

Los Angeles Erupts!

Years of Frustration, Days of Rage

p. 1

by Evelyn Sell

Ron Daniels Campaign:

Jesse Jackson and the '92 Election: The Fallacy of the Inside Strategy	5
by Ron Daniels	
Impressions of the Ron Daniels Campaign	6
by Steve Bloom	
There Must Be Reproductive Justice for All Women	8
Statement by Daniels Presidential Campaign Committee	
The Caterpillar Strike: No Contest	9
by Frank Lovell	
The Caterpillar Aftermath	11
by Elaine Bernard	
Justice for Hamlet Workers	12
by Marilyn Vogt-Downey	
Killer Gangs or Killer Government?	13
by Mary Scully	

Constituent Assembly: Educating the South African Working Class for Social Liberation	16
by Shaun Whittaker	
Understanding the National Struggle in Georgia (Part 1)	20
by Marilyn Vogt-Downey	
What We Mean by the Fourth International and Why We Should Continue to Build It Today	23
by Steve Bloom, Carol McAllister, Paul Le Blanc, and Marilyn Vogt-Downey	
Their Leninism and Ours	30
by Roy Rollin	
Film Review: American Betrayal	32
by Frank Lovell	
For Free Trade Unions in China	35
Letters	36

Who We Are

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

FIT members and supporters are involved in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. We are activists in unions, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. intervention, student formations, and lesbian and gay rights campaigns. We help organize support for oppressed groups here and abroad—such as those challenging apartheid in South Africa and bureaucratic rule in China, Eastern Europe, and the 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 FIT was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because they opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. We tried to win the SWP back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective, and called for the reunification of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. through readmission to the party of all who had been expelled in the anti-Trotskyist purge. The SWP formally severed fraternal relations with the Fourth International in June of 1990. Our central task now is to reconstitute a united U.S. sympathizing section of the Fourth International from among all those in this country who remain loyal to the FIT'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.

FIT DIRECTORY

- FIT National Office/National Coordinators: 27 Union Square W., 2nd floor, Rm. 208, New York, NY 10003
- Bay Area: P.O. Box 971, Berkeley, CA 94701
- Baltimore: Sarah Springer, 3203 N. Charles St. #203, Baltimore, MD 21218
- Boston: Mary Scully, 15 Summit Ave., Somerville, MA 02143
- Cincinnati: Kate Curry, 1136 Franklin Ave., Apt 1, Cincinnati, OH 45237
- Cleveland: P.O. Box 18874, Cleveland, OH 44118
- Dallas-Fort Worth: P.O. Box 556, Lancaster, TX 75146
- Kansas City: P.O. Box 30127 Plaza Station, Kansas City, MO 64112
- Los Angeles: P.O. Box 480410, Los Angeles, CA 90048
- New Jersey: P.O. Box 345, Millburn, NJ 07041
- New York: P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009
- Pacific Northwest: P.O. Box 17512, Seattle, WA 98107-1212
- Philadelphia: P.O. Box 28838, Philadelphia, PA 19151
- Pittsburgh: Paul Le Blanc, 357 Gross St., Pittsburgh, PA 15224
- Twin Cities: P.O. Box 14444, University Station, Minneapolis, MN 55414

Bulletin In Defense of Marxism, No. 97, June 1992

Closing date May 8, 1992

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

EDITORIAL BOARD: Tom Barrett, Steve Bloom, R. L. Huebner, Lisa Landphair, Paul Le Blanc, Sarah Lovell, Bill Onasch, George Saunders, Evelyn Sell, Jean Tussey, Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Göte Kilden, Sweden; Daniel Libreros, Colombia; Ernest Mandel, Belgium; Manuel Aguilar Mora, Mexico; Steve Roberts, Britain; Barry Weisleder, Canada.

To subscribe to *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, send \$24 for 12 monthly issues or \$15 for 6 issues to Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. Back issues are \$3.00 each.

Indexed in the Alternative Press Index

Years of Frustration, Days of Rage

by Evelyn Sell

Outrage. Shock. Frustration. Anger. Those were the widespread and multiracial reactions of Los Angeles area residents when they heard the April 29 "not guilty" verdicts in the case of four white police officers charged with beating Black motorist Rodney King on March 3, 1991.

There was outrage over the messages being sent by the verdicts: it is acceptable to assault African Americans; people of color do not deserve equal justice under the law; there's one set of rules and moral standards for whites and there's a different set of rules for Blacks—with minorities expected to serve, obey, and be content with a lower status.

People were shocked by the verdicts—although many had expected weak punishment for the cops' crimes against King because the trial was moved out of Los Angeles and took place in a nearby county where whites make up 66 percent of the population, where only 2 percent are African Americans, and where a number of racist incidents have taken place in recent years. Shortly before the trial of the white officers, a Latina filed seven complaints against the Sheriff's Department for a pattern of police brutality against Latino youths in the county. About a month earlier, a fifth-grade student—dressed like Adolf Hitler, wearing a swastika armband, and giving a presentation sympathetic to the fascist leader—won a second-place award in a public school speech contest.

Last year an elected representative from the area proposed a constitutional amendment which would deny citizenship to children born in the U.S. whose parents were illegal immigrants. Four Jewish religious buildings have been repeatedly vandalized and marked with anti-Semitic graffiti over the past three years. In late 1990, "We Is Apes" was sprayed on the garage of the president of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the Simi Valley area of Ventura County, where the trial of the four white cops took place, almost 80 percent of the residents are white. The 12-person jury in the King case was composed of ten whites, one Latino, and one Asian.

The frustration which exploded after the April 29 verdicts has been building up over the past 14 months—ever since worldwide television news programs carried the video tape of the assault on Rodney King. Demands were immediately made to take action against the police who severely injured King with 56 baton blows and kicks within 81 seconds. These demands were coupled with calls to remove Chief Daryl Gates who initially claimed that the attack was "an aberration" and not typical of Los Angeles Police Department policy or practice. Large demonstrations took place in 1991 involving all races and ethnic groups in the Los Angeles area. [See *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, May 1991, No. 85]

The pressures for change were so great that a special investigation was carried out by a commission whose members were appointed by Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and Chief Gates. The report of the Christopher Commission completely confirmed complaints made for many years: racism, sexism, and homophobia existed throughout the police department; and, citizens complaints were ignored or discouraged. [See *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, September 1991, No. 88] The commission's report recommended numerous changes in the City Charter, and Amendment F is currently on the ballot for a vote in the June elections.

As a result of the continuing pressures following the King beating, Chief Gates was forced to announce his retirement. A new head for the department, the first Black chief in Los Angeles' history, was announced in April. It seemed to many that some progress was being made in exposing and modifying police department practices. But the trial verdicts ripped apart any illusion that substantial change was on the horizon.

Frustrated Expectations, Increasing Problems

Underlying the frustrations of the last year, conditions for African Americans have gotten worse since the Watts rebellion in 1965. Exact comparisons cannot be

The following speech was delivered by Claire Cohen, Pittsburgh chairperson of the Ron Daniels Campaign Committee, on May 2, to 3,000 demonstrators who had gathered to protest the verdict in the Rodney King case.

