, methods of work, or forms of organization. Let's keep our eyes on the prize. It's party-building time.

Onward to a new revolutionary party of workers!

Forward to socialism!!

Long live the Fourth International!!!

discussion bulletin, open to all who were interested in this project. It also proposed that the FIT conference "elect a reunification committee of three empowered to meet with members and representatives of all supporters of the United Secretariat FI for the sole purpose of initiating a unification process under joint auspices." This committee would "convey unambiguously our firm conviction that a new FI section can be created from the existing forces. For our part we stand ready to work in a single organization with all others who support the basic Trotskyist program and adhere to the statutes of the FI."

With the adoption of the motion to "vigorously pursue" the opening presented by Solidarity, and the defeat of the alternative motion, a clear, if slim, mandate was established for taking the next concrete step toward a broader unification of the FI in the U.S.—rather than immediately attempting to create a new FI sympathizing section as an independent entity. Clearly, much still needs to be worked out in terms of how a unification with Solidarity can take place and what it will mean. And this further clarification—both within the FIT and between the FIT and Solidarity—will no doubt be decisive in helping members of the FIT decide whether or not to actually take that step.

Ron Daniels Campaign and Other Discussions

Another important debate took place at the conference concerning the Ron Daniels campaign for president of the United States. Disagreement in the discussion centered on the character of Daniels's specific political platform, his degree of commitment to genuine independence for Blacks and working people from the Democratic Party, the extent to which his campaign has really begun to organize itself, and how much support he has generated among serious Black activists and others. Despite a number of real problems in some of these areas, a substantial majority of the delegates voted to accept a recommendation of the outgoing National Organizing Committee and give critical support to Daniels for president. (See the report and motions on "Independent Political Action and Social Struggles in the United States" which begins on page 14 of this issue.)

During the agenda point on the "World Revolutionary Socialist Movement," an extensive discussion was held about work of the FIT in relation to the Fourth International. Of particular concern in the main report was a discussion that has opened up for the next world congress (now scheduled for 1994) concerning the very nature of the FI itself. Four FIT leaders—Steve Bloom, Carol McAllister, Paul Le Blanc, and Marilyn Vogt-Downey—submitted a discussion article as part of the process of beginning this debate within the FI leadership. It is entitled, "What We Mean by the Fourth International and Why We Should Continue to Build It Today." The conference delegates voted to publish that document in a future issue of the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*.

In addition, under this agenda item, the conference heard specific reports on the ex-USSR, and on Cuba and Central America. It called for stepped-up work by FIT LOCs in terms of defense of Cuba against U.S. threats, as well as more attention to Central America solidarity work. A specific motion was adopted urging FIT Local Organizing Committees to help establish units of the U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee (see the founding statement of that committee in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 92). The general line of the theses previously adopted by the FIT national coordinators and NOC, "Defend and Renew the Gains of the Russian Revolution," was also approved by the conference delegates (see *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 89 and the pamphlet *Where Is the Soviet Union Heading?* published by the FIT).

Under the agenda point, "Organization and Building the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Its Publications," delegates ap-

proved a national campaign to obtain 100 new subscriptions to the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* by September 17.

In addition to the formal conference sessions, a trade union workshop was held on Saturday evening. Panelists described different situations in their local and national unions, and com-

mented on general labor developments. During the Saturday dinner hour, women's rights activists and others got together for informal discussion and to hear a report by the FIT delegate to the recent meeting of the Fourth International's Women's Commission. □

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Independent Political Action and Social Struggles in the United States

by Evelyn Sell

Report to the Seventh National Conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, February 15, 1992

An avalanche of problems is hitting the overwhelming majority of people in the United States. No matter what problem we look at, it is impossible to ignore the role of elected and appointed officeholders, government agencies, and political institutions at the national, state, county, and city levels.

Inadequate unemployment compensation bills are grudgingly approved by Democratic and Republican politicians while more and more workers lose their jobs. The "social safety net," which is supposed to provide minimum basic necessities, is being torn to shreds by elected lawmakers and appointed decision-makers. Local governments are responding to the soaring homeless population by passing stronger vagrancy laws and by ordering police to tear down makeshift shelters and forcibly remove homeless persons. Inadequate government funding for immunization programs has resulted in children dying from diseases which had been virtually wiped out in this country—like measles which has reached epidemic levels in major cities. Other problems plaguing our society involve the very sick public school system, the anguish and deaths caused by insufficient AIDS research and treatment, the tortured environment—the list could go on and on.

The connections between these crises and the actions of politicians are more easily seen during a major election year like 1992—when campaign mud-slinging exposes secrets and half-hidden realities, and when candidates try to win votes by echoing some of the demands of working people, oppressed racial and ethnic communities, women, and others calling for needed changes. A brighter-than-usual spotlight has been thrown on the interrelations between social struggles and politics—politics as it is generally defined by most people. But an even more profound relationship exists between social struggles and politics as defined by revolutionary socialists. Every economic and social struggle poses the essential political question: Who has the power to decide? This is the reality regardless of whether the participants in the fight are conscious of the political nature of their actions.

The auto workers who carried out sit-down strikes during the 1930s presented the ultimate challenge to the bosses: Who owns and controls the means of production? The seed of that challenge lies within every labor battle — no matter how small.

The struggles of African Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, and Native Americans take up fundamental questions of self-determination: Who controls our communities? Who determines our identities? Who shapes our destinies?

The movement against the war in Vietnam and the recent protests against the gulf war posed key issues in class society: Who has authority over the military powers of the state? Who determines matters of war and peace?

The student rights battles of the 1960s — and student protest actions today — concern: Who makes the rules governing our lives and our future?

The women's liberation movement continues to defy traditional patriarchal answers to: Who controls our bodies? Who establishes our role in society?

Lesbian and gay rights activists raise basic questions about the gender system which reinforces bourgeois ideology.

The activities of the environmental movement are essentially a political fight over who will make the decisions over the health of our planet.

Politics is the struggle to determine the course of history. The capitalist class is fully conscious of this political reality. They are determined to remain rulers of society but they recognize the fact that they are a tiny minority acting against the needs of the majority. They maintain a system of government which gives them the power to be the prime decision-makers in our society. The current two-party system has been one of the most effective methods used by the capitalists to give the illusion that the voters have a choice while, at the same time, making sure that the domination of one class is preserved. Every now and then a little of the real truth is revealed to the public: that both parties are owned and controlled by the wealthiest layer, and that key capitalists finance both Democratic and Republican candidates running for the same offices.

There is a growing understanding that a real choice does not exist. This is partially shown by low registration figures and by the small percentage actually voting. It's a common joke that "None of the Above" would win the election if put on the ballot. More and more people see that, instead of a donkey counterposed to an elephant, there is really only one two-headed animal eating out of the same field.

Independent political action is needed to smash this electoral monopoly. Independent political action is necessary to free social struggles from being strangled to death by their reliance on so-called "friends" in the two major parties.

Independent political action is not limited to election campaigns and voting but involves a broad range of activities including: strikes, picket lines, mass mobilizations and demonstrations, rallies, clinic defense actions, solidarity campaigns, boycotts, sit-ins and building takeovers, the publication of statements and appeals, and protest events of many types.

Social struggles need to include an electoral aspect—or what is won in the workplace and on the streets will be snatched away by state legislatures, the U. S. Congress, the White House, and the courts. There are currently three overlapping but distinct developments of independent electoral activities taking place in the labor movement, women's rights organizations, and the African American struggle. Each one, looked at by itself, would be important. Taken together, they signify an increasing alienation from the political parties dominated by the capitalists.

The Trade Union Movement

The organized labor movement has long recognized the need for political action. The union movement has registered millions of new voters, has sponsored bills in state legislatures and the U. S. Congress, has lobbied to promote pro-labor laws, has endorsed and campaigned vigorously for candidates, and has provided platforms for politicians at local union meetings, labor conventions, and huge national marches and rallies like the 1981 and 1991 mobilizations in Washington, D. C.

The problem is not labor's lack of consciousness about the importance of political action. The problem is the labor bureaucrats' reliance on the two-party system. With very few exceptions, the union leadership has snuggled into the coat pockets of the Democratic Party and has organized rank-and-file support for Democratic politicians who are supposed to be "friends of labor." This has been a formula for disaster. It has reinforced the false claim that there are indeed only two legitimate parties—one that favors working people and another that helps the bosses. It has sucked the many valuable resources of unions into the stinking swamp of compromises and deals and trade-offs and pork barrel politicking. It has restricted the ability of unions to wage militant

workplace fights—because certain politicians would be embarrassed. It has prevented the labor movement from organizing workers in Southern states—because a serious struggle would rupture relations with the Democratic Party which includes white supremacist and antilabor Southern politicians.

Voted into office with the help of unions, Democratic Party members in Congress paid no attention to appeals from the Eastern Airlines strikers, helped defeat a national health care program, and voted to break the railworkers' strike by imposing compulsory arbitration which resulted in the loss of 40,000 jobs. Democrats in the House of Representatives resist approving the AFL-CIO's top legislative priority: the Workplace Fairness Bill which would weaken the use of scabs by preventing companies from hiring replacement workers during strikes.

The combination of union misleadership in contract negotiations and in political action has hog-tied workers' struggles—leading to concessions, cutbacks, and lost jobs. Compounding their crimes against their memberships, the labor bureaucrats have worked hand in glove with the bosses to place blame on workers in other countries. The AFL-CIO lobbied against the Free Trade Agreement on the basis that it takes jobs away from American workers by allowing companies to relocate to low-wage areas—especially in Mexico where wages are about \$6 a day in the maquiladoras along the border. Labor bureaucrats are among the loudest voices in the "Buy American!" chorus. Instead of promoting labor unity in the face of the employers' offensive, the union leadership is encouraging U.S. workers to view workers in other countries as "the enemy."

The combined weight of the employers' attacks and the labor bureaucrats' misleadership has not squashed the fightback spirit of many workers—as shown by packinghouse workers in Austin, Minnesota, Pittston miners, Eastern Airlines and New York *Daily News* employees, hospital and supermarket workers in Pennsylvania, East Coast telephone workers, teachers and hotel workers in Los Angeles, garment workers in Wisconsin, mine workers in Montana, farm workers in Michigan and Ohio, public employees in New Jersey, clothing workers in Georgia, and auto workers in Flat Rock, Michigan. Black Workers for Justice, a group based in North Carolina, is tackling the crucial task of organizing unions in Southern states. Immigrant workers from Central America have played a key role in some recent union victories, for example, in the Justice for Janitors campaign of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Women unionists have led significant labor battles in the public employee sector where the largest growth in organized labor has taken place.

The fightback spirit displayed by workers also involves a rejection of the political parties of the bosses. Polls of rank-and-file members in a number of unions show that 63 percent agree that the two major parties care more about big business than about working people. Over 50 percent think that it is time for the trade unions to build a new political party independent from the Democratic and Republican parties.

This is not the first time that unionists have supported the creation of such a party. But last year something significantly new and different happened: a serious effort was launched at the national level to promote the establishment of a labor party. The initiator was Tony Mazzocchi, a longtime leader of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW). He issued a public invitation to unionists to become members of Labor Party Advocates (LPA). The single purpose of this formation is "to educate the public about the need for a Labor Party in the United States." Membership in LPA means agreement with the idea that the U. S. labor movement needs its own political party, and joining LPA means members are willing to be part of an organizing committee for a labor party. There is no projection for running or endorsing candidates nor for actually establishing a party at this time.

The response to this invitation was immediate and impressive. Thousands have sent in \$20 to become charter members. Some unions have joined or endorsed or voted to send LPA materials to all of its members. Mazzocchi and LPA members have spoken to union meetings, have been interviewed on radio programs, and have given presentations at various public forums around the country. Mass circulation newspapers as well as labor publications have published articles about Labor Party Advocates.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency immediately welcomed the formation of Labor Party Advocates and FIT has been helping to spread information about LPA, has been encouraging unionists to join, and has been helping to organize events where LPA representatives can speak and distribute materials.

In the December 1991 issue of the LPA newsletter, Mazzocchi suggested that "1993 seems a good target date" for a convention of LPA members. He explained why it would be premature to attempt to rush into running candidates, acting like a political party, and writing a program. His go-slow approach is based on his understanding of the difficulties in establishing a broad-based fully representative organization which can adequately reflect and reach out to the diverse sections of the labor movement. The FIT appreciates Mazzocchi's concerns about making sure that a solid basis be built for a labor party, about not obstructing the healthy development of this labor party initiative, and about not getting into foolhardy confrontations with the entrenched conservative union bureaucracy which will fight tooth and nail against a labor party.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency is enthusiastic about building Labor Party Advocates—but we are not simply wind-up toys acting blindly and mechanically. We feel it's a weakness that there is no clear method for democratic rank-and-file input and control over program and structure. Decision-making is limited to Mazzocchi and his close associates.

The weaknesses in the present structure of Labor Party Advocates are far outweighed by the positive breakthrough represented by this development. Labor Party Advocates helps accelerate the regroupment of political power in the United States by making working people more conscious of the need for a separate party to represent their interests. Labor Party Advocates exposes the illusions nurtured by the Democrats and Republicans. If labor pulled out of the Democratic Party and offered a strong alternative, it would shatter the two-party monopoly.

We can't predict whether or not LPA will culminate in the actual establishment of an authoritative labor party. What we can do is help build it, we can present appropriate programmatic and organizational proposals, and we can try to make sure it moves along the path of independent political action as far as possible. In order to do these things, we must be a part of Labor Party Advocates—not sideline critics or cheerleaders.

Women's Liberation: Economic, Social, Political

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency also has a positive and activist attitude about feminists moving in the direction of independent political action.

When the women's liberation movement emerged as an organized force in the late 1960s, one of its most important distinguishing characteristics was its independence in confronting women's problems as an oppressed sex and as a superexploited section of the labor force. Women relied on their own strengths, skills, strategies, and tactics. Although women utilized the legal system and lobbied lawmakers, feminists did not depend on judges or politicians—not even on sympathetic ones.

We marched in the streets. We mobilized at state capitols and in Washington, D. C. We held public rallies and organized demonstrations. We filed lawsuits and testified at hearings. We exerted a pressure and created a climate which influenced judges

to rule in favor of our rights, and forced lawmakers to respond to our demands. Independence was the key to winning legal abortion, affirmative action, improvements in the treatment of rape victims, and other gains.

But our progress has been slowed down by the general attack on working people carried out by the employers and their political flunkies. And important battles have been lost due to strategies and tactics pursued by the major national organizations which are seen as the leadership of the feminist movement.

A prime example of this leadership failure is the unsuccessful ten-year campaign [1972-82] to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Major efforts were poured into direct lobbying of state legislators and into election campaigns for candidates promising to vote for the ERA. But the politicians failed to live up to campaign pledges — and the ERA was lost although the amendment won ratification in 35 states containing a majority of the U.S. population. The losing margin was so tiny that only ten “yes” votes in three key states would have incorporated the ERA into the U.S. Constitution.

The current battle to keep abortions legal is a fresh example of why women cannot depend on politicians or judges. The U.S. Supreme Court’s 1989 ruling in a Missouri case set the stage for the ferocious struggle now going on over a woman’s right to choose. On January 21st, the Supreme Court announced it would hear the appeal of Pennsylvania’s restrictive Abortion Control Act. With the help of confirmation votes from Democratic Party senators, the two newest Supreme Court justices are expected to provide the deciding votes to overturn or, at the very least, mutilate women’s reproductive rights. Meanwhile, back in Congress, the Freedom of Choice Act is going nowhere.

Political experts and media commentators say the economy will be the biggest issue in the 1992 campaign. But here, too, women face serious problems and can expect little or no help from government agencies, the courts, and politicians.

