



## 750,000 Declare:

# WE WON'T GO BACK, WE WILL FIGHT BACK!

**The fight for reproductive rights.**

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## Who We Are

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

FTT 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 former 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 FTT 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 FP'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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Indexed in the Alternative Press Index

## April 5 National Pro-Choice March Draws Masses to Washington, D.C.

by Sarah M. Springer

History was made in Washington, D.C., on April 5. Hundreds of thousands from around the country converged on the capital to take part in what proved to be one of the largest rallies ever in U.S. history. The event was sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW), and was cosponsored by more than 150 organizations, including the American Association of University Women (AAUW), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Congress of National Black Churches, National Education Association (NEA), National Rainbow Coalition, Planned Parenthood, and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL).

Many observers commented on the youthful nature of the crowd, especially compared to similar demonstrations organized in the recent past by NOW. Everywhere one turned there were signs announcing that a contingent came from one college campus or another. And although a large majority of the participants were women, there were also substantial numbers of men. Unfortunately, the racial composition—the crowd lacked sufficient representation of Blacks and Latinos—reflected the overall social base of NOW itself, which has failed to attract large numbers of women of color as active participants. There was also a real lack of participation by official delegations from the trade union movement, despite CLUW's role as a co-sponsor.

In the days leading up to the march the media had reported that both pro-choice demonstrators and "pro-life" counter-demonstrators would be present in Washington. But any repre-

sentatives of the right-wing, anti-abortion crowd were few and far between, and they were clearly overwhelmed. Many people who came to express their support for the right to choose may not have seen a single one.

Before the march began the massive crowd gathered at the Ellipse, south of the White House, for an initial rally. The march itself went north, past the White House, and then down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Mall, which very rapidly filled with people all the way from the Capitol to the Washington Monument, but people continued to pour into the rally area for hours after it began.

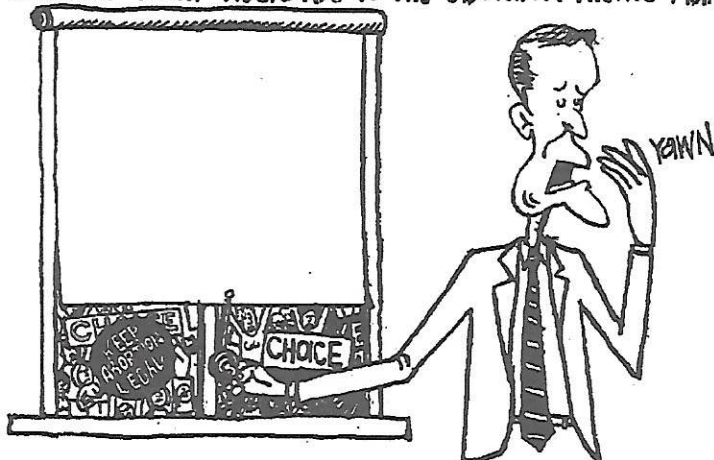
The rally at the Mall featured dozens of speakers, including Patricia Ireland, NOW president; the presidents of the NEA, Planned Parenthood, ACLU, United States Student Association, AAUW, NCJW, National Welfare Rights Union, and NARAL; various actors, singers, and authors; doctors and health care workers; and a long string of politicians—including Alan Cranston, sponsor of the Freedom of Choice Act in the U.S. Congress. This piece of legislation was a focus of support by many of the speakers, saying that if enacted the law would protect abortion rights in the United States against any erosion by the states or the Supreme Court.

Also present at the march, but specifically not invited to speak at the rally, were Democratic Party presidential candidates Bill Clinton, Jerry Brown, and Paul Tsongas.

Speakers proposed a variety of different kinds of political action to the crowd. Many urged rally participants to view this march as the stepping-off point in terms of organizing outreach across the country to protect abortion rights. Some urged support for the Freedom of Choice Act—including letter writing and lobbying—as an important focus for activity. And there was, of course, widespread talk about electing "pro-choice" candidates to Congress and the Senate in the November elections.

Unfortunately, there was little clarity about what it means to really be a "pro-choice" candidate. Many Democratic Party politicians—both women and men—who have tried to wear that label were given rousing endorsements and hearty applause, even though their party has been using women's issues for years to get its candidates elected and then betrays those who work and vote for them.

GEORGE BUSH RESPONDS TO THE ABORTION RIGHTS MARCH...



Patricia Ireland felt constrained to point out the fact that the current Congress is “allegedly” already “pro-choice.” And that this so-called pro-choice majority in Congress has been complicit in the Reagan-Bush campaign to undermine abortion rights over the last ten years. It helped confirm Bush’s last two nominations of blatantly anti-women’s rights and anti-abortion candidates to the Supreme Court, while failing to pass the Freedom of Choice Act—although it was introduced in 1989—and making no concerted effort to stand up against Bush’s threatened veto of pro-choice legislation.

Clearly the women’s movement does not need any more “friends” like those it supposedly has in government right now. Rather it needs to push ahead with independent political action. NOW’s call for the formation of a “21st Century Party” can serve—if it becomes part of a coalition with others, in the labor movement, among Blacks, etc., who are beginning to talk seriously about and to organize independent electoral efforts—as an *independent* vehicle for women and men to organize a real challenge to the two-party system of oppression from the Republicans and “concessions” from the Democrats. Women and women’s issues are not represented in the existing system, and it needs to be fundamentally altered.

During 1990 and 1991 NOW held a series of hearings around the U.S. to discuss the idea of a new party. These hearings clearly indicated that people are disillusioned by the Democratic “alternative” because too often they have volunteered their time and resources to elect candidates who did not truly represent the interests of women, or whose only attraction was a nominal “pro-choice” stand while they were lousy on other important issues affecting women. The women’s movement, and the one-half of the population it represents, should not have to settle for this kind of leadership. Rallies like the one on April 5 clearly show that many are dissatisfied and ready for a *real* change.

The immense turnout for this action is an indication of the outrage felt by millions of women who have witnessed a persistent assault on their rights in this country. The attempt to roll back gains women won during the 1960s and ’70s is not limited to reproductive freedom, but includes such questions as the lack of pay equity for women workers, access to education and jobs, sexual harassment, abuse, and discrimination in all walks of life, and access to affordable health care and child care. Reproductive choice is certainly not seen as the only issue on the line for women, as the president of the National Council of Jewish Women said at the rally, but it is a right that is most directly under attack and which, if denied, would lead to even greater lack of economic freedom for women.

Currently the women’s movement is facing several specific threats to abortion rights, the greatest one being the possibility that the Supreme Court will overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which legalized abortion. Already, safe and affordable access to abortion has been severely restricted and in many cases it is impossible for women receiving medical care sponsored by the government to obtain an abortion. This includes women in the military, Native American women who live on reservations, and poor women who are dependent on the federal Medicaid program. Restrictions have also been implemented in some states requiring that young women notify their parents before having an abortion, that married women notify their spouses, and that clinics provide “counseling”—

which is designed to discourage a choice for abortion—to prospective patients prior to the procedure.

In one of the most outrageous acts, federally funded family-planning clinics have been “gagged”—with staff under legal compulsion not to inform women that abortion is available as one of their options. The Supreme Court recently upheld the constitutionality of this federal regulation. In response to sharp criticism on this question from the medical profession—many have denounced the White House for interfering with the doctor-patient relationship—a new interpretation of this regulation has been handed down that exempts doctors themselves from its provisions, while keeping them in force for all others. But many family-planning clinics, especially in poorer areas, cannot afford to have doctors on staff. So the effect of the original ruling remains just as severe for those women who are already most sharply under attack—women of color and poor women. Speaking at the rally, Patricia Ireland said that “44 million women in the U.S. have already effectively lost the right to choose.”

The federal government’s tactic of targetting one group of women at a time in order to undermine abortion rights has proven unsuccessful in dividing and conquering the women’s movement. Belief that reproductive choice is a fundamental right for *all* women, not just for a privileged few, remains strong. This theme was reiterated by many speakers at the rally, who talked about Martin Luther King, Jr.’s insistence that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. This essential belief in the old slogan, “an injury to one is an injury to all,” has helped the women’s movement maintain its focus of holding the president and Congress responsible for the backlash against women’s rights, instead of caving in to a concessionary position that would ultimately hurt all women.

The involvement of large numbers of campus women—in addition to seasoned activists—in this demonstration was extremely important. Young women who grew up after the *Roe v. Wade* decision are especially vulnerable to the government-sponsored campaign of restricting abortion. The president of Planned Parenthood pointed out that before *Roe* over one million abortions were performed in the U.S. each year, and the result was that women died: “Most often the victims [of illegal abortions] were women of color and poor women.”

Others also reiterated the pre-*Roe* horrors of back alley abortions, the tremendous toll on women’s lives before abortion was legalized. Still others spoke of what *Roe* represented in terms of the culmination of years of organizing and mobilizing efforts by women to demand the right to a legal, safe, and affordable abortion—and the need to keep the momentum going in order to safeguard those reproductive rights still intact and to win back those that have been taken away. People make up movements and movements make social change.

This march and rally clearly showed that the government’s attempts at restricting abortion are not going to be met quietly or without challenge. The outpouring of women and men, young and old, of all religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds on April 5 directly contradicts the media’s portrayal of the marginalization of the women’s movement. It shows how false the assertions are that the goals of feminism are out of touch with “mainstream” America. □

# Meeting of Supporters of 21st Century Party

by Carol McAllister

Tired, sweaty, and dusty but also exhilarated from the just completed We Won't Go Back! March for Women's Lives! about 200 supporters of NOW's call for a new party filled the pews of the United Church in Washington, D.C., on the evening of April 5, 1992. The events began with an hour of eating and socializing in the church basement where old friends and new acquaintances met and informally exchanged impressions of the day's activities and the upcoming meeting. Seats for the meeting were marked off by state and region, and although many participants did not sit in their designated areas, it was clear from comments from the floor and informal discussions that participants came from all parts of the country, including from as far away as Los Angeles and San Francisco. The majority of those in attendance were women, but there was also a sizable number of male supporters. Overwhelmingly white, the participants included a few people of color—African Americans, Asian Americans, and at least one person of Hispanic descent. Most of the audience had known about the meeting beforehand; although it was announced during the March for Women's Lives, it was difficult for people traveling on buses or who had not made prior travel arrangements to attend. This probably accounts in part for the relative absence of young women, who were so visible at the events earlier in the day.

The meeting was chaired by Dolores Huerta, co-convenor of the 21st Century Party and co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America. Four of the other co-conveners—Mel King (former member of the Massachusetts State House whose campaign for Boston mayor kicked off the Rainbow Coalition), Ellie Smeal (former NOW national president and president of the Fund for the Feminist Majority), Patricia Ireland (current NOW president), and Sara Nelson (executive director of the Christic Institute)—also made statements and answered questions. Monica Faith Stewart (former Illinois state repre-

sentative and the youngest African American woman elected to a state office) was the only co-convenor not present but she sent a statement which was read by Patricia Ireland.

Ellie Smeal explained the evolution of the call for a new party beginning with the 1989 NOW National Conference, through the work of the Commission for Responsive Democracy, to the decision of the National NOW Board to endorse the commission's recommendation and to present it to the June 1992 National NOW Conference to be held in Chicago. (For more information on these developments, see articles in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* Nos. 68, 77, 81, 88, and 95.) It was announced that the name of the party had recently been changed from "Our New Party" to the "21st Century Party" and that a founding convention is being planned for August 28-30, 1992, to be held simultaneously in Philadelphia and Los Angeles with telecommunication hookups that will also allow others throughout the country to follow the proceedings.

Each co-convenor explained why she or he felt a new party was needed and the principles on which such a party must be built. The ongoing betrayal by the Democratic as well as the Republican Party was emphasized—for example, Ellie Smeal reminded participants of the "yes" votes of Democratic members of Congress for recent Supreme Court nominees, Mel King pointed to the failure of the current Democratic frontrunners to address issues affecting African Americans, the poor and youth, and Sara Nelson described the failure of either party to deal with the growing abuses of the national security apparatus. Opening statements on the character of the new party focused on the need to insure both gender and racial/ethnic balance in all party bodies, the goal of internal party democracy which will be reinforced by the funding structure of the party (no corporate memberships, and monthly pledges equal to 1/2 of 1 percent of the income of individual members), and

the principle of candidate adherence to the party's platform. While specific positions will be determined at future conventions, the party's initial platform is based on NOW's Expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century which includes: constitutional guarantees against discrimination based on sex, race, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability; the right of women to funded and available birth control, abortion, and pregnancy care; the right to a decent standard of living, including adequate food, housing, healthcare, and education; the right to a clean and protected environment; and the right to freedom from all violence, including the violence of war. Meeting participants responded actively and enthusiastically to each of these points, with clapping, cheering, and positive verbal acknowledgments. The political orientation laid out by co-conveners was reinforced by the skits, songs, and comic routines of the "Oh So Politically Correct Players" who provided some very feminist, radical, and humorous entertainment.

The weakest part of the meeting was the lack of concrete proposals for how to build support for and active participation in the new party. Besides urging those of us present to become members of the 21st Century Party ourselves, we were also asked to volunteer for various areas of work and to each recruit 21 new members. There was some discussion of organizing on the basis of existing electoral districts and of holding district meetings in the near future. Co-conveners had intended to kick off the planning for such meetings through small group discussions by region and state. But because the audience was not seated according to geographical location, this was skipped and we moved instead to questions and answers.

There were a number of comments and questions that focused on the need to involve African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans in the beginning stages of local building for the upcoming party convention. Concerns were raised about the lack of racial or ethnic balance in the meeting that night and the need to seriously think about ways to involve people of color in the projected district meetings. There were also questions about the ways the 21st Century Party initiative might relate to similar initiatives for independent politics in the labor and

(Continued on page 20)

This FIT flyer was distributed at the April 5 march and rally in Washington, D.C.

## Women's Rights and Independent Political Action

Winning the fight for reproductive rights will take independent political action — in the streets and in elections.

Mass mobilizations — like the April 5 March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. — clearly demonstrate the majority's support for safe, legal, and accessible abortions. Experience has proven that this demand for women's right to choose must be expressed forcefully and *repeatedly* in massive public demonstrations.

The record proves that women and their allies cannot depend on campaign promises from either Democrats or Republicans.

- The 1989 elections brought victories to a number of candidates who promised to fight for women's rights — but then failed to initiate or support legislation to back up their campaign pledges. In some cases, they even voted against women's interests.
- Votes by Democratic Party senators helped confirm the two newest justices to the U.S. Supreme Court — and, therefore, helped seat a majority which is expected to gut or even overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.
- The Democrats made a show of introducing legislation to overturn the 1991 "gag rule" but did not follow through to make sure that poor women would be able to receive abortion counseling and services in federally funded clinics.
- Although Democrats hold a majority in Congress, the Freedom of Choice Act sat on the shelf after it was introduced in 1989. With the present need to win women's votes, committee hearings were recently held. President Bush is expected to veto any Freedom of Choice bill which might possibly pass — providing another opportunity for the Democrats to "look good" while placing the blame on the White House. This political game has been played over and over, and women's rights have steadily deteriorated as the lawmakers pursue "business as usual" politics.

### The new party initiative by the National Organization for Women

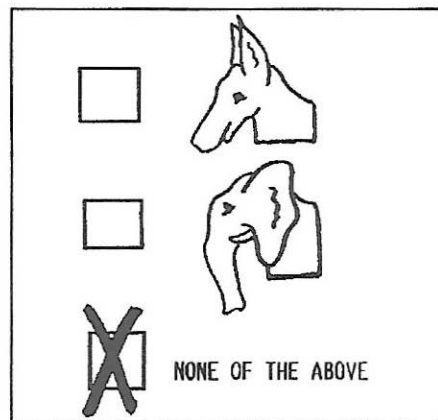
Faced with the betrayals and empty gestures from so-called "friends" in the two major parties, the National Organization for Women (NOW) decided at its 1989 national conference to explore the possibility of forming a new political party — independent from the Democratic and Republican parties, and based on a broad program addressing the needs of women, racial and ethnic minority groups, working people, youth and elderly persons, lesbians and gays, environmentalists, and opponents of war. After holding hearings across the country during 1990–91, NOW's Commission for Responsive Democracy recommended the creation of a new party. NOW's National Board approved the resolution, and delegates to NOW's National Conference will discuss and vote on the question in June. A working group has already begun to lay the groundwork for independent electoral activity and has published some literature soliciting support and participation.

This new party initiative is significant in and of itself. But it takes on added importance in light of two other important developments: the creation and growth of Labor Party Advocates and the independent presidential campaign of Ron Daniels. These three separate but interconnected efforts within the trade unions, the African-American struggle, and the women's rights movement show a profound alienation from the twin parties controlled by and serving the interests of the ruling capitalist powers in this country.

### Simply electing more women is not enough!

A great deal of energy and money is now going into supporting women candidates at the local, state, and national levels. But experience proves that simply having a woman in office — even a woman who says she is for abortion rights — does not guarantee the fulfillment of women's needs. The proofs are many, but here are just two examples:

- During the Gulf War, Congressional women voted along *party lines*. Out of 31 female legislators, only Rep. Max-



ine Waters voted against the January 19 pro-war resolution. Dianne Feinstein, backed by feminists in her bid to become governor of California, gave President Bush "accolades" for his conduct of the war, and said she would have voted for his actions if she had been a U.S. Senator.

- In the first election after the anti-abortion *Webster* decision, a declared pro-choice Republican woman candidate won a California Assembly seat with the help of feminist campaigning and funding. But once elected, she refused to speak at a pro-choice event and voted against or abstained from measures involving reproductive rights.

It is not enough simply to elect more women. It is not enough simply to elect pro-choice women. Women's rights fighters can learn from the experiences of African-Americans who have found that their situation was not significantly improved by simply electing more Black mayors, state legislators, members of the U.S. Congress, and a state governor. The labor movement has gone through similar experiences of helping to elect lawmakers who betray their campaign promises and do nothing to safeguard or advance the needs of working people.

It is essential to have a political party which is organized to fight day-in-and-day-out for the program and goals of its members and supporters. We need a party which is accountable to the people who put it into office.

**Independent political action now — in the streets and in elections!  
No support to Democrats or Republicans!**

**For safe, legal, accessible and affordable abortions regardless of residence, age, or financial situation!**

The five-month-old strike of 12,600 members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) against Caterpillar Inc., world's largest manufacturer of construction equipment, has become a test of will and strength between organized labor and basic industry. Since the rise of the CIO movement in the 1930s, U.S. industry has been forced to adjust its labor policies to the presence of powerful unions. But it was never reconciled to this fact, and since the 1970s has dared to speak boldly of a "union-free environment." For the past 15 years industry has carried on a concerted campaign to destroy the unions, and with startling success.

The anti-union drive was launched without fanfare in mid-1978. The issues were clearly stated and the lines sharply drawn. Until then labor/management cooperation had been standard practice in the post-World War II period of prosperity and industrial expansion. An unofficial advisory institution had developed known as "Labor-Management Group," consisting of eight major corporation executives and eight ranking labor leaders. This Group met regularly under the leadership of Professor John T. Dunlop, former secretary of labor, and tried to reach agreement on such broad social questions as energy problems, inflation, unemployment, rising health care costs, and others that remain unresolved to the present day.

### Class War

Douglas Fraser, then president of the UAW and a member of the Group, issued a lengthy press release on July 19, 1987, which said in part:

For a considerable time, the leaders of business and labor have sat at the Labor-Management Group's table—recognizing differences, but seeking consensus where it existed.

The acceptance of the labor movement, such as it has been, came because business feared the alternatives. Corporate America didn't join the fight to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1946 or the Voting Rights Act, but it eventually accepted the inevitability of that legislation. Other similar pieces of legislation aimed at the human needs of the disadvantaged have become national policy only after real struggle.

The latest breakdown in our relationship is also perhaps the most serious. The fight waged by the business community against the Labor Law Reform bill stands as the most vicious, unfair attack upon the labor movement in more than 30 years. Corporate leaders knew it was not the "power grab of Big Labor" that they portrayed it to be. Instead, it became an extremely moderate, fair piece of legislation that only corporate outlaws would have had need to fear.

The new flexing of business muscle can be seen in many other areas. The rise of multinational corporations that know neither patriotism nor morality but only self-interest has made accountability almost nonexistent. At virtually every level, I discern a demand by business for docile government and unrestrained corporate individualism. Where industry once yearned for subservient unions, it now wants no unions at all.

As we go to press word comes that UAW negotiators agreed April 14 to send all Caterpillar strikers back to work on company terms. Negotiations continue. Our analysis of this crucial struggle will continue in the June issue of this magazine.

## The Caterpillar Strike

# Locked in Deadly Embrace

by Frank Lovell

Thus Fraser resigned from the Labor-Management Group, having recognized belatedly that "business wages class warfare." His perception that an openly anti-union policy had been adopted by the employers was accurate. He also understood that their control of government, through the Democratic and Republican parties, had put the unions at a disadvantage. His frustrated hope to overcome this disadvantage within the two-party political structure brought with it the realization that a new labor-management relationship had developed. The period of class collaboration had ended.

Fraser threatened "class war" in return. But at the time the union officialdom had neither the will nor the power to retaliate. Union muscle had grown flabby in the years of industrial prosperity and class collaboration. Labor's armies had been demobilized, fighting legions converted into docile dues-paying members. Its general staff, such as it had become, had enrolled in the schools of social harmony and labor peace. So at that juncture the union movement was fat and feeble.

The 1980s was a decade of lost strikes, beginning with the crushing of the PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization) strike by the newly installed Reagan administration. From then on things went from bad to worse for unions. Not only was there a series of lost strikes, but unions began losing NLRB elections in which workers voted for decertification. Union members complained that they were tired of paying dues and getting nothing but abuse in return. Union officials developed their own save-the-union strategy of concession bargaining, consisting of givebacks to the employers (in the form of lower wages, fewer health and welfare benefits, and less job protection) in exchange for union recognition and continuation of the dues checkoff system. The result at the end of the decade was a net loss of more than a million dues-paying members.

This decline of the union movement was accelerated by other factors over which the unions had no control. During the past 15 years technological advances and the globalization of finance capital (foreign investment in manufacturing, real estate, financial institutions, etc., by bankers of all countries outside their own national borders now totals over \$1.5 trillion) have transformed U.S. industry. Some unions like the printers have all but disappeared because computers have drastically reduced the workforce and rendered old skills obsolete. Eight of the largest industrial unions (including UAW) show a combined loss of membership exceeding 1.5 million, due entirely to plant closings and reductions in the workforce. At present only 10 percent of the workforce in the private sector is organized, the lowest percentage since the 1920s.

Despite its battering, the union movement today represents about 13 million on-the-job workers, a powerful social force to be reckoned with if properly mobilized. But such was the depressed state of the unions and the demoralization of their top leaders that union officials and members alike are still treated with contempt by prosperous employers, and shunned by smug officeholders in both the Republican and Democratic parties.