The outrageous verdict in the Rodney King case is a slap in the face, a reality to remind us of how racist our society still is. Racism in this country will not die until Americans of all races make its destruction a central part of their agenda.

The riots that have followed show the level of desperation and alienation of the poor and oppressed, especially the youth, in our society.

Demonstrations and calls for federal intervention are not enough. If we want racial, social, and economic justice in this country, we *must* fight for fundamental change.

We must organize and struggle at every level: politically, economically, culturally. That includes building permanent, grass roots, *independent* political structures that represent the interests of African Americans, other people of color, and all poor and working people, instead of just the interests of the greedy, privileged few.

The Democrats, nationally and locally, have just given us slightly bigger crumbs than the Republicans. We want our share of the pie.

It's a farce to tell people that voting for a Democrat will make a substantial difference in their lives when the Democrats have controlled the Congress and most state legislatures throughout the last 20 years of brutal assault on our people and communities.

You want the 90 million non-voters in this country to vote? Give them something to vote for! We must start building uncompromising, credible, independent politics now.

In the meantime there is a choice that represents our interests and can send a powerful message to put the system on notice. We ask you to consider Ron Daniels for President/Campaign for a New Tomorrow. Daniels will speak at the third annual Malcolm X Day program on Saturday, May 16th on: "Malcolm X: 1992 Might Just Be the Year of the Ballot or the Bullet." □

made due to changes in neighborhood populations, and the different economic and social context of the 1980s-90s. In 1965, South Los Angeles (including Watts) was overwhelmingly populated by Blacks but now that area is home to about equal numbers of Blacks and Latinos. In 1965, unemployment in South-Central Los Angeles ranged from 12 to 15 percent—but 27 years later, the figure had swollen to 40 percent. Social welfare programs have been cut back again and again during the 1980s. The school system has deteriorated. The problems of daily life have increased for those trapped at the bottom of the economic and social ladder—and warnings have been sounded repeatedly that an explosion would come.

The anger, built up over many decades of police abuses and general discrimination against people of color, burst out when the jury declared “not guilty” over and over and over to the many charges brought against the four cops on trial. (There was no decision on one charge, and another trial may take place against one police officer.) The first hours after the verdicts were marked by four different kinds of responses.

- Black ministers, anticipating possible problems, had called for people to meet in a well-known African American church. Thousands gathered there for songs, prayers, and speeches by civic and religious leaders.
- In the downtown area of Los Angeles, a well-organized and self-monitored demonstration was held in front of Parker Center, the main police headquarters. Organized by groups which had been fighting police brutality for a number of years, the demonstrators called for justice for King, and an end to police abuses. A number of people broke away from that demonstration and began breaking windows and setting fires in the vicinity.
- The vast majority of African Americans and Latinos in South-Central Los Angeles and other minority neighborhoods stayed inside their homes, behind locked doors, and expressed their bitterness and rage to family and friends.
- About 50-100 African Americans, mostly youths, gathered at a major street intersection in South Los Angeles. Stores were broken into, merchandise was taken out, and fires were set. Persons driving by in their vehicles were pulled out and beaten; these attacks were directed primarily at whites and Asians but Latinos

and Blacks were also hurt. The Blacks’ sentiments were summed up in the shout, “No justice, no peace!”

‘Pay-Back Time’ Spreads

In the hours that followed these initial events, similar actions developed over a wider geographic area, and involved both Blacks and Latinos. Stores were set on fire, merchandise was taken, and individuals were attacked throughout Los Angeles County. When asked by reporters why they had broken into stores and taken items, the answers were: Everybody was doing it. I needed the food and furniture. One Black explained, “We’re taking back our community. I didn’t like the fires. That just makes no sense to me.”

Many commentators have compared what happened in the Los Angeles area with the revolts of Black communities which swept across the country during the 1960s. But today’s Los Angeles is not the same as it was in 1965—when the Watts rebellion shook the nation. Significant changes in population, the composition of neighborhoods, and other aspects have created a multiracial and multi-ethnic dynamic which did not prevail in the mid-60s. The author of this article was an eyewitness to the 1967 Detroit uprising of the Black community. Ignited by an incident involving police, the Detroit events immediately took on the character of a generalized Black revolt against the entire socio-economic system. Although the majority of the Black community was not involved in street activities, there was overwhelming Black support for those who were expressing themselves through fire and the expropriation of goods—that’s what we called it in 1967; *expropriation* because for many years Blacks had paid many times over for their overpriced purchases.

South-Central Los Angeles, where street activities began on April 29, is now populated by both African Americans and Latinos. The 1992 events were not only an expression of Black frustration and outrage but, also, of Latino reactions to the police brutality and racism affecting them. The latest reports indicate that predominantly Latino sections of the city were even more devastated by the fires than Black neighborhoods. Community residents understood and sympathized with the anger expressed on April 29 and the following days. At the same time, there was significant sentiment—declared in the poorest neighborhoods—that the form of the protest was causing injury to Blacks and Latinos by destroying homes, neighborhood shops, and community facilities.

One thing was not changed from 1965: the response of the powers-that-be, the establishment, the political machinery. Mayor Bradley declared a state of emergency immediately, got help from other police agencies such as the Highway Patrol and the Sheriff’s Department, and declared a dusk-to-dawn curfew which began the night of April 30 and lasted through the morning of May 4. Governor Wilson called out the National Guard. President Bush activated army and marine troops on May 1, and they were deployed inside Los Angeles on May 2. Bush also sent in 1,000 federal agents including members of the Border Patrol and prison guards.

A television cable news reporter stated that federal troops were demanded by middle class Blacks but, in fact, residents in the affected neighborhoods voiced over and over again their need to have such protection—especially since they did not trust the Los Angeles police and sheriff’s deputies. African Americans in South Los Angeles brought soda pop and cake to guardsmen; one young woman told troops, “I’m sorry you guys had to come down here like this. But I’m sure glad to see you.”

Not all South-Central Los Angeles residents welcomed the federal and state troops. A Central American woman exclaimed, “I had to leave El Salvador because the army was everywhere. I come to the United States, and what do I see? La Guardia Nacional!” Blacks driving by army troops stationed in Watts honked and made obscene gestures at the soldiers. A banner hanging out of a window demanded, “U.S. Out of Echo Park!”

On April 30 and continuing through May 3, public transportation was stopped in the afternoon and not available at all during the night, schools and colleges were closed, postal services were halted in affected areas, Cinco de Mayo events were canceled, public recreation facilities were shut, airplane flights were delayed and rerouted over the ocean because of the thick black smoke from thousands of fires. Firefighting equipment could not cope with the growing problem of burning buildings—partly because of the large number and the widely scattered locations, and partly because of being attacked by bottles, stones, and bullets. Three firefighters were shot, one was killed.