Women workers now receive seventy cents for every dollar earned by males. In the early 1980s, the ratio was fifty-nine cents to the dollar. This apparent progress for women workers is not a true closing of the wage gap but is primarily due to a combination of factors: men’s earnings have gone down, younger women have been able to break into traditionally male jobs where pay scales are higher, and there has been increased unionization of occupations which have been predominately female. But most women remain trapped in the low-wages “pink collar” job ghetto. Women of color are further victimized on the basis of their race or ethnic group.

Employment gains won by women have been watered down or erased by the courts and politicians. For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1991 limits the amount of damages which can be awarded women who are *intentionally* discriminated against by employers. White House campaigns and court rulings have undermined early affirmative action victories. Progress on comparable worth has been stalled by courts which have resisted the pay equity concept that workers should receive equal pay for jobs which are not identical but are comparable in terms of training, responsibilities, and so on.

Women’s frustrations with working within the two major parties poured out during a workshop at the 1989 National NOW Conference. Leading activists in the National Organization for Women described many years spent in election campaign committees for politicians who used their energies and skills to win offices, and then ignored or betrayed women’s needs. The national conference adopted a *Declaration of Women’s Political Independence* and an Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century which constituted a basic program covering a broad range of issues.

NOW formed the Commission for Responsive Democracy to explore possibilities for a new party. The commission held a series

of public hearings during 1990 and 1991, and received testimony from over 500 people including activists from many different struggles and organizations. The commission recommended that NOW provide leadership together with other constituencies to establish a new independent political party. The National NOW Board endorsed the commission’s new party resolution, and the recommendation will be taken up at the 1992 National NOW Conference.

A brochure is now being distributed soliciting memberships and supporters for New Party, USA. The brochure explains:

The attacks on affirmative action, equal opportunity, the environment, education, health care, the homeless, the poor are increasing as the political season heats up. . . . The Supreme Court stands ready to take legal abortion away from women *this year*. And we are slipping further and further behind as the economy continues to falter. . . . As both parties remain silent, the S&L and banking scandals rage, the ranks of the homeless swell and the rape of the environment escalates. Only a new party can stand up on behalf of the future because it does not have to defend the mistakes of the past. . . . We need your help and your contributions to turn the vision of our new party into a reality.

These statements show why the Fourth Internationalist Tendency has supported NOW’s new party initiative from the very beginning: because it helped expose the failures and betrayals of the two major parties; because it helped educate about the need for a new independent political party; because it projected a program in the interests of working people and oppressed groupings; and, because it helped build bridges between feminists, unionists, people of color, and activists in a variety of social struggles.

At the same time, the FIT has recognized continuing confusions, contradictions, and weaknesses in this development. Leading figures in New Party, USA continue to be involved in fundraising and campaigning for candidates in the two major parties. For example, Ellie Smeal and Dolores Huerta are officers for the Fund for the Feminist Majority which sent out a letter in January urging support for the Feminization of Power Campaign 1992. The goal is: “to inspire record-breaking numbers of feminists to run and dramatically increase the numbers of women in public office.” The letter explains: “. . . it will be these new women officeholders who will generate the long-term change necessary for women to reach full equality in this society.” The same kinds of statements are made in materials published by NOW — including letters signed by NOW President Patricia Ireland, another member of the working group which launched New Party, USA.

There is an obvious contradiction between calling for a new party and pouring energies and monies into 1992 campaigns for women running on Democratic or Republican tickets. The concept of a “feminization of power” reinforces the idea that simply electing more females will result in significant gains, and encourages illusions that the two-party system can serve women’s needs.

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency will continue to present our concepts about how to achieve genuine independent political action. And we will continue to support the new party initiative as a means of maintaining the momentum toward a decisive break with parties serving the interests of the ruling class.

The African American Struggle and Political Action

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency’s support for independent political action by African Americans is rooted in our concept of the combined revolution in the United States. The transformation of U.S. society will begin with a working class revolution against capitalist exploitation combined with a revolution by oppressed nationalities for liberation and self-determination. Blacks are not the only oppressed national minority in the United States but this

report will focus on political action by African Americans because of a specific development taking place at this time.

As a superexploited section of working people, and as a super-oppressed minority in U.S. society, African Americans play a vanguard role in social, economic, and political struggles. There have been repeated attempts over the past 30 years to use the political process in the fight for Black liberation—some attempts were pursued within a major party (like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party) and other efforts were outside of the two major parties (like the Michigan Freedom Now Party). The departure of significant numbers of Blacks from the Democratic Party will knock away one of the most substantial props holding up the party as a major political force. Although Democratic Party politicians are dependent on the support of Blacks and even though the Republican Party is wooing African American voters, major party politicians have produced meager results for Black communities. Half of all African American children in the U.S. today live under poverty conditions. The unemployment rate for Blacks is twice as high as for whites. Over one-third of Black families in the South live in poverty. The death rate for Black infants is two times the rate for white babies.

No matter what basic necessity is studied—housing, health care, education—the overwhelming majority of African Americans remain in the lowest economic and social levels of U. S. society. This situation has not been improved by the election of more Black mayors, state legislators, or U.S. congressional members. These Black politicians are captives of the Democratic and Republican party machines, and are unable to win substantial reforms or to make over either of the parties—even if those were their original intentions. The crisis of Black leadership today is expressed in its resistance to taking the only path to genuine liberation, the only path to improvements in the quality of life for African Americans: the path of independent political action in its broadest sense and electoral action independent of the two major parties.

At the present time, the presidential campaign of Ron Daniels is the only nationally significant independent political activity being carried out by Blacks. Daniels, who had been a deputy campaign manager for Jesse Jackson's 1988 presidential effort, now presents a strong contrast to Jackson's attempts to keep Blacks within the Democratic Party. Daniels is organizing a campaign with a special focus on the demands and needs of African Americans, and with the perspective of building a coalition including all people of color, women, and working people.

Although Daniels has been a longtime activist, he is not a familiar figure to Black communities around the country. He is speaking to meetings in cities scattered across the U.S., and has received modest initial support from some grassroots activists, Black nationalists, environmentalists, Black ministers, unionists, and feminists. Some local campaign committees have been established. His campaign is still in a formative stage but it has already shown its potential to present the basic concept of independent political action, to raise programmatic demands which express the needs of working people and oppressed groups, and to encourage interaction between various social struggles.

The majority of the FIT National Organizing Committee, at its November 1991 plenum, adopted two motions regarding the Ron Daniels Campaign for a New Tomorrow. The first encouraged FIT members to participate in the campaign, and to help build it in order to promote both Black and working class independent political action. The second motion recommended that the FIT national conference approve giving critical support to the Daniels Campaign for a New Tomorrow.

What will it mean to give critical support?

It means we can say: Yes, we support Daniels's message to labor: "Break the monopoly of the two-party system. . . . 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." [*Labor Notes*, May 1991]

Yes, we support Daniels's effort to "Utilize an independent presidential campaign as a vehicle for massive political education on the contradictions in the U. S. political-economy; to mobilize and organize the unregistered and the unemployed; to ignite a voter revolt and a mass movement with the vision, capacity and confidence to fight for power and governance." [Leaflet for Ron Daniels for President 1992]

Yes, we agree with many of Daniels's platform demands, including: "Fight for the ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION based on race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. COMPLETE EQUALITY FOR WOMEN and protection of reproductive rights for women (the right to choose to have an abortion) . . . full employment with decent jobs with good wages and benefits . . . a Housing Bill of Rights to make affordable housing accessible to all. . . protection of workers' rights to organize and maintain unions. . . . Increased investment of resources to guarantee a QUALITY, EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL . . . RESPECT FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY AND TREATY RIGHTS OF NATIVE AMERICANS; economic restoration and economic justice for all Native American peoples. . . . respect for the right of self-determination of all peoples and nations . . . withdrawal of all U.S. troops from foreign soil; complete nuclear disarmament." [Leaflet with framework for platform]

Yes, we support the intention to build a basis for political action beyond the 1992 election. [Leaflet with goals and objectives]

Giving critical support to Daniels's presidential campaign means participating in petition campaigns to put his name on state ballots, being involved in local campaign committees for Daniels, telling people to vote for him, circulating campaign literature, and helping his campaign efforts in a variety of ways.

Giving critical support also means the FIT can say: No, we do not agree with your platform plank to "reduce military spending by at least 50%." The FIT can explain why that is not appropriate, and can propose transitional demands such as: Use the military budget for a public works program with full employment at union wages; build homes, schools, and hospitals—not bombs. The FIT can point out inconsistencies in Daniels's statements about the Democratic Party, and why these contradictory views undermine the call for a break with the two major parties and water down the perspectives for genuine independent political action.

Critical support does not prevent the FIT from expressing concerns about the one-person decision making which has characterized the Campaign for a New Tomorrow. We can help construct effective democratically structured rank-and-file campaign committees, and we can encourage democratic procedures for policy making, platform development, and other aspects of the campaign.

The amount and intensity of our criticisms depend on how critical the issues are and on how the campaign develops. The resources we put into supporting the campaign depend on the character of its activities and positions as well as on our own capabilities. There is no preordained formula for setting the ratio of criticism to support.

The recommendation to give critical support does not hamper the FIT's ability to present its political analyses and program. Our involvement in the Daniels presidential campaign is in keeping with our activist orientation toward social struggles and our understanding of the importance of promoting independent political action.

FIT Welcomes Motion Toward Independent Political Action

Our positive approach to Labor Party Advocates, to the NOW new party initiative, and to Ron Daniels's presidential campaign

is based on our appreciation of the central role of independent political action in the process which will culminate in the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society. We see an independent political party as a vital organizational form to mobilize massive struggles — not just during election campaigns but in an ongoing fashion. There is no guarantee that these current developments will grow into that kind of party. The FIT is not asking for warranties, and we're not demanding perfection. For the first time in many, many years significant steps are being taken to break with the twin parties of capitalism and to move in the direction of independent class struggle politics. This is an exciting development which we support and we want to be a part of and we intend to promote. □

The national conference delegates approved four motions following discussion of this report on independent political action. The motions were:

- to approve the general line of the report;
- to continue our support of and participation in Labor Party Advocates;
- to continue our support of the new party initiative launched by the National Organization for Women, and to be part of the development of that initiative;
- to participate in and give critical support to the campaign of Ron Daniels for U.S. president, and to be involved in and give critical support to the Campaign for a New Tomorrow.

Conference on Black Independent Politics Held in D.C.

by Claire M. Cohen

The National Emergency Conference on Black Independent Politics was held at the Howard Inn Hotel in Washington, D.C., on February 21 through 23, 1992. Ninety-two people, all African Americans, attended. The conference was called by a recently formed group calling itself the National Committee on Black Independent Politics, consisting of the following: Dr. Bob Law, committee chair, host of the nationally syndicated radio talk show "Night Talk"; Janice Graham, founder, Our Common Ground Organization, West Palm Beach, Florida; Ron Daniels, independent presidential candidate, 1992, founder, Project New Tomorrow; Dr. Gwendolyn Patton, program field director, Southern Rainbow Education Project (SREP); Damu Smith, co-facilitator, National African American Network, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Jemadari Kamara, dean, Center for Public and Community Service, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Judy Claude, executive director, Bread and Roses Foundation, Philadelphia; Jitu Weusi, African Americans United for Political Power, New York City; Bob Starks, Black Political Task Force, Chicago; Kathy Flewellen, co-facilitator, National African American Network, Washington, D.C.

There were a number of positive aspects to this conference. First is the fact that it was held at all, and modestly successful in terms of numerical turnout, is an indication of an initial revival of interest in the building of Black-led independent politics in the wider African American community beyond Black revolutionaries. Second, those newcomers to activism that I talked to at the conference expressed a clear, un-

ambivalent stand on building independent politics and making a break with the Democratic Party. Indeed, some expressed disappointment that the conference did not have a stronger approach to independent party building. The majority of the conference had a strong negative reaction to a presentation by Howard University professor Ron Walters, in which he tried to make the case for why African American politicians and leaders should stay with the Democratic Party and stated that the great majority of Blacks are still solid Democrats. Every single person who spoke during the hour discussion period emphatically disagreed with Dr. Walters's perspective, speaking for independent party building and running independent candidates at all levels. In the end, the conference did endorse the Ron Daniels for President Campaign.

An international political platform was adopted, which strongly supports Cuba without romanticizing it. It also supports the right of peoples in third world countries, such as Cuba, to decide for themselves what kind of political system they want. It strongly condemns imperialist intervention everywhere, especially United States imperialism, for any reason, even if seemingly humanitarian on the surface. It calls for the Black activist community to educate African Americans on the role U.S. military intervention plays in propping up international capitalism at the expense of devastating third world peoples, and why it is never in the interests of the Black community to support such interventions. It points out that despite the legal overturning of apartheid, the battle for freedom in

South Africa is far from over, and stressed the need for the African American masses to express their solidarity with third world struggles, especially those of the African and Palestinian peoples.

On the negative side, however, none of the conference organizers, other than Daniels himself, spoke out on the Daniels campaign during formal sessions, even in the workshop on political empowerment. Second, although there were no Democratic Party officials or politicians at the conference, as far as I could tell, many of those who made up the conference committee seemed to have some kind of connection with that party. In addition, few revolutionary-minded Black activists were in attendance. (There was one representative each from the New African Voices Alliance in Philadelphia, a member of Black Workers for Justice, and a few others, including two people from the Socialist Workers Party.) The conference was poorly organized. In the workshop on political empowerment, during the morning session that I attended, independent politics was talked about only in a vague and abstract way, and the Daniels campaign was not discussed. Finally, there was no formal discussion on how to build independent political parties, locally or nationally, or how to support independent candidates.

It is hard to see how this particular "National Committee on Black Independent Politics" will be able to go anywhere unless it drastically changes its perspectives or personnel. The Daniels campaign has called for a progressive convention in August or September of this year. It is possible that a real National Committee on Black Independent Politics might emerge out of that. □

March 6, 1992

Struggles for Women's Liberation: An International Perspective

by Carol McAllister

This is a slightly edited version of Carol McAllister's talk delivered at a Fourth Internationalist Tendency educational conference held in Pittsburgh last July.

Although I'm giving the presentation by myself I feel as if a lot of other people, particularly a lot of other women, are here with me and have contributed to this. I wanted to acknowledge that before I begin. The most important are some of the women in the other sections of the Fourth International throughout the world whom I met and had a chance to talk with; also women around the world, both here in the United States in different communities and in places like Malaysia who have shared their lives and their experiences with me, and also my students, one of whom is here this morning, whom I learn a lot from when I teach and who have also written papers on some of the very subjects that I'm going to be talking about. I want to acknowledge that debt.

Activism and Resistance

In Malaysia on the floor of multinational factories owned by American or Japanese companies, it is very common for a woman looking through a microscope, doing tedious, eye-straining work, suddenly to see—or we might say, think she sees—a ghost and to become possessed by this spirit. The possession travels up and down the assembly line, as women en masse cry out against the immediate abuses that factory managers and foremen are imposing on them. Sometimes they go as far as to cry out that the factory should not be there at all, that it has been built on sacred ground and has no right to be in their society. Other younger women who are being groomed, in their minds and in their families' minds, not to work on the assembly line but to work as technicians for higher pay, and are going to boarding schools, also experience the same phenomenon, which becomes a mass phenomenon. In both cases, if the attacks are widespread enough, if they recur frequently enough, the factory or the school has to be closed. It's essentially what we would call a strike. Traditional healers have to be brought in to cleanse the premises. If this happens repeatedly it can sometimes force a change in actual working conditions in the factory.

In Bolivia recently, in response to increasing impoverishment, including serious hunger and malnutrition, women have organized themselves to set up what they call "Mothers' Clubs." The Mothers' Clubs are essentially self-help organizations to organize the distribution of food and other items and also to carry out training programs for women to make them more self-sufficient. This is described in an interesting study by anthropologist June Nash. She visited two areas where these Mothers' Clubs were set up. In one area the club is attached to the Catholic church, and the women participating in it became very dependent on the church and interpreted their own experiences filtering them through the church's ideology. When they were asked what the cause of the problems was they said, "It's our fault, because of our self-centeredness." To them the solution was through religion and also through dependence on the church, on the state, and also on the patriarchal family, which is symbolized by the male Trinity.