### Militancy Returns

A change in attitude toward their unions and a growing mood of combativity among working men and women generally—both organized and unorganized—began to emerge and find expression in the latter half of the 1980s. Not all strikes were lost. Two bitterly fought strikes in the mid-1980s were harbingers of the new mood.

One was the strike in Austin, Minnesota, at the Hormel meatpacking plant. The other was at a cannery of about 1,000 mostly women workers in Watsonville, California, organized by a local of the Teamsters union. Both strikes lasted several months and were superbly organized by local leaders against great odds. In the strike battles the entire membership of both unions was mobilized and became active eyes-and-ears participants in the decision-making process. A distinguishing feature in both cases was appeals by the strikers to the broad union movement for support, and the enthusiastic response they received. In the end the Hormel strike was broken by the top officials of the United Food and Commercial Workers union who opposed the strike from the beginning and collaborated with Hormel, in collusion with state and local governments, to defeat the workers. At Watsonville the strikers won a resounding victory, only to see the plant close and their jobs move to Mexico soon after. But these heroic struggles inspired others throughout the union movement to stand up and fight.

The coal miners demonstrated the same fighting mood in their 10-month-long strike against the Pittston Coal Group in 1989-90. They took their appeal for solidarity to every union in the country, and received an open-arms welcome everywhere, sweetened with financial and physical support. The turning point in this strike came after seven months when camouflage-clad miners took over Pittston's main coal tippie and occupied it for three days in the face of court orders to evacuate and combat mobilization of state police with orders to evict the intruders.

As the deadline to evacuate passed, the miners held their position. The union had mobilized its forces, 5,000 strike supporters were massed at the gates of the tippie to serve as a buffer against the expected police attack and to help protect the occupiers inside. The 77-hour occupation was ended by the mine workers union after indications of a U.S. congressional investigation and open hearings on the causes of the strike. The company then came to the bargaining table and an agreement was ratified by the strikers in February 1990.

### New Mood

A new mood prevails today throughout the country, largely the result of the faltering economy and the callous disregard of government to the suffering of the unemployed, the working poor, the homeless, and the sick. Resentment coupled with determination to strike back is strongest in the ranks of organized labor. The strike at Caterpillar is an expression of this. Ten thousand UAW members and union supporters rallied earlier this year as strikes and lockouts at Caterpillar plants in Illinois and Pennsylvania entered their fourth month. The mass rally in Peoria, Illinois, on March 22 was attended by an estimated 20,000. They came from UAW locals and other unions throughout the Midwest and from the coal fields of Appalachia. They brought food, cash donations, and pledges of support. Finally the top union officialdom is waking up to the fact that they are under siege and had better shape up. Among those who came to speak and be seen were heads of the Illinois State AFL-CIO, the machinists (IAM), the letter carriers (NALC), and the municipal employees (AFSCME). Official delegations came from the garment workers union (ILGWU), service employees (SEIU), and teachers (AFT). International UAW president Owen Bieber chaired the rally, and declared full support of the strike until victory is won, "no matter how long it takes." The strike is also supported by community groups and some civic leaders. Bieber ended the rally with a march through downtown Peoria to Caterpillar corporate headquarters.

Clearly this is different from the heroic Hormel strike. It has official endorsement of the international union and the AFL-CIO, unlike the situation at Hormel where the strikers were opposed, deserted, and betrayed by the officials of their international union,

and where the AFL-CIO took a "hands-off" stance in favor of the strikebreaking UFCW international officials.

### Union-Busting Stratagems

What remains the same this time, as with all the strikes and lockouts of the previous decade, is the adamant anti-union stand of Caterpillar Inc. The demands of the union are modest. All that is being asked is a new contract on the same terms as previously agreed to in negotiations with Deere and Co., which include certain restrictions against layoffs, provisions for equal pay for equal work, and a 3 percent pay raise. But this is not the issue.

Caterpillar officials declare that "pattern bargaining is an outdated concept that makes no sense in a global economy." They demand givebacks from the union, especially in health care coverage. But they say their main objective is elimination of pattern bargaining which is an established practice in all industrial groups covered by UAW contracts. Gerald Flaherty, a Caterpillar group president, is quoted as saying, "We need an agreement that makes sense for our employees and enables Caterpillar to continue providing high-quality jobs here in the United States. We also need an agreement that will allow us to sell products against non-United States competitors around the world." This is a transparent excuse to end negotiations, reminiscent of the stratagems used by employers a decade ago when they thought the time was right to get rid of the unions.

Flaherty implies that wages in Japan and other industrialized countries are below U.S. rates. But the fact is that average industrial wages in Japan, Germany, and other European countries are above the U.S. average. The U.S. Labor Department says German workers are provided with child care, parental leave, universal health care, and other benefits denied workers in the U.S. A third of the German workforce belongs to unions.

The UAW has countered with Caterpillar's own data showing that it outsells its strongest competitor, Komatsu, in Japan. The union also submits evidence that if it were not for this company-provoked strike Caterpillar would have made \$100 million in profit in 1992. This company produces 75 percent of its tractors and other earth-moving machinery in the U.S. and exports 59 percent, making it the second largest U.S. exporter. It posted profits of \$210 million in 1990 and claimed losses of \$404 million last year due to the worldwide economic decline. This company does not suffer from high labor costs. In testimony at congressional hearings last year the corporation chairman, Donald Fites, said "the labor that goes directly" into Caterpillar products represents only 6.1 percent of the cost. When asked about plans to move plant facilities to Mexico he said, "It is not economical. Productivity is the key issue here. We can produce a product in Peoria or Decatur, export it to Mexico, and have it be a much better economic deal for us." This company is not hurting financially. Its executive officers draw down exorbitant salaries and its stockholders rake in rich dividends.

On April 5 Caterpillar announced that striking workers must report for work the following morning or be replaced by non-union workers. Few scabs crawled back. The strike remained solid. It may continue into summer. Neither side is ready to give up. No one can predict the outcome at this stage. But the truculence of Caterpillar executives indicates that they may have misjudged the temper of the times and the mood of the workers. There should be little doubt that the strikers can win on the picket lines. But strikes are often lost at the bargaining table, or in the political arena where organized labor is at great disadvantage because it lacks its own labor party, and must seek the "good offices" of Democrats and Republicans. What the struggle now comes down to is a test of the present UAW leadership. □

April 6, 1992



# New Threats Against Libya United States and United Nations Impose Sanctions

by Tom Barrett

*We extended our normal news deadline so that Tom Barrett could file this late-breaking story.*

As the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* goes to press, United Nations sanctions which prohibit arms sales and air travel to and from Libya are scheduled to go into effect. They are being imposed because of Libya's refusal to turn over two of its intelligence agents who are under indictment in the United States for the bombing of Pan Am Flight #103 in December 1988. Two hundred and seventy people died when that aircraft exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland. Since those indictments were handed down in November 1991, U.S. President George Bush has threatened military action against Libya on more than one occasion.

The threat of a military attack is a serious one. In 1986 then-president Ronald Reagan ordered bombing raids on Tripoli and Benghazi, in which, according to the *N.Y. Times*, 37 Libyans were killed, including Libyan President Muammar el-Qaddafi's one-year-old adoptive daughter. The pretext was the bombing of a German discotheque frequented by American military personnel, for which—it was later determined—Libya had no responsibility. The case against the two Libyan agents, Lamem Khalifa Fhima and Abdel Basset Ali el-Meghrabi, is far from conclusive and is based almost entirely on circumstantial evidence. Libya has, with some justification, expressed mistrust that Fhima and Meghrabi will be tried fairly in the United States or Britain, and has offered to turn them over to the Arab League or to a neutral country if a Libyan investigation is not acceptable.

## **A New Relationship of Forces in the United Nations**

The two Security Council votes—on January 21 to demand that Libya turn over Fhima and Meghrabi either to the United States or Britain by March 19, and on March 31 to impose mandatory sanctions—shows conclusively that the United Nations has ceased to be anything more than a “thieves’ kitchen” dedicated to the legitimization of imperialist world domination. The Yeltsin regime in Russia has dropped even the pretense of anti-imperialism which its Stalinist predecessor maintained. Of the fifteen member nations of the Security Council not a single one cast an opposing vote. Ten countries voted in favor of imposing sanctions: the United States, Britain, France, Russia (four of the five permanent members), and Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, Hungary, Japan, Venezuela. The remaining five—China (which, as a permanent member, could have exercised a veto), Morocco (the only Arab state on the Council), India, Cape Verde, and Zimbabwe—abstained.

There is no longer any state which has both the will and the power to challenge Washington's assertion of its unilateral right to take criminal action against anyone on earth, whether a U.S. citizen or not, and to depose any foreign government which dares stand in its way. The peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America who attempt some measure of independence from Western European, North American, or Japanese domination were once able to use the United Nations as a forum to explain their struggle to all the peoples of the world, including to the working people of the imperialist metropolises. The Soviet—and after 1978, the Chinese—bureaucrats often used their veto power to deny Washington the legitimacy that United Nations resolutions could

have provided. On other occasions, United Nations resolutions did the opposite—supported legitimate demands of oppressed peoples for political and economic justice. For example, Security Council Resolution 242 demanded that the Israeli state return the territories seized in the 1967 war to the neighboring Arab countries (although it also demanded Arab recognition of the Israeli state within “secure borders”). Twenty-five years later, the Zionists continue to defy that resolution. The General Assembly resolution which defined Zionism as a form of racism also registered world support to the Arab struggle for self-determination and justice. The repeal of that resolution in 1991 was a clear indication that the world relationship of forces has changed, and that the United Nations has nothing to offer to the oppressed peoples of the world except legitimacy for their oppression. This organization, supposedly established to preserve world peace, is powerless to stop the slaughter in El Salvador, Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, or Kurdistan, but it is swift to accede to George Bush's and John Major's demand to impose sanctions on Libya, and it continues with its crippling sanctions against Iraq.

## **Why Is Bush Doing This Now?**

One may ask, with some justification, why threaten Libya now? Surely U.S. military supremacy is unquestioned since the gulf war. Washington successfully apprehended, tried, and convicted Panamanian President Manuel Noriega. No more hostages are held in Lebanon. What is left to prove?

The answer has more to do with domestic politics than with international. After his “splendid little war” in the Arab (Persian) Gulf, Bush's popularity ratings soared to roughly the 90 percent level. Now that the yellow ribbons have faded and working people are looking at the conditions of their own lives, the president's popularity has plummeted to the point where the Democrats think they can deny him reelection, even with Bill Clinton as their candidate! A popular bumper sticker reads, “Saddam Hussein still has his job. Do you?”

The Bush administration has absolutely nothing to offer to working people whose living standards have been shot to pieces in this recession. He has resisted the extension of unemployment benefits; he has opposed legislation to defend the right of workers to strike; the most he can offer to workers who have lost their jobs is—a capital gains tax cut. He has even suggested reducing the tax on luxury yachts as a way of creating jobs for shipbuilding workers. Marie Antoinette lost her head for less!

Bush is perceived as being far more competent in managing foreign affairs than domestic. He and his advisers recognize that he will not be able to overcome that problem in time for the 1992 general election. His strategy is, therefore, to attempt to focus voters' attention on foreign affairs, where—the perception is accurate—he has had remarkable success in his term as president.

## **A New Version of the Crusades?**

Speaking at a patriotic rally in Tripoli, Qaddafi appealed for Islamic unity against what he called the “Western crusaders,” who, having finished with “communism,” are turning their attention to the conquest of the Islamic world. The petty-bourgeois nationalist Qaddafi's inability to understand the class dynamics in world politics should not be surprising; however, he has a point. Racism against Muslims, and against Arabs in particular, remains socially acceptable and politically expedient throughout Europe and North America. It was a significant factor in the degree of support Bush was able to build for the gulf war. A new wave of racism against immigrants, a large proportion of whom are Muslims (Arab, Turkish, Albanian, and Bosnian), has shifted the political balance rightward in Germany, France, and Italy. The slang term for racist attacks in Britain is “Paki bashing,” referring to immigrants from

*(Continued on page 32)*

## Peruvian Revolutionary Describes Fujimori's Coup

by Harold Lavender

One of the first targets of the April 5 anti-constitutional coup d'état of President Alberto Fujimori and the Peruvian military was political parties. Troops and tanks surrounded the headquarters of parties and trade unions. Party leaders, and elected members of the dissolved Peruvian parliament, were detained under house arrest and worse. Barrera Bazan, a leftist who is vice president of the Chamber of Deputies is being held on a ship off the Peruvian coast. Those not arrested have gone into hiding. Security has been stepped up at airports to prevent them from leaving the country.

By a twist of fate, three central leaders of the Unified Mariatiguista Party (PUM), the most left of the left parties in the Peruvian congress, were abroad on a tour of Asia at the time of the coup. Senator Javier Canseco and Congressional Deputy Ricardo Letts, both of the PUM, were appointed to represent the two chambers at an emergency meeting of the Organization of American States. Eduardo Caceres, secretary general of the PUM, came to Vancouver, British Columbia, the first stop of a pan-Canadian tour to build urgently needed international solidarity.

At an April 9 press conference Caceres noted that when the Peruvian president violates the constitution, as Fujimori did, he is considered removed from office. Caceres pointed out that the existing Peruvian constitution grants a clear right of insurgency against the anti-constitutional coup of Fujimori and the military. Fujimori, having suspended the existing Peruvian constitution, plans to draft a new constitution within the next eighteen months and have it approved by plebiscite.

Why would a constitutionally elected president choose to wipe out the constitution?

In the 1990 presidential election campaign Fujimori won popular support by campaigning against the free-market shock policies of his opponent, Vargas Llosa, which were inspired by the International Monetary Fund. But after taking office he implemented the full IMF treatment. Gas prices were raised eight times. Price subsidies were eliminated, wages frozen, public services slashed.

The aim of this was to open up Peru for foreign investment. However, Peru failed to attract much. This was partly due to the international recession and the very deep economic downturn in Peru itself where production plummeted. But it also reflected a tumultuous social and political decomposition. The coup was thus a forceful attempt to impose order.

Moves in the direction of a strong state began well before the coup. The Peruvian parliament did give the president authorization to enact legislation covering a limited number of areas. However, Fujimori chose to go far beyond what was authorized by parliament. He enacted over 100 decrees, even directly contrary to the will of Congress.

Many of these involved the so-called "pacification"—in reality a policy of extreme militarization. The Peruvian military was allowed to take control of regional governments. A new and extremely powerful National Intelligence Service was established, controlled by the military, and was given the power to go into every public office and ask for information, jailing those who refused to provide it. Caceres said that this legislation was "more repressive than that of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile."

Fujimori's unconstitutional decrees led to a growing confrontation with parliament. Caceres explained that Fujimori expected the left to oppose his measures, but hoped to create an alliance with the armed forces, the right-wing parties, and the U.S. government in support of militarization and a strong state. Instead, an extraordinarily broad coalition, ranging from the PUM to Vargas Llosa's right-wing Libertad, united in defense of the constitution.

The Peruvian opposition had warned of the danger, but it was clearly caught off guard by the timing of the coup. This was partly because people believed that the military would not act without the blessing of Washington. But Caceres said that there was no reason to believe Washington had been directly involved. Indeed, the White House has publicly taken its distance from Fujimori and suspended some aid to Peru.

The coup-makers face a serious contradiction. They risk international political isolation at a time when their whole economic policy depends on opening up Peru to foreign capital. But Japan has not suspended aid. And Fujimori is wooing Japanese and Asian capital. To do so successfully he needs to show that he can quickly impose order out of a corrupted and decomposing society.

The Peruvian military has a lengthy record of violating human rights. Recently Peru topped the world in numbers of people who had "disappeared." Now Caceres warned that the military might be given a green light to unleash a total offensive in an attempt to quickly annihilate the opposition.

This war will not just be waged against the Shining Path. Shining Path's support is growing given the hunger and misery caused by neo-liberal policies, but they command only a fringe base of support, perhaps 5 percent of the population. In recent years the left and popular organizations have been subject to attack by both Shining Path and the military. (See "Sendero Luminoso Assassinate Feminist Leader in Peru," by David Trujillo, *Bulletin IDOM* No. 95.) The coup itself—if it eliminates all other opposition and reduces the situation simply to one of the government against the Shining Path—could actually cause their base to grow.

The Peruvian left faces a double challenge in this context. It needs to join with all possible forces, domestically and internationally, that will fight against the military's war on democracy. At the same time it needs to help organize the mass movement—for self-defense and to lay the basis for a working class and popular alternative. □

## Organizing Independent Trade Unions in the Former USSR

For the information of our readers, the *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* has from time to time printed materials from the independent trade union *Independence* of St. Petersburg. "*Independence*," organized in June 1989 in Leningrad, tries to organize workers who perform physical labor into their own, genuine trade unions as opposed to the phoney official trade unions that serve only to promote the needs of those on top—whom *Independence* calls the *sotsiali*. *Sotsiali* are "all officials in the state from the director of an enterprise to the president of the country." (See *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, No. 80, Dec. 1990, for translations of some of its documents.)

While *Independence* is not a large organization, its idea about the need for workers to form their own independent unions seems to be shared by other currents in the developing workers' movements in the former Soviet Union. As a trade union, *Independence* does not see itself as a political organization although it welcomes activists who have a variety of political perspectives.

The core activists in *Independence* are devoting their lives to their movement with meetings at least twice each week to maintain momentum. Three of these core activists, founding members of the group, are Leonid Nikolayevich Pavlov—an economist, former economic planner and former political prisoner who considers himself a Marxist; Vadim Bolshakov—a labor historian and *Metrostroi* worker fired for his labor organizing efforts; and Rimma Sharifullina, a compressor operator at a construction materials plant who was fired in the spring of 1991 for her role in organizing a trade union and a strike there.

### 1—Letter to Ina Mae Best

Dear Ina Mae Best,

We have been told about your struggle for workers' rights and freedoms when a representative from the USA came to visit us at the trade union "*Independence*" of which I am a member. Your situation—your struggle and the loss of your job—is

We print below some material by Rimma. In her mid-twenties, Rimma was born in the Tatar Autonomous Republic. Her connection with *Independence* began when she met Leonid Nikolayevich while he was working as a receptionist in a government office. Because Leonid Nikolayevich had taken Marxism seriously in his writings and speeches while serving in an economic planning post, the local bureaucrats had decided that they no longer needed his services unless he wanted to be a receptionist. He accepted the "demotion," became a receptionist, but was subsequently sacked anyway.

Item 1 is a letter Rimma wrote to Ina Mae Best, a textile worker from North Carolina fired by the Goldtex company after 18 years on the job because of her efforts to organize a trade union in her plant. A campaign to win Ina Mae's job back is being waged by *Black Workers for Justice*. (See *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 81, "Black Workers Organizing Today.")

Item 2 is an unpublished report by Rimma about her trip to Vorkuta to organize a union of coal miners in May 1990. They had joined the miners in Ukraine's Donbass and Siberia's Kuzbass regions in a mass strike wave in 1989. The strike at 13 Vorkuta mines of November and December 1989 lasted 38 days. Rimma went to Vorkuta, one of the Vorkuta mines, to help organize a union at the request of a coal miner who had come to Leningrad to get labor support for the strike. He met with *Independence*, and joined it. Rimma said that in the mining region she visited, the snow was black on the coal-black earth, that it was a dirty and disorganized place to live; and it stays cold even in May. Many miners live in cramped dormitories with their families. They came

to make quick money, in many cases, but could never get out. The mines were built by the mass prison labor of the Stalin period, aspects of which were described from firsthand experience by Mikhail Baitalsky in his *Notebooks for the Grandchildren* (serialized in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* Nos. 36-93). The forced labor camps, of course, have been closed. But, the barbed wire and guard towers remain in place.

Item 3—"Our Aim Is Collective Property"—appeared in issue No. 12 of an independent trade union monthly *Rubikon*, printed in "*Petrograd*" dated October 1991. It is an account of Rimma's experiences organizing at the Polyustrov construction materials plant in Leningrad in 1990-91.

Items 4 and 5 appeared in *NeRV—Independent Workers Bulletin*, Issue No. 2, dated February 18, 1992. These reports provide an update of developments since the strike.

Item 6, which appeared in *NeRV*, No. 3, of February 21, 1992, shows the work collective advertising for administrators.

Item 7, which appeared in *NeRV*, No. 4, dated February 28, 1992, indicates that Rimma must have been reinstated in her job by the higher court on October 8 but appears to be on the verge of being fired again.

The accounts by Rimma provide new information about what worker organizers are doing and thinking in connection with the new openings they have in the former USSR.

The translations of items 2 through 7 were by Marilyn Vogt-Downey. The letter to Ina Mae Best was translated from the Russian by Diana Downey.

\* \* \*

very familiar and understandable to me since I, too, was sacked from work after a 23-day strike.

It is very difficult for me to imagine life in America and especially the lives of American workers. Your country seems distant and unfamiliar to us. It was very important to me and my comrades to learn that you have similar problems. For us,

relations between workers of different countries are much more important than meetings between Gorbachev and Bush. Therefore, it is essential for us to know the details of your dismissal and the struggle of the American trade unions for the rights and freedoms of workers.

I worked for four years at a construction materials factory. But only after three years

did we succeed in convincing the workers of the importance of the struggle and the need to form a trade union. In the summer of 1990, we formed a factory trade union called Independence which joined the professional association of workers Independence. As a result of its formation, a 23-day strike began, which was the reason for my dismissal. According to the law laid down by the Leningrad courts, our strike was illegal. The Supreme Court of Russia was forced to repeal the decision of the Leningrad City Court. For this we are indebted to the miners' strike and the resulting unrest which continued in our country from March through April 1990.

We defended our strike at the new trial held in the Leningrad court and in the end it was declared legal. The courts lifted the fines imposed on the members of the strike committee of our trade union Independence and stopped persecution of the workers. The management increased workers' pay.

On August 15, 1991, a trial is taking place for my reinstatement at work. The trade union Independence is defending me at the trial. I hope that my comrades will support me.

Ina Mae Best, unfortunately, I know little about you. That is why I have written a complicated letter. But my comrades and I would very much like to hear from you.

In conclusion, I want to say that the position of women in our society is very difficult. Many women consider their discrimination and oppression as something inescapable and natural. So it would be very instructive for us to know the history of the struggle of women in America. This will be very important for the development of the women's movement in Russia. I await your reply.

Workers from many countries and every nationality are oppressed by the ruling classes. My comrades and I in the trade union Independence stand with the workers of your trade union. Although we are from different and distant lands, we are together and united by the same aim.

We have been given some leaflets describing your struggle. We have translated them into Russian and distributed them among the workers of Leningrad.

It would be wonderful to arrange permanent links between our trade unions.

Please write to the following address:

RSFSR  
190121 Leningrad  
a/ya 970  
Trade Union "Independence"  
Sharifullina Rimma

We look forward to your reply.

With comradely greetings,  
Rimma Sharifullina  
August 8, 1991

## 2—How We Ended Up at Vorgashor

Upon the invitation of members of Independence of the Vorgashor mine of Vorkuta, my comrade Petr Shenin and I were delegated to visit the mine in May 1990, in order to take part in the formation of the trade union Independence. For this purpose, we spent a week there.