Media reports tend to emphasize the destruction of businesses—but the persons affected the most drastically were those in the poorest neighborhoods. Fires set in stores spread to nearby houses and apartment buildings, leaving many Black and Latino families homeless. Electrical power was lost for 25-30,000 people when transformers were burned by fires started in businesses. Vital community facilities

were destroyed, including post offices, two public libraries, and many food stores. The offices and facilities of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee were destroyed. This anti-poverty organization, created by Ted Watkins in 1964 with the help of 50 unionists, functioned after the Watts rebellion to bring jobs, social services, free and low-cost transportation, and other services to Blacks.

Signs stating "Black Owned Store" were posted or spray-painted on many businesses—but even some of these were burned. Small shops operated by other minority persons were also destroyed. A ten-mile stretch of Vermont Avenue, stretching from deep in South-Central Los Angeles north into Hollywood, contained many hundreds of destroyed buildings: a Latino-owned restaurant, a Black-owned telephone paging service, a Korean-owned furniture store, a Filipino-owned camera shop.

Jobs held by Latinos and Blacks went up in smoke along with the destroyed businesses. It is estimated that 20-40,000 jobs were lost—perhaps 10,000 on a long-term basis.

In many cases, residents took charge in the emergency situation by directing traffic at street intersections where signal lights were not working, saving homes threatened by fires from nearby businesses, and organizing self-defense groups. Here are some vivid examples:

When flames from a store began licking the wall of the African American Community Unity Center, Blacks and Latinos linked up garden hoses to water down the building and save it. After several hours, fire trucks arrived and completed the task. A Latino gang stood guard over a corner store throughout the night, the banner behind them read "Protect Our Neighborhood Store." When interviewed by a reporter, the gang leader explained that his grandmother shopped at this store, and if "something happens here, she would have nowhere to go for food." Blacks and Latinos guarded a supermarket. Old people in a retirement center formed a ring around the building and, despite being pushed around, protected their home. Homeless persons who had set up a tent city protected their neighborhood food market from being torched. Residents parked their cars across the entrances to their street, and stood watch.

The self-mobilization of the community was also expressed in clean-up activities carried out by tens of thousands beginning on May 1. Bringing brooms from their homes, garbage cans, and plastic trash bags, multiracial groups worked for hours along miles of major streets sweeping up broken glass, and removing debris from burned buildings. One highly publicized

effort was organized by actor-director Edward James Olmos who spent days sweeping and directing activities. Students from colleges and universities participated in the broom brigades. Other clean-up groups were organized by churches and community organizations. But thousands of individuals simply took the initiative to go out in their neighborhoods or, in many cases, come into Los Angeles from outlying cities and counties.

Within 36 hours, almost all of the fires were out, and the physical expressions of rage and frustration were rare. Residents in the hard-hit areas struggled with the needs of daily life: finding a store where they could buy food, searching for a gas station so they could keep their cars running, and waiting for many hours in long lines at the few post offices remaining open to give them their social security checks and similar payments. Many expressed the view that they could understand and sympathize with the initial actions following the "not guilty" verdicts, but—as so many put it—"There's no sense in keeping it up hour after hour, for days. Look what it's done to our neighborhood! Look how it's hurt me!"

When Rodney King spoke at a May 1 media conference, he asked people not to continue violent activities in his name, and pointed out that although a battle was lost, the war was not over. King's lawsuit against the police department and the city of Los Angeles will be taking place, and the federal grand jury began its investigation of the violation of King's civil rights on May 1. King's attorney indicated that the civil lawsuit would provide a much stronger case than the criminal trial because many witnesses not utilized in the criminal trial would be called, evidence not introduced in the criminal trial would be presented, and King himself would testify. The prosecutor in the trial of the cops did not call Rodney King as a witness.

Relations Between Blacks and Korean Americans

The situation in Los Angeles was not a simple Black versus white confrontation. Immigration, population mixtures, and the diversity of racial and ethnic groups have prompted complex interactions and changes. The 1990 census reported that Los Angeles' population included 1.4 million Latinos (40 percent), close to 488,000 Blacks (13 percent), and 320,000 Asians (Cambodians, Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, Japanese, Koreans, Thais, Vietnamese, and others).

Tensions between Blacks and Korean Americans, and between Blacks and Latinos, have erupted many times in recent years. Important elements in conflicts be-

tween African Americans and Korean Americans include: cultural and language differences; general strains caused by economic problems and the racism which permeates U.S. society; and, the presence of Korean-owned or operated businesses in predominately Black neighborhoods. Stresses between Blacks and Korean Americans were heating up to a boiling point shortly before the social explosion on April 29.

A key event was the March 16, 1991, killing of a 15-year-old Black female by a Korean-born woman. Accusing the young woman of stealing, the grocer shot the young African American as she turned and started to leave the family-owned store. Demonstrations and a boycott of Korean stores were organized by Blacks. Their outrage was compounded on November 15, 1991, when a judge sentenced the 51-year-old Korean woman to five years' probation, a fine, and community service for voluntary manslaughter. Angry African Americans carried out demonstrations against the judge, and campaigned to oust the jurist from office.

Efforts to reduce tensions were made, and were partially successful. But the smoldering resentments and bitterness flared into the open when the street actions erupted on April 29. Any Asian was targeted for retribution. International media has covered the beating of a white truck driver but a Japanese American was also beaten at the same intersection, and rescued by a Black male who led him away from attackers shouting anti-Asian epithets.

The section of Los Angeles known as Koreatown was especially marked for fires and looting. When calls to the police went unanswered, Korean Americans organized armed defense guards for stores and businesses. Many expressed outrage at the "not guilty" verdicts in the King case but, at the same time, protested the attacks against the Korean American community. On May 1, the Korean American Coalition organized a parking lot rally attended by hundreds including some Blacks, Latinos, and Anglos. On May 2, about 50,000—mostly Korean Americans—participated in a march through their community. Many signs called for "Justice for Rodney King," and others bore the single word, "Peace."

Intergroup tensions remain a serious problem in Los Angeles at this time. The matter is too complicated to take up here, but an in-depth analysis of the April 29-May 2 events will need to address the many-layered problems which plague Los Angeles—a multiracial, multi-ethnic city which many think gives a look into the future of U.S. society as a whole.

New Leadership, Big Changes Needed

On May 2, Mayor Bradley announced that Peter Ueberroth, chief organizer of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, would head up a recovery program to rebuild the city both materially and spiritually. On May 3, the dusk-to-dawn curfew was lifted but the state of emergency remained—as did the National Guard and federal troops. On May 4, the highways were filled with cars once again, schools were reopened, public transportation resumed, mail deliveries were made, much of the city returned to a significant degree of normalcy. But many thousands in the hardest-hit areas were still homeless, still without jobs, still trying to cope with the needs of daily life. The problems which provoked what some call “the days of rage” continue to exist. And little can be expected from the established institutions and leaderships.