In another area of Bolivia, a nearby area where there had been a long history of union organizing, union struggles, very militant struggles, particularly among miners and their families, women organized a similar club. But their discussions took a different turn. There they said the problem is the government, and what they've done to us, and the international debt crisis, and the solution is not the church, and the solution is not even the elections, but the solution is class struggle and self-organization.

One of my students wrote a paper this past term on Palestinian women in the Intifada, which I found very interesting and important. In it she talks about how women have played a very central role in the recent uprising in the last couple of years. At first women who were active in the Intifada were given two labels: they were either called "active housewives," which meant women who were essentially housewives but a little more active, or "mothers of martyrs," kind of taking traditional roles and using these as the symbols for women's participation. But as women's

participation went on in the struggle, in many cases even leading to involvement in the armed struggle, their participation came into conflict with their traditional female role, and a struggle evolved around that, until women began to say things like, "we can't grow strong if half of us stay at home." They began to think about their role as women as well as their role in the political struggle.

Most recently, however, there is a fundamentalist reaction to all of this, and women are being harassed and in some cases violently attacked if they are not, for example, wearing the Islamic veil and behaving in a restricted way that this particular current thinks is appropriate for female roles. Women, however, are resisting this, and asking the revolutionary forces as a whole to support them. It's an ongoing struggle that is not yet resolved.

In the United States last night we heard a representative of the Black Workers for Justice. My first encounter with Black Workers for Justice was through the women in that organization, through the singing group Fruits of Labor, a kind of cultural expression of Black nationalism and of the women's participation in that, through a visit to Pittsburgh of another member of Black Workers for Justice, Shafia Imbalia, who talked about how on International Women's Day they organize speak-outs, where women get up and talk about their own experiences. She explained the importance of this for consciousness-raising and for political organizing. And finally, one of the most famous members of Black Workers for Justice, Ina Mae Best, a woman who through her involvement in the union organizing efforts in her textile factory, has now been fired from her job. There is a national campaign to protest this.

Finally, I attended last weekend the national convention of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in New York City. One thing that happened at that convention was a workshop on the proposal for a new party, outside and in opposition to the Democratic and Republican parties. This all began two

years ago in 1989, when there was a workshop called "Who's Invited to the Party?" Initially the focus of the workshop seemed to be on how we can reform the Democratic Party, in particular. But at that workshop the rank-and-file members of NOW over and over again came up to the podium, told about their experiences working within the Democratic Party, how they were burned, how they were used and betrayed over and over again, how they were sick and tired of this. They wanted something new. There was a call to move toward forming a new party, and a commission was set up to explore this question.

[For recent developments on the NOW new party proposal see the article "Independent Political Action and Social Struggles in the United States," page 14 of this issue.]

Diversity and Connection

These observations, different as they are, lead to several questions. One question is, what is the relationship between the struggle for women's liberation—i.e., the feminist movement—and women's participation in more general struggles for economic and social change? The second question is, what are the connections on the one hand and the divergences on the other among women and feminist movements in different sectors of the world today? How can and should these movements relate to each other? And third, under what conditions are women most likely to engage in struggles for economic and social change, and what factors encourage these struggles to develop in both a revolutionary socialist and a feminist direction?

I think there are three things that are important in terms of how I'm coming at this whole question. The first is that I think we must learn to recognize women in all sectors of the world as actors or activists, not just passive victims. Claire [Cohen] touched on this a little bit last night in terms of the African American struggle: we must see not only what has happened to Black people, having been oppressed, but how they have struggled for a long time. The same thing is true of women. We must get rid of this idea that women are simply victims. Yes, we are victimized, but we also act. We resist, and we need to see that and recognize that and explore that.

Secondly—and this one gets a little more complicated—I think we must become more sensitive to the tremendous diversity among women's experiences around the world, and therefore the diversity of their perspectives, how they see things and articulate their oppression and their resistance. There is a tremendous variation from society to society, depending on the history of the society and depending on the par-

ticular place of the society in the present international order. But also within a society—within our own certainly, but within every other one—there is also diversity, especially based on class and racial and ethnic differences. That's why the word in the title of this session is "struggles," plural. But at the same time that we are being sensitized to diversity, I think we also need to recognize and explore the links and the connections among these different experiences and responses of women.

Third, I think we need to deepen our understanding of the profound impact of international and national economic and political developments on women's lives. This has two components. One thing is to recognize that women's experiences, just like men's, are affected and shaped by the overall changes in political economy, and must be analyzed in that framework. I think there's often a misconception, even within our own ranks, that men are the actors out there in the public sphere, and the big changes in world economy and in political developments directly affect men, but that they affect women only secondarily, in a manner that is filtered through the domestic sphere. This is completely inaccurate. These things affect women just as much, just as directly. We need to understand that and look at women's experiences not separate from but as part of the major transformations occurring in the world today.

The other part of it, though, is that the way world developments may affect women are not necessarily identical to the way they affect men. There are class differences in how capitalist restructuring affects people, but there are also gender differences. In fact, gender, just like class, is sometimes an explicit component of the manipulation and the maneuvering that is done by the capitalist class, sometimes it is also a central aspect of how workers are responding. So we need to understand not just how these developments affect the working class as a whole, including women in that working class, but how in particular they affect women, if we're going to understand women's experiences and women's form of response and resistance.

Changes in the Global Economic Framework

My focus in this presentation is going to be on struggles for women's liberation in the Western imperialist countries, especially the United States, which is the case I know best, and in the so-called third world, the semicolonial countries. This obviously leaves out some major areas of the world, which I am just not going to be able to address, in part because of my own lack of information and in part because I don't

have time. I'm not going to say a lot about Western Europe; unfortunately, I'm not going to say a lot about our neighbor to the north, Canada. I'm not going to say a lot about a very important sector, which is Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the newly de-Stalinized countries. There are very important things happening with women in these countries in terms of women's struggles, but I'm not going to comment on them. And, of course, in this exploration I will concentrate on the experiences and perspectives of the women in the laboring classes.

I want to begin by briefly discussing two recent developments in the international capitalist economy and a series of what I call crises that I think these developments have generated, crises that have particular effects on women's experiences and consciousness. Then I'm going to go on and draw out some general implications of these developments and crises in regard to emerging struggles for women's liberation, hopefully providing both a sense of the connection and the diversity of women's experiences in third world and imperialist countries.

The first development that I think is very important is the increasing internationalization of production and consumption. Some people call this the "global assembly line" in terms of production, and in terms of consumption, the "global supermarket." Both of these processes very much affect women. The first way they affect women is through proletarianizing them, in many cases, very deeply and very rapidly, by drawing women into the wage workforce to a degree that has never been experienced before in world history. In the third world this is most dramatic, through the development of export-processing industries owned and controlled by U.S., European, and Japanese capitalists. *Maquiladoras* along the Mexican-U.S. border are the most popular example, but these kinds of set-ups exist not only in Mexico but in many places in Latin America, in Southeast Asia, on the Pacific Rim, and are now being introduced into Africa and the Middle East as well. There are also, of course, the newly industrializing countries, particularly the "Four Tigers" in north-northeast Asia, (Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore). In all of these cases, the industrial transformation is built very much on the back of women's and young women's labor. Also, women who are still working in the agricultural sector find themselves being much more proletarianized, tending to work for wages rather than, or sometimes in addition to, working on their own subsistence plots. So, there's a fundamental change in women's work.

In the United States we see not an identical but a linked kind of development. We know that women have entered the workforce since World War II in increasing numbers. The largest group of women now entering the wage workforce are women with young children. Part of this is a similar development to what we see in the third world: certain kinds of factories, like electronics factories, are operating inside the U.S. in many ways just like they do in the free trade zones in the third world relying on the labor of women, particularly immigrant women, coming from third world countries. There's also a shift in the U.S. labor force, with more and more people now working in the service, clerical, and sales sector, and fewer and fewer in the manufacturing sector. Many of these workers are women. And then there are women working again in the agricultural sector, not as family farmers, but again as a proletarianized workforce, both in the fields and more commonly in food processing, such as the poultry workers that Black Workers for Justice are trying to organize.

The second effect of this increasing internationalization of production and consumption is the growing dependence of people on commodities that are distributed through the competitive world market, for even very basic provisions, food, clothing, housing, for their families. This especially impacts on women, because women are those most responsible for organizing consumption in their families. I think what this is linked to is actually a general commodification of life and culture which has other implications that I'll talk about later.

Third, the final effect of the increasing internationalization of production and consumption, the "global assembly line" and the "global supermarket," is the growing environmental degradation that is occurring both here and abroad. That impacts on women's health and also on women's work—as they lose land, as they have less access to fuel, as they have less access to water, as they work in situations where there are toxic chemicals that affect them day to day.

The other major development in the international capitalist economy that impacts on women is the debt crisis, the rising debt. There has been much focus on the third world, the third world debt and the IMF-imposed so-called structural adjustment policies, but I think all of this is paralleled (though the same terminology is not used to talk about it) by a kind of debt in both the public and private sector of the U.S. and other imperialist countries, and similar structural adjustment programs. What this leads to is a rise in unemployment and a decline in the availability of basic necessities. Here, I think, you begin to see some of the contradictions, how we get caught

between a rock and a hard place. People in general, and women in particular, have become more dependent on wage work and more dependent on commodities to meet basic needs—while at the very same time, there's less possibility of finding wage work and finding a good job and also less possibility to buy what you need on the market.

As a result of rising debts and structural adjustment policies, there are curtailments in social services, health and welfare programs, social security programs, and education programs that are especially used by women and their dependent children, and a return to privatization of much of the public sector, which affects women both as workers and as service users. And finally, in the third world, I would argue that there is a kind of recolonization of the local economy and society going on. We see this in things such as the debt-equity swap agreements, which allow third world countries to retire some of their debt by essentially turning over hard capital, industry, and land to first world banks and companies, or through things such as the so-called Free Trade Agreement that is being proposed among Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Three Crises Facing Women

Now, I think that these two developments taken together and all their various ramifications have led to a series of crises that have particular implications for women's situation in the third world and in the Western imperialist countries. The word "crisis" has two meanings in the way I'm using it here. We can see a crisis as a moment of very extreme danger, the usual meaning of the term "crisis," a serious danger situation. But sometimes when we talk about revolutionary crises, we view a crisis as a moment involving great possibilities and potential for change, including revolutionary change. The three crises that we'll examine here have this kind of dual character, particularly affecting women.

The first is the crisis of work. This has a couple of components. While women in both the third world and the imperialist countries are becoming more and more involved and dependent on wage work, at the same time there is a contradiction in that their position in the wage workforce remains very segregated and marginalized. Women throughout the world remain relegated to the lowest paid, least secure, and often most hazardous jobs in the wage work sector. And we're also seeing actually new forms of marginalization, here in the U.S. and in Western Europe and also in the third world, with the rise of temporary employment, part-time work, return to the

"putting out" system or the "home work" system.

Secondly, the crisis of work also involves a crisis of how women combine the different forms of work that we are expected to do. This, I think, is a real problem. It is sometimes known as the double day, sometimes it ought to be called the triple day. In other words, what we're talking about in the U.S. is combining wage work, working outside the home for eight, ten, sometimes more hours a day, and then coming home and having a lot of work to do in terms of housework and in terms of childcare. In the third world it takes on another dimension, wage work outside the home, often at very long hours, work inside the home without any appliances to help, and then often subsistence production in the field to continue to produce subsistence food and crops to supplement the very inadequate wage work. Although men sometimes find themselves caught in these dilemmas, too, this is very much more the experience of women, of trying to combine these new and old forms of work. Women are extremely overworked in the world today on a scale assuming crisis proportions.

The second crisis is the crisis of reproduction. The first piece of this is very related to what I just talked about in terms of the crisis of work. That is, the difficulty of maintaining the existing system of social reproduction that depends on the unpaid labor in the home both to maintain the present workforce and to produce new workers, the coming generation of workers. It depends on women's unpaid labor in the home at the same time that women are being drawn out of the home to act as a cheap labor force in the wage work system. We all know about this, but I think we haven't given enough attention to how important this structural change is in our society. Another piece of it, too, of course is the decline of things such as family networks and the rise of single-parent families. I think that without increasing socialization of traditional domestic work and social responsibility for childcare and care of other dependent persons, for example, people who are sick or the frail elderly, the system is actually getting to the point of a potential collapse. This is just not workable any more.

Many women in our own society, particularly African American women, have been dealing with this problem throughout the whole history of our country. What's happened now is that the problem has deepened, and it is affecting broader and broader layers of people. I don't want you to have the misconception that women didn't previously work outside the home in the third world. Almost throughout the whole history of these societies women

worked outside the home, but work was organized by the household, not by the employer. So women were more able to combine different kinds of work that they were doing. That is no longer the case. We have the same kind of crisis of social reproduction.

There is also a crisis of biological reproduction and of simple basic survival. Ernest Mandel, in his recent U.S. tour, kept citing a statistic on the death rate of children from diseases that can be either prevented or cured: within four years the number of children who die from diseases that can be prevented will exceed the number of people who died in World War II. And although a couple of decades ago we saw a drop in infant mortality in many countries throughout the world, we're now seeing a rise in it, including within our own society. Pittsburgh, it has been reported, may be the city with the highest Black infant mortality rate in the United States. This is in a city that is known for its high-tech medical care. The overall infant mortality rate in the United States, in fact ranks very high among industrialized countries. Even when children survive there are often problems. I went to a workshop at the NOW convention on a discussion of women working in the *maquiladora* industries on the Mexican-U.S. border, and it is reported that in one area there is a tremendous number of children being born with Downs Syndrome, and it's related to the toxic chemicals that are being used in that plant. So there's an impact on our very basic reproduction, as people, as human beings.

There's also the whole struggle over who is going to control women's reproductive potential, ourselves or others? And this involves new attempts here and elsewhere in the world to restrict women's access to and control over contraception and abortion. It includes continued sterilization abuse, involving sterilization of women against their will both in the third world and particularly women of color in the United States. And it includes other more complicated manipulations of women's reproductive lives, around new reproductive technologies, questions of surrogate motherhood, questions of using contraceptives such as Norplant, which could all be advantageous if controlled by women, but very dangerous and exploitative if controlled by others and imposed on us. Then there are state policies controlling women's reproduction. I just wanted to mention one, in Singapore. It's a very interesting and dramatic case, because it is very class based. The present policy in Singapore encourages well educated women, professional women, to return home and to have more children. Each child they have gets them more and more

family benefits, better housing, more family allowance for that child, and better education for that child, reinforcing the class structure. Working class women who have more children are penalized with each new child: more services are withdrawn; their children go to less desirable schools. It is a very conscious manipulation. But I think that's just a more blatant example of what goes on more subtly elsewhere, including here.

The third crisis generated by these changes in the world economy is a crisis of culture and identity. I think this results from both a general and growing commodification of daily life and of personal relationships, and also from the continuing reinforcement of imperialist and racist domination, against the third world as a whole, and also against people of color and ethnic minorities, especially immigrant minorities, in the United States and other Western imperialist countries. People's resistance to this is usually exhibited in some form of nationalist and/or working class struggle, often having a progressive character in terms of resisting neocolonial and capitalist hegemony.

But in terms of the cultural content of such struggle, we see some radically divergent trends. I was reminded of this yesterday in the discussion around the national question in the Soviet Union when someone said that it depends on where you reach back into history and what you pick from that whole cultural repertoire. This shapes the manner in which your present struggle is symbolized and articulated.