We had been in contact with the miners since the 38-day strike of November 1989. Before it began, a member of the Vorgashor strike committee, Yuri Fedorovich Dmitrienko, had come to see us. Through him we made contact with the strikers and informed Leningrad workers about them. Yuri immediately jumped at the idea of a trade union "without officials." Now he is the leader of Independence at Vorgashor.<sup>1</sup>

### *First There Was the Democratic Workers' Movement*

The results of the autumn strike were that the demands for the mine's economic independence and for the establishment of a Democratic Workers Movement (DRM) were met. This was a social-political organization, which the workers committee joined in order to be officially recognized and avoid being disbanded by the government. Later the workers organized into a branch of the Independence union inside that movement.

### *At First Glance*

When we arrived I was struck by the fact that the miners assembled freely, without the participation of the administration, and resolved their problems. The workers committee had office space where everyone who wanted to could go and say whatever they wanted to say. Through a telephone which the committee had access to, the DRM could contact other mines and regions. Opposite the office of the party committee, the DRM posted its agitational leaflets. This could not happen in Leningrad. At the meetings organized during shift changes, with the director and the representative of the party organization present, the Vorgashor miners spoke sharply about the need to expel the party committee from the mines.

### *Opposing the Communists in a Communist Way*

There was also cause for concern. It seemed to us that all the leaders of the strike who had joined the DRM and had become deputies had been infected by the method of bureaucratic-party maneuvers against the soviets and the workers' commissions. Before our arrival at Vorkuta, we felt that in the regions where there was an active workers' movement, it made sense to struggle for equal representation in the soviets. But at Vorgashor it became clearer

and clearer that this idea was premature. The soviets were and remained a tool of the imperial state. They obeyed the anti-worker laws of the state powers and lacked the strength to act independently. The enterprises and institutions only responded to instructions from their departments and administrations. The deputies were powerless before both the state law and their own executive committee, because they were not being paid by those who elected them. The executive committee of the Vorkuta soviet consisted of the same people who had been there during the worst years of the imperial [pre-glasnost] regime.

The deputies from DRM complained that workers had not been pulled into an elected post "for a bottle." Candidates who had campaigned for a future, better system of power adopted the old methods of the Communists after they were in power. Accusing the electors of political passivity, they did not understand that deputies without electors to support them end up being no different from the old ruling party. Lack of interest among the workers in the powerless soviets became obvious during our visit. The Vorkuta soviet after several campaigns had vacant places and could not conduct any business for lack of a quorum. Life in the city and in the village flowed along unchanged, once more proving the impotence of the soviets when the imperial state remains intact.

### *At Least the Administration Should Pay*

All the miners said that the strike gave them nothing except confidence in their own power. The workers did not receive pay for the time of the strike, after which all the mine's debts got "hung" on them. As a result of the shift to economic self-sufficiency, the number of loads had decreased and so had wages. They had to be convinced that the debt and disorganization of production should be paid for by the administration and the higher-ups. Anyway, the workers are still making the same average pay.

The administration wants to be independent of the ministries and associations; the workers are fighting for independence from the administration. This is the first aim of Independence. Otherwise, it is only strikers who will suffer from a strike. The officials as before are beyond control and will continue to oppress the workforce with impunity. Many miners, particularly the women, were indignant that no one has seen to it that the miners' demands were met. Instead, the miner leaders got places in the organs of the administration or turned their attention to politics. As a result, working conditions have not improved and wages remain at the former level. I believe this results from the fact that

many leaders joined the official structures with the intent of reforming them but instead got reformed themselves, largely because they became isolated from those who perform physical work.

### *Leaders: 'For' or 'Against'*

Some leaders felt they were now politicians for whom working conditions and the struggle against the administration's tyranny were "petty concerns" when compared with participation in the power structure. One of the most energetic strikers had become chairman of the trade union committee and no longer worked. Trying to prove the need for the union to have full-time functionaries, this newborn trade union bureaucrat babbled for hours in committee meetings.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, he would complain about the catastrophic shortage of time. He was not at all uncomfortable that there was a waiting room full of people with a staff of secretaries in his reception area. In our presence the members of the DRM examined the case in which one of the women workers had been disciplined with the consent of the trade union committee. This incident showed the impotence of the politicized DRM to affect the administration's decision. On the basis of this example, we saw how much the psychology of a leader changes when he becomes cut off from the workers. At least the power of the comfortable chair continues to function efficiently.

### *'Leading Organs' Again?*

Our familiarity with the Vorkuta City Strike Committee (VGRSK) led us to the same conclusion. Its members had already moved a long way from a worker environment; they were not working but were getting paid—not by those they represented but by the enterprises, i.e., by the bureaucrats. By the time we arrived in Vorkuta, all that remained of the strike was about 1,200 rubles from the strike fund, the new worker functionaries, and their staff that appeared from nobody-knows-where. The function of these "strikers," who had been "out" now for the better part of a year, boiled down to trying to find ways to become the "leading organization" of the workers' movement in Vorkuta and finding the means for existence.

At a session of the VGRSK they were talking about sources of funds since the contributions to the fund the committee had raised to help the strikers was running out. The committee members themselves admitted that the city workers committee had become a division of the territorial committee. Even the newly elected liberal deputies could not understand its members' claims to be a leading organ since they had no organization, i.e., no

social base in the mines. We understood: the social base for this committee does not exist and the miners will begin to act independently of the VGRSK as was evidenced by the fact that not one protest strike occurred in response to the administration's refusal to recognize the committee.

At the session, it was decided to appeal to the miners for material aid even though many of those present admitted that they did not enjoy enough authority to expect that the workers would agree to sustain them as still another leadership organ. In line with this, they agreed they were not capable of dealing with Resolution No. 608 and that it was necessary to advance new demands—but how and which ones, no one knew. After our presentation, a discussion began of the idea of our union. The opinion of the workers was sharply different from the opinion of the functionaries who could not be members of our organization.

Several miners asked about our regulations and program while the "intellectuals" haughtily criticized our radicalism.

### *We Are for a Showdown*

After these observations at Vorgashor and in the VGRSK it became understandable why the workers who became deputies and joined the administrative organs like the STKs, trade union committees, and bureaucratic commissions all supported liberalism, the spokesmen for which are the liberal bureaucrats. But liberalism is only good when the workers' movement is just being born, to help provide conditions for its development. When more radical currents appear and the workers begin to repudiate the existing power structure and refuse to participate in it, liberalism takes on imperial colors. Among the miners the idea of leaving the All-Union Congress of Trade Unions was being advanced. Instead, they want a union of miners with the directors and highly placed trade union organs.<sup>3</sup>

This is a typical manifestation of liberalism which gives the appearance of improvements without changing anything fundamental. It is absolutely clear that the pyramidal structure of the "new" union is preserved so as to give the economic and trade union bureaucrats the possibility to continue to live at the expense of the miners. It deprives the workers of the possibility to struggle against their own administration. In fact, can you really present demands to members of your own organization? It was long ago understood that the interests of the workers are opposite to the interests of the bureaucrat directors. Therefore the need arises to create a trade union without the administration and without the office staff, a union that is

opposed to the administration and the powers that be.

This is what the radical current of the workers' movement says and this is what Independence says. We spoke about this with the miners at Vorgashor. There were many arguments, but our radicalism coincided with the mood of the miners. They understood that without a real showdown to defend their interests, the administration will not budge. In order for the officials to respond to the workers, workers must have the right to form a union independent from the administration. . . .

At the end of our stay at the mine, a founding meeting of the Independence trade union of the Vorgashor miners took place. About 30 miners joined it. Sixteen were present at the meeting; the others were at work. The miners said a division of the union could be set up in every section where workers will have money and collective property at their disposal, using their trade union rights. The director's orders about living conditions and pay will be meaningless without the trade union's agreement. The impotence of the other public organizations when confronted with the tyranny of the officials had been shown by the experience of DRM. The director did not consult the DRM on a single instruction regarding working and living conditions and the laws protected him. Evidently the same is happening with the Unions of Workers and the Confederation of Labor, the sum total of whose power stops at the gates of the enterprise.

This happens because they function outside production and have a reformist political orientation. But the workers need an independent trade union that fights against the tyranny of the administration in the enterprise, in the branches, and on the shop floor. The best way to organize such a union is to have it open only for workers and not for office staff and leaders who do not work. This is stated in the rules of Independence. The DRM organization, created for the struggle against the authorities and for power, was no different than any other party. Independence fights against the administration and against social tyranny. This makes no sense if it is isolated from production. Will the DRM support the new trade union? Time will tell, and time is on our side.

Summer 1990

### **3—Our Aim Is Collective Property**

**D**SK-2 (a housing construction production combine) is a construction monopoly uniting three production centers and various building trusts.

In December and January 1990-91 there was a long strike at the Polyustrov production center organized by the Leningrad

trade union Independence. At the same time, the construction workers at this plant established their own Independence trade union.

Before the strike, I had worked at this factory for four years in a brigade of women compressor operators. The compressor room is a vitally important part of the production process which provides the other divisions with compressed air. In the autumn of 1990, ten compressor operators who were dissatisfied with their situation presented some demands to the administration. Everything was done officially, in writing. The administration ignored this appeal. The conflict intensified.

I advised the women to organize a trade union. After that, when the administration again ignored our demands, advanced by now in the name of the compressor operators' trade union Independence, we decided to resort to an extreme measure: a strike. But we first had to appeal to all the workers in the factory because if work at the factory were to suddenly stop when the workers did not expect it, the administration would be able to turn the other workers against us. We spent a lot of time talking to the other workers on the shop floor. The workers were also dissatisfied with their situation and this allowed us to organize the trade union Independence throughout the entire Polyustrov production combine, where the workforce numbers about 800.<sup>4</sup> Of these, 500 are production workers and 300 are office personnel and administrators.

We succeeded in uniting the workers into the trade union, conducting several meetings, and presenting our demands to the administration of the entire monopoly. After the general director Yakovlyev turned his back on our demands, the trade union began a strike. The strike continued for 23 days and as a result related branches of production stopped their work, construction was halted, and the Yakovlyev administration stopped receiving its foreign currency income from the joint ventures that rented shop space at Polyustrov.

Initially our demands were economic: wage increases, improved working conditions. But the administration stubbornly refused to grant these demands and took us to court. The defendants—the strike committee members—were not present at the trial because the court workers would not allow them to enter the courtroom. The strike was ruled illegal and we were ordered to return to work. But we did not return to work and held a trade union conference where we decided that the factory should be made the property of the workers. In point of fact, this meant the disintegration of the Yakovlyev monopoly because the administration of the factory

would have to be shifted to committees of workers' self-management.

We appealed to the Leningrad City Council because we knew that they had approved a course toward privatization. We requested that they recommend a specialist whom we could hire as overall manager. We could not complete the transition to a collective form of ownership without a person in overall charge and we knew that the specialists who worked in the old system—like the office workers in the factory—were on the side of the old administration.

In the course of the negotiations, [Leningrad mayor Anatoly] Sobchak was very insolent so we appealed to the commission on property of the Leningrad City Council.

The chairman of this commission Utyevsky proposed we rent the property. Toward this end, deputies—who claimed to be on the side of the workers—came to visit us at the factory. Because we did not have support from other factories, the workers were attracted to the deputies' proposal. But it turned out that the deputies, behind the backs of the workers, had actually been in collusion with the administration to stop the strike by promising to help the workers with the legal aspects of the transition to this leasing arrangement—after the strikers returned to work.

The strike ended and nothing has changed at all. The workers now realize that the deputies were traitors who talk a lot about privatization but are really under the thumb of Kozhukhovskiy, the general director of the Leningrad Construction Committee (or Concern, as it is now called). This monopoly exists to this day and is thriving. As a result of the strike, the official of the Polyustrov plant was fired and so was one of the shop officials. Some changes have been implemented: wages were increased, the average wage of the workers is now about 700 rubles per month; and working conditions are changing.

We registered our trade union with the Independence association. . . .

After the strike ended, the administration fired me because I was a member of the strike committee. When we went to court in connection with our strike, my case was also raised. The Supreme Court of Russia overturned the decision of the Leningrad City Court in connection with the strike and ordered it to review its decision. As a result of the review by the Leningrad City Court, we won: the fines that had been imposed on the members of the strike committee were dropped and the administration sought a peaceful settlement, relinquishing its claims. But they soon declared a moratorium on strikes in our association, which seemed quite funny to me.

The case on my reinstatement took place on the first day of the attempted coup. And I must give some credit for the fact that I got my job back to the principled legal stance of the judge who made the decision. However, it is true that by then we had already won the case involving the strike, and the trade union Independence was rather well known to the employers. I was to get my job back immediately but I was not awarded back pay for the time I had been deprived of work. The administration appealed the Leningrad court's decision; the hearing on their appeal will take place October 8, 1991.

What can we expect from now on? Yeltsin's edict abolishing activity of political parties on the premises of the enterprises simultaneously abolishes activity by trade unions. Now, when we propose the administration sign a contract with us, the administration, naturally, refuses on the basis of this edict which says we do not have the right to function within the territory of the enterprise. What conclusion are we to draw from this? We must again go through the process of legal registration. For registration, it is important to rely on the previous court decisions because they will give us a basis for demanding a contract from the Yakovlyev administration.

But we do not intend to give up our goal of getting the Polyustrov plant as our collective property. This—if not today, then tomorrow—will become a reality.

October 1991

#### 4—'We Are Prepared'

The workers at the Polyustrov Production Facility DSK-2 are ready for privatization.<sup>5</sup> For them it is no secret that the enterprise is on the verge of ruin and any day can send them on an indefinite leave. In this case, they are ready to advance an alternate proposal: let the workers take over production. They are selecting in the meantime variants of collective non-distributable property arrangements to be administered by a worker self-management committee made up of delegates from the various occupational groups. However, the workers are well aware that without experienced administrators, economists, buyers, and other specialists, it is impossible for the enterprise to function.

Therefore, the Independence trade union of construction workers of Polyustrov invites the collaboration of specialists who would be willing to help the work collective prepare a program for saving the enterprise and if the privatization is successful to work at a collectively run enterprise. We would be glad to meet with such persons. Contact Rimma Saditovna

Sharifullina at [various telephone numbers].

February 18, 1992

### 5—'At the Top of Our Voices'

Despite constant quarrels with the administration, the construction workers' trade union Independence at Polyustrov has experienced significant gains. Thus, over the past week, as a result of talks with the administration and shop floor meetings we succeeded in getting the management to back off from their efforts to force workers to sign individual contracts before a collective agreement can be concluded. Also, an agreement has been reached about open discussions on the issue of raising rates of wages. Previously, this was done on the sly which sometimes caused conflicts since no one knew who was receiving how much each month. Now, if the workers demand it, the shop floor official must make public what in-

creases can be expected. Still another opportunity to split the workers has been knocked from the hands of the administration.

February 18, 1992

6

The Polyustrov building workers' trade union Independence is now seeking an administrator to oversee the functioning of the forced-steam shop. A position is guaranteed. Drunks, rude individuals, and those who do not know how to talk to workers need not apply.

February 21, 1992

7

February 25, 1992: There was a meeting of the work collective of the forced-steam shop of the Polyustrov Production Works DSK-2. There, representatives of the administration announced the first

layoffs—even though only a month ago, in response to an inquiry by the trade union Independence, the administration had sworn that no such layoffs were in sight. Among those who are slated for layoff from the forced-steam shop was the leader of the local trade union Independence—R. Sharifullina.

February 28, 1992

### Notes

1. Unfortunately, Yuri subsequently joined a fundamentalist Christian group, took a job above ground, and left the workers' movement.
2. The Independence term *sotsiali* has been translated bureaucrat.
3. The AUCTU self-destructed in October 1990. In its place the General Confederation of Trade Unions was formed. The coal miners formed an Independent Miners Union in October 1990.
4. The trade union Independence now has 303 dues-paying members at the Polyustrov plant.
5. Privatization is used here to mean workers taking over an enterprise from the bureaucrats and running it themselves.

## Independence and Leningrad Subway Workers

One of the work sites where Independence has been able to establish a union has been Metrostroi, the government agency responsible for construction of new subway tunnels and stations in the city of Leningrad [now St. Petersburg]. Metrostroi employs approximately 6,000 workers and has roughly 50 tunnel shafts and new station sites deep beneath the city.

During the summer of 1991 when I was visiting Leningrad, I accompanied the Independence activists as they attempted to assist a Metrostroi worker Valery in establishing a trade union for the workers in one of these shafts. Valery, a rock "cutter," had worked in the tunnels for 29 years. Part of his personal history included being mobilized by the army in October 1986 to go to the site of the Chernobyl nuclear explosion that occurred in April of that year. He had to stay for three months helping construct villages for officials some 30-40 kilometers from the deadly, damaged reactor. He had never joined the Communist Party or the Komsomol. In the spring of 1991, having heard of Independence, Valery came to the organization and asked for help in establishing a union in his shaft. Since spring, he has become an active member of Independence's coordinating committee.

On an appointed day in mid-July, Leonid Nikolayevich, Vadim, Rimma, and I met Valery at the face of the shaft where he works to meet first with shaft officials—who with their pressed clothing, greasy hair, and potbellies remarkably resembled bosses in the U.S.—to inform them that a meeting with the workers would be called for the next week.

I also accompanied them when they returned the next week to meet with the workers themselves during a shift change to tell them about the trade union Independence and encourage them to join.

The workers (about 25 gathered round) seemed to listen fairly attentively and for the most part with sympathy.

After the first meeting, I was given a "tour" of the shaft. We were lowered into the shaft on a rickety lift and shown the antiquated and dilapidated equipment the workers had to use which contributed to the high rate of accidents and occupational injuries. In a remarkable

coincidence, a huge iron gate to the lift, which the workers had long demanded be repaired, fell totally from its hinges just as we were trying to ascend and would have killed Valery had he been a few inches closer to the lift at the time; fortunately, it "only" grazed his shoulder.

In early August, I also accompanied them with two workers—who had been chosen as delegates—to the executive offices of Metrostroi in central Leningrad to meet with Alexandrov, the Metrostroi boss, to present the workers' demands which included the recognition of the union, a 50 percent pay increase, and guaranteed paid vacations. Alexandrov was as slippery and slimy as any boss anywhere. With his four pressed-shirted underlings seated at his elbow, he listened to the demands and refused to grant them for various technical reasons. All of the reasons Leonid Nikolayevich was able to prove illegal, quoting appropriate documents he had brought along. (Incredibly, after the meeting was over, Alexandrov had the nerve to claim he was a Leninist, to which we responded, "hardly.")

Alexandrov asked for two weeks to think about the matter.

Independence has been continuing its efforts to organize Metrostroi workers. Issue No. 3 of the new St. Petersburg weekly *NeRV—Independent Workers Bulletin*—dated February 21 reports that the administration of Metrostroi had fired a leader of the Independence union there named Vladimir Ignatenko. The journal speculated that most likely the administration has begun "to settle accounts with troublemakers on the eve of the conclusion of a contract."

By the way, the Independence comrades told me that at least partially due to my presence at the shaft meetings as a "representative of the international workers' movement," as Leonid Nikolayevich introduces me within two days after my visit, the iron gate on the lift was finally repaired and the management announced to Valery's shift that their daily pay for the month would be increased—to 32 rubles from the previously announced 26 rubles. However, it is more likely that the bosses' fear of the prospect of the union played a large role in this. (One of the problems workers face is not knowing how much their wages will be until nearly the end of the month.)

—Marilyn Vogt-Downey

# The Irresistible Decline of Mikhail Gorbachev

by Ernest Mandel

*This article is reprinted from Socialist Outlook, No. 15, February 1, 1992.*

**T**he mass action of tens of millions of workers is the only force capable of really finishing off the old ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. In other words, a real popular, anti-bureaucratic revolution is needed.

The Soviet bureaucracy is too vast, has such strong social links, and can rely on so much inertia and routine, obstruction and sabotage, for it to be decisively weakened from above.

Mikhail Gorbachev did not want to unleash such a revolution, nor was he capable of doing so. His aim was to preserve the system and reform it, not destroy it.

Gorbachev's attempt to radically reform the system was not primarily motivated by ideological reasons, but by the deeper and deeper crisis that the USSR slid into from the late 1970s. This was shown in a number of ways:

- The continual decline in economic growth, which had been lower than the USA's for a decade.
- The impossibility, in these conditions, of simultaneously maintaining economic modernization, the arms race, a regular increase in the popular standard of living, and maintaining and increasing the bureaucracy's privileges.
- The defeat of the attempt to improve the quality of industrial production. That requires making a priority of quality rather than quantity, exact calculations of costs, glasnost in the economy, and more say for consumers. All of these are incompatible with bureaucratic dictatorship.

This had a number of consequences:

- A big social decline, with more than 60 million people in poverty, the deterioration of the health service and a big drop in life expectancy.
- The regime's loss of any political legitimacy, with the development of a broad opposition (oppressed nationalities, intellectuals, youth).
- A deep ideological and moral crisis in the bureaucracy, which went out of control.

### III-Conceived

Gorbachev's defeat was the defeat of economic perestroika. Ill-conceived from the start, changing direction frequently, combining increasingly contradictory aims, perestroika ended up by dismantling the old "command economy" without substituting anything coherent for it. After one or two somersaults, economic decline followed stagnation.

For the Soviet people, this meant an accelerating decline in their standard of living. As a result, Gorbachev lost any popular base.

Gorbachev's foreign policy was based around stopping the arms race at any price and getting technological and financial aid from the West to stop the whole edifice from crumbling.

This translated into reactionary "regional agreements," affecting both the Cuban and Central American revolutions and the South African and Arab liberation struggles.

But closing one's eyes to the positive changes that took place in the USSR under Gorbachev would be wrong. These changes can be summed up as glasnost—the massive expansion of democratic freedoms enjoyed by the masses.

They were certainly limited, partial democratic rights which were not constitutionally guaranteed. They were also combined with authoritarianism, which increased in Gorbachev's latter days.

But they were real rights: a larger number of parties, political groups, and independent workers' organizations developed. Uncensored publications appeared. Public demonstrations were allowed. Strikes multiplied. Elections were held which gave voters a choice between different candidates.

The putschists of August 1991 wanted to severely limit, if not suppress, these rights. They aimed specifically to withdraw the right to strike and suppress independent workers' organizations.

This is why they had to be opposed by any means available. And it's why the coup's defeat was welcome.

The workers of the ex-USSR now need to conduct a struggle on two fronts: to defend and extend democratic rights; and against privatization. To abandon either of these would be to sacrifice the fundamental interests of the working class.

There is no chance of developing, or winning, the political revolution in the USSR without the working class regaining its organizational autonomy and class political independence. It is impossible to realize these aims without a long period of developing struggles and the emergence of a new vanguard.

Without real democratic freedoms, this would take much longer, be much more difficult, and have much less chance of success.

Gorbachev was overthrown by a wing of the bureaucracy led by Boris Yeltsin, who represents a wing of the top nomenklatura. Due to his past and his training, Yeltsin is a man of the apparatus. If one thing distinguishes him from Gorbachev, it is that he is less evasive, more authoritarian and so more dangerous for the masses.