The events in Los Angeles showed the complete bankruptcy of local and state elected officials, of the White House and the U.S. Congress, and of the Democratic and Republican parties. Government figures acted to “get control,” announced plans to help rebuild businesses, and quickly placed blame on others—on “hooligans,” on “criminals,” on each other. It’s clear to see where the blame lies. The facts are obvious. Racism continues to pervade U.S. society—encouraged by many leading politicians and ignored by many others. Gains won by Blacks—as well as by other minority groups, workers, women—have been under attack and slashed by employers and their servants in government. Profit-driven corporations have no interest in improving conditions for the overwhelming majority of the population—in fact, their interest is directed toward divide-and-conquer efforts to weaken labor unions by pitting one race against another, one ethnic group against another, and domestic workers against workers in other countries. The U.S. Congress has been dominated numerically by

Democrats during the Reagan and Bush administrations—but this has not resulted in any protection or progress in the areas of civil rights, pro-labor legislation, women’s rights, civil liberties, social programs involving health services and education—the list of grievances against the politicians in both major parties can go on and on.

In the face of these well-known facts, the politicians’ solution to the problems which exploded in Los Angeles is: register to vote, support and vote for us, depend on us. The politicians offer the same promises now as they did after the 1965 Watts rebellion. The record of the past 27 years demonstrates betrayal piled on top of deceit.

The events in Los Angeles, also, showed the bankruptcy of the recognized African American leadership. Black ministers, regarded as a key leadership force, spent most of their energies issuing pleas to “stay calm” during the hottest crisis period. A downtown demonstration was called by Black ministers for May 2—and then hastily canceled. Not knowing that the protest was called off, a number of people showed up at the designated place and were ordered to disperse by the police who declared the action an “unlawful assembly.” When they failed to move quickly enough, demonstrators were arrested—including about 30 youth from a multiracial coalition organized by the First AME Church.

For many years, Black business, religious, community, and political leaders urged: work inside the system, make the system work for us, elect our own people to public office, be patient. Experience has shown that the election of Black mayors, members of state legislators and the U.S. Congress, and appointments of Black police chiefs have not significantly bettered the everyday lives of the overwhelming majority of African Americans. Prayers and hard work have not won Blacks “the American Dream.”

Jesse Jackson hurried to Los Angeles, gave rousing speeches, held media conferences, and talked with some residents in

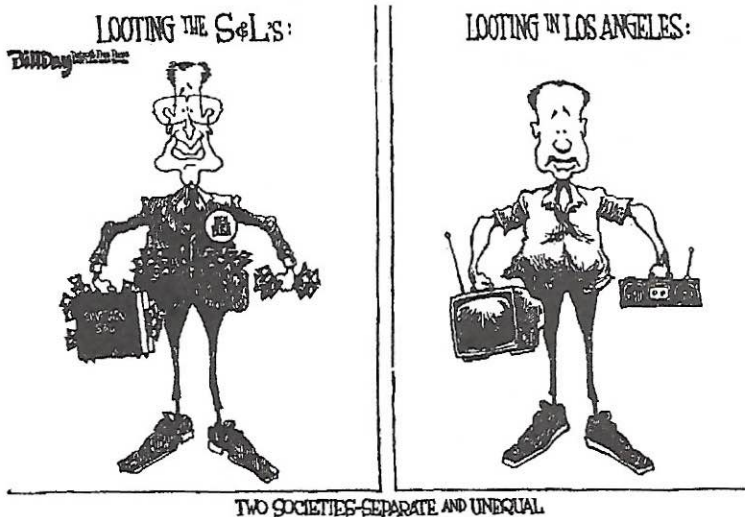
the destroyed areas. He pointed out the underlying problems which made the eruption inevitable. But he called for a “rainbow solution”—which means staying within the Democratic Party. And he repeatedly said the U.S. government needed to stop aid to other countries and place those funds into America’s inner cities—another version of setting U.S. working people against those in other countries.

What is needed is quite different: independent political action through electoral means and in the streets to fight consistently for an end to police abuse, for better schools and housing, for jobs and health care—in short, an organized struggle to improve living and working conditions for Blacks, Latinos, oppressed minorities, and other groups in U.S. society. Such an alternative is currently being posed by three interrelated developments among African Americans, within the organized labor movement, and by the women’s rights movement.

- Ron Daniels, a deputy campaign manager for Jesse Jackson’s 1988 presidential campaign, has broken with Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition program of building and supporting the Democratic Party. Daniels is running an independent campaign for U.S. president in order to “Build a movement for social justice” for Blacks and other racial and ethnic groups, workers, women, poor people, lesbians and gay men, and others who are oppressed and exploited by the present socio-economic system.
- Labor Party Advocates has thousands of union members who are committed to creating a labor party in the U.S.
- The National Organization for Women (NOW) has taken the initiative to launch the 21st Century Party which represents a broad program addressing not only women’s rights but wide-ranging demands and issues affecting the overwhelming majority in this country. NOW’s call for a national mobilization to support abortion rights resulted in the largest-ever women’s rights demonstration in U.S. history on April 5.

The events in Los Angeles present a dramatic example of the urgent need for self-mobilization outside of the established institutions, massive public demonstrations to press demands, and electoral activity independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. □

Los Angeles
May 8, 1992



Jesse Jackson and the '92 Election: The Fallacy of the Inside Strategy

by Ron Daniels

This article is reprinted from Vantage Point, a syndicated column of articles and essays by Daniels, published in the week of March 16.

During a recent appearance with Bryant Gumbel on NBC's Today Show, two-time presidential candidate Jesse Jackson lamented the fact that none of the Democratic candidates for president are exciting Black voters. Jackson complained that the candidates are not addressing the issues that matter most to the majority of Black voters—urban policy, jobs, housing, health care, children, etc. Interviews conducted by various news organizations reveal that large numbers of African Americans are displeased with the candidates of the establishment parties because of the total lack of discussion about Black issues and concerns. As a result there has been a dramatic decline (20-30 percent) in Black voter turnout during this year's primaries so far.

Jackson has a right to complain, but the fact of the matter is that Black people have virtually no leverage with the establishment parties, particularly the Democratic Party. Black people, those who bother to vote, are locked into the Democratic Party, but the Democratic Party is not locked into the Black Agenda or Black people. A few months ago I wrote that Jesse Jackson was the last best hope for the Democratic Party. When Jackson decided not to run for president, it was clear to me that no other Democratic candidate would raise the issues of vital concern to Black people, minorities, women, and poor and working people.

But even a Jackson candidacy would have been a somewhat tired rerun of his 1984 and 1988 campaigns. In both instances these brilliant campaigns were terminated at the Democratic national convention. The Democratic Party refused to commit itself to broaden its base to include the millions of disenfranchised and disadvantaged voters who could have propelled the Democrats into the White House. Indeed in '84 and '88, Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow forces were insulted and disrespected. No one, including Jesse Jackson, should have any illusions about the Democratic Party and its allegiance to Black people, workers, women, and the poor after the rejections of '84 and '88.