One trend that we see throughout the world is the attempted revival of cultural elements that represent more collective and democratic traditions, which become important in the resistance to colonialism and capitalism. In many cases because of women's important role in both biological and social reproduction, it's been women who all these years have kept these traditions alive, often in a sort of underground and low-key manner, and are therefore very important in their present-day revival and resurgence. Often many of those traditions symbolize and reflect women's great power and autonomy in an earlier period, particularly a precolonial and precapitalist period of these groups' history. The first example I told you about, spirit possession, I think is such an example of a traditional form of resistance now being applied on the floors of multinational factories. Also in Malaysia there are other forms of this, such as a traditional form of feasting that provides a way for people to resist the market economy, to share and redistribute goods outside of that economy, to carry on politics that doesn't get you thrown in jail. In both of these women play a key role in organizing and keeping it all alive, keeping

it all going. I also think—this is an aside, but I think it's an important aside—that a parallel kind of progressive cultural resurgence in the United States, and in other countries as well, can be found in some of the cultural feminist movements, especially lesbian movements, involving an attempt to create a different kind of feminist or lesbian culture.

On the other hand there's also another trend that we're probably even more aware of, which is the cultural revival taking a much more reactionary turn, and calling for the "revival," or I would argue the *creation* of fundamentalist religious or philosophical orientations that, rather than celebrating women's power and autonomy, further restricts and eliminates women's power and self-determination. This results in the celebration and strengthening of patriarchal ideas and practices that may be attributed to traditional culture, but that are likely to have emerged or been reinforced under colonial rule or in the transition to a capitalist economy. In other words, they are not necessarily really traditional to that society. Of course, we are most cognizant of the numerous movements for Islamic fundamentalism in this regard. Some of our information about these movements is accurate, and some of it suffers from serious ethnocentric distortions. But there's also the recent rise of various forms of Christian fundamentalism in both North America and Latin America. Other patriarchal religious and philosophical traditions, such as Hinduism and Confucianism, appear to be following suit. It's interesting to me that both of these trends—progressive and reactionary—put women in the center in terms of cultural "revival." In each of these cases women are very important. The images and roles of women are central to defining a whole culture's identity. But the result is very different, depending on what cultural elements are being picked out of the whole cultural repertoire, and on who's doing the picking: is it women themselves—are they playing a role in this—or is it being imposed upon them?

Future Developments

These three crises, of work, of reproduction, of culture, their causes and their outcomes, create a very complex, dynamic, and critical situation for women at this conjuncture of world history. For the rest of my talk, I want to draw out some of the most important implications of the situation for the development of struggles for women's liberation throughout the world, particularly the third world and the Western imperialist countries today. In doing so I will try to relate this analysis to several of the key concepts and the lessons

derived from our own experiences as revolutionary socialists. I'm going particularly to talk about four implications.

The first one is what I would call the increasing feminization of the labor movement. This is perhaps the most direct effect of the changes in the international capitalist economy that I talked about before. Essentially what's happening is that increasing numbers of women are involved in both the organized trade-union movement and in the broader labor movement that also includes struggles among unorganized workers. From *maquiladora* workers in Mexico, to labor struggles and resistance to the government in South Korea, to strikes of clerical and public service workers in the United States, we see this important development. In the United States still a very small percentage of the labor force—about 17 percent—is unionized, and only about 14-15 percent of women are unionized. It's still a small percentage of our population. But the most rapidly growing sector of the labor movement is among women and oppressed nationalities. Particularly we see this in the increased organization of the clerical workers in private enterprises and in the public service sector. I think this is very important, that the most successful union drives are involving these groups of people.

In the third world, while women workers may remain largely unorganized, they play a leading role in struggles of workers, both against employers and against the state. We're also seeing the self-organization of many women who aren't particularly wage workers, such as domestic street vendors and even prostitutes. One thing this means, simply, is that the labor movement has more women in it and that in itself changes the character of the labor movement and makes it more possible for women through the labor movement—more than we have been able in the past—to raise our demands, to raise issues particularly affecting women.

But there's another aspect of this that I think is also very important, which is what seems to be happening along with and maybe as a result of this feminization of the labor movement. There is a broadening out of the forms and issues of working class struggle. It seems to me that it's becoming more like what we experienced here in the United States in the 1930s, and I mean that in a couple of ways. One is that struggles are moving not away from the workplace but are moving from *just* the workplace to the broader community. And also there is a tendency to raise issues that go far beyond issues of wages and hours and working conditions within the workplace, to raise issues of general social and political import, including feminist demands, for example, for pay equity, for childcare

policies, for national health insurance, and for national health policies. Some of the issues are survival issues; some of the issues are specific women's issues. Some of the issues challenge general state policies, even the legitimacy of states and governments in many cases. I think what all of this does is to create the possibilities for the pursuit of women's specific demands within the broader labor movement to a much more heightened degree, and also it encourages the development of more general revolutionary socialist consciousness through a process in which for the first time in human history women and their demands are playing a leading role. This relates to the whole question of the importance of women's liberation for the development of the working class and socialist movements and vice versa, the importance of a broad working class struggle and socialist movement for pursuing the demands for women's liberation.

The second implication of these crises and these changes in the world for women is that they create greater possibilities for increased awareness of the intersection of gender and class oppression. Working class women are oppressed both on the basis of their class position and on the basis of their gender. Many women also experience oppression by virtue of their race or ethnicity, or the particular location of their society in an international capitalist system. While the intersection of these different forms of oppression is a very "hot topic" among academic feminists and socialists, women in the real world, in communities both in the U.S. and in the third world, are learning about this firsthand. But here I think we see a bit of a divergence between the experience of women in the third world and the experience of women at least in the organized women's movement in the United States. This is being discussed seriously in the Fourth International. Our comrades in Latin America talk a lot about how women in Latin America tend to be very aware of class and national oppression and organize quite readily around basic class issues and against imperialist intervention in their society. But, until recently, they had little consciousness around their oppression specifically as women.

However, recently, there has begun to be an important shift in this. Part of it comes about because women, though still organizing primarily around basic economic and human rights issues, such as the question of the Disappeared, are organizing in all-women's groups. The result of this is interesting, though contradictory. Sometimes the women organized as women articulate that they're organizing as mothers, that they're organizing as housewives, and this tends to reinforce traditional gender

roles, traditional gender categories. However, the simple fact remains that they are increasingly active, are organizing together, are working together, are talking together, and are also exploring why they are in all-women's groups. The economic crisis and the imperialist crisis have particular effects on women who are developing this understanding and this consciousness, an awareness of themselves as a gender, as women, and who combine that with their understanding of themselves as a class. The example I gave before of the Mothers' Clubs in Bolivia is an interesting example of that. It shows the different contexts in which this consciousness may or may not occur. In fact, our comrades in Latin America argued very strongly that this consciousness—in other words, moving from an awareness of class to an awareness of class and gender and their intersection—will not happen automatically. It must be consciously advanced both by distinctively feminist and by larger revolutionary currents.

In the United States we almost have the opposite problem, I think, in that women in the organized women's movement—I'm thinking of groups like NOW—are very aware of gender oppression but tend to have an insufficient awareness of class and also racial oppression, and particularly of their mutual interaction. However, because of the economic situation facing the majority of women in the U.S., even among so-called "middle-class" women, and because so many of the attacks on women's rights, particularly reproductive rights, have a very strong class basis, women in the organized women's movement are beginning slowly but surely to develop an understanding of class and racial oppression. Again, however, just as our comrades in Latin America told us, development of such an awareness will not occur automatically. It will require explicit development of such consciousness through the organization of special groups, such as the Women of Color for Reproductive Freedom group in Pittsburgh and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. It will also require the raising of ideas such as NOW's proposal for a new party. We need to be raising the idea of the need for allies in this struggle for a new party, and where those allies can be found, in the labor movement, in the Black liberation movement. Or, trying to move the consciousness that people in NOW have, a very strong consciousness that they've been used and betrayed by the Democratic and Republican parties, in a more class-conscious direction. They don't understand in whose class interests those parties really act. We can work on this. And we must work on developing a broader revolutionary socialist movement that itself con-

sistently ties together issues of gender, class, and race.

Both developments, the movement from class consciousness to class and gender consciousness, and the movement from gender consciousness to gender and class consciousness, are important not only for achieving women's liberation but for strengthening the working class and socialist movements as a whole.

Third, these crises will lead to the transformation of some issues of the women's movement that previously had a reformist character into demands with more of a transitional dynamic. What I'm suggesting is that there are certain demands that people see as reasonable, as just, things we ought to have, and things that we absolutely need right now, but that also have the quality of challenging the basic capitalist relations and also the world imperialist order. In some cases these demands cannot be fully realized without a fundamental change, without an overturn of capitalism. These demands are called "transitional" because they start from now—they aren't visionary things for the future—they begin where people are at, what makes sense to them right now, and move people's consciousness and move the struggle toward a much more revolutionary socialist direction. I think the reason that this has happened, and particularly in terms of the women's movement, is some of the fundamental contradictions that I talked about earlier, one of them being that women are increasingly drawn into the workforce as a cheap pool of labor at the same time we're expected to be free laborers, maintaining and reproducing the labor force at home. This is a contradiction that isn't being worked out, and that is creating not just a social crisis but a personal crisis for many women throughout the world.

Among such transitional demands are responses to so-called "family issues": childcare policies, parental leave policies, national health insurance, social security measures. These are especially prominent in the United States at the moment. Throughout the world there are demands around such survival issues, particularly in urban struggles among third world countries, demands for food and availability of food, demands for work, demands for restoration of social security programs, and the demand for retirement of the third world debt. All of these have a transitional character. We in our movement

have a history of trying to develop this orientation, and we need to do this more in terms of the kinds of demands that are rising out of the feminist movement.

We need to look at some of the issues of pay equity and comparable worth and also some issues in the reproductive rights movement in this light as well, to see if they have a transitional character. Can we develop them in that way? Finally, even developments such as NOW members' call for a new party, especially if linked with similar developments in the labor and Black liberation movements, also have the potential to challenge the capitalist system.

The final point: these crises in the present conjuncture have created the possibility for a truly international and internationalist feminism. I think this is extremely significant and important. On the most elementary level, what's happening is that women are beginning to have increasingly common experiences throughout the world. To be sure, this doesn't include all classes, but broader and broader layers of women within a society are beginning to be affected by these very same crises. This creates the possibility for what we might call "solidarity, not charity," across international lines, including across lines between imperialist countries and third world countries. Throughout the third world the possibilities are really ripe in the whole struggle for cultural identity and the resurgence of nationalist struggles for women to create a feminism that is shaped in the image of their own cultural values and perspectives, on their own terms. This may involve a combination of reviving and celebrating cultural traditions that are supportive of women's power and autonomy, resisting the imposition of Western forms of sexual exploitation, and challenging the patriarchal traditions of their own society to shape them in light of women's own needs and desires. This all must be determined by women as they participate actively in the broader struggle for social change and for national liberation.

In the United States and other Western imperialist countries, I think there is a greater possibility than there has been in the past for a much more inclusive feminism, that gives voice to all women, including women of color, working class women, and poor women, focusing on their needs and demands, and also framing the struggle for women's liberation in countries like the United States within an

internationalist perspective. One example of this: when the first moves toward the gulf war happened last summer, the National Organization for Women, much to my surprise, came out with a very strong antiwar statement and resolution, which they stuck to all the way through. It was still being reiterated at the NOW conference. It seems to me this shows a considerable growth in the understanding of the linkages of women's struggles for liberation here and the role of the U.S. in preventing women's liberation, in oppressing women elsewhere—through war and the things that lead to war and that come from war. It shows an ability, in the face of a lot of ruling class pressure, to act, and to hold on to that internationalist understanding.

It is, however, only through attention to the necessity of an overall revolutionary transformation in society and economy—including a transformation in the relationship between imperialist and third world countries—to achieve women's liberation that we can lay an adequate foundation for a truly united and internationalist struggle. It is thus encouraging that increasing layers of feminists understand that there needs to be a lot more fundamental structural change if we are to win even basic reforms and hold onto them. They may not call that revolution, but that's where it's going. Among revolutionary activists, both here and elsewhere, there also needs to be an increased understanding of the importance of women's liberation and the feminist struggle as a key component, not a side effect, not a secondary effect, not a thing to be done afterward, but a central component, right in the middle, of the revolutionary process and struggle. We need to deepen that understanding, and what it really means in nitty-gritty terms, more fully. I think these developments in experience and consciousness create the possibility, not only for a convergence between the feminist and the revolutionary socialist movements here, but also among revolutionary feminist movements throughout the world. At present, we should honestly recognize that we are far from the realization of this goal of truly international or internationally conscious feminism. It will not be achieved without a good deal of struggle on both an ideological and political plane. However, it seems to me that this is something we can now actually envision, and that in itself is a big step forward. □

Harry DeBoer, American Trotskyist 1905-1992

by David Riehle

Over two hundred friends, comrades, and admirers of Harry DeBoer met at the Teamster Building in St. Paul February 16 to commemorate the life of this veteran socialist and hero of the 1934 Teamster strikes, who died at age 86 on New Year's Day, 1992. The meeting was chaired by longtime friend and collaborator Randy Furst.

The fact that this meeting could be held at a Teamsters hall said a lot about the recent changes in the million-plus member organization whose transformation into a giant industrial union was initiated by the victory of the two Minneapolis truckdrivers' strikes in 1934 and the subsequent organization of the over-the-road drivers in the 11-state North Central region. In 1941 eighteen leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Minneapolis Teamster union, Harry DeBoer among them, were indicted and convicted by the Roosevelt administration in the first prosecution under the witch-hunting Smith Act. For 50 years after that, proletarian revolutionaries like Harry were a special anathema to the Teamster bureaucracy in Minneapolis, in effect installed by the FBI while the authentic leaders were railroaded to Sandstone federal prison.

The change was exemplified by the message to the memorial meeting from Ron Carey, the newly elected general president of the Teamsters, and the presence of Bill Urman, newly elected Teamsters vice president on the Carey slate from this area, as well as Thomas Keegel, the head of Minneapolis Teamsters Local 544, the historic center of the great Teamster struggles in the 1930s. There may have been some element of making icons out of those who are safely out of the way to be found in the presence of the head of Local 544, whose retransformation into a fighting democratic rank-and-file organization is still on the agenda, but there was no doubting the sincerity of the tribute from Carey and Urman.

In Harry's last years he had worked closely with militant union activists in the Minnesota chapter of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, who have been the backbone of the effort to elect Carey and helped set in motion the transformation of some key Teamster locals in this area.

Harry was capable of inspiring great awe and affection in those who knew him and knew about his record in the labor and socialist movements. In spite of his exclusion from the Teamsters after his release from Sandstone, he was in constant touch over the years with radicals, socialists, labor historians, and rank-and-file workers who heard about him and found their way to his secondhand truck repair shop to seek his advice.

The speakers at the memorial meeting exemplified this, including labor activist and historian Peter Rachleff, United Autoworkers leader Tom Laney, Hotel and Restaurant Employees secretary treasurer Dan Kuschke, and Cindy Burke, a well-known socialist and rail union leader who herself had just come under the same kind of red-baiting frame-up that was directed against the Minneapolis Trotskyists in 1941. Also present to pay tribute to Harry's life was Bill Ness, a lifelong Teamster and the son of Henry Ness, one of the two strikers who were killed by Minneapolis police on Bloody Friday.

However, no one exemplified the irrepressible and militant spirit unleashed by the great Minneapolis labor struggles of the 1930s and still reverberating throughout the living labor movement more than Harry's close friend, comrade, and fellow fighter throughout those historic times, Shaun (Jack) Maloney, retired president of International Longshoremens and Warehousemen's Union Local 19 in Seattle, Washington. Jack was at Harry's side on July 20, 1934, when they were both shot at by the Minneapolis cops and Harry was severely wounded. During World War II Jack made his way out to Seattle where he became and remained a militant, class-conscious leader of the maritime and longshore labor movements.