By contrast with Gorbachev, who still vaguely supports socialism, Yeltsin openly supports the restoration of capitalism.

But when judging politicians, what they think is not enough. The most important thing is to look at what they do in practice and the social interests they represent.

From this standpoint, Yeltsin and his allies in the liquidation of the USSR in favor of the "Confederation of Independent



States" represent a fraction of the nomenklatura. This is quite distinct from the bourgeois forces as such (the nouveaux millionaires), even if the two do intersect.

The classic case is that of the presidents of Kazakhstan and the Ukraine, who with Yeltsin "betrayed" Gorbachev at the last minute (his words) to liquidate the USSR. Both have been regional leaders of the Stalinist apparatus since Gorbachev's early days. Both rely on the "local" KGB, which has hardly changed.

At the start of the putsch, both took an expectant, if not favorable, attitude to it. Both knowingly used the popular feeling of revolt against national oppression to convert themselves into "nationalist leaders."

And their cynicism was particularly highlighted by the fact that they did not hesitate to associate themselves with Yeltsin, a genuine Great Russian chauvinist—for how long is a different question.

The only conclusion is that there is still a three-cornered struggle. Fractions of the top nomenklatura, forces that are for the restoration of capitalism—bourgeois in the social sense—and the working masses are three distinct forces with their own interest.

### A New Putsch?

New putsches are possible. Yeltsin risks rapidly losing his popularity, given the anti-working class policies that he is implementing.

Behind him there is already the sinister figure of Vladimir Shirinovsky, the Soviet Le Pen, who associates himself with the tsar and Pinochet. He has the support of some of the army and is openly Great Russian, anti-Semitic, and racist. His popularity should not be underestimated.

All this adds up to a situation which is neither revolutionary nor prerevolutionary. As a social force, the working class is infinitely stronger than its opponents, and infinitely stronger than in 1917 or 1927.

But, for Stalinism to be overthrown by a revolution, the working class has to act as an independent social force. This is not happening.

Stalinism discredited the very idea of communism, Marxism, and socialism. As a result the vacuum created by the deep ideological and moral crisis of Soviet society is not about to be filled by the working class.

The workers are acting, but around immediate, short-term aims, in a fragmented way. Right-wing forces have the political initiative, contrary to the hopes that one could have had up until 1980-81 (the first rise of Solidarnosc).

Does this mean that a restabilization of the nomenklatura or a restoration of capitalism are more likely? It means nothing of the kind. They are just as improbable as a breakthrough for the political revolution.

Yeltsin's pro-bourgeois government has made a start on capitalist restoration. But there is an enormous distance between the beginning and the end.

For there to be a real restoration of capitalism, an extension of the market economy—which is much less widespread today than it was under the NEP—is not enough. The major means of production and exchange would also have to become commodities.

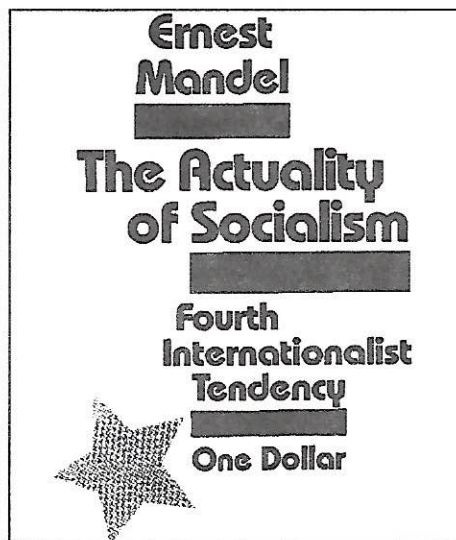
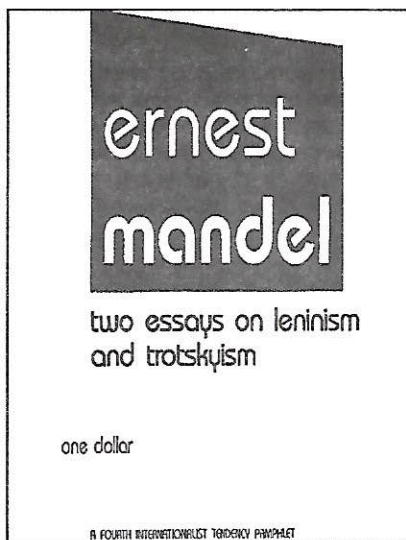
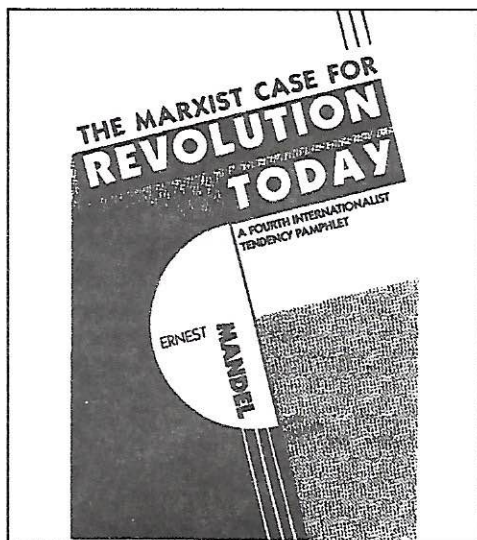
That means at least a thousand billion dollars, which is currently as impossible a sum in the West as in the USSR itself. The labor force would have to submit to the laws of the "labor market."

That means tens of millions of unemployed and a drop in the standard of living of 30 to 50 percent. That would meet with strong resistance.

So the most likely outcome is a long period of decomposition and chaos. But there is a modest but real hope that during this period the Soviet working class will slowly reconquer its class independence.

The main task of the small socialist forces consists of linking up with this process to aid the workers in overcoming the obstacles. □

### New From the FIT: Three pamphlets by Ernest Mandel:



WORKERS  
OF THE  
WORLD,  
UNITE

# THE MILITANT



Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America

VOLUME VII, NO. 17 [WHOLE NO. 231]

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 1934

PRICE 2 CENTS

## All Out to Madison Square on May Day!

Revolutionary Workers! March Under the Banner of the Communist League of America!



On May Day this year New York will witness the imposing demonstration of the workers and the tangible advances toward their united struggle against the common enemy that has been seen for many years. The participating workers' organizations will march together in a single parade and hold a common demonstration at Madison Square. The Communist League (International Communists) will march in the parade under its own banner and will be represented by its own speakers at the demonstration.

The United League demonstration represents the revolutionary workers. The workers who want a united front of action and action are called upon to choose between the socialist party and the Communist Party. This ultimatum contains those propositions which have to be dealt with separately.

### UNIONISTS AND COMMUNISTS

It is quite true that the Madison Square demonstration will be predominantly socialist and trade unionist and that these organizations have by far the main weight in the demonstration. But that is not a reason for communists to stay away from the demonstration. On the contrary, it is the duty of the communists to march with the socialist workers and the trade unionists and to raise the banner of communism in their midst. As long as the communists are permitted to march with their own banners and to be represented by their own speakers at the demonstration—and these rights have been expressly preserved for all the participating organizations by the Joint demonstration committee—they have no need and no right to present any other demands as a condition for united action. March separately, strike together—this is the fundamental basis for the united front of the workers.

We do not demand that the socialist workers have their organizations as a condition for common action with us. We do not demand that they cease to be socialist in order to make a united front with us. But it is no less true that the united front doctrine of revolutionary internationalism will also be represented there this May Day, and only there. Not the banner of socialism, episcopal with crises and irreversibility, but the banner of the International Communist—this is the banner of Communism. Every revolutionary worker ought to march behind it and no other.

### FASTLY MARCHING ON UNITED FRONT

The third fallacy is the ultimatum of the Socialist and their associates concerning the joining of the question of a united front with the Social Democracy and the Communist Party and the Communist Party, and the demand that the workers choose between the two parties. "March with the Communist Party, not with the Socialist Party," is the formula of this ultimatum. We say that it is a question of party preference, we choose neither the U. S. nor the S. K. and follow neither. If the May Day meetings are to be restricted simply as meetings of different parties then the revolutionary workers supporting the Communist League would have no choice but to abstain from both demonstrations and to organize their own, however small it might be.

But this is not how the question properly should be asked. On the contrary. General political meetings of the parties can be conducted apart from the demonstration under the auspices of the respective parties

in the need for unity and to preclude the abandonment of the rank and the workers for it, that it was proposed had been adopted and carried out honestly and conscientiously it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the Socialist leaders to refuse.

We shall continue to fight for this policy as we have fought consistently for it in the past. For years, as a further stepping for the return of the C. P., we continuously advocated the adoption by the party of the policy of the united front in the same sense that we proposed it today. The victory of Communism in Germany is directly due to the rejection by the Socialist leadership of the united front with the Social Democracy and the reformist trade unions which the Left Opposition insistently demanded. The weakness and disorganization of the working class movement in this country, after four and one-half years of the unopposed reign of its leadership, are the result of the same fatal mistake, systematically repeated.

Breaking with the Communist banner of the obvious and irreparable bankruptcy, and taking the path toward new parties and the Fourth Internationalist, the International Communist (formerly the Left Opposition) is no way slow or modify the principles, strategy and tactics which guided by the broad labor movement which they formerly proposed for the adoption of the official Communist tactics. The only difference is, that we carry out in practice now, as a completely independent organization, the tactics which we previously recommended to the C. P. This

### Important Notice!

Largest numbers and arrangements available on May Day at 125 West 125th Street at 11 A.M. sharp.

May Day, the workers' holiday, will be the great struggle of 1934, inspired by the blood of the Maymarket martyrs!

May Day has witnessed mighty demonstrations of the marching hosts of labor throughout the world. It has witnessed the death days of the World War and the memorable capitulation of the Second International. It has seen the glorious days of the Russian Revolution when the workers, rising in their might, overthrew their oppressors and marched in triumphant processions through the streets which they had won.

Through bitter struggles, through defeats and victories, through the few survivors of the slaughter, again the marching millions, have prevailed to the

by James P. Cannon

The following article on upcoming May Day events was published in the Militant, April 28, 1934. The Militant of May 5 reported that this was the most impressive May Day celebration New York had ever seen. The Madison Square parade proceeded before the speakers stand from 1 to 6 p.m. Cannon, representing the Communist League, and Manny Garret, representing the Spartacus Youth League (Trotskyist youth group), spoke at the rally following the march. It was estimated that a total of 150,000 participated in the two demonstrations, the one called by the May Day Labor Conference at Madison Square and the other by the Communist Party at Union Square.

On May Day this year New York will witness the most imposing demonstration of the workers and the most tangible advances toward their united struggle against the common enemy that has been seen for many years. The participating workers' organizations will march together in a single parade and hold a common demonstration at Madison Square. The Communist League (International Communists) will march in the parade under its own banner and will be represented by its own speakers at the demonstration.

The idea that the political and economic organizations of the workers, regardless of their differences of principle, must form a united front of action against the class enemy—this idea, which was rejected with such fatal consequences in Germany, has brought a host of organizations together and governs their practice in carrying out all the arrangements of the united front May Day parade and demonstration. The no less important condition—that each organization shall preserve its own identity and march under its own banner—is likewise respected and observed by the participants.

These features of the demonstration signify a victory for the idea of a workers' united front and the beginning of its realization in action. For these reasons alone, the Communist League, which insistently fights for the united front of the workers' organizations, would be duty bound to take part in the work and actions of the May Day Labor Conference which culminate in the parade and demonstration on May Day. But there are other reasons of no less weight and importance which make the course we have taken mandatory upon us as communists.

The Stalinist party (CP) and the organizations under its control are conducting a separate parade and demonstration at the same hour. Thus, although the preponderant weight of forces is with the Labor Day Conference, a serious element of division remains in the workers' ranks. Such a division is not of our making. We stand for the united front of all the workers' organizations and will continue to fight for it in the future. Nevertheless, the division, and the holding of the demonstrations at the same hour, compel each organization and each individual militant to make a choice.

We have made our choice in this matter with full deliberation, and our decision is not an isolated one, applicable only to a single occasion. It corresponds, rather, to the trend of developments in the labor movement. And this, in turn, determines the tactical course of the revolutionary Marxists.

### Madison Square and Union Square

The Stalinists, who reject the united front with all organizations not under their direct control, demand that the workers demonstrate on May Day only under Stalinist auspices. This ultimatum is repeated by their camp followers of various kinds in varying stages of confusion and demoralization.

The ultimatums of the Stalinists have no interest for us. We reject the "leadership" of these political hooligans and condemn them as a menace to the labor movement. But to the conscientious left-wing workers who may have the mistaken impression that the May Day demonstrations present a choice between communism and reformism, we owe a frank explanation of the course we have taken. Our remarks on the question are addressed especially to them.

It is argued by the Stalinists and their camp followers that the parade and demonstration at Madison Square, organized by the Labor Conference, will be composed predominantly of the Socialist political organizations and reformist trade unions, while the Union Square demonstration represents the revolutionary workers. The workers who want a united front action and defense are called upon to choose between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. This ultimatum contains three propositions which have to be dealt with separately.

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It is quite true that the Madison Square demonstration will be predominantly socialist and trade unionist and that these organizations have by far the main weight in the conference. But that is not a reason for communists to stay away from the demonstration. On the contrary, it is the duty of the communists to march with the socialist workers and the trade unionists and to raise the banner of communism in their midst. As long as the communists are permitted to march with their own banner and to be represented by their own speakers at the demonstration—and these rights have been expressly provided for all the

participating organizations by the joint arrangements committee—they have no need and no right to present any other demands as a condition for a united action. March separately, strike together—this is the fundamental basis for the united front of the workers.

We do not demand that the socialist workers leave their organizations as a condition for common action with us. We

do not demand that they cease to be socialists in order to make a united front with communists. We do not demand that our leadership be recognized beforehand, and we do not repeat the insane gibberish about the "united front from below." It is such *ultimatums*, which the Stalinist bureaucrats are in the habit of laying down to the workers, which negate the very idea of the united front and make it impossible. We hope to *convince* the workers, *in the course of common action*, of the inadequacy of reformism and the necessity for revolutionary policy and leadership. But we do not demand that they be convinced of this in advance. Therein lies the fundamental difference between the Stalinist and the revolutionary communist conception of the united front.

### Who Are the Revolutionary Workers?

The second false assumption in the ultimatum of the Stalinists and their ideological captives is the argument that the Union Square demonstration is a demonstration of the "revolutionary workers," that the Stalinist leaders are the representatives of communism. This contention, false to the core, is especially repugnant today in the face of the cynical united front of Stalinism with world reaction in hounding the organizer of the Russian Revolution.

Many workers with the impulse to be revolutionists will undoubtedly participate in the Stalinist demonstration. But Stalinism as a political current contributes nothing to the labor movement but ideological disorientation, demoralization, and defeat. The Stalinist hooligans corrupt every principle of communism and defile its very name. They always subordinate the interests of the working class to the special interests of a bureaucratic apparatus. The Stalinists disrupt and sabotage every attempt of the workers to unite their forces for a common fight against the class enemy. Stalinism is a poison in the veins of the labor movement, and its harmful influence derives precisely from the assumption by many workers that it represents communism.

It is necessary to attack this illusion in deed as well as in word and to put the question as it really stands: *Stalinism is a reactionary force in the labor movement of the whole world.*

The Madison Square demonstration will be predominantly reformist, in composition and leadership. That is true. But revolutionary internationalism will be represented there this May Day, *and only there*. Not the banner of Stalinism, spotted with crimes and treacheries, but the banner of the International Communists—this is the banner of communism. Every revolutionary worker ought to march behind it and no other.

### Party Meeting or United Front?

The third fallacy in the ultimatum of the Stalinists and their apologists consists in the posing of the question of a united front on May Day as a rivalry and conflict between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, and the demand that the workers choose between the two parties. "March with the Communist Party, not with the Socialist Party" is the formula of this ultimatum. For our part, if it is a question of party preference, we choose neither the CP nor the SP and follow neither. If the May Day meetings are to be construed simply as meetings of

***Don't Strangle  
the Party!***

**by James P. Cannon**

**A Fourth Internationalist  
Tendency Pamphlet**

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different parties than the revolutionary workers supporting the Communist League would have no choice but to abstain from both demonstrations and to organize their own, however small it might be.

But this is not how the question presents itself to us. Quite the contrary. General political meetings of the parties can be conducted apart from the demonstrations under the auspices of the respective parties—the Communist League, for example, will hold its own meeting in the evening. But the *demonstration and parade* on May Day ought to represent a *united front* of all the parties and workers' organizations in a single demonstration against war and fascism and for the immediate needs of the workers.

It is precisely the inability of the Stalinists even to comprehend the question in this sense, their shopkeeper's conception of the special interest of their own party apparatus and their fear of "competition," that impelled them to organize the Union Square demonstration as a demonstration for the Communist Party. Their stubborn refusal to merge their party interest for a single occasion, on May Day of all days, with the general class interest, condemns the demonstration to isolation as an affair of the CP and its auxiliaries, despite all the crooked ballyhoo about "unity" and the "united front."

And by the same token this policy of the Stalinists and the whole line of conduct flowing from it, not forgetting the Madison Square Garden affair\*—this policy and conduct make it easy for the socialist leaders, who are no more in favor of an all-inclusive fighting united front than the Stalinists, to counteract the pressure of their own members for a single, united demonstration.

### The Stand of the Communist League

The fact that the socialist leaders felt obliged to agree to joint action with every other group and organization except the Stalinists, to give up their original demand that the May Day Labor Conference be labeled as "Socialist and Labor," their agreement that all the participating organizations be represented with their banners at the head of the parade as well as on the arrangements committee and on the speakers' platform—all this is powerful testimony to the deep-rooted sentiments of the socialist workers for a genuine united front.

The Communist League fought in the conference and arrangements committee for an invitation to the Stalinists, but without success. We also sent delegates to the Stalinist conference to propose that a direct approach be made to the May Day Labor Conference for a single demonstration. Our proposal was rejected with the usual barrage of epithets and slander. Nevertheless, it can be asserted, so pressing is the need for unity and so powerful the sentiment of the rank-and-file workers for it, that if our proposal had been adopted and carried out honestly and consistently, it would have been extremely

\*This is a reference to a meeting on February 16, 1934, called by the Socialist Party and various trade unions in solidarity with an Austrian workers' uprising. That meeting of 22,000 was disrupted by an organized group of members of the Communist Party.

difficult, if not impossible, for the Socialist leaders to refuse.

We shall continue to fight for this policy as we have fought consistently for it in the past. For years, as a faction working

for the reform of the CP, we continuously advocated the adoption by the party of the policy of the united front in the same sense that we present it today. The victory of fascism in Germany is directly due to the rejection by the Stalinist leadership of the united front with the Social Democracy and the reformist trade unions, which the Left Opposition insistently demanded. The weakness and disorganization of the working class movement in this country, after four and one-half years of the unprecedented crisis, is in large part also the result of the same fatal mistakes, systematically repeated.

Breaking with the Comintern because of its obvious and irremediable bankruptcy, and taking the path toward new parties and the Fourth International, the International Communists (formerly the Left Opposition) in no way alter or modify the principles, strategy, and tactics with regard to the broad labor movement which they formerly proposed for the adoption of the official Communist parties. The only difference is that we carry out in practice now, as a completely independent organization, the tactics which we previously recommended to the CP. This is the meaning of our decision to participate in the Madison Square demonstration and parade with the Socialist Party, the trade unions, and other political groups and tendencies.

### The Road to the United Front

The parade and demonstration organized by the May Day Labor Conference, lacking the inclusion of the Stalinist organizations, is obviously not a complete united front and should not be represented as such. But this is not a reason to abstain from participation. After all the divisions and demoralization, it is utopian to expect that the idea of the united front will take hold everywhere with the same force and that it can be realized organizationally overnight.

The building of the united front of the workers is a process. This process involves agitation for the idea, experiments in cooperation, and tests in action. Including all the tendencies of the more or less progressive section of the labor movement, with the single exception of the Stalinists and their satellites, the May Day Labor Conference represents a tremendous step forward. From this point of view it must be hailed and supported by the revolutionary workers. At the same time efforts must be made to broaden out its composition and extend it to other fields of activity in the class struggle.

Needless to say, our participation at Madison Square does not imply in any way the slightest reconciliation with the Socialist Party. The united front of action on concrete questions does not signify political collaboration. No blurring of principled issues. No mixing of banners.

Our principled differences with social reformism remain. We shall fight them out to the end. Not by lies and slanders, not by hooligan violence, but through argument and example we shall endeavor to convince the socialist workers of the necessity of a revolutionary policy and leadership. In intransigent principled struggle against social reformism we shall work for the new party and the new International.

Meantime, now as always, we shall stand for the united front in concrete struggles of the day with the socialist workers through the medium of their chosen organizations. □

# On Independent Labor Political Action

by Jerry Gordon

*Jerry Gordon is an international representative of the United Food & Commercial Workers Union as well as a member of Labor Party Advocates. This talk was given at forums in San Francisco and Los Angeles on March 12 and 14, 1992.*

First, I want to thank the organizers of tonight's meeting for inviting me to participate in this important discussion. And, second, I want to make clear that the views I will be expressing are my own and that I am not speaking here as a representative of my union.

Early last year, Tony Mazzocchi, longtime leader of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union, started a new organization called Labor Party Advocates. Labor Party Advocates, which already has thousands of members, calls for the establishment of a labor party based upon the unions, a party that will reflect the traditions, composition, and needs of working people, and that will fight in the interests of all oppressed sectors of our society.

In explaining the need for such a party, Mazzocchi said, "Let's face it. The bosses have two parties. We need one of our own."

But today, if you listen to the rhetoric coming out of the presidential campaign, you get quite a different picture of the Democratic Party. The aspirants for the Democratic nomination portray it as a party for all the people, including workers. Almost all the major labor leaders echo this sentiment and they are poised to support whichever candidate the Democratic Party nominates.

So, what is the Democratic Party? Is it a party of the bosses or a party of the people? Let's look at the record.

Every once in a while a major event comes along which clearly tests political parties, forcing them to take a stand and show which side they're really on. That happened last April, when the railroad workers went on strike and legislation was introduced in Congress to force them back to work on the bosses' terms. Those terms were a 25 to 30 percent cut in real wages over the life of the contract, a drastic reduction in the number of workers in operating service, and the elimination of some basic gains in working conditions railroad workers had won going back to the early 1950s. So how did Congress vote on this strikebreaking legislation? The Senate approved it unanimously by voice vote; the House almost unanimously, with only five dissenting votes. There are 324 Democrats in Congress and only five voted "No" to

strikebreaking! And this is supposed to be a political party for the working class?