When Jackson announced that he would not seek the Democratic nomination for president in '92, some of us thought we saw a glimmer of hope. Jackson indicated that he would focus his attention on the building of a New Independent Democratic Majority. It sounded like Jackson was opening up the prospect of launching a third force which could utilize an inside-outside strategy. Unfortunately, Jackson's actions since that announcement have demonstrated that he is still firmly com-

mitted to an inside strategy—functioning exclusively inside the Democratic Party.

At the Candidates Forum convened by Jesse Jackson in Washington, D.C., no independent or third party candidates were in evidence. Only Democrats were invited. Though Jackson had drawn up an agenda of issues for the Democratic candidates to respond to, his position was weakened by his pledge to support the eventual nominee of the Democratic Party in November. Sealing off the independent option further lessened his leverage. Jackson's position has also been undermined by his inability to hold the remnants of his Rainbow Coalition together as a bloc to pressure the field of Democratic candidates. With Jackson out of the race as a candidate, the "Rainbow" vanished as Black elected officials, civil rights leaders, and prominent preachers rushed to give their blessing to the candidate of their choice (even without a Black Agenda/progressive agenda).

Having surrendered the option of independence (for real), Jackson has nowhere to go. So he has blandly offered to campaign with all of the Democratic candidates for the sake of promoting party unity (and protecting his own future within the Democratic Party, no doubt). If none of the Democratic candidates are speaking to the Black Agenda/progressive agenda, what purpose does it serve to complain about and then campaign with candidates who see the Black Agenda/progressive agenda as a liability? Out of the presidential race, having ruled out an independent/outside strategy, handicapped by the absence of a genuine mass-based organization, Jesse Jackson has reduced himself to a "team player" whose sole mission is to deliver a discontented Black vote to the Democrats in November.

Jesse Jackson was the person best equipped and best positioned to radically change the dynamics of American politics. If he had elected to run as an independent candidate for president after the debacle at Atlanta, he probably would have captured at least ten million votes. And with a serious commitment to be both a "tree shaker and a jelly maker," Jesse Jackson could have built a third force capable of advancing a politics of social transformation. By failing to accept that challenge and shrinking from that mission, Jesse Jackson has missed an incredible historical moment.

Having elected to exclusively pursue an inside strategy, Jackson has sacrificed the potential leverage to not only pressure the Democrats but to build a movement that could supplant the Democrats as the erstwhile "party of the people." The historical imperative for African Americans and the progressive movement is to move beyond the sterile constraints of the Democratic Party to build a vital and visionary new force for social transformation in American politics. Jesse Jackson is trapped inside the Democratic Party, clearly out of synch with that historical imperative. □

Impressions of the Ron Daniels Campaign

by Steve Bloom

On April 10 Ron Daniels came to Brooklyn, New York. I and other members of the FIT attended the small meeting, where he spoke to 25 or 30 people about his campaign for president of the United States. I found myself impressed—both with Daniels as an individual and with the message he presented.

I had previously read some of the leaflets that the Daniels campaign has produced (they looked pretty good, but you can't determine too much from a few slogans on a leaflet) and several of his newspaper columns. But I had only heard him in person one previous time—during a panel on electoral politics at the conference on Malcolm X held at Borough of Manhattan Community College in November 1990. There he had spoken only in vague, abstract terms about the general need for an independent, Black-led political effort and the fact that he was considering the possibility of running for president. I had heard that kind of talk before and had never seen it amount to much, so I was a bit skeptical.

I am much less skeptical now. On all of the most important questions Daniels not only said the right things that evening, he expressed himself, and acted, in a way that convinced me he really meant what he was saying.

For example, when he began his talk I was prepared, during the discussion period, to pose what I consider the two most crucial questions for any independent electoral campaign in the United States today: 1) How does the electoral effort relate to other forms of political activity, in particular periodic battles that erupt around specific demands and goals? Too often, after all, politicians will go to those in struggle and suggest that they come on board an electoral campaign *as a substitute for* continuing their own activity, the effect of which is to sidetrack, weaken, and coopt struggles. 2) Given the difficulty of launching an independent election campaign and making it seem credible to masses of people, what perspective can be offered beyond the immediate election year itself? What are our expectations in the first stages of the process and how do we measure success?

By the time Daniels had finished speaking he had rendered these questions superfluous. Because answering them had been a central purpose of his entire talk. And I found myself in agreement with the general approach he took. He stressed that his campaign was just the beginning of a process that had to transcend the election year, and that it was only valid in the context of a much broader perspective of struggle against the injustices of this society. His goal was to strengthen those struggles, to build an ongoing movement that would do far more than run in elections, one which could begin to unite all of the battles for social change waged by Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, workers, gays, etc. He went so far as to project the idea of a one-day general strike in the United States where all working people would unite to shut the country down, demanding real changes and demonstrating the real power that they possess.

He insisted that there was nothing special about his candidacy, that he had only decided to run because no one else who really represented the interests of Blacks in the U.S. was willing to do so. And we shouldn't expect that he would provide all of the answers to all of the problems of working people or the Black community. Others will have to get involved in a democratic process through which we can collectively formulate the necessary programmatic perspective for changing this country. As an example of the kind of process he has in mind he pointed to a campaign statement that was prepared for the April 5 National March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. It was the product of a genuine, collective, brainstorming process in which a variety of activists in his campaign participated. As a result they were able to formulate the problem of reproductive choice, in particular how it affects women of color, far better than anything he might have come up with on his own. (See statement on page 8.)

In addition, Daniels stressed that the campaign was a learning process for all, and that many of those who were taking major responsibility in cities around the country had no previous experience with electoral work. This he considered a positive feature, and he demonstrated his interest in stimulating participation by new activists when he actively encouraged individuals in the audience who had not raised their hands during the discussion to express any opinions or questions they might have. As a result, several people did speak up, making a useful addition to the evening's discussion.

At one point Daniels summed up his overall viewpoint by saying that even if his campaign should come to an end the next day, he would already consider it a success because he has begun to stimulate an exchange of views around essential questions that must be taken up, and to involve people who otherwise might have continued to abstain from political activity.

I was also struck by his discussion about the failings of the Jesse Jackson campaign in 1988, when Daniels was executive director of the Rainbow Coalition. He specifically criticized Jackson for not creating a real rank-and-file movement, for keeping the campaign focused on himself as a personality. Daniels recounted how, after the Democratic national convention that year, he had urged Jackson to organize a national conference of Rainbow Coalition forces—in order to make a democratic assessment of the process they had gone through and decide what the movement should do from that point on. But Jackson refused, choosing instead to make his peace with the Democratic Party machine.

Daniels insisted that he would not follow such a course, and reported plans already under way for a "Progressive Convention," to take place in Michigan sometime shortly after the Democratic Party chooses its nominee this summer. This will ensure that the movement created by his candidacy is able to maintain a democratic process, with real decision making by all those who want to participate.