Maloney, the keynote speaker, started right out by chastising the local labor paper, the *Union Advocate*, for promoting the "boy wonder" Senator Paul Wellstone last April immediately after he had voted to break the national rail strike, and it got even better from there. One could hardly conceive of a better tribute to Harry than this example of the militant and unrepentant past penetrating into the present. (To their

credit, however, the *Advocate* did run a full-page tribute to Harry's life.)

The St. Paul *Pioneer Press* reported on the meeting in an article headed "Labor faithful remember union man Harry DeBoer":

The afternoon air in the Teamsters hall billowed with cigarette smoke and sentiment Sunday as union faithful gathered to honor the memory—and perhaps resurrect a bit of the unyielding nature—of radical Twin Cities labor leader Harry DeBoer.

The article concludes with:

Jack Maloney of Seattle, DeBoer's cohort in the 1934 strike and fellow true believer for more than 60 years, was among the parade of speakers Sunday. Like DeBoer a radical to the end and decrying his opposition to "capitalist war," Maloney blasted liberal U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone's support of legislation last summer compelling striking railroad workers to return to work.

Harry never retired from the class struggle, as long as he was capable of breathing and thinking. He was expelled in 1982 from the Socialist Workers Party, along with his lifelong comrade Jake Cooper, for opposing the abandonment of the party's Trotskyist program. They were founding members of the party in 1938, and members of the Trotskyist movement earlier.

In 1985/86 both Harry and Jake traveled to Austin, Minnesota, to give support to Local P-9's strike against the Hormel Company, and were there on the picket line when the National Guard came in. I remember attending a meeting of the P-9 executive board in that period with Harry, where strike strategies were explored with him and the strike leaders. We were reintroduced to the historic ties between the Austin local and the Minneapolis Teamsters in the 1930s. It was plain the old-timers in the union knew who Harry was. We even found that the legacy of the Austin Trotskyists was alive and present in the union.

Harry remained a militant opponent of the two capitalist parties, and spent his last years helping to reintroduce the labor party idea into the union movement. Another speaker at the memorial was Dick Mitchell, former business manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 110, a well-known St. Paul trade unionist and a leader of Labor Party Advocates in this area.

Harry's long life was too rich and varied to encompass in this brief article. Although he was an old-timer to most of his recent contemporaries, he always saw himself as a link in the chain of indigenous class-con-

scious and revolutionary tradition in the American working class. He inspired many by his heroism, his implacable hatred of oppression and capitalism, and his humanity and humor. He was proud of the fact that he never had used violence against a fellow worker, although Harry was a proletarian warrior of legendary proportions. Even Jake Cooper was in awe of him. Well into old age Harry was nobody to trifle with. There were echoes in Harry of that great American revolutionary anthem, the Battle Hymn of the Republic—"he has trampled out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored."

Harry had spent several years as a professional boxer in traveling carnivals around the Midwest, taking on all comers and never being knocked down. But he always preached to rank-and-file strikers enraged by the presence of scabs that they had to remember that most scabs were just desperate and uninformed workers and that it was necessary to try to *convince* them of where their real class interest lay.

No, Harry said, it wasn't baseball bats that won the 1934 strikes, it was the masses of unemployed workers who were won over to the vision of a militant workers movement and became some of the best fighters for the union.

Harry and Jack were probably the two closest collaborators with Farrell Dobbs outside his family in the preparation of the four Teamster books, which preserve in great detail the legacy and lesson of Minneapolis.*

Harry, Jack, Farrell, Jake, and many others of their generation in their turn had been educated and inspired by a previous generation of proletarian revolutionaries—Carl Skoglund, Ray Dunne, Oscar Coover, and Jim Cannon.

Harry made and retained a special friendship with Jim Cannon, whom he met for the first time when Cannon came to Minneapolis in 1934. Harry said he had been worried that perhaps Cannon might be a big shot blowhard like some of the Communist Party leaders he was familiar with, but Cannon set him at ease right away. "Well, what kind of trouble did you get into now?" Cannon jokingly asked Carl Skoglund, as they began their first meeting over strike strategy. Harry relaxed—"We knew Jim was one of us" he often told us. "Jim was a worker."

Harry had traveled to Mexico in the late 1930s and met with Trotsky, whose high regard for the Minneapolis Trotskyists was

second to none. According to Trotsky's secretary, Jean Van Heijenoort, "the only two Trotskyite groups about which I heard him express unqualified admiration were the Charleroi group in Belgium, made up of coal miners, and the Minneapolis group, made up of Teamsters." Trotsky's warmth and humanity toward his comrades deeply impressed Harry, who often described the experience as akin to meeting his grandfather. That this great revolutionary, under most adverse conditions, would still take time to inquire with sincere interest into the well being and immediate needs of his comrades told Harry that Trotsky, too, was "one of us."

Cannon, of course, was the preeminent spokesman for the Trotskyist defendants in the 1941 trial, skillfully popularizing revolutionary ideas in courtroom testimony (preserved in the book *Socialism on Trial*). After the trial and conviction, Harry related, at one point they found themselves all seated silently in the receiving room at Sandstone prison, waiting to be processed. High spirits were not in the air. Harry turned to Jim and said, "You and your big mouth." That punctured the gloom.

Harry was born of immigrant Dutch parents in Northwestern Minnesota. His father was an active socialist and supporter of the Industrial Workers of the World. "When I was 12 years old I was already listening to discussions with the Wobblies," Harry reported in a 1988 interview. "That's how I got to understand the labor movement and I got interested in it."

In a message to the meeting from Gladys McKenzie, a leader of the newly organized AFSCME local of 3,200 clerical workers at the University of Minnesota, she included a blowup of a picture she said had sat above her desk throughout the many months of organizing. The picture, a news photo taken during the Smith Act trial, shows four defendants, Teamster organizers and comrades Grant Dunne, Ed Palmquist, and Ray Rainbolt seated in an automobile with Harry at the wheel, all leaning forward and laughing in a sort of half-defiant and half-derisive way at the news hound behind the camera.

Harry and his comrades laughed at adversity, and fought relentlessly, and through their *collective* example, as socialists, workers, and human beings of the highest integrity and historic optimism, passed the torch to the succeeding generations.

In his message to the meeting Frank Lovell said:

The irony of life is epitomized in Harry's long illness and death just as his struggle and dreams to transform the Teamsters union into a democratic

working class organization that can defend the interests of all the poor and downtrodden in this country seem possible. What he so long hoped for may be about to happen.

The many thousands of workers who never knew or heard of Harry DeBoer will not know their debt to him. But we who knew him will remain forever grateful for his struggles in solidarity with the working class—in large things and small—to create a better world for all working people. I and my comrades in the Trotskyist movement today salute everything he did and stood for.

In this time in history, when all the terrible betrayals in the name of human progress and socialism are being brought forward in sickening detail, Harry and his comrades left something pure and unsullied for future generations of workers in the example of the lives they led, through great successes and crushing defeats, and in their unswerving perseverance under the most varied conditions carrying the struggle forward. There is no better tribute to Harry, and to them all, than the one Farrell Dobbs placed at the beginning of *Teamster Rebellion*:

To the men and women of General Drivers Local 574 who gave me unshakable confidence in the working class.

Harry is survived by his wife Pauline, also a veteran of the movement, and two children. □

Message to Harry DeBoer Memorial Meeting

Harry DeBoer was a hero to thousands of young radical workers and students in the 1930s. We who remember or have read about the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes are well aware of the part Harry played in those dramatic events. We look to a new resurgence of the working class that will bring fighters like him to leadership positions in the struggles for working class control of government in this country.

As we meet in the seventh national conference of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency of U.S. Trotskyists, we envision the unification of the U.S. labor movement—one of Harry's dreams. And we pause in our deliberations to pay tribute to him and his contributions to our cause.

The FIT

*The four Teamster books by Farrell Dobbs are: *Teamster Rebellion*, *Teamster Power*, *Teamster Politics*, *Teamster Bureaucracy*, distributed by Pathfinder Press, New York.

Inaugural Address of Ron Carey

Following is the inaugural address of Ron Carey, general president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, delivered in Washington, D.C., February 1, 1992, outside the monumental headquarters building of the union. The audience was an estimated 2,500, mostly rank-and-file Teamsters, some job-seekers, and a sprinkling of old-guard officials. This occasion marks the beginning of a new era in Teamster union history, and perhaps in the history of unionism in America.

Carey ended his talk with an invitation to his audience to come inside and explore what working Teamsters have commonly called "the marble palace," and begin the process of membership control of union affairs. One of those in attendance described the Carey inauguration as "part of the record from which judgments will be made." We publish Carey's inaugural address for this reason, as an important part of the record.

To my family who supported me in a long and difficult campaign, I thank you. To the supporters and our new general executive board who courageously challenged the powers of this union to bring about a new day, I thank you. To President McCarthy, who has shown our transition team every courtesy and cooperation in helping launch the new Teamsters, I thank you. And most of all to the members whose votes made history and served notice to the world that this union is putting its past behind us and becoming a stronger, more effective voice for all working people, I thank you.

Today—we begin the work of building the new Teamsters—and our mission is to give this union back to our members. Our first important task is to restore the pride of our membership and the respect of people everywhere. We've lived through a period where Teamsters couldn't hold their heads high because of the constant news reports about corruption, mob influence, and the lavish lifestyles of our leaders. Our image problem has destroyed our credibility and hurt us in organizing campaigns, in legislative efforts, and in political strength. But changing our image will take a lot more than public relations and press releases—the real work starts in this union and it starts now!

Over the last few weeks, we have taken a close look at the finances of this organization. On Monday morning, I will begin my work as president by setting an example with the following measures:

The Teamster limousine, the condominium in Puerto Rico, the luxury jets—they're all going on the market next week.

But I want to go even further than that so that you'll know that I'm not asking anything of anyone that I'm not demanding of myself. I am reducing my own salary. And if you read the fine print in our constitution, you'll find an outrageous provision allowing the general president and a companion to vacation anywhere, anytime, for any amount of time, at Teamster expense. To that special perk, I say, no thank you. That is *not* how your hard-earned money is going to be spent in the new Teamsters.

Within the first two months of my term we are going to do some things that have never been done. We are going to establish personnel policies to ensure that employees of this union receive fair pay and that they earn it. It's time our members got their money's worth from their union.

We are going to establish financial procedures to make sure this union bids its purchases, travels economically, and gives its members the best services for the dues they pay.

We have begun a careful examination of IBT headquarters, to identify wasteful duplication, unnecessary expenses, and to consider ways to reorganize this union. I assure you no stone will be left unturned in our effort to make this organization the most professional, effective, and respected union in the labor movement today.

Our pride will never be returned to us as long as people think it takes the government of the United States looking over our shoulder to keep us honest. We must prove to the world that we are ready and able to take care of our own problems, without outside help.

Within the coming weeks, I will be announcing the creation of a new ethics committee within our union. Our ethics committee, which will be supported by its own staff, will investigate misconduct and corruption wherever they exist and recommend disciplinary actions.

I pledge to you today that I will use the full power of this office to rid this union of mob influence and win this battle once and for all.

The vast majority of Teamster leaders are hardworking and honest trade unionists who are fighting to provide a better life for members. This is a union in which a greedy few have tarnished the reputation of the many—and through our election, hundreds of thousands of Teamster members have said that it is not going to happen again.

Cleaning up this union is important. But it is only our first step. Our members and their families need better contracts. The entire labor movement has been losing ground at the bargaining table. If we want to change that record, we need new strategies to strengthen our position. We need to do a better job of telling the public our side of the story. We need to do a better job of using our economic clout to win a better life for our members.

As I campaigned throughout North America, I heard the horror stories about representation. Across our union, many of our grievance panels are dominated by employers and are shortchanging Teamster members. There are many ways to restore fairness to this process—mandatory arbitration—grievance panels that provide rank-and-file participation and independent hearing officers.

In the coming months, we will take a hard look at the quality of representation we provide. And deliver hard recommendations to improve it. As I speak to you today, a wide-ranging review of Teamster pensions and health and welfare funds is already under way. Make no mistake about it, we have got to remove our 1930s thinking cap, and develop new ideas and strategies to improve the management of our funds. Our commitment will be to work with the 200 Teamster funds, to share information, coordinate strategies, pool resources, and use our collective strength to deliver better benefits for the men and women we represent.

The new Teamsters are going to be a stronger, more effective force in politics in the United States and Canada. No longer will we support candidates who are enemies of organized labor. We will be in the forefront of the battle to pass national health insurance. We'll fight for legislation to stop employers from firing

(Continued on inside back cover)

Lenin's Heritage

by Ernest Mandel

The following was written for the centenary of Lenin's birth and originally appeared in Intercontinental Press, April 20, 1970.

Lenin's life work is a totality in which theory and practice cannot be separated from each other. Lenin himself stated: without revolutionary theory, no revolutionary practice. No serious person today could deny the historic significance of the socialist October revolution or the creation of the Soviet state: these events have indelibly marked the history of our century—and of the century to come.

But the theoretical insight which made these great events possible is as important, if not more important, from the long-term point of view than these events themselves. For that insight will in the long run make possible a worldwide extension of the October revolution, an endeavor which temporarily failed during the lifetime of Lenin and Trotsky themselves.

Seven main pillars constitute the body of Leninism, an extension of Marxism in the imperialist epoch. These seven main parts of Leninism continue to hold true today as they did forty-six years ago when Lenin died—nay, their full significance is only coming to be understood today, to larger and larger masses of workers and poor peasants, revolutionary intellectuals and students, in several important parts of the world.

1. Imperialism: Last Stage of Capitalism

The theory of *imperialism as the supreme phase of capitalism* in which free competition leads to the creation of great monopolies (trusts, holdings, cartels, combines; we would add today: multinational corporations), that is to say, the domination of a tiny handful of finance groups over the economy and society of the imperialist countries and their colonial and semicolonial satellites.

Imperialism doesn't mean necessarily the end of economic growth, a final stop to the growth of the productive forces. But it means that capitalism has fulfilled its historically progressive task of the creation of the world market and of the introduction of an international division of labor, and that an epoch of structural crisis of the capitalist world economy is opened.

This structural crisis, while coinciding sometimes with deep conjunctural crises of overproduction (as it did in 1929-33 and during the subsequent so-called "recessions"), is marked by two decisively reactionary traits: in the underdeveloped parts of the world it impedes those very processes of national liberation and unification, of agrarian emancipation and industrialization, which the great bourgeois revolutions of the past realized in the West.

In the imperialist countries themselves, it is marked by a growing and frightful parasitism (large-scale waste of material and human resources, not only through wars, unemployment, overcapacity, etc., but also through massive increases of the selling and distribution costs, systematic degrading of the quality of products, threats against the ecologic equilibrium, and threats against the very physical survival of mankind).

2. Revolutionary Character of Our Epoch

The theory of the *revolutionary character of our epoch*, of the "up-to-dateness" of socialist revolution, which flows directly from

the structural crisis of world capitalism. While that crisis is permanent (although knowing ups and downs, periods of temporary stabilization and periods of great instability of capitalism in key countries and continents), there are from Lenin's point of view no "permanent revolutionary situations": if the working class does not profit from a favorable combination of circumstances to conquer power, a defeat of the revolution creates preconditions for a temporary comeback of the capitalist class.

The socialist world revolution, which has been on the agenda since World War I, takes the form of a *process*. The chain of countries subjugated by imperialist capitalism breaks first in its weakest links (these can be underdeveloped countries like Russia and China, but there is no law in Lenin's thought which says that they *have* to be such).

For Lenin, while the workers of each country where a favorable revolutionary situation occurs should by all means seize power, they should consider this as a means to strengthen the revolutionary forces in neighboring countries and on a world scale, and should consider themselves always a detachment of the world revolutionary communist movement.

3. The Party

The theory of the *revolutionary vanguard party*, which is based upon a correct, dialectic understanding of the interrelationship between objective mass struggles and subjective class consciousness under capitalism.