The heart of the labor movement's problem today is the gang-up against us by the government and the employers. They seek to divide us, to break our solidarity, and to restrict our actions through crippling legislation and court injunctions. We can't even legally put up mass picket lines anymore, or conduct solidarity or secondary strikes, thanks to the Taft-Hartley Law passed 45 years ago, *with a majority of the Democrats in Congress voting in favor of it.*

On issues of vital concern affecting our members and workers generally, the Democrats have given us nothing. They have not provided jobs in this depression-plagued economy; or provided adequate housing; or a clean environment; or a health care program; or funding to conquer AIDS. They have not reversed the astronomical growth of poverty in this country. They have not stopped unbridled police terror against the Black community. They won't pass strong and inclusive civil rights legislation with teeth in it. They won't relieve the plight of immigrant workers subjected to unspeakable conditions. They did not make the Equal Rights Amendment part of the U.S. Constitution. They did not prevent confirmation to the Supreme Court of judges who oppose abortion rights.

The Democrats and Republicans jointly pursue what is called a bipartisan foreign policy. Its aim and purpose is to protect and expand U.S. corporate investments on a global basis. Implementing this policy has resulted in the slaughter of hundreds of thousands in Vietnam and in the Persian Gulf. Of course, the U.S. invasion of Grenada and Panama, and U.S. intervention in Central America and around the world are all part of this policy.

*What we need is international solidarity between U.S. workers and workers of other countries to fight the multi-national corporations. What we get are wars fought between U.S. workers and workers of other countries to profit those multinational corporations.*

*This will not change until we have our own party, with domestic and foreign*

*policies which reflect workers' needs and interests, not those of the corporations.*

The word in the labor movement today is that at all costs we've got to get a Democrat back in the White House. We had a Democrat in the White House in 1976-1980: Jimmy Carter. Carter used Taft-Hartley to try to break the miners' strike. He ordered railroad workers back to work. He raised military spending to record high levels, while axing social programs. He diluted labor law reform so that it was practically meaningless and then Congress killed it altogether. He opposed indexing the minimum wage so that inflation wiped out the meager increases voted by Congress. He pushed deregulation, with its devastating consequences for workers' jobs and living standards. And he supported repressive anti-worker regimes and counterrevolutionary movements in other countries, despite all his talk about human rights.

No, we don't want to go backward with the Democrats. We want to go forward with our own party, a labor party, a party of people who look like us, talk like us, fight for us, and are us.

Thirty years ago, the Canadian labor movement broke with the political parties of big business and launched a Canadian labor party. They called it the New Democratic Party. Today, Canada has a national health care program. We don't. Thirty-seven percent of their workers belong to unions. Sixteen percent belong in the U.S. In Canada, legislation passed by the New Democratic Party has made it easier to organize workers. In the U.S., legislation passed by the Democrats and Republicans has made it harder to organize workers.

Some unionists ask: Is it better just to leave the Democratic Party—period? Or should we stay in it and try to reform it, while laying the foundations for a new party?

My view is that the labor movement should break with the Democrats. Immediately, decisively, totally, irreversibly, and definitively. And if I could think of additional adverbs to make the point more strongly, I would throw them in too.

We really need a labor party alternative for the 1992 elections because none of the Democratic or Republican presidential candidates speaks for us. And the differences between these two old parties are for all intents and purposes nonexistent. No wonder that half the eligible voters in the U.S. don't bother to vote in presidential elections and two-thirds don't bother to vote in off-year elections.

Unfortunately, I don't believe we're going to have a national labor party this year. But it seems to me everything possible should be done to run independent labor candidates on a local level—for Congress, for state legislatures, whatever. I hope local and regional bodies of the labor movement will put forward such candidates.

We have tremendous power at our disposal, if only we would use it. We *can* put working people into political office. A good example of that is what happened in an election in Virginia in 1989 for the state legislature. The Democratic incumbent in one district was so strongly entrenched he was running without Republican opposition. But this incumbent was anti-labor. He was reactionary. His son—a chip off the old block—was the judge leveling fines of millions of dollars against the mine workers union during the Pittston strike. So the miners said, "Enough! We'll run our own guy as an independent." And they did, with a write-in campaign. They elected miners' leader Jackie Stump to the Virginia State Legislature by a two-to-one margin.

Now, if they can do that in Virginia—a southern right-to-work state—why can't we do the same in San Francisco, or Los Angeles, or Cleveland?

We must stop supporting so-called "lesser evil" candidates for office. Work-

ing people should not give their votes to any kind of evil, lesser or greater.

This "lesser evil" business is a real scam. Take the question of wasteful and unnecessary military spending. Both the Democrats and Republicans say we have to spend hundreds of billions of dollars annually for the Pentagon. But the Democrats propose a few billion dollars less, so we're supposed to support them as the "lesser evil." But if we had a labor party, we would have different priorities. For example, we could take the money from the Pentagon and use it for a free, comprehensive, and quality health care program accessible to all. That is something urgently needed, but something neither the Democrats nor the Republicans support. And for workers currently employed in the arms industry, money taken out of the military budget could be used for producing needed goods and services, and providing jobs to do so at union wages.

The point is that under the system today, it is the two parties of big business which set the agenda and try to tell us what our choices are. But tomorrow we'll have our own party. And, since the working class—which of course includes unemployed and retired workers—makes up two-thirds of the U.S. population, we'll have the clout to set a different kind of agenda, with the aim being to meet the real needs of the overwhelming majority and to improve the quality of their lives.

As for the November presidential elections, there is the Ron Daniels campaign. Daniels is running as an independent on a program that calls for putting human needs above profits. He has made strong and telling criticisms of the Democrats, a party which can make no legitimate claim to representing oppressed minorities, poor,

and working people. While I don't agree with Brother Daniels's occasional statements in support of so-called "progressive" Democrats and Republicans, the main point is that he will be on the ballot—in a number of states, I hope—as an *independent* running *against* the Democrats and Republicans. So supporters of independent politics have a presidential candidate to vote for in 1992.

We should also take note of the initiative for a new political party being taken by the National Organization for Women. This is a very positive development and it helps pave the way for a coming together down the road of the labor, women's, Black, Hispanic, environmental, and other progressive movements in a common political cause. That cause should be a workers' party that fights on every issue of social concern, and that wages its struggle not only in the electoral arena, but even more importantly in the streets of this land.

Finally, I hope you will join in building Labor Party Advocates. I've got membership forms here tonight. Labor Party Advocates is already playing an important role in helping educate workers, both organized and unorganized, on the need for a labor party. Union members won to this idea can urge their local and national unions to endorse it as well. The Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers and the United Electrical Workers have taken positions in favor of a labor party. That's a beginning. When other major international unions take a similar stand, we can think seriously about actually starting a labor party in this country. It is an idea whose time not only has come—it's long overdue.

**Join Us—Solidarity!!**

### **21st Century Party (Continued from page 3)**

Black movements, in particular the Labor Party Advocates clubs and the Ron Daniels presidential "Campaign for a New Tomorrow." The answers to these questions were not handled well from the co-conveners who reiterated the principle of gender and racial balance without, however, suggesting the need for 21st Century Party supporters to relate to existing struggles and movements of African Americans and other people of color or to develop cooperative links with either LPA or the Daniels campaign. In terms of the latter, the clearest response was given by Sara Nelson who indicated she envisioned some coming together in the future—"bringing

what we have to a common negotiating table"—of the three efforts.

What was more positive was the clear indication that the 21st Century Party is a serious initiative to found a new party dedicated to pursuing issues of basic economic and social justice and to ensuring women's rights. There has also been some movement away from earlier arguments for an "in-out" strategy or viewing this simply as a threat to "scare the pants off the Democrats." While no promises were made about the support of individual 21st Century Party leaders for Democratic (or Republican) candidates, a very clear statement was made that the new party

itself will not endorse any candidates in either the Democratic or Republican parties. Given the growing strength of NOW and the commitment of some of its central leaders to this initiative—and given the enthusiasm expressed at this meeting as well as the tens of thousands of signatures supporting the new party effort collected at the March for Women's Lives—we must treat this as a serious campaign to found a new party that has a very real chance for success. For more information on the 21st Century Party or to become a member or supporter, write to: 21st Century Party, 1600 Wilson Blvd., #707, Arlington, VA 22209. Phone: (703) 243-7890 or 1-800-394-21st. □

# An Attempt to Defraud the African American People

by Tom Barrett

In 1988 voters were introduced to an intelligent, articulate, and dynamic African American woman running for president of the United States. Her name was Lenora Fulani, and she was the candidate of the New Alliance Party (NAP). Her platform called for radical social change, and she was running against both the Democratic and Republican parties. She achieved ballot status in all 50 states and convinced 600,000 to vote for her on election day. Her speaking engagements drew hundreds of radicalizing young African Americans and many others who clearly liked her message of fighting racism and sexism and stopping war and environmental pollution. The enthusiasm she generated showed conclusively how hungry Black youth are for a political alternative to the twin-party system, especially one led by, and responsible to, African Americans. In many states she was the only candidate besides George Bush and Michael Dukakis on the ballot and provided the only chance for voters to protest their lack of choice.

In 1992 Fulani is again the New Alliance Party's presidential candidate. However, just as in 1988, her campaign represents neither (1) an alternative to the Democratic and Republican parties, nor (2) a Black-led political movement, nor (3) even the ideas and vision of Dr. Fulani herself. The New Alliance Party is an unsavory formation under the complete control of one white man, a psychotherapist (whose qualifications are open to serious question) named Fred Newman. Everything Fulani does and says is carefully scripted by Newman; the New Alliance Party is a cult whose members sign away large amounts of money and give superhuman labor to enable this small group to carry out such aggressive political campaigns. The NAP supported Jesse Jackson's primary election campaigns in 1984 and 1988, pledging to withdraw its independent candidates in Jackson's favor if he won the Democratic nomination. It supported David Dinkins for mayor of New York (NAP's strongest local unit) in 1989. In 1992 Fulani entered the New Hampshire primary as a Democrat, winning fewer than 300 votes.

With the money it has raised so far (by methods which some people have said border on the fraudulent and which deserve close scrutiny by the Black nationalist and workers' movements), the New Alliance Party has qualified for federal matching funds. In fact, Fulani raised more money during the New Hampshire primary campaign than all other Democratic contenders except Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. She raised nearly \$100,000 more than the winner, Paul Tsongas.

Fulani has become quite prominent outside the electoral arena as well, especially since the Tawana Brawley affair in New York State. However, she has not played any independent leadership role, deferring instead to the agenda of people like

the Rev. Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan. Neither she nor the New Alliance Party has shown the least inclination even to raise questions as to whether Sharpton's or Farrakhan's policies are in the best interests of the African American struggle. Rather, New Alliance is opportunistically attempting to latch on to what it perceives to be the "actually existing" Black leadership to gain support among African Americans. Instead of making a contribution to ending the leadership crisis in the African American struggle, the New Alliance Party is making a big contribution to its continuation.

## Who Is Fred Newman? What Is the New Alliance Party?

An excellent source for information on the New Alliance Party is *Clouds Blur the Rainbow: the Other Side of the New Alliance Party*, written by Chip Berlet and published by Political Research Associates in December 1987. Berlet's report is long on information and short on denunciation, allowing the evidence to speak for itself.

According to Berlet, the New Alliance Party originated in a collective called "If . . . Then" on the Upper West Side of New York City in 1968. Newman was at that time an instructor in philosophy at City College of New York. "If . . . Then" prided itself on using more obscene language in its political pamphlets than any other radical publisher, even during that wild time.

The Upper West Side of Manhattan was then and remains fertile ground for left-wing political projects, and even those so poorly thought-through which would wither and die very quickly in other areas can flourish on the Upper West Side. Tenants' rights organizations and other community-based political activities are part of the landscape north of Seventy-second Street. During the early 1970s, Newman and his followers set up a group called "Centers for Change" (CFC), which described itself as:

... a collective of liberation centers including: a school for children, ages 3 to 7; a community-oriented therapeutic and dental clinic located in the Bronx; and a press (CFC Press) operating out of the CFC offices. . . . Also, the Community Media Project; [an] information service for the people of the upper west side... [Quoted in Chip Berlet: *Clouds Blur the Rainbow*, p. 3]

During this period Newman became involved in psychology and psychotherapy, developing his theory of "social therapy." By 1973 CFC was offering therapy and counseling at its drop-in center. However, it should be noted that Fred Newman holds a doctorate in the philosophy of science and foundations of

mathematics, not in any health- or psychiatry-related discipline. Newman's theories, moreover, are rejected as dangerous quackery by reputable psychologists and psychiatrists.

Newman's thinking was developing parallel to that of another—and very similar—self-appointed political leader whose home base was on the Upper West Side, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. During the 1973–74 period, Newman's group and LaRouche's were in a political alliance in which each influenced the other. The similarities between Newman's thinking and leadership policies and LaRouche's are striking and warrant a close examination.

### Lyndon LaRouche and Fred Newman

Lyndon LaRouche, a former time-efficiency engineer at a shoe manufacturing plant in Lynn, Massachusetts, was expelled from the Socialist Workers Party in 1965. As a self-styled Marxist economist writing under the pseudonym "Lyn Marcus," he entered the Students for a Democratic Society shortly thereafter and set up a "Labor Caucus" within SDS. The faction was based primarily at Columbia University. During the Ocean Hill–Brownsville teachers' strike in 1968, LaRouche and his "Labor Caucus" supported the teachers, who went out on strike as a protest *against* limited control of the public schools by the Black and Puerto Rican communities. The strike, led by Albert Shanker, the present president of the American Federation of Teachers, was motivated by racism and was condemned not only by Latinos and African Americans but by all serious-minded radicals as well. SDS justly expelled the "Labor Caucus" for racism.

After his expulsion from SDS, LaRouche established the "National Caucus of Labor Committees" (NCLC), which for some four or five years was just one more silly little sect on the fringes of the socialist movement. LaRouche, like Newman, began to espouse strange psychoanalytic and sexual theories and also to issue dire warnings about CIA-KGB-Rockefeller plots to commit all kinds of high crimes, not the least of which was a conspiracy to assassinate LaRouche himself.

None of this nonsense provoked much more than mild irritation among serious radicals until May 1973. At that time, the NCLC announced that the Communist Party was "dead" and had become transformed into Rockefeller's and the CIA's agent in the radical movement. NCLC appointed itself to rectify the situation by establishing "hegemony" over the radical movement in the United States. To accomplish this, they launched "Operation Mop-Up," which was in fact a program of physical attack against public meetings of the Communist Party and of any group who came to its defense. NCLC gangs used bats, chains, and martial arts weapons, causing serious injury to a number of people. Of course, every radical group with any proletarian integrity rallied to defend the CP. The Socialist Workers Party participated in united defense guards against Operation Mop-Up and soon had to defend its own meetings against LaRouche's thugs.

Chip Berlet explains (*Clouds Blur the Rainbow*, p. 6):

The trigger for Operation Mop-Up was a March 1973 warning by NCLC to the Communist Party, USA, to stop opposing the creation by LaRouche of an alternative to the Black-led National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO)

which LaRouche denounced as being part of a "union-busting slave-labor" alliance. LaRouche set up an alternative, the National Unemployed and Welfare Rights Organization (NUWRO), and, according to LaRouche, NCLC then sent delegations into public Communist Party meetings, "demanding that this criminal behavior of the CP leadership"—that is, support for the original NWRO—"be openly discussed and voted down by the body assembled."

Eyewitnesses recall this "discussion" usually consisted of primarily-white and young NCLC members standing up and disrupting meetings of the primarily-Black and older NWRO with calls for a debate on LaRouche's charges against NWRO leaders until members of the audience were forced to physically drag the NCLC members out of the meeting. These confrontations became formalized under Operation Mop-Up.

LaRouche's pontifications became increasingly laced with racism, sexism, and homophobia. An editorial in the September 1973 issue of the NCLC magazine, *Campaigner*, charged that "Concretely, all across the USA, there are workers who are prepared to fight. They are held back, most immediately, by pressure from their wives. . . ." NCLC published an essay (in English and Spanish) in November 1973 entitled, "The Male Impotence of the Puerto-Rican Socialist Party."

It was precisely during this period—when LaRouche and the NCLC went from being a minor pain in the neck to a dangerous criminal gang—that Newman and his followers became attracted to the NCLC. Political discussions and "joint forums" between CFC and NCLC began in October 1973, and in June 1974, Newman and 40 CFC members joined NCLC.

Berlet writes:

By 1974 LaRouche had started his swing toward fascist economic and political principles—well before Newman and his followers joined NCLC and announced that they would place themselves under LaRouche's political leadership and "hegemony." It was during this period that LaRouche began talking of the need for rapid industrialization to build the working class. He talked of a historical tactical alliance between revolutionaries, the working class and the forces of industrial capital against the forces of finance capital. He began developing an authoritarian world view with a glorification of historic mission, metaphysical commitment and physical confrontation.

Berlet also quotes a former NCLC member on the arrival of the "Newmanites" in 1974:

They put themselves under the actual political leadership of LaRouche for a few months, and we came to believe that what Newman really wanted during that period was to act as an understudy to LaRouche—to learn his methods and techniques of controlling persons in an organization.

The individuals in Newman's group seemed to lack clarity and political focus and were obsessed with psychology and sexuality. Newman was clearly the leader, and it was obvious that LaRouche's ego and Newman's ego were too big to allow them to work together in the same organization for long.

The critical point here is that Newman and his followers—the predecessors of today's New Alliance Party—were not attracted to a harmless if somewhat silly left-wing sect; they were not interested in a group which had a strategy—even a wrong-headed strategy—for advancing the working class's interests. They were attracted to a group which had already



completely lost whatever political bearings it might once have had. Its political ideas had no basis in objective reality, and its practice was moving from the irrelevant to the criminal. Newman disingenuously claims that he and his group were simply politically inexperienced and made an honest mistake. However, when a group is carrying out acts of physical violence against other groups on the left, even the most inexperienced young radical ought to have enough sense not to get involved with it.

### Elitism and Opportunism

In August 1974 Newman and 38 of his associates left LaRouche's NCLC to form the "International Workers Party" (IWP), which was proclaimed the "vanguard party of the working class." The IWP remained committed to "joint work" with LaRouche's NCLC, in spite of whatever political differences they may have developed (which to this day have never been made clear). The primary activity which the IWP engaged in during the late 1970s appears to have been related to Newman's theories of psychotherapy. The IWP has not functioned as an independent, public organization, and, in spite of its claims, it has never led workers in any kind of activity. Growing out of its community-based "therapy centers," the IWP formed the New Alliance Party in 1979. The IWP still exists as a semi-underground "inner party" within the NAP, only admitting Newman's most trusted associates into membership.

A look at Newmanite internal documents reveals a theory of political organizing—similar to LaRouche's—which makes an important distinction between the core cadre, composed primarily of white intellectuals, and "organic members," composed of people of color and other working people. According to Dennis King, a journalist who has studied the various organizations through which Newman operates, the "intellectual vanguard" is trained directly by Newman through his "therapy." Newman's disciples, in turn, use "therapy" to raise the consciousness of people of color who have been recruited to the NAP, with the projection that some time in the dim and distant future they will be capable of leading the organization. King describes this attitude as "paternalistic racism," and he is right.

The NAP has attempted opportunistically to exploit African Americans' and Latinos' nationalist consciousness in a number of different ways, including through electoral campaigns. The NAP has fielded Black candidates for office with the pretense that the campaign is led by and responsible to African Americans. In 1984, the NAP ran Dennis L. Serrette, an African American telephone linesman from New York, for U.S. president. Shortly thereafter, Serrette resigned from the NAP after an unsuccessful internal struggle to give meaningful leadership roles to Black activists, who had organizational titles but no independent authority within the organization. Serrette went public with his charges against the NAP in a Mississippi newspaper, the *Jackson Advocate* (cited in Berlet's *Clouds Blur the Rainbow*):

I left the party because it continued to claim it was Black-led—I knew better. I mean no harm to these powerful Black women, Emily Carter, Lenora Fulani, and Barbara Taylor, when I say that. . . . I knew from being there that they were not

leading Fred Newman—he was leading them — that's why I left. . . . I don't feel they can use "Black-led" continuously without falling on their faces—falsehoods just won't hold up under close scrutiny.

Whatever "training" Newman has given to his most trusted inner cadre, they have next to no understanding of strategy and tactics to advance the working class's interests. The NAP claims to be against war, racism, and sexism. However, this "vanguard of the working class" is carrying out no organized activity in the trade unions. It is doing nothing to build the National Organization for Women (NOW) or any other feminist organization; NAP members are not to be seen defending abortion clinics or building pro-choice activities. The New Alliance Party abstained from activity in the coalitions which organized protests against the gulf war. In its activity in the African American movement it follows whoever appears to be leading struggles, regardless of whether they are leading the struggles to victory or defeat. In addition, the New Alliance Party has supported Jesse Jackson's two presidential bids and is attempting to capitalize on Jackson's popularity by calling one of its front organizations the "Rainbow Lobby." Jackson has publicly disavowed the Rainbow Lobby and any connection with the New Alliance Party.

### Taking Advantage of the Vulnerable— New Alliance 'Psychotherapy'

Central to the New Alliance Party's program and activity are Newman's psycho-political theories and his practice of "social therapy." Newman directs eight "social therapy" centers in New York City as well as centers in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, Denver, and Jackson, Mississippi. According to Newman, "each individual is governed by a 'bourgeois ego' that prevents unity with others and encourages self-gratification. The role of the radical therapist is to lead the individual to overthrow the dictatorship of the bourgeois ego and to liberate the proletarian ego by means of a personal revolution." (Quoted in *The New Alliance Party: A Study in Deception*, B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League Research Report.) Most of the NAP activists have undergone Newman's "social therapy," many paying as much as \$40 per hour for the privilege (for group sessions, at that).

Berlet quotes a Latina activist who went through the "social therapy" experience:

I first came into contact with Social Therapy Institutes through a friend who . . . said there was a group that offered therapy for people with progressive views, so I went to see what they offered.

I was told everybody has problems, which is true everyone does, but they use that as an excuse to recruit people. People with emotional problems think they are going to be helped but they don't help people.

Before or after the therapy session, they would say, "why not sell the newspaper," or "maybe you could do us a favor and hand out these leaflets." The therapy offices are full of their political propaganda. In the group therapy sometimes we discussed politics and their political party. They want people to get involved in their political activities, but they don't really give any treatment. . . .

It is not true that there is no pressure to work with the New Alliance Party when you are in the therapy. They tell you if

you are working with them you will feel good. I said "I need help, I need individual therapy." Instead they had me assisting them in the group therapy sessions.

They don't like it if you pay a low fee and don't work for them politically, such as doing propaganda work for the New Alliance Party. If you pay more, you get a better work position in the organization. If you can afford a lot, you can get individual therapy. Everything is money or power.

Some people are fooled, especially the uneducated or emotionally ill, they use them. It is disgusting. They don't care about people—they want numbers: more money, more people, more power. The social therapy is just an excuse to recruit members. It is just like their many other activities, concerts, rallies, they are active in many areas, but they accomplish nothing.