One important point that Daniels made in his presentation, and returned to several times as a result of questions, was the relationship of his campaign to that of Leonora Fulani and the New Alliance Party. He explained that one of the factors which stimulated his decision to run was the realization that if there were no genuine voice from the Black community, someone who did not really represent their interests would come along

and try to fill the void. He used the example of the Fulani campaign, explaining that despite its pretensions it does not in any way represent the Black community. It is controlled from behind the scenes by Fred Newman, leader of a psychoanalytic cult of the type that has so often taken advantage of Black people's oppression. He then went through some of the sordid history of Newman and his relationship with other shady characters such as Lyndon LaRouche. (See on this subject the article "An Attempt to Defraud the African American People" by Tom Barrett in *Bulletin IDOM* No. 96.)

Daniels also made a particular point about the need to raise consciousness concerning the oppression of American Indians—especially during this year, the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's first voyage to the "new world." He is attempting to find a Native American woman to accept nomination as his vice-presidential running mate, so that these concerns can be expressed firsthand as a central feature of his campaign.

Other comments made by Daniels also struck a chord with this listener, offering a real perspective for resolving the problems of working and other oppressed peoples in the USA. Two that I remember in particular were the need for full employment at decent wages as the solution to crime, drugs, homelessness, the "welfare burden," etc., and the need to make public education, from elementary school through the university level, completely free and of the highest possible quality.

* * *

Of course, I did not agree with Daniels on everything. But the points on which I might object seem not as important when I put them in the context of the overall positive impression made by his presentation. And they are points on which a real exchange of views will be educational and useful for everyone concerned.

In discussing the question of the Democratic Party, for example, Daniels explained how he has, in the past, thought in terms of an inside-outside strategy. But now he is more and more thinking that a strictly independent course is the way to go. From a revolutionary Marxist point of view—which understands that the Democratic Party is one of the fundamental pillars of rule by the capitalist class in the USA, from which working people need to break completely and unambiguously—Daniels's present conclusions are certainly welcome. On a practical level our conceptions of what must be done will probably converge more and more, and that is extremely important.

But as long as his conclusions remain on a purely pragmatic level, based on specific experiences with the Democrats and not on an analysis of that party's fundamental and necessary role in this society as a *capitalist* political party, then a certain tension is bound to exist. This was underlined when one of the central organizers of the New York campaign commented on this problem as a result of a question raised during the discussion. She explained that she herself was committed ideologically to independent politics and had tried to run for city council as an independent candidate. But when that effort was blocked because she could not get on the ballot, she chose to run as a Democrat since the petitioning requirement was far less. That seemed to her to be an obvious and correct political expedient.

So, although our immediate goal must be to find agreement on practical tasks around the Daniels presidential campaign

with everyone—no matter what their ideological understanding of the Democratic Party might be—it will also be necessary to place a friendly discussion about this question on our agenda. We can certainly hope that Daniels, and other activists who are attracted to his campaign, will begin to draw the more profound conclusions on this all-important question that we believe are appropriate.

Two other points made by Daniels stand out for me as requiring further discussion. First is the question of the military budget. In his literature Daniels proposes a reduction of military spending "by at least 50 percent." He repeated this idea in his talk, citing a specific dollar figure that he believes the Pentagon should be limited to. And this, of course, is the most obvious place from which money should come to implement the kind of broad social programs that Daniels is talking about. He also repeated, at the meeting, the call made in his literature for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel and institutions from other countries—an idea which I hope will remain a prominent part of his message.

However, as I tried to suggest from the floor during the discussion period, as long as the ruling rich of the U.S. continues to remain in control of this country's military forces—and nothing in Daniels's overall program would change that control, which does not, after all, depend on who is sitting in the White House—there is no reason for working people to give the military *even a single penny* of our tax money. The ruling class of the United States uses its military might for one purpose and one purpose only: to maintain their own profit margins around the world by overthrowing governments they do not like, or combating revolutionary upheavals in countries where the ruling elite is presently "friendly" to the U.S. (that is, friendly to American corporations making profits at the expense of their populations).

A similar problem exists with the idea Daniels raised for a greater role by the United Nations, rather than by the U.S. military directly, in "peace-keeping" efforts around the world. If the Persian Gulf war and its aftermath make anything clear it should be that the UN is not much more than a rubber stamp for U.S. foreign policy. With the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe, which has both ideological consequences and also creates an even greater dependence for most of the world's smaller states on aid and trade from the USA, there is even less room for illusions that the UN might be able to chart a course independent of U.S. and other imperialist interests.

This will remain true even if the "more democratic" vision of the UN that Daniels proposed at the meeting somehow comes into being—with a removal of veto rights from the big powers and more authority going to the governments of African and other third world states. Most of these governments are completely dependent on the goodwill of the U.S. ruling class—with its overwhelming forces of financial and military coercion—to remain in power at all. What, after all, did the recent General Assembly vote repealing its previous characterization of "Zionism" as "racism" reflect if not Washington's ability to force other governments to toe the line? Certainly it did not represent the real sentiments of peoples around the world on this question.

* * *

This first Brooklyn meeting for Ron Daniels was small. But plans were made to begin reaching out and organizing others.

Not all of the people there were hardened political activists; many were obviously new, and they had come because they were attracted by the message Daniels is presenting. Finding more such people and actively involving them in the campaign will be the key to its success. With the kind of approach Daniels projected to us that evening, there seems to be a real possibility that significant numbers—from the Black community and elsewhere—can be found who will want to participate.

Whatever agreements or disagreements one might have with specific programmatic ideas Daniels is raising, his key point remains extremely important. It is one that revolutionary Marxists in the U.S. can agree with 100 percent: working people, Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, gays, and other oppressed groups have a common interest in fighting the ruling rich of the United States. To do that they will need to organize

themselves independently and to rely solely on themselves and their own activities—not on any politician, not even a Ron Daniels.

If we can succeed in building the kind of activist, democratic movement that this perspective suggests, and that Daniels himself calls for—and which his campaign might well be an important factor in bringing about—then U.S. revolutionaries can expect to get a reasonable hearing for any programmatic ideas and suggestions we might want to raise within it. So it is extremely important, even though our forces today are limited and there is much other work to be done, for us to become actively involved in supporting Ron Daniels's campaign for president of the United States in 1992 and doing everything we can to help make it as successful as it can be. □

There Must Be Reproductive Justice for All Women

This statement was prepared by the Ron Daniels presidential campaign for the April 5 "March for Women's Lives" in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Organization for Women.

Women of color—African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American—and poor women always suffer disproportionately when reproductive rights are restricted. In 1972, the year before *Roe v. Wade*, 64 percent of all women dying from illegal abortions were women of color. In Georgia, 80 percent of women dying from illegal abortions were African Americans. Eighty percent of all forced Caesarian sections are performed on African American women. Eighty percent of women who have been charged, convicted, and jailed for drug use during pregnancy have been African American or Native American—despite studies showing that the rate of drug use in pregnancy is the same for European American women as for women of color. White women are referred for therapy, not jail. These are just a few of the facts illustrating the grave lack of reproductive justice for women of color in our country.