Defending and expanding Marx's and Engels's concepts of historical and dialectical materialism, Lenin rejected the mechanistic and naive belief that class struggle in itself gives to the exploited class—cut off from all the main sources of science—the power to spontaneously reconstruct Marxist theory, the highest product of centuries of intellectual and scientific developments of mankind.

Marxist theory, socialist consciousness, must be introduced from the outside in the class struggle, by conscious efforts of a revolutionary vanguard. Without such a constant effort, the overwhelming majority of the working class remains subjected to the prevailing influence of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. But without a successful fusion with a large working class vanguard, the revolutionary minority is not yet a party; it is only an attempt to build such a party.

Lenin rejected all ideas of self-proclaimed vanguards. For him the proof of the pudding was in the eating, i.e., in the capacity of the vanguard to actually lead large working class struggles. And the supreme test of the party—the leadership in the struggle for power—presupposes the conquest of the conscious support by the majority of the working class and the toiling masses.

4. Workers' Councils

The theory of *workers' councils* (soviets) as *power instruments of the dictatorship of the proletariat* and as higher forms of democracy than parliamentary bourgeois democracy. Lenin believed, as Marx did, that between capitalism and socialism there is a transition period called the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. No more than Marx did Lenin believe that you could overthrow capitalism along the road of gradual reforms, parliamentary elections, or legislation in the framework of bourgeois institutions. The victory of socialist revolution presupposes not only collective ownership of the means of production but also destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus—i.e., of the apparatus of repression directed against the great mass of the people.

The essence of a workers' state, i.e., of a dictatorship of the proletariat, is for Lenin not any "totalitarian" nightmare of the 1984 type, but, as described in *State and Revolution*, a democratically centralized system of freely elected workers' councils, which

exercise simultaneously all legislative and executive functions as the Paris Commune had done.

For Lenin, dictatorship of the proletariat means *more* actual democratic freedoms for the workers and toiling masses than they enjoy under any bourgeois-democratic regime. It means full and unfettered enjoyment of freedom of the press, freedom of association and of demonstration for all and every group of toilers (and not only for a single party), as well as the material means to enjoy these freedoms.

Even for the bourgeois classes Lenin did not in principle rule out the right to enjoy democratic liberties under the dictatorship of the proletariat, but neither was he ready to guarantee this to them. In his opinion this was a matter of relationship of forces, i.e., of the strength and violence of counterrevolutionary opposition to the victorious working class.

As for the leading role of the party inside the Soviet institutions, this was for Lenin strictly a matter of political persuasion, of capacity to win the allegiance of the majority, and not at all a matter of systematic repression of all contending tendencies (Lenin admitted the necessity of such repression only under exceptional circumstances of civil war, when most of those tendencies were involved in open military violence against the revolutionary government).

5. *The International*

The theory of *internationalism*, the International being the only organizational form for the proletarian vanguard and for the workers' states congruent with the needs of world economy and toiling mankind, produced by imperialism. That's why Lenin proclaims the need for a Third International the very day he recognizes the Second International is dead. That's why he remained till his end a passionate defender of the right of self-determination of all nations. That is why he proclaimed the necessity of the *independence* of the Communist International from the Soviet state: no maneuver of that state (e.g., concluding a truce with German imperialism; making an alliance with the Kemalist state in Turkey, etc.) should imply any change of orientation by the Communist International from its line of preparing, favoring, and assuring the best possible conditions for victory of proletarian revolutionary struggles everywhere.

For the same reason he opposed any attempt at Russification of the non-Russian Soviet republics and considered the attitude of communists in imperialist countries towards national liberation movements in the countries oppressed by their own bourgeoisie as a keystone of internationalism.

6. *Role of the Party*

The theory of the *political centralization, through the revolutionary vanguard party, of all progressive democratic mass demands and mass movements into a single flow towards a socialist revolution*. While Lenin developed that concept at a time when he did not yet accept the idea of the Russian revolution growing uninterruptedly over into a socialist revolution, he maintained it and extended it during the founding years of the Communist International when he based all his thinking upon the strategy towards socialist revolution.

This concept flows from a dialectical understanding of the stratification of the working class and the toiling masses into layers with different levels of consciousness and with different immediate interests, which have all to be united (inasmuch as they don't stand for counterrevolutionary causes) in order to make a mass revolution possible.

It also flows from a deep understanding of the antidemocratic and reactionary nature of imperialism, which not only does deny the majority of mankind such elementary rights as those of national independence and dignity but which tends also to erode in the imperialist countries themselves the very conquests of the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the past.

But contrary to opportunists of all kinds, Lenin's concept of uniting the struggle for democratic and the struggle for transitional demands did not mean in any way a dismissal or a subordination of the socialist goal to the wishes or prejudices of temporary "allies"; on the contrary, it was based on the firm belief that only the victorious socialist revolution could bring about a final and definite triumph of these democratic goals.

7. *Democratic Centralism*

The theory of the *inner-party regime based upon democratic centralism*, which does not only mean majority rule, the need of minorities to apply in practice majority decisions but also full democratic rights of discussion inside the party, the right to form tendencies, to submit collective platforms to party congresses, to have them discussed on equal footing with the leadership proposals before congresses, to full and impartial information of the membership about political differences which crop up in the organization, etc., etc.

This was the way the Bolshevik party and the Communist International functioned in Lenin's lifetime. It is indicative of the gulf which separates Leninism from the bureaucratic centralism applied today in the USSR and Eastern Europe that the hesitant attempt of the Czechoslovak CP leadership to return in 1968 to some of these Leninist norms in a new draft statute for the Fourteenth Congress of the party was seized upon furiously as a sign of "rightist antisocialist tendencies" inside that party by Brezhnev and company.

Already before Lenin's death, many if not all of these basic tenets of Leninism were beginning to be challenged by the new Stalinist leadership inside the CPSU and the Communist International. Lenin's last struggle was a desperate attempt to stop this perversion of his doctrine. This revisionism was, obviously, not a purely ideological phenomenon. It reflected a deep-going social shift inside Russian postrevolutionary society and inside the CPSU.

On the basis of the growing passivity of the Russian working class—resulting from the backwardness of the country and from the temporary retreat of world revolution—a privileged bureaucratic layer monopolized the exercise of power and the administration of the state and the economy. It ruthlessly subordinated the party into an apparatus defending its own particular interests, if necessary against the historic and immediate interests of the world revolution and of the Russian working class itself.

Stalinism was only the ideological expression of the rise of that parasitic caste. It is the very antitheses of Leninism, the proletarian doctrine of socialist revolution.

Lenin's Heritage

The Left Opposition around Trotsky, and later the Fourth International, maintained and enriched the heritage of Leninism in the years of reaction and of receding world revolution. These are now superseded again by a new epoch of rising world revolution.

A growing number of workers, revolutionary students and intellectuals, and poor peasants understand the validity of Leninism and participate in the building of new revolutionary parties on a worldwide basis. The future belongs to Leninism. That's why it belongs to the Fourth International. □

Where Now for Socialism?

by Michael Löwy

Reprinted from *Monthly Review*, May 1991.

1

One cannot die before being born. Communism is not dead, it is not yet born. The same applies to socialism. What the Western media call “the Communist states” and the Eastern official ideology “really existing socialism” were neither. At best, one could call them “non-capitalist societies,” where private property in the main means of production had been abolished.

2

What the conservative or liberal media call “the death of communism” is in fact the crisis of the authoritarian and bureaucratic system of development first established in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s on the ashes of the Russian Revolution. It is a model which had already been criticized and rejected in the name of Marxism by a whole generation of radicals, including Leon Trotsky and Christian Rakovsky, Isaac Deutscher and Abraham Leon, Heinrich Brandler and Willy Muenzenberg, Victor Serge and Andre Breton. What is moribund and dying in Eastern Europe is not “Communism” but its bureaucratic caricature: the monopoly of power by the *nomenklatura*.

3

This crisis is unfolding in the USSR in a more contradictory form. After several decades of bureaucratic stagnation, a vigorous process of demolition of the Stalinist heritage took place, whose moving force was the dialectic between reforms from above—promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev and his collaborators—and the democratic movement from below—the Popular Fronts, and socialist, ecological, and reform clubs.

The politics of reform implemented by the new Soviet leadership is a mixed blessing, combining a remarkable political opening (*glasnost*) with a market-oriented economic restructuring (*perestroika*) which endangers some of the traditional rights of workers.

4

In the political and social struggle which is developing in the USSR and the other non-capitalist societies, both inside the *nomenklatura* and in civil society, several alternatives confront each other in the search for a way out of the Stalinist model. The contending projects are:

- the authoritarian political system combined with significant market-oriented reforms—the Deng Xiaoping “Chinese” model;
- the relative democratization of political structures and the introduction of market mechanisms in the economic management—the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania;
- a democratization according to the Western model and the generalization of the market economy—that is, the restoration of capitalism—as in other Eastern European countries;

- the thorough democratization of political power and a socialist/democratic planning of the economy—the program of radical trade unionists and socialist oppositionists, not implemented anywhere as of yet.

5

There is not much room for optimism about the outcome of the struggle in the short run. In most of the East European countries, the radical movements which struggle for the socialist/democratic alternative or claim some link to the Marxist tradition have been defeated, even those with a history of bitter opposition to the bureaucratic system.

A common element explains this setback: for forty years, socialism and Marxism had been identified with the Stalinist bureaucratic system.

That had been the only point of agreement between propagandists of the Eastern governments and their Western antagonists, between Radio Prague and Radio Free Europe—that these states are “socialist,” that their leaders are implementing Marxist politics.

Confronted with such a unanimous and formidable consensus, what weight could the opinion of a small group of Marxist dissidents have?

Nobody would make Descartes responsible for the French colonial wars, nor Jesus for the Inquisition, even less Thomas Jefferson for the U.S. invasion of Vietnam. But it has been made to seem that Karl Marx built the Berlin Wall and nominated Ceaucescu leader of the Romanian Communist Party.

6

There is no reason to accept the contention, presented as a kind of self-evident truth by establishment economists, neo-liberal ideologues, Western political leaders, and mainstream editorialists that the capitalist market economy and the profit system are the only possible alternative to the failed totalitarian command economy—a system where a small group of (incompetent) technocrats decided what to do with the economy and despotically imposed their decisions on the society.

There is another road, the democratic planning of the economy by the society, where the people decide, after a pluralist and open debate, the main economic choices, the priorities of investment, the general lines of economic policy—that is, socialist democracy.

7

The dogma, implied by many reformist economists and leaders of Eastern countries, is that there is a direct and logical link between market-oriented economic reforms and political democracy, economic “freedom” and political freedom.

Deng Xiaoping’s model is a good counter-example, as are the many third world countries which combine neo-liberal economies with extremely authoritarian forms of state power.

Moreover, the recent Chinese experience shows that although market-oriented reforms can temporarily solve certain difficulties created by bureaucratic centralized planning, it generates new and equally serious problems: unemployment, rural exodus, corruption, inflation, growing social inequalities, decline in social services, growth of criminality, subordination of the economy to the multinational banks.

8

The crimes committed in the name of communism and socialism by the bureaucratic regimes—from the bloody purges of the 1930s to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968—have deeply injured the very idea of a socialist future and reinforced bourgeois ideology among large sections of the population, both in the East and West.

But the aspirations for a free and egalitarian society, for social and economic democracy, for self-administration and control from below, are deeply rooted among significant parts of the working class and youth, both in the East and West.

From this standpoint, socialism and communism, not as an “existing” state, but as a program which has inspired emancipatory struggles of the victims of capitalism and imperialism for a century and a half will remain alive as long as exploitation and oppression exist.

9

Understandably, in the present situation of crisis, one can find among many leftists a deep state of ideological confusion, disarray, and perplexity. Even those who are not yet ready to give away the whole Marxist heritage are preparing themselves for a retreat in good order.

The dominant tendency on the left, both East and West—with the exception of a few heretics who still believe in the need for social revolution—argues for “modernizing” Marxism, adapting it to the ruling ideas, to liberalism, to individualism, to social positivism, and above all to the market, its idols, its rituals, and its dogmas.

In this view, the failure of “really existing socialism” has its origins in the attempt of the Russian Revolution to break away (at least partially) from the model of capitalist civilization, from the world market; the modernization of Marxism would therefore imply a certain return to the canons of the Western social and economic system.

The social-democratization of several Communist parties, both in the East and West, is one of the major forms of this attempt to dilute the socialist program. What is being thrown away with the (extremely) dirty bathwater is the baby—the idea of moving beyond capitalism toward a democratically planned economy.

What are put forward in this attempt at “reconciliation with reality” (to use a venerable Hegelian formula) are not the universal values negated or perverted by Stalinism—democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, social equality, solidarity—but those publicized by Western elites—“free competition,” “free enterprise,” monetarism, market culture.

10

There is no doubt that Marxism needs to be questioned, criticized, and renewed, but this should be done exactly for the opposite reason from that given by its bourgeois critics: because its break with the productivist pattern of industrial capitalism and with the foundations of the modern bourgeois civilization was not sufficiently radical.

Marx and Marxists have often walked in the footsteps of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in presenting the

development of productive forces as the objective foundation of the revolution and as the main argument legitimating socialism.

In certain forms of vulgar Marxism, the supreme aim of the social revolution is not a fraternal and egalitarian reorganization of society, not a “utopia” with a new way of producing and living, with productive forces of a qualitatively different nature, but simply to remove those relations of production which are obstacles to the free development of productive forces.

One can hardly find in *Das Kapital*—excepting one or two phrases—any elements for understanding that the “growth of productive forces” can endanger human survival by threatening to destroy the natural environment.

As a social scientist Marx did not always transcend the mechanical model, based on the arbitrary extension to the historical sphere of the model of the natural sciences, with its laws, its determinism, its purely objective prediction, and linear development—a tendency pushed to its logical conclusions by a certain kind of Marxism, from Plekhanov to Louis Althusser.

11

The essence of Marxism is elsewhere—in the philosophy of praxis and the dialectical materialist method, in the analysis of commodity fetishism and of capitalist alienation, in the perspective of the workers’ revolutionary self-emancipation and in the utopia of a classless and stateless society. This is the reason why Marxism holds an extraordinary potential for critical and subversive thought and action.

The renewal of Marxism must start with a humanist, democratic, revolutionary, dialectical heritage to be found in Marx and his best followers, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Gramsci among others, a tradition which was defeated during the 1920s and 1930s by counterrevolution, Stalinism, and fascism.

Moreover, in order to radicalize its break with bourgeois civilization, Marxism must be able to integrate the practical and theoretical challenges raised by the ecology and feminist movements, liberation theology, and pacifism.

This requires the vision of a new civilization, which would not be just a more progressive version of the industrial capitalist system based on state-controlled development of the same productive forces, but a new way of life, based on use-value and democratic planning; renewable energies and ecological care; race and gender equality; fraternity, sorority, and international solidarity.

The present worldwide triumph of neo-liberalism and bourgeois modernization results from the impossibility of both Social Democracy and post-Stalinism to offer a significant—that is, both a radical and democratic—alternative to the world capitalist system.

12

More than ever, Marxism must be, as Marx suggested, the “ruthless criticism of all that exists.” Rejecting the modernist apologies for the established order, the realistic discourses legitimizing the capitalist market or bureaucratic despotism, Marxism represents what Bloch called the Principle of Hope, the utopia of an emancipated society.

But it has no ready-made answer to all the questions of the transition to socialism: how to combine representative and direct democracy, how to articulate democratic planning with the inevitable relics of the market, how to reconcile economic growth with ecological imperatives. Nobody can claim to have the monopoly of truth; these questions call for open and pluralistic debate in a process of mutual learning. □

Literature from a Marxist Perspective

Labor Into Art, by David Sprague Herreshoff. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1991. Hardcover, \$24.95, 170 pp.