### The New Alliance Party's Role in the 1992 Election Campaign

Working people are justifiably disgusted by the pathetic spectacle being put on by the Democratic and Republican parties in 1992. The incumbent president, George Herbert Walker Bush, whose family is as close to titled nobility as exists in the United States, shows precious little concern as thousands of working class families are being devastated by a recession that just won't end. The Democrats have been given their best opportunity since the Watergate scandal of the 1970s and the best they can offer is—Bill Clinton. The Democrats' abject failure to use their congressional majority to do anything to protect workers' living standards during this recession, to defend people of color from racist violence, to stop the erosion of women's rights—even to block Clarence Thomas's appointment to the Supreme Court—has caused more people to consider alternatives to the twin-party system than at any time in the last four decades. Under Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union official Tony Mazzocchi's leadership, a new organization—Labor Party Advocates—has been formed to organize a political party based on the organized labor movement. The National Organization for Women, after over a year of hearings around the country, is launching a new political party to fight for women's rights, racial equality, economic justice, and protection of the environment. And veteran Black nationalist Ron Daniels, who worked as Jesse Jackson's campaign manager in 1984 and 1988, is running his own independent campaign for U.S. president, beginning the process of building an independent African American political party as an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. (The treasurer of Daniels's national campaign committee is Dennis Serrette, New Alliance's 1984 presidential candidate.)

Each of these three initiatives is a positive step forward for working people, and each one reinforces—and is reinforced by—the other two. However, the New Alliance Party, rather than participating in these formations in a positive way, is *counterposing* itself to them, and Lenora Fulani is running *against* Ron Daniels as much as she is running against George Bush and the Democratic candidates. She is using her name recognition and popularity from the 1988 election campaign to divert support away from Daniels rather than to build a united alternative to the twin parties.

Labor Party Advocates, the NOW new party (at present known as the Twenty-First Century Party), and the Daniels Campaign for a New Tomorrow all have political weaknesses. None is a complete answer to the problem of building an alternative, on a principled class or oppressed nationality basis, to the capitalist parties. There are legitimate political arguments that revolutionaries could raise against supporting any of these formations. That is part of the political debate which helps strengthen the workers' movement. However, that is not the kind of debate in which the New Alliance Party participates. Dr. Fulani has not spelled out her political disagreements with Ron Daniels, nor has she explained why she has made no attempt to work with Daniels and other African American activists to put together a unified campaign. Such a campaign could have tremendous potential to draw working people—especially working people of color—away from the Democratic Party and would have a powerful impact on struggles outside the electoral framework. If there is a principled reason why a unified electoral campaign cannot be organized, then Dr. Fulani should explain what it is.

In 1848 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

Unfortunately, those principles had by and large been forgotten by most people who identified with the socialist movement long before the New Alliance Party ever came into existence; Fred Newman is not to blame for the bad habits that developed before he was ever born. However, it makes no sense to continue them when the socialist movement has the opportunity to provide positive answers to working people who for the first time are recognizing that capitalism can no longer provide a decent standard of living to the overwhelming majority of them.

In 1992 there are unprecedented opportunities for independent political action in the United States, by workers, by people of color, by women, by all oppressed people. Ron Daniels has taken the initiative—at great personal expense, both in time and money—to run an independent campaign for the presidency when both Labor Party Advocates and NOW have, for legitimate reasons, decided not to field candidates. Many organizations, such as the Green Party and Peace and Freedom Party, which in the past have run their own candidates for office, are endorsing him and in some cases providing him with their ballot lines. The effect is to create a single pole of attraction for oppressed people in the 1992 election, which could lead to the formation of a permanent labor party and permanent African-American party on the American political landscape. If it is to lead in that direction, it will require the conscious and positive intervention of committed revolutionists, working together. The New Alliance Party is undermining that effort. □

March 25, 1992

# A Challenge for Revolutionary Marxists: The Left Debates Leninism

by Paul Le Blanc

An important debate has opened up on the left regarding the revolutionary socialist perspectives associated with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, especially the conception of the revolutionary vanguard party. Lenin had been the leader of the current of Russian socialists known as Bolsheviks (majorityites) who became the organizers of the world Communist movement. According to Leon Trotsky, “the main work of Lenin’s life was the organization of a party capable of carrying through the October revolution [of 1917] and of directing the construction of Socialism” in the new Soviet Republic, a project with which Trotsky passionately identified. With the “collapse of Communism” in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, many in the socialist movement are coming up with dramatically divergent answers over whether Lenin’s orientation is responsible, at least in part, for the debacle.

## Historical Background

To understand the debate, it is important to have some understanding of the historical background.

In 1917 an irreconcilable breach opened up within the socialist movement—after decades of mounting tension between its reformist and revolutionary wings, and in the face of immense upheavals of imperialist war and of popular insurgency against the terrible effects of that war. The most revolutionary element of the socialist movement in Russia, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and Trotsky, rallied masses of proletarians and peasants to establish the first workers republic. It became a beacon of hope, an inspiration, a source of theoretical and practical orientation for revolutionary socialists throughout the world. (For a rounded analysis of the revolution and its aftermath, which will not be repeated here, see the FIT’s “Defend and Renew the Gains of the Russian Revolution,” *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 89, October 1991, also available as a \$1.00 pamphlet.)

But among its most bitter opponents were the reformist socialists, who were as frenzied in their hostility to Bolshevism as they were easygoing in their opposition to

the capitalist system. Thus Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and other revolutionary supporters of Bolshevism in Germany were murdered under the “moderate” supervision of reformist Social Democrats Friedrich Ebert (head of the new postwar government) and Gustav Noske (in charge of the regime’s “security forces,” which included right-wing death squads), men dedicated to preserving capitalist “law and order” against alleged “revolutionary extremists”—which is the classic stance of modern Social Democracy.

The situation became increasingly complex after the death of Lenin, with the consolidation of a bureaucratic dictatorship in Russia under the leadership of Joseph Stalin. Although opposed by Trotsky and the most consistent defenders of the old Bolshevik orientation, Stalinism came to dominate the world Communist movement. For many Communists and anti-Communists alike, Stalin was seen as Lenin’s rightful heir. He and those around him—in the name of Bolshevism, and invoking the authority of Lenin—carried out policies that were increasingly conservative, counterrevolutionary, viciously anti-working class, murderous, and authoritarian, designed to preserve the power of a privileged bureaucratic layer. Many who identified with the original Bolshevik ideals, millions of people around the world, failed to recognize the hideous betrayal represented by the “Marxism-Leninism” of the Stalinist dictatorship. For many, socialism was seen as being divided into two wings—a revolutionary but undemocratic current of “Communism,” and a nonrevolutionary but democratic current of Social Democracy. An additional complication developed in the 1960s, when a rift developed between the “revolutionary” Stalinists of China who followed Mao Zedong and the “revisionists” of the USSR (former henchmen of Stalin who were repudiating their dead boss). Many revolutionary-minded people in the capitalist West and in the third world then embraced “Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought,” which continued to project Stalin as a genuine revolutionary.

There were relative handfuls of left-wing dissidents (predominantly Trotskyists, or those influenced by Trotskyism) who insisted that Stalinism was counterrevolutionary, that Social Democracy wasn’t genuinely democratic, and that the revolutionary Marxism of Lenin, Trotsky, and Rosa Luxemburg was distinct from both—authentically revolutionary, profoundly democratic, genuinely socialist. Such people were contemptuously dismissed by pro-Moscow Communists, Maoists, Social Democrats, anarchists, liberals, conservatives, and fascists. But from the late 1920s down to the present, they have been a vital element in the politics, the intellectual life, and the social struggles of countries throughout the world.

Yet there have been tremendous pressures of the political mainstream, the propaganda apparatuses of powerful elites, the impact of daily realities under capitalism and in the Stalinist-run societies, sometimes devastating and disheartening setbacks in popular and revolutionary struggles. Such pressures have constantly chipped away at the ranks of the revolutionary Marxists, periodically causing whole layers of former militants to reject their beliefs and “come in from the cold” to the shelter of Stalinism, Social Democracy, religion, nonpolitical cultural pursuits, or the capitalist establishment. The production of a substantial and influential body of writings, including a large number of relatively sophisticated critiques of Marxism and the Bolshevik tradition, was one of the results of this process. (In such works of the early 1940s as Sidney Hook’s *The Hero in History* and James Burnham’s *The Managerial Revolution*, for example, we can find many of the “discoveries” that ex-Leninists of today have recently announced. Alan Wald’s invaluable study, published in 1987, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, offers much information on this phenomenon.)

A more positive development has been the rise of new insurgent and revolutionary currents in the world, in some cases influenced by traditional Stalinist or Social Democratic or revolutionary Marxist cur-

rents, but relatively independent and fresh. In this category must be placed: the freedom movements of oppressed nationalities and peoples exploited by imperialism; the women's liberation movement; antiwar and environmentalist currents (Greens, etc.); as well as revolutionary socialist movements in the Caribbean and Central America, throughout Latin America, in parts of Asia and Africa; radicalizing religious currents throughout the world (especially "liberation theology"); and some of the more radical "pro-democracy" forces in the Stalinist-dominated countries. All of these have brought fresh perspectives, somewhat different terminologies, and new insights which have influenced—and been influenced by—the more traditional left-wing perspectives.

In addition, there have been important political, cultural, social, and economic changes in the world during the past fifty years. These have posed challenges and provoked debates on the left, resulting in important new theoretical developments; some of these changes appear to transcend some of the old perspectives and categories which united and divided the traditional left. Many of the old distinctions and standpoints seemed to have lost some of their relevance in the post-World War II era, despite the fact that the three general categories—Social Democracy, Stalinism, revolutionary Marxism (which largely overlaps with what is called "Trotskyism")—continued to exist as more or less recognizable and influential entities.

But with the disintegration and collapse of the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe and the USSR, many on the left who once identified with the Bolshevik-Leninist tradition of the Russian Revolution have felt compelled to reexamine their beliefs. To a very large extent, the different variants of Stalinism have ceased to exist, except as a rapidly declining and marginalized force. On the other hand, the tremors of this political earthquake have inevitably been felt at other points on the left spectrum. With the dramatic alteration of the political landscape, new alignments must take place—among those formerly influenced by Stalinism, but also among Social Democrats and revolutionary Marxists.

In a sense, the fundamental division of 1917 again comes into bold relief, as revolutionary Marxists and reformist Social Democrats advance their counterposed perspectives over what orientation is capable of bringing about socialism. At the same time, of course, capitalist ideologists recognize a breathtaking opportunity to buttress their own case that the market economy provides for the best of all possible worlds, and that the dreams of socialism are impossible — that attempts

to implement them in the real world will result in living nightmares.

New fissures have opened up, in this context, among those who have been on the revolutionary left. Many of us are convinced that the Marxism of Lenin, Trotsky, and Luxemburg has held up rather well throughout the 20th century, explaining evolving realities and at the same time demonstrating a capacity for being enriched by new insurgent currents. On the other hand, a noticeable number of erstwhile comrades have begun to follow in the tracks of previous refugees from revolutionary socialism—breaking with their earlier commitments, embracing more moderate variants of socialism, or even drifting further to the right. One of the essential paths in this retreat involves a rejection of Leninism.

### An International Phenomenon, a Variety of Opinions

This present-day rightward drift of an important layer of revolutionary intellectuals began before the collapse of the USSR. It reflects, to some extent, the exhaustion of revolutionary hopes on the part of radicals who became politically active in the 1960s. The international youth radicalization that many of them were part of failed to bring about world socialism, of course, but this wasn't the only disappointment. The third world revolutions that inspired many of them also failed to usher in the expected brave communist future. The working class radicalization in the industrially advanced capitalist countries, anticipated by many of the radicals, was largely outflanked by the restructuring of the world capitalist economy. And the mass democratic protests in the Stalinist-ruled countries appeared to be going in a non-socialist direction well before the most recent developments.

The influential British journal *New Left Review*, once seen as "semi-Trotskyist" by many, has been carrying an increasing number of "hyphenated-Marxist" (post-structuralist Marxist, rational-choice Marxist, liberal-Marxist, post-Marxist, etc.) and sophisticated reformist contributions. The same holds for many of the volumes it publishes under the Verso label. A good example is a recent volume edited by a former member of the British section of the Fourth International, Robin Blackburn: *After the Fall: The Failure of Communism and the Future of Socialism* (1991) consists in part of recent contributions to the magazine. Of course, not all of the contributors are in agreement. But none writes from a clearly revolutionary Marxist (or Trotskyist) perspective.

One of the better articles, by Ralph Miliband, dismisses all segments of "the

Leninist left," summarizing their position in this way: "The important thing was to concentrate on the class struggle at the point of production, and beyond; and at some point the class struggle would reach a moment of extreme crisis, out of the deepening and irresolvable contradictions of capitalism, and this would present the revolutionary vanguard party with the opportunities for which it had been preparing over the years and decades. The moment of revolution would have arrived, the bourgeois state would be smashed, and the dictatorship of the proletariat would be proclaimed, on the basis of workers' councils and genuine as opposed to fake popular power." Shaking his head sadly, Miliband tells us: "The weakness of this perspective is not only that it has so far proved to be quite unrealistic, or that, as I have suggested, it has tended to ghettoize its proponents, but rather that it holds no promise whatever of avoiding the degeneration into authoritarianism which has befallen all Communist regimes." He concludes that "it is social democracy which will for a long time constitute the alternative—such as it is—to conservative governments." Where do revolutionary-minded socialists fit in? Miliband answers: "For many years to come, socialists will be something like a pressure group to the left of orthodox social democracy."

Ten years ago Robin Blackburn could have been expected to offer a bristling and brilliant polemic in response to such stuff. Instead, in a very long rumination on "Socialism After the Crash," Blackburn—as he himself summarizes it—traces "a subterranean dialogue which links Bakunin and Kautsky, Trotsky and Hayek, Che Guevara and Gorbachev." Critical of "Lenin's cult of party organization and discipline," of his "intolerance and ferocity," of his introduction of "commandist and centralist principles to the organization of the Party," he urges us to reconsider Karl Kautsky's Social Democratic critique of the Bolsheviks: "Kautsky . . . warned that conspiratorial, secretive and hierarchical organization 'may be rendered necessary for an oppressed class in the absence of democracy, but it would not promote the self-government and independence of the masses. Rather it would further the Messiah-consciousness of leaders, and their dictatorial habits.'" Drawing on free-market ideologists Frederick von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises (both icons of modern-day conservatism), in whose critiques of socialism he finds parallels with Trotsky's critique of bureaucratic economic planning, he urges the development of new models of "market socialism."

It should be stressed that Miliband and Blackburn remain much further on the left end of the political spectrum than is the

case with many others. In an important article in the January 1991 issue of *Socialism and Democracy*, entitled "Retreat of the Intellectuals," left-wing scholar James Petras makes a number of important points:

The intellectuals' retreat from Marxism is not merely a Western European and North American phenomenon. The tendency is as evident in Eastern Europe and the Third World—particularly in Latin America. While the intellectual shifts in each region reflect the influence of specific conditions, many of the ideas and theories seem to originate in Western Europe and North America and then to spread to other regions, often with the aid of foundation funding and state subsidized joint intellectual ventures.

The "internationalization of capitalism" and the rapid diffusion of capital through the electronic networks is accompanied by the "internationalization" of post-Marxist ideologies, rhetoric and scientific "discourses." With a striking regularity, the same unfounded criticisms are leveled at Marxism from Paris to Buenos Aires, from Warsaw to Chicago. The retreat seems on its face to have become a rout—celebrated in the mass media as further confirmation of the superiority of free enterprise.

Petras demonstrates that many of these "sophisticated" left and ex-left critiques of Marxism are based on gross distortions of Marxism and, claiming to correct or improve upon Marx, put forward incredibly superficial analyses of society. "The works of Lenin too have suffered from distortion," he observes. His defense of Lenin is worth repeating:

On the one hand, Lenin is accused of being an economic reductionist, and, on the other, a voluntarist who idealizes organization. Both accusations are false. On one level, Lenin's discussion of revolution revolves around a detailed concrete analysis of the impact of capitalism on the specificities of the Russian class structure. On another, it refers to the problems of highly differentiated and uneven developments of class consciousness. On a third level, Lenin analyzes the political conditions (nature of state levels of repression) that influence political organization. Finally, on yet a fourth level, Lenin emphasizes the centrality of ideological and programmatic debate and clarification within the workers' movement. Lenin's complex multi-level interactive "model" of analysis cannot be forced

into any of the crude boxes fabricated by the anti-Leninists.

The debate over revolutionary socialist perspectives, interwoven with the debate over the meaning of Leninism and the heritage of the October 1917 revolution, has recently erupted inside the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), and it has also surfaced in discussions of Central American revolutionaries, as indicated in two articles in *International Viewpoint* #222, February 17, 1992: José Correia, "The PT debates socialism," and M. Velazquez and P. Pacheco, "El Salvador: Peace on the razor's edge." There is nothing academic about any of this—it involves questions of life and death for many millions of working people throughout the world. Left-wing theorists and activists in all countries are becoming engaged in arguments and counterarguments over the classic Leninist question: "What is to be done?"

A valuable collection of interviews has been gathered in a symposium on the collapse of the USSR, by the British magazine *Workers' Liberty*, published in issue #16, March 1992. Nina Temple, secretary of the Democratic Left, the "Euro-Communist" fragment of the former Communist Party of Great Britain, comments:

What do we believe about the Russian Revolution? It ended in disaster. Some of our members think it was a mistake from the outset. The majority believe that from the beginning it contained the elements which led to Stalin. One element was the vanguard party.

We do not believe in vanguard parties carrying out revolutions. We need a socialism which is accountable to the people. This means democratic change. There are no shortcuts to achieving socialism. The Bolsheviks attempted such a shortcut by seizing power in Russia in 1917. . . . We have rejected Leninism and democratic centralism. . .

Fred Halliday, formerly on the *New Left Review* editorial committee and author of two pieces in Blackburn's *After the Fall* anthology, asserts: "My feeling about the Bolshevik revolution is that, quite bluntly, it could never have succeeded. The model of political and economic development it postulated was unable to compete with capitalism. . . . The project of revolutionary socialism has foundered. There is no point in thinking it can be revived. . . . The experiences of France '68, Chile '70-'73, Portugal, Iran and Poland are not the embryos of future experience. They have been the breeding ground of illusions." (Halliday and a few other *New Left Review* contributors, it should be noted, also backed the recent U.S.-led military intervention in the Persian Gulf.)

Ernesto Laclau, a former Argentinian revolutionary now living in Britain, and a prominent "post-Marxist" theorist, explains: "There are two main brands in the socialist tradition: communism and social democracy. These strands share a basic confidence in bureaucratic centralized planning. This idea is at the core of Marxism." He adds that by the late 1960s the world had seen "the end of class politics," that there is now "a proliferation of new identities which cannot be seen as unifying around a class base." Left-wing forces must move beyond Marxism, he insists, pursuing an evolutionary reform of capitalism through the efforts of diverse social movements: "Our task is to allow progressive forces to control more and more of the state's mechanisms."

The prominent revolutionary Marxist of South Africa, Neville Alexander of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA), disagrees: "For us there is no question about the centrality of the Russian Revolution. We believe the October Revolution continues to be the most important event in world history. In building a new international socialist movement, there is no doubt that we have to go back to the period of 1917-1924 to see where our starting points should be." Far from rejecting the notion of working class politics, Alexander suggests: "In a way we have to get back to the First International where workers' organizations the world over got together on the basis of their experience, on a bare empirical reality of the experience of capitalist exploitation, [to] begin to put together a cohesive strategy against the world capitalist system."

Similarly, well-known literary critic Terry Eagleton, also associated with *New Left Review* (as well as with *Workers' Liberty*), insists that "the real left has no need of apology," explaining: "Almost all of the major interesting Marxist developments in the West, from Trotsky to the Frankfurt School, have been resolutely anti-Stalinist." While many liberals only belatedly recognized the evils of this bureaucratic tyranny, "we have pushed against Stalinism for well over half a century. The most abrasive and analytical critique of Stalinism has come from within Marxism, not from outside it. . . . Far from being apologetic, we should point out that we have developed not only the most historically grounded criticism, but also the most politically combative analysis of Stalinism." He concludes: "One of the more invisible crimes of Stalinism was to discredit the idea of socialism in the eyes of the Western working classes. At least this is no longer on the agenda. At least we can now clear away the monstrous mystifications of socialism which have so

alienated people to whom it would have been beneficial."

Among the most uncompromising defenders of "the tradition of October" in the *Workers' Liberty* symposium are representatives of the Fourth International. "My view is that the 1917 October Revolution was a real working-class revolution," explains Poland's Jozef Pinoir. "After 1917 there was a type of workers' state. Stalinism was a movement against this state and against the working class. There is no relation between the October Revolution and Stalinism. Stalinism was a kind of counter-revolution." Michael Warshawsky of Israel adds: "When some of these people, who are re-evaluating history, say that Stalinism began with the revolution, we say prove it! We do not have to accept those ideas, we can point to the war between the Bolshevik Party and Stalinism. The Stalinists killed millions of communists." Livio Maitan of Italy elaborates:

I continue to defend the Trotskyist view that the Russian Revolution was the world's first successful conquest of state power by the working class; the actions of the Bolsheviks and their allies in seizing state power remain historically justified. But the degeneration of the revolution was to some extent inevitable once the European revolutionary wave of 1917-23 was defeated. That is to say it was inevitable that isolated revolution in a backward country should suffer bureaucratic deformations. It was not inevitable that a bureaucratic caste would usurp power. That was a consequence of the political defeat of the struggle of the Left Opposition in the 1920s, itself conditioned by the profound weakness of the Bolshevik old guard in relation to the danger of bureaucratization, as well as the well-known atomization of the Russian workers' vanguard, a consequence of the civil war and its aftermath. . . .

"Where working-class rule and socialist aspirations had gone down to bloody destruction for decades, their murderers paraded around in the old clothes of the revolution, and defended themselves with counterfeits of its ideas, goals, phrases, slogans and symbols. The Stalinist counter-revolution proclaimed the continuity of the revolution. . . .

"In this way, the Russian revolution of 1917, like a dead star whose fading light still reaches Earth long after it has ceased to exist, still sent out, for the millions of would-be revolutionary workers who rallied in successive waves to 'the banner of the October Revolution,' a bright light long after the source of that light had ceased to exist in the world. Now the light that went out 60 years ago is seen unmistakably to have gone, in the dramatic collapse of the Stalinist empire. For the misguided millions who still believed—or half-believed—in it, its going out is an immense tragedy."

—Editorial in *Workers' Liberty* #16, March 1992

Copies of this interesting issue can be obtained from *Workers' Liberty*, PO Box 823, London SE 15 4NA, England, for £1.50 (approximately \$3.00); make checks payable to Socialist Organiser.

Socialism or barbarism remains the choice facing humanity. The challenge for revolutionary Marxists is to turn the collapse of Stalinism to our advantage, rather than allowing it to be used as a weapon against us.