It should be the fundamental right of every woman:

- to choose to have or not have a child;
- to choose to have or not have an abortion;
- to choose to be or not be sterilized;

- to choose or refuse to use contraceptive implants such as Norplant;
- to choose the method of birth control she feels most comfortable with;
- to have full access to information on all forms of contraception, including abortion;
- to have free quality prenatal care;
- to have quality, accessible medical care for herself and her family;
- to be well informed about all medical procedures recommended to be done on her body, and to be able to refuse such procedures if she chooses;
- to receive non-judgmental, quality therapeutic care if she is suffering from drug addiction during pregnancy;
- to be treated with dignity and respect during gynecological and obstetrical procedures no matter her circumstances;
- to have free, quality daycare if she chooses to work outside the home while her children are young;
- to be provided adequate economic support in a respectful and non-judgmental manner if she chooses to stay home to parent her children under five and is poor;

- to be ensured of the economic means to provide a decent quality of life for her family, regardless of her economic status, job status, or family size.

Women of color are disproportionately poor. Poor women do not live like queens. Their lives are often hell. Most struggle to survive any way they can. Those who don't struggle, don't because they have given up out of overwhelming despair and hopelessness. They do not choose to be poor. Theirs is the ultimate lack of choice.

Poor women and women of color are decent, worthwhile human beings who deserve the same dignity, respect, and choices that all other women do. They are not the cause of this country's economic and moral decay. They are not the ones that squandered hundreds of billions of dollars on corrupt S&Ls, unfair tax breaks for the super-rich—that 10 percent who obscenely accumulate 80 percent of this country's wealth—and the biggest military buildup in the history of the world. Tell us where is the fairness in attacking the destitute for the few pennies of your tax dollar that goes to them, while the super-rich, corrupt, and military-industrial complex walk off with over half your tax dollar in order to increase their obscene share of the wealth at the expense of most of us. Where is the fairness in that?

If we are to truly be for reproductive justice, we must fight just as hard for racial and economic justice. Without racial and economic justice, there can *not* be reproductive justice for all women. And no woman is free while any woman anywhere is oppressed. □

No Contest

by Frank Lovell

After more than six months of turmoil and strikes in the farm implement and construction equipment industry, provoked and sustained by the anti-union strategy of Caterpillar Inc., the giant manufacturer of heavy construction machinery, the 12,600 members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) who had been on strike for months and had refused Caterpillar's "final offer" were sent back to work on April 14 by UAW negotiators. They returned without a union contract and under conditions dictated by the company. This precipitate decision by top UAW officials sent shock waves through other AFL-CIO unions and stirred resentment in the ranks of the strikers. Even Caterpillar management at the factory level seemed surprised and claimed to be unprepared for the sudden turn of events.

This came less than one month after UAW president Owen Bieber promised a mass rally of 20,000 strikers and supporters in Peoria, Illinois, at the headquarters of Caterpillar, that the international union with all its resources would stand firmly in support of the strike until victory, *for as long as it takes*.

The deal was done behind closed doors at the insistence of a U.S. government mediator, Bernard DeLury, who expressed satisfaction with the outcome. "It feels good when you can get 12,000 men and women back to work," he said. DeLury is director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and personally interceded in this situation. In his capacity as director he carried out his duty to the Bush administration. He said it was necessary to bring such an important union and major manufacturer together and avoid a show-down. It is, of course, especially necessary for Bush in this year of the general election. Negotiations are scheduled to continue under DeLury's supervision. "We'll take it step by step," he said. There is as yet no announcement of the next step.

Chief negotiator for the UAW, Bill Casstevens, implied that the strikers had gained a breathing spell after long months on the picket line. He said the union retains the right to resume the strike if negotiations fail to produce a satisfactory settlement. He said the union seeks to improve the package offered by Caterpillar but made no mention of the UAW's traditional position for industry-wide pattern bargaining which was rejected by Caterpillar after a satisfac-

tory UAW agreement was reached last November with Deere & Co., manufacturers of farm machinery. This was the issue used by Caterpillar initially to break off negotiations and unilaterally impose job reclassification and revised shop rules at all its factory sites. Casstevens is UAW secretary-treasurer, one of the union's two top officers.

UAW Local 974 in East Peoria represents 9,000 Caterpillar strikers who received the back-to-work order from their union officials. Jerry Brown is president of Local 974. Other members of the local first learned that the strike was called off when it was announced on public radio early in the morning. Unlike members who earn their living in Caterpillar plants instead of working for the union, Brown quickly figured out that the strike at that point had been a success. At least he knew that Casstevens and other top officials would want him to say the strike succeeded. He was quoted as saying that the membership showed that it could stand together and stand up against the corporation. He said, "We're going to continue to negotiate. Anything they do that we're not happy with will be an issue on the bargaining table." He added that the union would never ask its members "to commit economic suicide," according to reports at the time.

These rationalizations of what happened and the guarded references to further developments by union officials were in stark contrast to the anger, disbelief, and frustration of the strikers who tried to return to work as directed.

As things turned out Caterpillar management had different ideas. Although company and union negotiators had agreed under pressure of the federal mediator that the company would not hire replacement workers (scabs) and that the strikers would return to their jobs the following day, plant managers stood at the gates on the morning of April 15 to turn the strikers away. Management said there had been some misunderstanding. A company representative announced: "The events of the last day were completely unexpected. We have been operating differently during the strike, with 4,000 management workers. We can't just absorb 12,000 people in a matter of a few hours."

About-Face

In a matter of 24 hours this announcement was revised. The company began hiring back all its former employees the following day. A Caterpillar group president, Gerald Flaherty, said, "We have invited back every striking hourly employee in good standing." He added that

some were not "in good standing"—less than ten, he said—because of their conduct on the picket lines during the strike. Thus the corporation asserted its right to hire and fire as it chooses. At a news conference during the day senior executives announced that Caterpillar would reduce its workforce by 1,350.

Returning workers at the main Caterpillar manufacturing facilities in East Peoria knew what to expect. A precedent had been set. Caterpillar is joint owner (with its Japanese competitor, Komatsu) of the Komatsu Dresser company which operates two plants in Libertyville and Broadview, towns in northeast Illinois not far from Peoria which is in central Illinois. These are small plants with less than 500 employees total. Last November, when agreement with Deere & Co was ratified, the UAW members at Komatsu Dresser walked out because they were denied the same terms. Their strike lasted two days and was not authorized by UAW international officials. The strikers returned to work under a company-dictated contract, tentatively accepted by the union.

Workers presently employed at Komatsu Dresser plants are reclassified and paid \$4 per hour less than before their walkout. Seniority rights of workers recalled from layoff are subject to company interpretation. Pension benefits have been slashed from \$1,600 per month to \$383 for retirees with 30 years seniority. Casstevens, who is in charge of UAW negotiations with both Caterpillar and Komatsu Dresser, says he intends to go after Komatsu Dresser "as soon as the Caterpillar situation is negotiated." In truth Caterpillar's anti-labor policy covers both companies and is designed to destroy union effectiveness in both. With all workers back on the job there is no rush on the part of Caterpillar or the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to resume negotiations. Without negotiations and no strike there is nothing to mediate or conciliate.