Reviewed by Sarah M. Springer

In this book, Herreshoff attempts to analyze how five mid-nineteenth-century writers—Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Frederick Douglass, and Walt Whitman—approach the theme of work in their writings. He examines the way in which each of these authors address a basic question: “What does work do to human beings?” “To look for answers suggested by the five writers is to come upon complex, variable, and sometimes evasive responses. But the answers that scrutiny of the writing yields share at least one fundamental thought: the division of labor produces a fragmentation of personality.”

Mid-nineteenth-century America saw the rise of industrial capitalism, followed in the late nineteenth century by the collapse of slavery and the pinnacle of industrial capitalism. With these changes in the mode of production came new kinds of working conditions. The majority of workers were alienated from production by the fact that they were not involved in the decision-making process of what was or was not to be produced for their own consumption. The working class was also limited to highly routinized, monotonous work, due to the greater division of labor under industrial capitalism. This double exploitation means that workers labored long, exhausting hours at tedious, repetitive jobs over which they had little control. This is, fundamentally, the setting in which the authors Herreshoff examines wrote about the experience of work. Though known primarily (perhaps with the exception of Douglass, whose life and writing was spent promoting social justice) for their literary accomplishments, these authors were not divorced from the workaday world in which they lived; the portrayal of work in their writing was drawn from their own experience.

Herreshoff begins with Thoreau’s essays on his experiment at Walden Pond. He especially delves into Thoreau’s perspective that work should not be mindless or undertaken without consideration of its effort and outcome. Work should not just be for the sake of doing *something*; busy work to Thoreau is wasted time. Most of all, Thoreau emphasizes that labor should not be a major time consumer. Time must be made for contemplation—not only of work, but of nature and existence. In this way, Thoreau clearly sees the dehumanizing aspect of work—alienating people from their creative, inquisitive impulses. Work becomes a drudgery when it consumes people’s whole lives and leaves no time for other pursuits.

Herreshoff’s best chapter deals with his evaluation of Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. Viewing the novel from a more in-depth perspective than the usual Human Spirit (Ahab) vs. Nature (Moby-Dick), the author looks at the ways in which the ship symbolizes the new industrial factory in the U.S. He investigates the relationships and hierarchy of workers aboard the *Pequod*, how the necessary workers’ compliance (needed to fulfill Ahab’s quest) is maintained, and how working on the ship affects various workers and worker solidarity. At times, the work is dehumanizing because the hours are long and the work is hard; at others, because there is no escape from the ship—even when there is no work to do—for leisure pursuits. Work aboard the *Pequod* is seen as analogous

to the work experience of laborers in the modern industrial factory in terms of their lack of time to develop fully as human beings, and in terms of their relationship to production, other workers, and the manager.

The other strongest chapter addresses the memoirs of Frederick Douglass. In his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass discusses not only the mentality and rationalizations of slave owners, but also the process by which people who are slaves are broken to internalize the ideology of slavery. Here, Herreshoff delves into how work can be totally dehumanizing, with no redeeming qualities. There is no freedom for slaves to enjoy time not spent working, no freedom for intellectual pursuit.

Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman both express themes of work through poetry. Dickinson’s focus is primarily centered on housework, “usually something to be endured or escaped from.” But some of her poems focus on the fulfillment to be found in creative work. Whitman gives credit to workers and solidarity among workers, while often positioning himself as an observer of, rather than a participant in, the realm of manual labor. He rarely places himself in the line of duty. Instead, he is often taking his ease in the grass or on the beach from which position he can pursue his intellectual ponderings.

In his conclusion, Herreshoff tries to evaluate some of the body of literature that addresses work themes. Contrasting images of redemptive, oppressive, and liberating work are common themes in literature—from the precapitalist world through the growth and height of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism to the present day. Herreshoff is clearly interested in how the working class came to be glorified and factory work idealized in more modern literature. He draws on his own decade of experience working in industry to point out that industrial workers do not want to remain in their present condition or position. Rather, they aspire to get out of industry. “Evidences of working-class thought and action from Luddite machine-breaking through Horatio Alger dreams of individual emancipation to manifestations of antihierarchical class consciousness go to show that the industrial working class since its inception has wanted to get away from itself. It does not wish to endure, does not want class continuity, cannot bear the prospect of hereditary class status.” However, Herreshoff does not view labor as inherently dehumanizing. The conditions of work—where, how long, what kind—contribute to either its dehumanizing or uplifting effects.

This is a book to recommend for people who want to look at and learn to examine literature from a Marxist perspective. As is true with other art forms, “literature” has been divorced from the working class and is often thought of as a “highbrow” wasted pursuit of petty-bourgeois ideals and precepts. And much of it is. However, in reading Herreshoff’s exploration of the theme of how work affects human beings, I realized how often I have neglected to look for a deeper understanding or to approach literature from a Marxist, dialectical viewpoint. Herreshoff’s choice of these authors from the mid-nineteenth century attempts to establish how writers portrayed the work experience in their contemporary industrial capitalist economy. He has written an easily readable and highly interesting book. □

Looking Back . . . and Forward

Notebook of a Sixties Lawyer: An Unrepentant Memoir and Selected Writings, by Michael Steven Smith. Smyrna Press, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1992. 230 pages (cloth \$19.95, paper \$9.95; send for copies to Smyrna Press, Box 021803 GPO, Brooklyn, NY 11202).

Reviewed by Paul Le Blanc

Mike Smith's buoyant memoir—an easy read, sometimes funny, sometimes moving—is too short. He lived through many things that I wanted him to talk about more. Perhaps I'm too greedy. The product of a unique slice of history, he shares innumerable recollections, reflections, and insights about:

- growing up in Milwaukee (a city with a strong socialist tradition) Wisconsin (the home state of Senator Joe McCarthy) during the years of Cold War and witch-hunts;
- the importance of urban folk music (such as the “subversive” singing group, the Weavers), African American jazz, and Lenny Bruce to a kid growing up in a liberal Jewish middle-class home of the 1950s;
- being a student activist at the “radical” Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin in the early 1960s;
- becoming immersed in struggles against racism and war during the youth radicalization of the 1960s;
- confronting the yawning gap between *Zionism* (which he sees as an exclusive homeland for Jews at the expense of the Palestinian people) and *Judaism* (which he feels is based on “the holding of a common morality,” based on the stricture “don't do unto others what you wouldn't want done to you”);
- becoming a lawyer (in the tradition of Leonard Boudin and William Kunstler), and helping set up a law firm about which Lt. Dennis Mulaney of the Detroit Police Department's “red squad,” at the end of 1970, wrote, “There is hardly an underground newspaper, black liberation, or left wing group of any kind in Detroit that at one time or another was not represented by the law firm [of Lafferty, Reosti, Jabara, Papahkian, Stickgold, James, Smith and Sobel].”

We are offered quick little tastes of this full life—a mere 54-page memoir!—which could easily be expanded into an autobiographical banquet. On the other hand, the author also sets out a rich smorgasbord of articles, book reviews, letters, speeches, etc.: more than 150 pages on a variety of the fascinating topics—personal, cultural, political—touched on in the memoir. In addition the book has an introduction by Dan Georgakas and an afterword by Alan Wald, two thoughtful left-wing writers who offer interesting comments on what Smith recounts.

Unlike many members of his generation, Mike was not content with being an independent radical activist, nor was he satisfied with the somewhat vague “new leftism” that had characterized the early Students for a Democratic Society—and which hardened into ultra-leftism and romanticized-Stalinism among many young radicals by the late 1960s. As he threw himself into the growing movement to end the U.S. war in Vietnam, and into civil rights and antipoverty efforts, he began to develop a Marxist analysis of how the different problems are interlinked, and how they might eventually be overcome. His own explanation of his views is clear and succinct:

I was for socialism and democracy. I thought and think that economic resources should be subject to democratic control, or more broadly, people should have a voice over what fundamentally affects their lives; that human progress exists and that progress can be defined as the ever increasing understanding by humanity of the forces of nature; that humanity has progressed from its development of agriculture in the neolithic age to its vision of democratically planned production in a higher culture of the future. Basic decisions in our society are now made by relatively few and the profit motive plays out overwhelmingly. It is the cash nexus that governs all human relations. Much of this came into focus during my reading at this time.

The reading that he specifically refers to, done while an idealistic lawyer for the antipoverty VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) program, included “one of the century's great works of literature and history, Trotsky's three-volume *History of the Russian Revolution*. I also read Lenin's *What Is To Be Done* on the need for a [revolutionary socialist] party and *State and Revolution*, his theoretical underpinning for the abolishment of government, the organized suppressor of humanity.” The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) distributed such literature, as well as the writings of Malcolm X which also had a profound impact on Smith's thinking.

The late 1960s became a decisive time for him: “In Detroit, where Malcolm had been, I had the opportunity to see the black pride and black leadership he exemplified and had been writing about. The possibilities for what the Czechoslovakians called ‘socialism with a human face’ showed itself during the ‘Prague Spring’ of 1968. In France in May 1968 the student rebellion and [working class] general strike raised the possibility of revolution in an advanced capitalist country.” The SWP and its youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), had been stressing precisely these kinds of ideas. So in 1968 he joined the Trotskyist movement:

I believed the SWP had the potential of becoming a left-wing party that would offer a practical alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. I felt it was the morally right thing to do. The SWP had emerged from the 1950s small and battered, but unbowed, even if a bit sectarian. But its political banner was unstained and unsullied. The SWPers were socialists with roots in American soil that went back to the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) who had pledged solidarity forever to their fellow workers. Their founders had belonged to the left wing of the Socialist Party of Eugene V. Debs and had helped found the American Communist Party after World War I. As SWPers Fred Halstead, the great anti-Vietnam War leader whose father had been in the IWW, put it: they believed in democracy “both before and after the revolution.” They had exposed and opposed the crimes of Stalin from the beginning. They understood through the contributions of C.L.R. James (an ex-member), Trotsky, George Breitman, and others the progressive aspect of black nationalism. They had led the general strikes in Minneapolis in 1934 that helped lay the groundwork for the emergence of the CIO. The American Trotskyists had had a great influence on 1930s New York intellectuals like Mary McCarthy, Edmund Wilson, Dwight MacDonald, Phillip Rahv, Irving Howe, Louis

(Continued on inside back cover)

An Exchange Between the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action

Statement Adopted by FIT National Organizing Committee

The January 1992 issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* published a resolution "On the Unification Process" which had been adopted by the National Organizing Committee at its November 1991 plenum. The Socialist Action Political Committee strongly objects to language in the resolution which presented the following assessment: "In the case of Socialist Action the primary obstacle to fusion remains a sectarian concept of party building which prevails in their organization (the notion, borrowed from the Barnesite SWP, that the party ought to function as a monolithic faction, and that *any* disagreement, even the most minor, with the leadership of that faction constitutes a threat to the unity of the party) and their requirement that we accept this approach to 'democratic centralism' in order to fuse with them in a common organization." (See the full resolution adopted by the Socialist Action Political Committee below.)

This sentence was not intended to express any idea that Socialist Action is formally undemocratic or that it does not tolerate dissident views or organized minority tendencies within it. We do not believe that SA is "Barnesite" or "monolithic." We were trying to express our general concern that some of the organizational practices of SA which we have witnessed firsthand seem to reveal a tendency to lean much too far in the direction of overly-centralized notions of Leninist functioning. We are withdrawing this specific formulation since it is obviously the subject of a misunderstanding and an objection by the Socialist Action leadership and, therefore, gets in the way of the real discussion that needs to take place between us. We sincerely regret our choice of words.

At the same time, we cannot withdraw our genuine concerns about the organizational functioning of SA. Democracy in the revolutionary movement is not merely a question of formal statutes, nor even of "tolerating" a variety of viewpoints. What is essential is to really comprehend, and then act on, a key fact: that ideological diversity is the very lifeblood of Leninist democracy, and that dissent and a wide freedom of discussion must therefore be *welcomed* and *encouraged* by any serious working class leadership.

Because we received the resolution only three days before our national conference there was not adequate time for the leadership of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to respond in a responsible manner. During greetings presented to our national conference by the representative from Socialist Action, the delegates were called upon to repudiate the characterization of SA included in the plenum resolution, and to make this repudiation public in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*. The agenda already adopted by the delegates did not allow for sufficient time to discuss and decide this matter during the

national conference. The question was referred to the incoming National Organizing Committee for action.

On March 15, the FIT National Organizing Committee authorized publication of the above statement in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*—along with the resolution from the Socialist Action Political Committee and the preliminary response sent to the SA Political Committee by the three FIT members who had been assigned to the Parity Commission established last year when fusion discussions between SA and FIT were taking place.

Resolution Adopted by the Political Committee of Socialist Action, February 5, 1992

The January 1992 issue of *In Defense of Marxism* prints a public resolution of the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency titled "On the Unification Process." The NOC is the highest decision making body of the FIT between conventions and its resolutions present the authoritative positions of the FIT leadership.

In this resolution the FIT leadership makes the following characterization of Socialist Action:

In the case of Socialist Action the primary obstacle to fusion remains a sectarian concept of party building which prevails in their organization (the notion, borrowed from the Barnesite SWP, that the party ought to function as a monolithic faction, and that *any* disagreement, even the most minor, with the leadership of that faction constitutes a threat to the unity of the party) and their requirement that we accept this approach to "democratic centralism" in order to fuse with them in a common organization.

This is the first time we have been made aware of this position of the FIT leadership. It certainly does clarify why that leadership rejects fusion with SA! How could anyone from the Trotskyist, Marxist tradition fuse with an organization that holds the notion that "the party ought to function as a monolithic faction"? Or which holds that "*any* disagreement, even the most minor, with the leadership of that faction constitutes a threat to the unity of the party"? These are very serious charges. A monolithic party is a Stalinist party.

This newly revealed position of the FIT leadership explaining their characterization of SA was kept hidden in their briefcases this past year while they went through a charade of discussions with the SA leadership concerning a possible fusion. It demonstrates that on the part of the FIT leadership those discussions were not held in good faith since they withheld this characterization of us *from* us.

We will not dignify the false charges levelled against SA by the FIT leadership with a detailed refutation. Nor do we intend to engage in any discussion about these charges or about why we haven't stopped beating our mothers.

We reiterate that we are more than willing to seek areas of common work in the class struggle where there is agreement between our two organizations.

In Reply to Socialist Action

Political Committee, Socialist Action

San Francisco

February 12, 1992

Dear Comrades,

We have received your resolution of February 5, 1992, passed in response to the resolution "On the Unification Process" adopted at the November 1991 plenum of the FIT National Organizing Committee and published in the January 1992 issue of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*.

Your February 5 resolution inaccurately asserts that it is the Fourth Internationalist Tendency which "rejects fusion with SA" and wrongly suggests that our "newly revealed" criticisms of your organizational functioning—"explains" why we "rejected" unity. It is asserted that our unity efforts were insincere. The agitated tone of your Political Committee resolution is unfortunate, as are its inaccuracies.

It is not possible to take up all the inaccurate statements in a short letter nor to cite all the documentation and facts, but we want to make some initial corrections. We want to clarify, first of all, that the one sentence you quote (out of several paragraphs about SA) does *not* constitute "charges levelled against SA by the FIT leadership." The plenum resolution presented an *assessment* of your organizational practices based on a number of verbal and written exchanges between SA and FIT, as well as experiences involving both of our organizations. The FIT plenum resolution does not present a view which was kept "hidden in their briefcases this past year" as you stated. We said such things frankly to you—as anyone can see by reading correspondence between FIT and SA, and by reading FIT reports which were sent to you. For example, in a report by Paul Le Blanc and Evelyn Sell, written after an April 27, 1991, meeting with Jeff Mackler and Dave Cooper, there is the following passage:

FIT members had questions about the internal functioning of SA and, in particular, were very concerned about the treatment of minority groupings by both SA leadership and membership. We have been told repeatedly that FIT would have full rights of minority tendencies. That correct formal statement is contradicted by what happened at the last two SA conventions where there were strong personal attacks against minority tendencies. FITers understand that political differences arouse sharp debates—we have such exchanges at our national conferences and plenums—but our members were very disturbed about the personal nature of the remarks directed at SA minorities. Paul cited his own experiences as part of a minority within SA and the attitude he encountered: minorities were a joke, something to be ridiculed, and were not to be taken seriously.