Perhaps the most important left-wing critique of Leninism to be produced so far is Samuel Farber's book *Before Stalinism—The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy*, published by Verso in 1990. Farber is an editor of *Against the Current* magazine and identifies with the left wing of the socialist tradition. He usefully draws together almost all of the criticisms and questions that can be raised about actual or possible mistakes and authoritarianism in post-1917 Bolshevik practice, partly for the purpose of developing a critique of Lenin's conception of the revolutionary party. The book has received an incredibly warm reception—although there have also been sharp critiques (such as that by Steve Bloom in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 94, March 1992). Farber calls for more democracy in the young Soviet Republic of bygone years, and he severely criticizes Lenin for not heeding the call. Yet he fails to give adequate attention to some of the problems facing Lenin and the Bolsheviks: a brutalizing civil war and collapsing economy; and also such international questions as the foreign military intervention (including crucial foreign funding and supplying of murderous counterrevolutionary armies), the devastating economic blockade, and the isolation of the Soviet Republic with the defeat of revolutionary upsurges elsewhere.

Many of these points are effectively made in a brilliant polemic which draws on a rich array of primary and scholarly sources—John Rees, "In Defence of October," *International Socialism* #52, Autumn 1991. *International Socialism* is the theoretical journal of the British Socialist Workers Party, a substantial

quasi-Trotskyist formation led by Tony Cliff which is certainly not free of problems (such as a sectarian attitude toward the British Labor Party, and for that matter toward the Fourth International and much else). But the British SWP has been among those taking the lead in defending the Bolshevik tradition. An indispensable source for anyone concerned with the issues raised in Farber's book, the article by Rees also stands as an important contribution to the debate occasioned by "the retreat of the intellectuals." With the review by Steve Bloom, it is the most damaging critique, as of this writing, to *Before Stalinism*.

A forum for the discussion of Farber's views has been provided by *Against the Current*, which carried not one but three friendly reviews in its issue of January/February 1992. The most serious criticisms of the book, among these three reviews, are offered by Susan Weissman, who complains that "his remedies are abstracted from the constraints of the time period and world political economic reality in which the Bolsheviks were acting." The well-known left-wing Russian activist Boris Kagarlitsky offers an uncritical endorsement, concluding: "It is a great pity that not one Soviet historian has written a work like Farber's, and that we must turn to a foreign source to study our past." On the other hand, Tim Wohlforth—while quite pleased that "the book represents a thorough and devastating condemnation of Leninism in power"—feels that Farber doesn't go far enough, that he "holds back from drawing all the conclusions his evidence demands. I believe that Farber remains partly in the grip of Leninism."

In the following March/April 1992 issue of *Against the Current* an additional review of Farber's book has appeared—this one quite perceptive and critical—by the fine Canadian historian of the Russian working class David Mandel. In another interesting article in the same issue, Ernest Haberkern defends his mentor, the late Marx-scholar Hal Draper, from Tim Wohlforth's "attempt to enlist Draper in his campaign to insist on parliamentary democracy as the only road to socialism," suggesting that Draper (like Marx, Engels, and Lenin) were committed to the kind of revolutionary socialism that Wohlforth warns us against.

### Tim Wohlforth vs. Hannah Arendt

Wohlforth, a former adherent of a particularly rigid (and thus distorted) variant of the Leninist-Trotskyist perspective, has defined Leninism as "that body of doctrine utilized by Lenin to justify his post-revolutionary actions." He continues:

At heart Leninism in power represents one very simple, powerful idea: *the interests of the working class are expressed through the thinking and practice of a section of that class organized into a vanguard formation.* This meant in practice that the working class exercised its dictatorship through the rule of its vanguard party. This led Leninists to impose their view upon the working class even when the working class held a different view of its "real" interests.

This means—Wohlforth tells us—that the revolutionary vanguard party must establish a dictatorship over society, eliminating all opposition parties, independent factory committees and trade unions, freedom of the press, etc. According to Lenin's plan, "civil society disappeared along with individual rights and due process in legal practice." Despite the contorted arguments to the contrary offered by Trotsky and his followers, "while Leninism and Stalinism are not identical *they are linked as cause is to effect.*" This is because "the *basic structure* of the single party dictatorship and bureaucratic domination of society were put into place under Lenin. What Stalin did was wipe out the remnants of democracy *within* the party." Wohlforth concludes: "The great appeal of Leninism is that its program worked. Yet the outcome was Stalinism. If we wish a different outcome we need a different program."

All of this is hardly new. For example, using a similar line of argument, another ex-Leninist, the late Bertram D. Wolfe, called Lenin "the architect of Twentieth-Century Totalitarianism," that is, a form of society in which there is total power of the state over an atomized mass of individuals, not simply a repressive political dictatorship but rather a kind of all-encompassing state slavery. (Such a conception of the USSR was a particularly useful propaganda weapon in the Cold War, in which Wolfe was employed as a highly effective U.S. propagandist.) Like Wohlforth, Wolfe pointed to the original sin of the vanguard party: "while there might be other parties claiming to be socialist, there was room in society for only one party which claimed to be the vanguard of the working class and of all other discontented classes and which, once in power, would appoint itself the vanguard of the 'ruling class,' in whose name it would rule over all classes, not excluding the proletariat. . . . Lenin is indeed unique in his conceiving and begetting his [party] machine, . . . seizing power and atomizing Russian society under his ruthless and completely self-confident dictatorship." (Wolfe, "Lenin, The Architect of Twentieth Century Totalitarianism," in

*An Ideology in Power, Reflections on the Russian Revolution* [New York: Stein and Day, 1970], pp. 179–180)

A remarkable contrast to this conception of Leninism was offered by one of the most perceptive students of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt. Although she was an uncompromising critic of Stalinism, she never chose to enlist in the cause of U.S. imperialism, just as—despite her own criticisms of Marx—she insisted on distancing herself from "the professional anti-Marxists." Arendt dismissed as a harmful myth not only the assertion "that Stalin (and Stalinism) was a [necessary outcome] of a revolution," but also the assertion "that Stalinism was the outcome of Leninism." Such a myth, she felt, obscured "the *sheer criminality* of the whole [Stalin] regime," and it would also blur an important historical reality. (See Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt, For Love of the World* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982], p. 411.) "To change Lenin's revolutionary dictatorship into full totalitarian rule," in Arendt's opinion, "Stalin had first to create artificially that atomized society which had been prepared for the Nazis in Germany by historical circumstances." Her discussion of "Leninism in power" is strikingly different from that offered by Wohlforth and Wolfe. The following is a key passage from her classic *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958, pp. 318–319):

The October Revolution's amazingly easy victory occurred in a country where a despotic and centralized bureaucracy governed a structureless mass population which neither the remnants of the rural feudal orders nor the weak, nascent urban capitalist classes had organized. When Lenin said that nowhere in the world would it have been so easy to win power and so difficult to keep it, he was aware not only of the weakness of the Russian working class, but of anarchic social conditions in general, which favored sudden changes. Without the instincts of a mass leader—he was no orator and had a passion for public admission and analysis of his own errors, which is against the rules of even ordinary demagoguery—Lenin seized at once upon all the possible differentiations, social, national, professional, that might bring some structure into the population, and he seemed convinced that in such stratification lay the salvation of the revolution. He legalized the anarchic expropriation of the landowners by the rural masses and established thereby for the first and probably last time in Russia that emancipated peasant class which, since the French Revolution, had been

the firmest supporter of the Western nation-states. He tried to strengthen the working class by encouraging independent trade unions. He tolerated the timid appearance of a new middle class which resulted from the NEP [New Economic Policy] period after the end of the civil war. He introduced further distinguishing features by organizing, and sometimes inventing, as many nationalities as possible, furthering national consciousness and awareness of historical and cultural differences even among the most primitive tribes in the Soviet Union. . . . There is no doubt that Lenin suffered his greatest defeat when, at the outbreak of the civil war, the supreme power that he originally planned to concentrate in the Soviets [i.e., the democratic councils of working people] definitely passed into the hands of the party bureaucracy; but even this development, tragic as it was for the course of the revolution, would not necessarily have led to totalitarianism. A one-party dictatorship added only one more class to the already developing social stratification of the country, i.e., bureaucracy, which, according to socialist critics of the revolution, "possessed the State as private property" (Marx). At the moment of Lenin's death the roads were still open. The formation of workers, peasants, and middle classes need not necessarily have led to the class struggle which had been characteristic of European capitalism. Agriculture could still be developed on a collective, cooperative, or private basis, and the national economy was still free to follow a socialist, state-capitalist, or free-enterprise pattern. None of these alternatives would have automatically destroyed the new structure of the country.

Stalin's victory in the inner-party struggles of the late 1920s, however, resulted in policies which liquidated the remnants of independent power inside the soviets, murderously liquidated all vestiges of peasant autonomy, eliminated all structures that could maintain solidarity and class consciousness among the working class, ruthlessly suppressed any glimmerings of national autonomy (let alone independence!) among the various ethnic peoples of the USSR, and repeatedly sought to wipe out—politically and physically—all real, imagined, and potential opposition within the Communist Party itself.

Arendt's approach makes two vital distinctions that are absent from the accounts of the anti-Leninists: (1) she refuses to project the authoritarian policies and rationales developed by Lenin and the Bol-

sheviks during the civil war period backward into the pre-1918 years when their program and practice were, in fact, profoundly democratic; and (2) she recognizes that the authoritarianism of the civil war period (1918–1921) did not lead directly into the totalitarianism of the Stalin period (1930–1953)—that there was an “in-between” period of 1921–1929 in which “the roads were still open” to alternate forms of development, including the socialist path originally envisioned by Lenin, Trotsky, and those who had made the Bolshevik revolution. (Of course, this socialist path could not have been fully realized without the triumph of working class revolutions in other countries, such as China, Germany, Spain, France, etc.) For Arendt, Stalinism represents an absolute negation of this revolutionary socialist path of Lenin.

In fact, there is abundant source material demonstrating the existence of this vital “in-between” period in the Soviet Union, qualitatively different both from the brutalizing civil war years and from the later horrors of the Stalin period. Some of the more recent scholarship is gathered together in a volume edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites, *Russia in the Era of NEP, Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), but interesting eyewitness accounts can be found in Victor Serge’s *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, Max Eastman’s autobiographical *Love and Revolution*, Alfred Rosmer’s *Moscow Under Lenin*, and Louis Fischer’s reminiscence in *The God That Failed*, and various other works.

There are valuable contemporary journalistic accounts of the 1920s in Anna Louise Strong’s 1924 book *The First Time in History* (with a laudatory introduction by Trotsky) dealing with the first years of the period and, coming at the end of it, in William Chamberlin’s 1930 account *Soviet Russia, A Living Record and a History*—both demonstrating a vibrant political, social, and cultural life among workers, peasants, artists and intellectuals, and among a variety of nationalities, despite problems of poverty and bureaucratic corruption. Also of interest is civil libertarian Roger Baldwin’s 1928 account of *Liberty Under the Soviets*, indicating a significant amount—despite admittedly serious problems—of freedom of expression, and the 1925 study *Russia Today, Official*

*Report of the British Trade Union Delegation Visiting Soviet Russia and the Caucasus*, which considered the development of the Left Opposition as a heartening sign that the consolidation of a working class political pluralism—perhaps even the development of a two-party system—might be possible.

These and other rich accounts buttress Arendt’s argument that Stalinist totalitarianism by no means flowed logically and necessarily from the policies of Lenin, that when Lenin died there were real alternatives for the development of the young Soviet Republic. While the isolation of the Russian Revolution (especially the failure of working class revolutions to win in Germany and other advanced industrial countries) inevitably generated bureaucratic deformations in Soviet Russia, as Livio Maitan has insisted, “it was *not* inevitable that a bureaucratic caste would usurp power” or that—in Wohlforth’s words—the toiling masses there were doomed to live under “state slavery.” The contrary impression, conveyed in different ways by Bertram Wolfe, Tim Wohlforth, and Samuel Farber, stands as an obstacle to understanding the historical reality of Leninism, Stalinism, and the fate of the Soviet revolution.

### What is Leninism?

The primary importance of all this, of course, is not to get the history right, but to orient ourselves in present and future struggles. (It’s harder to do that, however, unless we *are* able to get the history right.) Consider, for a moment, this passage from James Petras’s important article cited earlier: “. . . a brief survey of Marx’s life—the long, tedious hours spent trying to build the organization of the First International, the pedagogical efforts and travels to worker educational conferences, the ideological struggles devoted to clarifying theoretical and practical issues for the workers’ movement—should suggest to even the most committed post-Marxists that for Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci, and contemporary Marxists, the transformation of a class in itself to a class *for* itself requires political organization, education, and ideological debate.”

This is precisely what *Leninism* implies, as an organizational orientation, for many on the left: developing collective structures to clarify, advance, and implement revolu-

tionary socialist theory and program in a manner that builds revolutionary class consciousness among working people and that provides guidance and coordination in the multifaceted struggles of the working class. It is intimately connected to a political orientation grounded in a substantial body of Marxist analysis and based on an uncompromising determination to build practical struggles for democratic and economic reforms, to defend the interests of working people and the oppressed, but to do this in a very particular manner. Such struggles must be integrated into a strategic orientation which advances the *political independence* and *hegemony* (predominance or leadership) of the working class. If the political independence and hegemony of the working class is achieved on a significant scale, the result can be socialist revolution.

Of course, such an orientation was not the monopoly of Lenin and those following him. As Petras indicates, Marx and others (Rosa Luxemburg, Eugene V. Debs, and a variety of “pre-Leninist” revolutionaries come to mind) also represent such an orientation. But Lenin and the early Bolsheviks symbolize the most consistent and successful effort to realize this project. A conscious and informed rejection of “Leninism” as such, in the late 20th century, implies far more than simply the refusal to uncritically endorse everything done in the name of “Leninism,” and it implies far more than simply the insistence that we must learn from the many profound mistakes made by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. If this were all that is involved, Lenin himself would be the foremost “anti-Leninist.” Rather, anti-Leninism among most of today’s socialists represents at least a tentative retreat from, if not an outright rejection of, the traditional revolutionary socialist project.

The debate is much needed. It will bring us back to “the three R’s” (Review, Refine, and Renew) that are essential for revolutionary Marxists who seek to keep their perspectives relevant to fast-changing and complex realities. The process of clarification, realignment, and growth among revolutionary socialists must be carried out precisely through such debates as these, as well as through our common efforts in advancing the struggles of the working class and the oppressed. □

March 15, 1992



## A Few Brief Notes on Marxism as Science

by Steve Bloom

In *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* No. 95, we reprinted an article by Michael Löwy, “Where Now for Socialism?,” most of which represents an excellent analysis of the present crisis gripping many around the world who have, until recently, embraced “socialism” and “Marxism” (however defined) as their guiding ideologies. Toward the end of the article, however, a problem arises in Löwy’s approach which detracts significantly from his effort.

In particular, he poses an important issue when he asserts: “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 conclusion by a certain kind of Marxism, from Plekhanov to Louis Althusser.”

Löwy implies that this calls for a fundamental change in the way Marxists have approached the world, that we have somehow been systematically crippled by this methodological weakness. I would say, however, that the real problem lies with the way Löwy presents both Marxism and “natural science.”

In reality, no scientist can follow the approach Löwy describes and hope to accomplish much—though something along these lines is often projected in textbooks and semiscientific popularizations. Anyone who begins to do real scientific research will soon be confronted with an essential reality: Even the most profound and universally accepted natural laws tend to be fuzzy around the edges, and sometimes in need of substantial revision; determinism, and therefore prediction, works only in limited cases when all of the main parameters are established and all of the variables easily controlled; and development, at least in the universe as we know it, is rarely linear.

In fact, a far more nuanced approach was actually being applied in the natural sciences during the time when *scientific* socialism was founded. An obvious case in point, and one that Marx and Engels considered particularly important in terms of its overall methodological implications, was the revolution in biology started by Charles Darwin. The idea that species evolve as a result of natural selection was based on understanding an extremely non-linear, and essentially unpredictable process: *random* mutation and its *chance* convergence with specific climatic, geographic, and similar factors, which might in rare cases improve simply the probability that one particular plant or animal, among an entire population, would survive and reproduce. Over many generations such a process can lead to completely new kinds of plants and animals.

Of course, some attempted from the outset to turn this idea into a caricature of itself—something deterministic, proving that natural law leads logically from the most “primitive” organisms to the supreme achievement of nature (or God): “man” himself (and I do, in this particular case, mean “man,” not “humanity”). With sufficient misinformation presented by a fairly large number of semi- and pseudo-scientific sources most people probably came to identify this and similar caricatures of evolutionary thought with “Darwinism.” (Indeed, even today many tend to believe that the arrival on the scene of our own species was somehow preordained

from the moment preorganic molecules first gathered together into living cells.)

“Social Darwinism” represented an even more grotesque distortion. It was used to “prove” the superiority of whites over people of color, rich people over poor people, Northern Europeans over Southern, men over women, etc. Such ideas did considerable damage, even convincing some that Darwin was the devil incarnate and that his ideas should be proscribed. It is, in fact, one of the ironies of history that William Jennings Bryan, who lives in infamy as the bible-thumping prosecutor in the “Scopes Monkey Trial,” opposed the teaching of evolution not because of a real understanding of Darwinism, but because he was outraged by the use of evolutionary theory to justify social inequality and oppression. He genuinely believed that such a justification flowed “naturally” from these ideas—because so many people had told him so.

But the fact remains that Charles Darwin cannot be blamed for such caricatured notions developed in his name. More importantly, he cannot be held responsible for the *methodology* of those who developed them. There is a useful lesson in all of this for individuals who are rushing to abandon, or at least “reconsider,” their commitment to “socialism” or “Marxism” or “Leninism” today based solely on the caricatures that have become identified with these ideologies.

It is hard for me to imagine Michael Löwy, or anyone else, demonstrating that Marx and Engels—with their conscious appreciation of the dialectic as it applied in the natural world as well as in human society—were guilty of an approach to social reality that derived from “determinism,” “purely objective prediction,” and “linear development.” Even if we were to concede that Plekhanov and Althusser committed such errors, it in no way proves that this was a “logical” development from Marx. To paraphrase Löwy: it would be in many ways similar to holding “Descartes responsible for the French colonial wars, [or] Jesus for the Inquisition, [or] Thomas Jefferson for the U.S. invasion of Vietnam.”

Precisely because Marxism has a legitimate claim to the term “scientific socialism” it is wrong to criticize Marx in the way Löwy seems to when he writes: “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.”

Such a statement may be true, but what does that tell us about *Marxism*? Can we really hold Marx, or his general method, responsible for the fact that he did not foresee all of the problems and contradictions which humanity would face on the road to socialism? But that is the task of a prophet, not a scientist. Rather we have to ask whether Marx’s general approach to human society as developed in *Das Kapital* opened up a legitimate new pathway of understanding, through which human knowledge can continue to grow and develop. That, not success in linear prediction, is the test of any scientific theory.

The Marxian revolution in socialist ideology was the *beginning*, not the end of a process—just as the ideas of Darwin were the beginning, not the end, of a revolution in biology; and the ideas of Copernicus were the beginning, not the end, of a revolution in

astronomy and cosmology; and Einstein's special and general theories of relativity were the beginning, not the end, of the modern revolution in physics. Raising *Das Kapital's* failure to understand ecological problems and implying that this represents a serious weakness in *Marx's method* is like objecting that the theories of Copernicus did not yet take the planet Pluto into account.

Marx did not transcend—because, in fact, he could not—the limits on knowledge that existed when he lived. Scientific understanding of technology during the mid to late 1800s could hardly have foreseen what is so obvious to us today: we have to stop using the earth, its oceans, and its atmosphere as a dumping ground for human and industrial waste. Yet if you abstract this single point from Löwy's list of social goals that a new vision of Marxism needs to champion, everything else has been clearly and abundantly developed by Marxists for generations: "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."

What program issued by what Marxist group can Löwy cite which projects a vision of "socialism" in the caricatured way he insists we must overcome: "just a more progressive version of the industrial capitalist system based on state-controlled development of the same productive forces"? Where do we find this idea in the writings of Marx or Engels? Lenin or Trotsky? Rosa Luxemburg? The documents of the Third International before its degeneration, or the Fourth International today? What, then, is the point of talking about such a "theory" as if it represents a real ideological obstacle in the way of developing a proper understanding of socialism as the 20th century comes to a close?

Of course, if understood correctly, it goes without saying that our Marxism has to be constantly "questioned, criticized, and

renewed." In this respect Marxism is like every other scientific endeavor. We learn and grow as a result of reconsidering past judgments, incorporating new experiences (new data about the real world) into our theories, and even through contributions and challenges from those who disagree with some of our fundamental ideas (such as pacifism and liberation theology, which are specifically cited by Löwy). But as long as we do not abandon our own fundamental ideas and methods in favor of other social theories, none of these things should be seen as a negation of Marxism's past. Rather they represent its profound confirmation and enrichment.

Perhaps, given all of the confusion that exists in the world today, the best way for us to think of our task would be not so much a "renewal" or "rethinking" of Marxist ideas, even though there is nothing inherently wrong with such terms as long as this represents an honest striving for valid conclusions. What we probably ought to talk about most of all is a *rediscovery* of Marxist and Leninist ideology.

In closing I will cite my favorite natural-scientific analog for Marxism: If medicine—with its extreme lack of linear development, with its laws which interact in a complex and often unpredictable way making a strict determinism impossible, with its uncertainty in the face of unique features making every individual case even of the same disease different from all others—can legitimately lay claim to being a science, then Marxism can as well. What is required is not a new revolution in Marxist or scientific methodology, but an abandonment once and for all of rigid and schematic notions of what that methodology has been historically, and what it should be today. □

#### Freedom Socialist Party Wins Initial Victory in 'Freeway Hall' Case

In a case which has broad repercussions for freedom of association in the United States, the Freedom Socialist Party won an initial victory on March 18. King County (Seattle, Washington) Superior Court Judge Dale Ramerman ruled that a former member of the FSP, Richard Snedigar, who has brought a lawsuit against the party, did not have sufficient grounds to demand that the organization turn over to him minutes of FSP meetings. Snedigar, who filed his suit in 1984, is demanding the return of a \$22,500 donation he made to the party when he was a member, at a time when the FSP was faced with eviction from its headquarters.

A 1990 Washington State Supreme Court ruling had affirmed that first amendment rights protect minutes of organizations, and stated that the burden of proof must be on the plaintiff making such a demand.

A court ruling upholding Snedigar's demand for confidential documents of a radical political party would have opened the door to anyone who wanted to harass left-wing and progressive groups as well as labor unions.

The trial on the substance of Snedigar's suit is now scheduled to take place on April 13.

For further information or to make donations to the defense fund contact: Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee, New Freeway Hall, 5018 Rainier Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98118; 206-722-2453.

April 1, 1992

#### Threats Against Libya (Continued from page 7)

Pakistan, an Islamic country. It is true that some Islamic leaders' fanaticism—in their call for Salman Rushdie's death or their extreme hostility towards women—has lent credibility to anti-Islamic sentiment; it is also irrelevant. George Bush has no concern for women's rights or civil liberties in the United States; how can anyone take seriously any concern he expresses for the same problems in Iran, Algeria, Libya, or Iraq?

The reality is—even though Colonel Qaddafi doesn't understand it—that the fundamental question is *class*, not religion or even nationality. The overwhelming majority of Muslims live in countries which are dominated by imperialism, and a great many of these countries are rich in natural resources (oil!) or have large populations—sources of cheap labor and markets for manufactured products. Continuing racism against the Islamic peoples makes it easier to use military force to keep them in line and it keeps their labor cheap when economic conditions force them to take jobs in Western Europe.