This report by Comrades Sell and Le Blanc was sent to you *before* Socialist Action initially agreed to embark on the unity process with us. Similar concerns were expressed by Paul Le Blanc at the early October 1991 United Secretariat meeting. In his report on this, the SA representative explains Comrade Le Blanc's views as follows: "For the FIT, SA represents a version of the old SWP, including the SWP of the LTF and Jim Cannon which they think is too rigid. The FIT fears that SA may be too

centralized, too rigid in our theoretical conceptions, too inflexible in relation to our organizational norms and too intolerant of minority views." While Comrade Le Blanc never expressed any criticism of Jim Cannon's alleged "rigidity" (since such a criticism is contrary to his actual views), it is clear that the SA reporter and the SA leadership was very much aware of our critical views regarding the organizational norms of Socialist Action.

The resolution which appeared in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* was adopted by our National Organizing Committee in November, *after* you broke off the unity process, in your letter dated September 13, 1991, when you wrote: "We think it best for the time being to suspend our discussions about fusion and find ways to collaborate on practical work." We made it clear that, despite our differences over the organizational question, we hoped that the unity process would be quickly resumed, as explained in our letter of September 18: "We hope that, after further consideration, you will soon agree to embark once again on the [unity] process approved by your National Committee plenum on August 3. We are prepared to meet with your parity committee representatives at a mutually agreed-upon time as soon as possible." Our own resolution printed in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* also affirms the desirability and possibility of unity between our two organizations—although we felt that your termination of the unity exploration process had significantly set the process back.

The characterization to which you object is based on what we observed at your national gatherings and on what your official representatives said over and over again. For example, the SA representative wrote in his report on the early October United Secretariat meeting: "During my presentation Paul asked specifically why SA thought it was important that SA be the majority in a fused organization. I responded that SA had a clear political project and program and that the FIT was less clear. SA desires to build a Leninist party based on the historic programmatic acquisitions of American Trotskyism and the Fourth International. The FIT is not clear on this matter." It is such statements as this, and such observations as those referred to above, that causes us to make a sharply critical judgment about your organizational functioning.

This doesn't mean that you are "Barnesites" or "Stalinists" or "mother-beaters," which you falsely accuse us of calling you. Nor do we accuse SA of being "a monolithic party," as you also mistakenly accuse us of saying. In fact, in our resolution we say: "It is essential to keep in mind that like the FIT, neither SA nor Solidarity represent monolithic blocs—not on the question of their own organizational concepts, nor in terms of relations with us. Our goal is to continue to clarify, define, and advance our *collective* understanding of the problems that exist in order to create the atmosphere for a *collective* effort to overcome them." That has always been our position. We hope that you will join with us in making this goal a reality. As we work together on common efforts in the class struggle, let's try to create an atmosphere—in part through frank and comradely discussions about the nature of the party we hope to build together—that will overcome the fragmentation of our movement.

Comradely,

/s/Paul Le Blanc, Bill Onasch, Evelyn Sell
FIT representatives to the SA/FIT parity committee

In our continuing effort to familiarize Bulletin In Defense of Marxism readers with activities and attitudes of the new workers' and pro-socialist movements in the former USSR, we print below an article that appeared in Rubikon, a "periodic publication of the independent trade union movement" in "Petrograd." The most recent issue, which we received just a few weeks ago, is No. 12, dated October 1991. The editorial board includes Nikolai Preobrazhensky, Igor Dashkevich, and Lidia Grossman, whose names may be familiar as materials by and about them have already appeared in our magazine, including Nikolai Preobrazhensky's article discussing the significance of the August coup attempt which appeared in December, No. 91.

Rubikon provides a wide range of materials by and about the independent workers' movements—like Justice and Independence which are centered in former Leningrad, as well as other organizational efforts in widespread regions of the former USSR.

This article is a unique account of a meeting of worker political activists that took place last fall. Translation for the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

The Workers' Movement in the Heartland

by Igor Pykhalov

From August 31-September 1 [1991], as an observer from the Socialist Party of Russia (Leningrad Section), I attended an expanded Council [Soviet] of representatives of the Social-Political Association "Worker" (OPOR) in Kazan [an industrial city in central Russia on the Kama River].

This association was formed a little more than a year ago and represents a regional formation of workers' committees of cities of the Ural and Volga regions. These include Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, Perm, Volgograd, Kazan, and a number of other cities. As distinguished, for example, from our Leningrad workers' movement, this association calls itself a social-political organization, which means that from the outset the groups consider themselves to be more political organizations than trade unions. In addition, I was a bit surprised by the rather left-wing views of all those present. Practically all those who spoke used Marxist phraseology and declared themselves supporters of socialism, at least in words. It seemed to me that this is not a reflection of the fact they have more left-wing views than we do but a consequence of the general lack of independence of the workers' movement everywhere. In such centers as Moscow and Leningrad, workers have an uncritical attitude toward the ideas of the democrats that prevail, while in the provinces they have the same uncritical view of the ideas of the communists and other left groups.

The association "Worker" has not yet yielded to the dominating ideological influence of any one organization. All three splits of the Marxist Workers Party par-

ticipated in its creation: the Labor Party of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the Marxist Workers Party itself, and the Democratic Workers Party (Marxist). Besides that, the former CPSU has a certain influence and it would be natural to assume that the people who joined the association are acquainted and collaborate with socialists in Chelyabinsk and Volgograd and know socialist leaders in Moscow.

The organization's size, by all appearances, is not great. Workers' committees have joined it. But no real mass movement exists as yet. I would estimate that it has several hundred members. Nevertheless, the groups at the local level, as a rule, have their own newspapers—even if only a small number of each issue appears—or at least leaflets and bulletins duplicated on a copy machine. They also appear to be self-sufficient financially.

About 24 people from 14 cities were present at the Council of representatives. Those who had gathered discussed first the political situation in the country after the unsuccessful coup attempt. In this connection, it was characteristic of the group that practically all who spoke had concluded that despite the defeat of the coup the situation had not improved. The most extreme statement of this point of view was expressed in the following way: "Earlier there were two sets of scoundrels opposing each other but now one set has been removed." Nevertheless, the resolution that was adopted by this Council of representatives included a phrase saying that victory over the putschists creates the conditions in which the formation of workers' organizations is possible. Obviously, they

meant that the CPSU, which pretended to be the defender of the workers and had thus discredited the workers' movement, has now been liquidated.

A number of the participants spoke of the need for broad efforts to create independent trade unions in those cities where their organizations function and also the need for not only an economic but also a political struggle, i.e., the creation of a workers' party or, like the representative from Kazan said, a party of labor.

In the Soviet, there was a very intense discussion of the new possibilities for administrators of enterprises to fire a worker without the trade union's agreement. And insofar as this concerns fundamental workers' interests, those present expressed their indignation. As regards Yeltsin's edict about excluding political parties from the workplace and its negative consequences for trade union work, as far as I could gather, the local organs of power which are still fundamentally in the hands of representatives of the former nomenklatura represent a much greater impediment to the development of independent trade unions in the cities which had representatives at the Soviet, than does this edict.

I can also add that as distinct, for example, from Leningrad where there are many independent trade unions created without any connection with one another, the cities in the heartland have only the official trade union and also Sotsprof [Socialist Trade Union], which has been registered on a Russia-wide level and has been able to officially establish its structures. As regards the possibility of creating trade unions in their own enterprises, the majority do not even dream of doing this, could not even imagine that it is possible. Apparently, this arises from their certainty that such an effort would be stopped by the local authorities.

In the Council of representatives in Kazan, a resolution was adopted to support the worker Vasilev who has been subjected to judicial repression in Leningrad for organizing a strike of streetcar drivers.

At the conclusion of its work, the Council of representatives adopted an appeal to the Supreme Soviet of Russia which contained the demands to shorten the workweek instead of implementing layoffs, to end non-productive defense expenditures, etc.

Among the leaders of OPOP are Marcel Shamsutdinov (Kazan, editor of the journal *Marxist*), Boris Ikhlov (Perm, Workers Union), Aleksandr Kharchenko (Magnitogorsk), Ruslan Bogomolov (Democratic Workers Movement, Volgograd).

The next session of the Council of representatives of the Association "Worker" will be October 12 in Moscow. □

National Question In USSR (Continued from page 8)

Stalin and post-Stalin years—which began even earlier in the Caucasus.

The major media in the capitalist world and in the CIS persistently try to depict the struggle in Nagorno-Karabagh as a revival of “animosity held in check during seven decades of Communist rule” which has now “erupted,” or as a continuation of some mythical “ancient Christian-Moslem vendetta,” “interethnic rivalry,” etc.

This is a deliberate falsification of the situation.

The struggle in Nagorno-Karabagh is a struggle of the Armenians—and Azeris—for self-determination. In an effort to prevent this from being contagious and certainly from being successful, the local Stalinist rulers—with the help of the Kremlin—have attempted through chauvinist propaganda, pogroms, and military actions to suppress the movement in Nagorno-Karabagh, as well as the movements for self-determination in their own territories.

Marxists and all who support genuine self-determination and national rights must support these struggles against Stalinist rule, which is continuing to devastate these populations despite all the reforms and transformations.

Next month: “Destabilization and Counterrevolution in the Georgian Republic.”

March 7, 1992

Ron Carey (Continued from page 27)

workers who exercise their right to strike and for other measures that support working men and women.

Finally, we will work to rebuild the membership of our union. Over the last decade, our membership has fallen from 2.2 million to only 1.5 million today. We have been hurt by our image, certainly. . . . But the fact is, we just haven't gotten the job done. Too often, these have been patronage jobs. The new Teamsters are going to employ organizers who really *organize*. And we are going to make this union grow again.

When I think about the new Teamsters, I think about what a union really should be—because a union should be a family. A family that provides protection against mistreatment and unfair pay. . . . It provides security on the job and in retirement. It provides education, opportunity, and a chance to enjoy all the benefits of life that working people rightly deserve. If we don't care deeply for working people, if we don't fight courageously for working families, no one else will.

Negotiating good contracts—representing our members on the job—that's the *minimum* of what a good union should do. But I want this union to be more than that. I want us to also look beyond the workplace . . . to stand up and be heard on every issue that affects the lives of working families everywhere.

And we must join and work with others in labor and in the community who share our vision and our goals. In building the

new Teamsters, I need the help of everyone in this union. Regardless of who you supported in this election, I am reaching out my hand to ask for your support and to ask you to join me in building a better union.

Those of us on this platform today can't change this union alone. So I ask all of you to join with us in putting the campaign behind us and getting on with the job of building the union our members deserve.

Our union—*The New Teamsters*—is the largest working family on the face of the earth. Our members, our retirees and their families number almost four million people. We have the money, the talent, the technology, and the organization to be the strongest voice for working people in the world. And that's just what we're going to be.

Now is the test. Our mission is to take the enormous resources of this union and give them new direction and new purpose—to win better contracts . . . to improve pensions and to organize new workers . . . to pass national health insurance. Our mission is to put the past behind us and rebuild our image . . . with hard work, new ideas, *results* for our members. Today, the eyes of the world are upon us. We have stepped into the history books and the story is ours to write. Our work will not be easy. We will not solve all our problems overnight. My message is that I need all of you to join me in this new beginning. □

Sixties Lawyer (Continued from page 33)

Hacker, and George Novack, thinkers who very much influenced me.

Mike all-too-briefly describes his involvement in the work of the SWP and the antiwar movement among GIs who were actively opposing the Vietnam war. The Trotskyists were among the few who correctly identified the bulk of U.S. soldiers as being part of the working class, who—like the Vietnamese—were being victimized by the imperialist war-makers, and who should therefore be won to the antiwar cause. Fortunately, there are also three substantial articles dealing with what he calls “rights of citizen soldiers,” plus two more informative pieces on SWP work among GIs in the section entitled “The Socialist Workers Party: Hope and Disappointment.”

This section on the SWP also includes some material documenting the degeneration of the organization, which under a new leadership headed by Jack Barnes abandoned the revolutionary democratic perspectives of the Trotskyist movement. This is touched on in the memoir as well. Mike Smith, honest radical and critical-minded iconoclast that he is, was among the first to be expelled in the wake of this new “turn.” He notes that among his firmest defenders were such veteran revolutionaries as George Breitman and George Weissman. “They were themselves expelled within a year and helped form the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT),” Smith writes. “Other friends and associates of mine also

took much that I found good in the SWP into Solidarity and Socialist Action.” Looking back, he comments: “The tragedy for America is that following the mass expulsions, the SWP has shriveled into a small, ineffectual group. At the close of the anti-war movement [in 1975], the SWP was on the brink of transforming itself from an essentially educational group to a small socialist party that could have had an impact on the political life of our nation.”

George Clemenceau once remarked that anyone who was never a revolutionary before reaching the age of thirty has no heart, and anyone who is still a revolutionary over the age of thirty has no brains. Many de-radicalized socialists and ex-socialists of our own time seem to be products of the Clemenceau school. Older but not “wiser” *à la* Clemenceau, Mike Smith remains true to the passionate insights that guided him in earlier years. He concludes on a note of revolutionary optimism:

The radicalization of the 1960s wounded the monster. Now, it is radicalism which seems wounded. But there is much brewing beneath the surface. André Gide observed that, “The world will be saved, if it can be, only by the unsubmitive.” Surely there will be a new movement in the nineties. It will react to new manifestations of injustice, but it will stand on the shoulders of those of us from the 60s. There is much about which to be unsubmitive. □

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS FROM THE FIT

\$1.00 PAMPHLETS:

Updated, with sections on Nicaragua and Gulf War—*Organizing for Socialism, The Fourth Internationalist Tendency—Who We Are, What We Stand For*, by Bill Onasch

Revolutionary Internationalism and the Struggle for Socialism in the United States, political resolution adopted by National Organizing Committee of FIT; plus statement from the World Congress of the Fourth International

The Struggle to Build a Revolutionary Party: A Balance Sheet on the Socialist Workers Party

Malcolm X: Teacher and Organizer, by Claire Cohen, Steve Bloom, and Evelyn Sell

Our Bodies! Our Choice! The Fight for Reproductive Rights, by Evelyn Sell

Fighting for Women's Rights in the 1990s, by Claire Cohen, Carol McAllister, Gayle Swann, and Evelyn Sell

Vanguard Parties, by Ernest Mandel

Don't Strangle the Party, by James P. Cannon

MATERIALS FOR A HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM IN THE UNITED STATES:

Trotskyism in America, the First Fifty Years, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.50

Organizational Principles and Practices, Edited with an introduction by Evelyn Sell \$3.50

Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism, Edited with an introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$5.00

BOOKS AND OTHER LITERATURE:

Permanent Revolution, Combined Revolution, and Black Liberation in the United States, by Larry Stewart \$1.25

Fifty Years of the Fourth International, Talks given at the New York City celebration, October 1988, plus other relevant contributions \$10.00

In Defense of American Trotskyism—Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party, Documentation of the struggle for revolutionary Marxism against the SWP leadership, Edited by Paul Le Blanc \$9.00

A Tribute to George Breitman: Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary, Edited by Naomi Allen and Sarah Lovell \$5.00

Trends in the Economy—Marxist Analyses of Capitalism in the Late 1980s, by Carol McAllister, Steve Bloom, and Ernest Mandel \$3.00

American Elections and the Issues Facing Working People, by Paul Le Blanc, Bill Onasch, Tom Barrett, and Evelyn Sell \$5.00

The Transitional Program—Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the United States, by Evelyn Sell, Steve Bloom, and Frank Lovell, Introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$4.00

Order from FIT, P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009

***Our Bodies! Our Choice! The Fight for
Reproductive Rights—by Evelyn Sell***

\$1.00

Order from FIT, P.O.Box 1947, New York, NY 10009