This is the reality behind the campaign against Libya. President Bush has no more concern for the people who lost their lives on Pan Am Flight #103 than he did for the Iranians who were killed when the U.S.S. *Vincennes* shot down a commercial jetliner during the Iran-Iraq war. Working people should not give any credence to any claim that he is seeking "justice" against "terrorists." That is completely false, and yet, young working people in military service may very well be called upon to put their lives on the line for this dishonest charade.

Fhima and Meghrabi are Libyan citizens; they are subject to the jurisdiction of the Libyan people, not the United States. Working people in the United States, Britain, France, and throughout the world must demand: stop the sanctions; stop the threats against Libya! □

April 14, 1992

### *Chinese Trotskyism Reviewed*

*Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* by Wang Fan-hsi, translated with an introduction by Gregor Benton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. 330 pages (cloth \$40.00; paper \$15.50).

Reviewed by Paul Le Blanc

Those who are part of the revolutionary socialist movement must have a sense that they continue a tradition which reflects the lives and passionate struggles of many, many thousands of the most insightful and idealistic people who ever lived. We don't know the names and the personally lived experiences of most of these comrades of diverse countries and cultures—there have been too many of them—but every so often someone from one part of the world or another is able to bring at least some of them to life for us. History and theory then become something more than abstractions, taking on the breath and pulse of individual people whose ideas, emotions, and experiences animated the revolutionary movement. So it is with Wang Fan-hsi's *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary*.

This book is by an early member of the Chinese Communist Party and one of the pioneers of Chinese Trotskyism. First published in English by Oxford University Press in 1980, it is finally available in paperback, enhanced with a new and valuable introduction by the translator, two recent prefaces (1987 and 1990) by the author, and an entire chapter focusing on theoretical questions that had been cut out of the original English edition. It should be part of any revolutionary socialist library.

I have been told that it is an old Chinese curse to say: "May you live in interesting times." After all, the "interesting times" in history are periods of crisis and upheaval, while historically "quiet times" presumably allow for a less problematical personal existence. This book, to some extent, throws such a view into question.

The millions of people of China were, in the early decades of this century, experiencing a ferment and growing anger against the many terrible forms of oppression that they had been enduring. Born in 1907, and growing up in the midst of all this, Wang nonetheless tells us: "The struggles which take place during periods of great historical importance are like huge furnaces which instantly reduce to ashes all unhealthy or inappropriate thoughts or feelings and enhance one's better qualities." Active in the burgeoning revolutionary nationalist and radical stu-

dent movements, Wang joined the Communist Party in the mid-1920s. In this period, the nationalist movement—under the leadership of the Kuomintang, a party founded by the radical patriot Sun Yat-sen—was seeking to mobilize the Chinese masses against the penetration and subjugation of their country by Western and Japanese imperialism, and also against the patchwork of petty but brutal tyrannies established by numerous military warlords after the overthrow of China's emperor.

Even after Sun died, and party leadership passed to Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang represented national sovereignty, democracy, and radical social reform. At the same time, a growing labor movement in the cities provided the base for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), founded by the prominent intellectual and educator Chen Tu-hsiu and others in 1921. The Soviet Union and the Communist International, under Lenin and Trotsky, extended consistent support to the revolutionary nationalist movement of China. The Chinese Communists—an integral part of the nationalist struggle—functioned as a loyal current in the Kuomintang-led movement, leading demonstrations and strikes against imperialism and participating in the armed struggles against the reactionary warlords.

As the left-wing labor movement grew, and as the Communist Party became a pole of attraction to radicalizing layers of the workers and peasants, sharpening tensions developed between the CCP and the more conservative and pro-capitalist elements of the Kuomintang, including Chiang Kai-shek. CCP leaders such as Chen Tu-hsiu and Peng Shu-tse began to question their party's subordination to the Kuomintang. They raised their critical questions with the leadership of the world Communist movement. By this time, however, Lenin had died, and the revolutionaries around Trotsky were being pushed aside by a bureaucratic layer led by Joseph Stalin in both the USSR and the Communist International. The leaders of the CCP were instructed to maintain their alliance with the Kuomintang at all costs—over the increasingly urgent objections of Trotsky, who warned that maintaining this policy under the new conditions would be suicidal.

In addition to arguing for working class political independence (combined with united front efforts against imperialism and warlordism), Trotsky was beginning to suggest that the theory of permanent revolution could have as much relevance for China as it had earlier had for Russia: the democratic-nationalist struggle could only be fully won under the hegemony of

the working class movement and its peasant allies, led by the Communist Party—and this would mean that the nationalist revolution would necessarily assume an anti-capitalist character. Otherwise, the pro-capitalist elements in the nationalist movement would gain the upper hand and, fearing the radicalization of the workers and peasants, would compromise with imperialism and reaction. This is what happened in 1927, when Chiang Kai-shek's triumphant forces turned against their left-wing allies. Thousands of Communists and working class militants were slaughtered, the trade unions and left-wing social movements (those of women, students and youth, peasants, etc.) were smashed. The story is well told in Benjamin Schwartz's *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Harold Isaacs's *Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, and in the novels of André Malraux—*The Conquerors* and *Man's Fate*.

In the wake of this disaster, as anti-Communist repression was spreading throughout more and more of his country, Wang and many of his comrades were sent by the CCP to Moscow, where they attended the Communist University for the Toilers of the East and Sun Yat-sen University, with thousands of other young Communists from China. Despite the Stalinist distortions of Marxism that were being taught in the formal classes, hundreds of these earnest revolutionaries were influenced by the "Bolshevik-Leninist" perspectives of the Russian Communist Party's Left Opposition which had just been defeated. Some of the young Chinese militants were contacted and befriended by Russian Oppositionists who had not yet been repressed. Trotsky's critique of Stalinist policy in China and elsewhere had a profound impact on them. Remembering the documents of Trotsky and Zinoviev that he secretly read in 1928, Wang wrote: "They had an enormous impact on me, because of their unassailable logic and also their superb style. They were a real contrast to the lifeless and insipid documents of the [Stalinist] Central Committee. The arguments and warnings of the Opposition, especially those concerned with the Chinese Revolution, were so obviously true and had been so often confirmed in practice, that I could not help nodding vigorously in agreement as I eagerly pored over them." (Many of these writings, and much else of value, can be found in Les Evans and Russell Block, eds., *Leon Trotsky on China* [New York: Monad Press, 1976].) The bureaucratic conservatism of the Stalinist leadership not only choked off workers' democracy in the

Soviet Union, but it destroyed the revolutionary internationalism of the world Communist movement, paving the way for bloody defeats of working people in many different countries—such as China.

Wang and others like him became part of the clandestine Trotskyist movement that was growing in the USSR during the late 1920s even after Trotsky himself was expelled and living in exile. Wang was able to make his way back to China where, after a brief stint of working under the prominent Communist leader Chou En-lai, he joined with a small but growing number of Chinese Trotskyists, among whom were Chen Tu-hsiu and Peng Shu-tse. Unfortunately, personality clashes, inexperience, and political differences repeatedly fragmented this movement. In his generally thoughtful and dispassionate account, Wang writes with great respect of his sometime adversary Chen Tu-hsiu, but a tone of irritation creeps into his comments on Peng Shu-tse. For the most part, however, he is able to convey a sense of profound idealism and heroism in his depiction of the Chinese Trotskyists who fought a six-cornered struggle against brutal warlords, insatiable Western imperialism, the repressive Kuomintang dictatorship, the murderous Japanese invaders, exploitative native capitalists, and the authoritarian Stalinists who came to be led by Mao Tse-tung. "Events and people from bygone days have haunted me like ghosts, gripping my mind," he writes toward the end of his book. He has succeeded in bringing them to life, with special attention to the vibrant political ideas which animated them in the period from the 1920s to the early 1950s.

Wang modestly recounts his own efforts to grasp the complex and changing realities which he faced, especially when the allegedly "petty-bourgeois" and now peasant-based CCP under Mao Tse-tung came to power—against the Trotskyists' expectations. In the 1940s he was influenced by the ideas of Max Shachtman (who had led a split-off from the U.S. Trotskyist movement), and he published a pamphlet in this vein attempting to explain the Chinese Communist revolutionary victory of 1949: "In it I said that the Soviet Union had turned into a bureaucratic collectivist state, and the Stalinist party into a party of collectivist bureaucrats." From this he concluded that the victory of the CCP "was merely the victory of the collectivist bureaucratic party," having nothing in common with a genuine victory for China's working people. He soon drew back from the practical conclusions of this analysis, however, and after more thorough theoretical work "arrived at the conclusion that among the numerous theoretical analyses of the Soviet Union and Stalinism

advanced both inside and outside the Fourth International, Trotsky's was by far the strongest and in the best interests of socialist revolution." The truth had turned out, as it often does, to be more contradictory than expected: gains had been made by and for the Chinese working people of city and countryside, despite the debilitating authoritarianism and bureaucratism of the CCP's Stalinist leadership. What he adds, with humor and dignity, tells us something of the quality of this revolutionary:

I had launched my soul onto unknown seas only to land again at the port from where I had embarked. Some may mock me for this. Let them. All that matters to me is the search for truth, and for the key to the completion of the revolution.

In his 1990 preface to this edition of his memoirs, Wang notes "that now we are witnessing the general collapse of Stalinism," and he considers such questions as: "Does its collapse prove the bankruptcy of socialism and communism? Is capitalism from now on inviolable and irreplaceable? Will socialism and communism go down in history as reactionary illusions?" Based on his own life experience and careful study, he answers "no" to all of these questions. The way he elaborates this answer, however, demonstrates a profoundly undogmatic and humane temperament:

Could it be that the world today, no matter whether it be the existing and now disintegrating "socialist" countries, standing blindfolded on the brink of an uncertain future, or the superficially prosperous capitalist countries, which in reality are host to all sorts of unresolvable contradictions—that in the world today the only way forward is in the policies already mapped out for us in the documents of the Trotskyists? Probably not, for human affairs are too complex and "Old Man History" is too cunning for any individual or group to be able in advance to formulate an exit from crises that have not yet happened; new policies must constantly be developed to suit reality's everchanging needs. I am deeply convinced, however, that as long as the structure of our society continues to rest on an opposition of robbers and robbed, repressors and repressed, the basic programmatic strategies laid down by the Trotskyists and by Marx cannot go out of date.

Wang's perspective provides orientation for the "long march" of revolutionary democrats and socialists in the struggle against the murderous vestiges of

Stalinism and the viciousness of capitalism and imperialism, the struggle for human freedom and dignity in the People's Republic of China and throughout the world. □

## Exposing the JFK Myth

Film review by Ben Stone

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, almost 29 years ago. Since then a virtual mythology has grown up around him, overlaid with some facts which enhanced the myths. Kennedy was handsome, he was rich, he had an elegant wife, and two beautiful children. He was also the leader of the free world and the incarnation of all that is good, fighting the forces of evil. Thus when he confronted Khrushchev in what has come to be known as the Cuban missile crisis and forced the Soviet ships to turn back, the world breathed a sigh of relief at being spared a nuclear catastrophe of incalculable proportions. The bourgeois world, of course, looked upon Khrushchev, not Kennedy, as the evil force. Kennedy was Camelot, the knight in shining armor.

Following the Kennedy assassination a rash of books appeared, all claiming that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy on the part of the southern reactionary forces acting in concert with the military establishment and the CIA. One such book was *Rush to Judgement*, written by Mark Lane following the Warren Commission report. During the intervening years, the charges of conspiracy against the "military/industrial complex" resurfaced from time to time but basically lay dormant.

The Warren Commission, which was headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, produced 26 volumes of testimony, over a period of nine months. Its conclusion: The assassination was the work of one man, Lee Harvey Oswald.

But the furor broke out again with production of the film *JFK*. The very first scene of the movie depicts Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his farewell speech, declaiming against the military/industrial complex, warning against its growing power in this country. This scene is obviously aimed at strengthening the major theme of the movie, that this military/industrial complex was responsible for the conspiracy that led to Kennedy's assassination. The viewer is then led through some scenes which are heavy on obscenities but light on proof of conspiracy. According to the conspiracy theories, the plot to kill Kennedy was hatched by top generals at the Pentagon, the FBI, the CIA, the Department of Defense, and even included Lyn-

(Continued on page 36)

**The KKK in the Midwest**

Thanks to Tom Barrett for his article on the KKK, David Duke, and American fascism in contemporary USA. It is the most accurate estimation I have ever read of the history and current thrust of the far right. I would add, it's about time too. I was beginning to feel like Chicken Little seeing what is happening in this area—the Ozarks of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas—and not seeing any reporting done except in the local media.

The Klan's history here, in many of its factions, goes back a century or more. While not the so-called Deep South, this area has a bitter racist history, enforced by right-wing fundamentalist Christian theology of the "eye for an eye" and "hellfire and brimstone" school. Most of the notorious TV evangelists now in the press over sex and money scandals attended "college" in Springfield, Missouri. There are three, two Pentecostal and one Baptist.

To the north of Springfield is a tourist attraction, Crystal Cave. People are transported through this huge cave by Jeep-pulled train. The tour includes a huge "altar" rock where the Klan held its meetings in the 1920s. Reportedly there has been no KKK activity in this area since then.

In 1906, Springfield was the stage for the most publicized lynching in USA history. Three black men (one 70 years of age) were hanged from the torchbearing arm of a large replica of the Statue of Liberty on the town's square. A reported 50,000 persons from the general area witnessed the event. The governor called in National Guard troops and established martial law on Easter Sunday following the Saturday night event. A hearing was held but no one was arraigned, brought to trial, or convicted. No single witness could be found. Then the San Francisco earthquake captured the headlines. To this day no recognition of the event has been made by the city, even though thousands of Blacks were forced to leave the area.

This is the atmosphere into which the Klan moved when it left Tennessee and Alabama after the courts forced big money settlements against them in those states. They were looking for a less hostile environment. It remains to be seen if they have found one.

Arkansas denied the Klan an "Adopt a Highway" opportunity on the Missouri-Arkansas line near Silver Dollar City and Branson Missouri's Country Music Mile. It headed for court. This group has established a "Bible Study" summer camp for the USA and is actively recruiting youth from across the nation to attend.

Another group, the CSA (Covenant Sword of the Lord of America) was in a grand shoot-out with the FBI and state and local police in the '70s and one member who was transporting guns from the Aryan Nation members in Montana/Wyoming machine-gunned a Missouri highway patrolman to death and wounded another when he was pulled over.

But all is not history. The Klan has been active in the '90s. They have demonstrations in Springfield and surrounding county. A cross-burning was held here last spring.

Jack Bresee  
Springfield, MO

**Response from a Russian Reader**

Thank you for the two issues of the journal and I hope for a lasting working relationship with you. I have passed your name and address around. I have found in the content of your magazine principles and ideals with which I am in sympathy. Unfortunately, my command of English is very weak and I need to use a dictionary. Translating articles takes much time and distortions of meaning are bound to creep in; however, I think that the problem can be corrected.

I was more than a little surprised when I received these journals from you because I know that our "soviet" censors get very upset about any links with foreigners. The arrival of your publication shows that elements of democracy are beginning to manifest themselves in Russia, which means our struggle has not been in vain. The task now is to strengthen and widen

them. It is true that the danger of setbacks exists because our democracy is still a hybrid, a post-Communist variety. Please understand that I call it "communist" not in the true sense of this word because there was nothing really communist about what we lived under. We certainly don't make the mistake of believing that we had socialism in our country. On the contrary, we are convinced that Russia has gone along a capitalist route for 73 years and continues on that course.

By way of exchange, I send you our book *An Economy of Absurdities or the Absurdity of the Economy?* Our people have presented here a sober Marxist analysis of the notorious "socialist" economy in the former colonial and totalitarian Soviet Union.

In the book you will find all our thoughts and concepts about the Soviet Union, the democrats, and our understanding of the historic route our country has traveled. I hope that after a careful examination of it you will understand the essence of our views.

A little about myself: I am 51 years old, married, with two daughters. I am a construction engineer (radiophysics and radioelectronics expert), but today I am unemployed, almost certainly because of my politics. I am a Marxist which is not very popular among today's democrats.

This once more shows the hybrid quality of our democracy, but as they say—or as the unforgettable Ostap Bender said—"Gentlemen: Things have begun to move."

Aleksandr Petrovich Nikonov  
Perm, UUUR

**The 'Big Bang' Theory**

Jeffrey Sachs from Harvard tries out the "big bang" theory on the economics of Poland.

"You don't try to cross a chasm in two jumps"

he explains reasonably, to support his argument that it needs

one year only to create the basis for a free market

Just as physicists pulled out their theory on the beginning of the universe

To explain the transformation of nothing into something—life

as we know it—

By saying there was an explosion! Bang! It happened!

Just like the Bible says God said—Let there be light!

But I mean what "chasm" are we talking about between

bureaucratic central planning and capitalism?

How can you leap when there's no ground prepared to land on?

The big bang theory! It's unlikely enough in physics, but at

least it's a logical stab in the dark of the unknowable.

But in the daylight of history and ongoing life?

What's wrong with protective clothing and spreading a mat?

And taking the time to do a good job?

Using imagination, sensitivity, and creative will to take into account

the multi-layered social aspects?

Margaret Dunbar  
New York City

### **For a Real Labor Party**

Your articles on the labor party development are of particular interest and importance to me. The time has come for a labor party. Not a labor party slogan but, as the old philosopher (Kant) would say, "the thing in itself." *The real thing!*

I have been here in the Midwest (Wisconsin) for the last 15 years and I can say there is no movement for a farm party. Thirty years ago I spoke in Detroit (at the Friday Night Socialist Forum) on the then growing and militant farm movement in the Midwest. There is nothing like that here now.

However there is contempt for the Democratic and Republican parties, and fear for the future under those parties. I see no significant movement towards the right in the form of a neo-fascist party of some type. Wisconsin in the past, as you know, has developed such groups and they may

reappear in the near future, but there is nothing like that in sight now.

The working people are like a large strong fighter who is on the ropes being pounded unmercifully by a smaller weaker fighter. The big fighter is not fighting back and not even protecting himself well, rather he huddles frightened on the ropes.

The trade union movement is tied much closer to the Democratic Party than the working class is. Though the case of the Teamsters union is an interesting one, there is no reason they should go from the Republican Party to the Democrats. They could easily go to a labor party.

The leadership and "push" for a labor party may not come from the labor movement. In Canada it was the labor movement uniting with the old Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), headed by Tommy Douglas, that brought the working class into the parliamentary political arena.

The CCF was a middle class organization with middle class values. It repeatedly expelled our radical working class members when we tried to join it, and this turned many workers against it. For example, the CCF at the time of the unity with the trade union officialdom (or sections of it) was so unpopular with union members that we had to argue with the militants that they could move the CCF to the left with the weight of the union movement. This is what happened after unity and the formation of the New Democratic Party. So I think, here in the U.S., the unions grudgingly will become the leadership of the labor party, but they *may* not start it! In the spring the run-off water makes many twists and turns, but in time it gets to the river.

Joseph Johnson  
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

### **JFK Myth (Continued from page 34)**

don B. Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy as president.

The motive of the conspirators? Kennedy was weak on Vietnam, planning to pull out American troops. He was weak on Cuba, having failed to provide sufficient backup forces for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Above all, Kennedy was soft on communism.

John F. Kennedy soft on communism? John F. Kennedy perhaps a liberal? The patriarch of the Kennedy family was Joseph Kennedy, who exerted a strong influence over the sons, including Robert and Edward. He was an arch-conservative, even though he served as ambassador to the Court of St. James under the New Deal administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He openly professed his admiration for Joe McCarthy, the neo-fascistic senator from Wisconsin. This admiration extended to his sons, John and Robert. In Bobby's case this resulted in his becoming a member of McCarthy's staff and, together with the notorious Roy Cohn, serving as counsel to McCarthy's Senate committee.

Henry Luce, one of the big moguls of his time in the publishing business and a close friend of Joe Kennedy, once remarked to Joe that if John was elected, he would be a liberal president. Joe replied, "Henry, you know goddam well no son of mine could ever be a goddam liberal."

Like his father and brother, John F. Kennedy admired Joe McCarthy and never raised his voice against him, not even when other members of the ruling class did. Kennedy was always a hardliner on communism, advocating building a strong defense (euphemism for offense). He presided over the Bay of Pigs invasion of

Cuba and he began the U.S. military build-up in Vietnam. There is every indication, including statements from his closest associates, that he was fully prepared to follow the same path with regard to the Vietnam war that his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, subsequently took. Indeed, Johnson simply followed the policies that Kennedy laid out on Vietnam. So why would the "conspirators" depicted in the film want him eliminated?

David Koskoff, author of *Joseph Kennedy, A Life and Times*, speaking of Bobby Kennedy, writes, "As his brother, the president, escalated the war from hundreds to thousands, Bobby himself . . . developed a deep respect and considerable admiration for 'hawkish' General Maxwell Taylor, as much as any man the architect of the Kennedy-Johnson Vietnam policies, and he became an enthusiastic partner in his brother's Vietnam policy. His jingoist talk like 'the solution to the Vietnam problem lies in our winning it. That is what the president intends to do,'" states the Kennedy perspective for the Vietnam war.

The movie, *JFK*, won eight academy award nominations for "best picture" including best director (Oliver Stone) and best screenplay (Oliver Stone). In the words of David W. Belin, former counsel to the Warren Commission, writing in the *N.Y. Times* of March 7, 1992, "For Hollywood to give any academy award to this massive misrepresentation of truth and character assassination of Earl Warren would be vivid evidence of the depths to which Hollywood standards of integrity, truth and justice have fallen."

Whether one agrees with it or not, it is not hard to understand why, almost 30

years after the Kennedy assassination, the conspiracy theory finds so much credence amongst the general public. Polls taken by the media on this issue find an almost equal division of public opinion. There is a pervasive sense of skepticism and cynicism that prevails throughout the country towards our government.

Virtually every president since FDR (and probably before) has come under suspicion, or worse, of lying, deceit, and cover-up of crimes committed while in office. Particularly odious have been the administrations of Richard Nixon, who got out one step ahead of the sheriff, and Ronald Reagan, who got out two steps ahead of the sheriff. But virtually all of the capitalist administrations for the past 60 years have been marked by their deception of the American people. Small wonder, then, that *JFK* feeds on this pervasive public opinion. But the conspiracy theory of the JFK assassination it presents lacks any credibility whatsoever.

Artistically, the movie is an eclectic hodgepodge. It keeps shifting between early shots of Lee Harvey Oswald, his wife Marina, both shown in documentary black and white, likewise the movie character portraying Oswald, making it difficult to distinguish between the two. It portrays Kevin Costner as Jim Garrison, the district attorney in New Orleans who embarks on a crusade to prove a conspiracy against Kennedy but whose chief trait throughout the movie is placidly smoking his pipe, seemingly detached from the proceedings. One wonders if this is the same Kevin Costner who evoked such sympathy in the movie *Dances with Wolves*. □

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