Looking to Congress

Back in Detroit at Solidarity House, UAW international headquarters, President Owen Bieber said a resumption of strike action is not excluded, but he gave no indication of preparations for such an eventuality. His second in command, Casstevens, outlined plans to pressure Caterpillar through a worldwide public relations campaign and through charges of unfair labor practices filed with the National Labor Relations Board. He explained that if the board upholds the charges Caterpillar will be restrained from hiring replacement workers (scabs). He hinted at a

possible in-plant slowdown. "We're going to tell workers to only do what they need to do to protect their jobs," he said. Meantime the AFL-CIO lobby in Washington continues to seek support for legislation, pending in the U.S. Senate, that will ban the permanent replacement of strikers.

No one slightly acquainted with U.S. politics expects the present Congress to pass favorable labor legislation, and everyone knows that if it did President Bush would veto it. There is little prospect of a favorable settlement for Caterpillar workers as matters now stand. What appeared to be shaping up as a test of strength between company and union, with the union having a slight edge because of growing worker militancy and general political discontent in the country, suddenly turned to defeat when the top UAW leadership gave up without a struggle.

Out of Touch

This leadership often speaks confidently in militant phrases but auto workers have learned over the years that their actions belie their words. The UAW is a thoroughly bureaucratized union. It has a "clean" reputation. Its officials are not connected to the mob like some Teamster officials before the recent housecleaning. But in the UAW officials are paid high salaries and collect handsome expenses. They live and think more like middle-level plant executives than the workers they are supposed to represent. They are not arbitrarily appointed to their comfortable positions, but are required to work their way up from shop steward to local union president and from there on up through the rungs of the bureaucratic ladder. Regional directors, vice presidents, and the two top executive officers are reelected at union conventions by duly elected delegates, the majority being aspiring union officials augmented by staff members on the union payroll. This is a self-perpetuating system.

Since the time when Walter Reuther was UAW president in the 1950s and 1960s until very recently, UAW conventions have been more like family gatherings than decision-making bodies. Throughout the 1970s and most of the '80s UAW conventions ratified decisions previously made and acted upon. The top officialdom in Reuther's time began to refer to itself as "the family," and collected substantial slush funds, secretly known as "the flower fund," to insure protection of the family and the careful selection of potential members of the family. Those who became members were assured tenure.

In the life of the UAW there was never a time without debate and opposition to the top officialdom, especially at the local level. This was encouraged as part of the necessary training of future bureaucrats.

Beginning as shop stewards union members learned to conduct negotiations with management and were trained to resolve grievances through compromise. Management representatives contributed to this training. Union-management collaboration was accepted on both sides throughout most of the post-World War II years as essential to worker morale and efficient factory production. This arrangement satisfied both sides as long as industry was expanding and the national economy prospered. Employers could afford small concessions, if they did not interfere with big profits, in exchange for a satisfied and docile workforce. But this came to an end in the mid-1970s when the economy began to slump and multinational corporations were formed to seek sources of cheap labor and expanding markets. The labor policy of big business in this country shifted from collaboration with unions to what the UAW president at the time, Douglas Fraser, characterized as class war. And the government's labor policy shifted accordingly.

The present UAW officials crawled to the bureaucratic top in the time of labor-management collaboration. They don't know anything else. Their only experience has been at the bargaining table with management or in strikes that were called only to allow negotiations to proceed to a prearranged conclusion. There were many such strikes in the 1950s and 1960s, some of several months and others for only a few weeks. There were various compelling reasons, depending on the particular circumstances. In some years the auto companies had large inventories or needed time for retooling to prepare for model changes. A strike would accommodate their needs. The workers were called out but the union saw to it that they did not suffer unduly. They collected strike benefits plus unemployment compensation. And if they chose to do so they could find a job on the side, usually available to skilled workers. When it came time to sign the new contract and get everyone back to work a final week of negotiations would be announced with much fanfare. The daily press reported how skillful negotiators worked far into the night, right down to the last hour, when the final differences were resolved. Company and union representatives then appeared before news cameras, shook hands smiling, each announcing victory while commending his (no women present ever) counterpart. In these strikes everybody won, nobody suffered. It was all part of the system.

Some strikes, usually of shorter duration, were agreed to by the negotiators "so the workers could blow off steam." This put the workers in a better frame of mind to

accept the "final wording" of a poor wage settlement.

This is the story of the past. This is where the present UAW hierarchy lives.

New Directions

The present generation of factory workers has learned firsthand what Fraser was talking about 14 years ago. Most are looking for ways to protect their present wages and working conditions through the union structure against class war waged by the employers. They blame union officials for failure to turn back employer attacks. For this reason the craven capitulation to Caterpillar may become a decisive issue at the UAW constitutional convention in San Diego this June.

Many UAW militants are alert to the ramifications of what is happening to Caterpillar workers. At the moment of retreat Owen Bieber assured all who would listen that every strike is unique, that union defeat at Caterpillar was unrelated to union defense strategy against layoffs and plant closings by the Big Three (General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler) in the auto industry. But it is clear that all major corporations have a common anti-union strategy, closely attuned to government labor policy, to circumvent national agreements and pit local unions against each other in bidding wars to cut wages and working conditions in the false hope of saving jobs. This is what happened earlier this year when General Motors announced the closing of 21 of its 150 plants, and decided later which ones to close depending on where they could get the most givebacks from local unions.

A serious opposition movement in the UAW began within the bureaucracy in 1986 and has grown steadily since, encouraged by the success of the reform movement in the Teamsters union and spurred by the remorseless onslaught of the employers. This movement calls itself New Directions and is headed by a former UAW regional director, Jerry Tucker. He is campaigning against Bieber and hopes to win enough delegates at the coming convention to become UAW president.

Stormy Future

Tucker's ambition races ahead of his vision. He has set his sights on a more militant union strategy, limited to struggles for economic needs and better working conditions of auto workers and other UAW members. He talks among union militants about struggles for social gains—for universal health care, low-cost housing, free public education, a public works program to reduce unemployment—but at public rallies skirts the question of how the union movement can organize a labor party to win these things. The first and most

important task, he tells supporters, is to organize the New Directions caucus in the UAW to transform the union and elect a new leadership.

In the union's test of strength with Caterpillar, Tucker argues that present UAW leaders failed to alert the membership early on to the dangers. A campaign should have been organized in all Caterpillar shops against overtime work as soon as the company refused last November to sign up on the industry-wide terms that had been negotiated with Deere & Co. This would have limited the stockpiling of machines and parts in anticipation of the strike which

the company at the time was preparing to provoke. The membership should have been kept fully informed of every anti-union move by Caterpillar, and encouraged to challenge the company at the plant level. He is also critical of Bieber for refusing to publicize the evil design of the company as revealed in months of negotiations, and for not calling on the entire labor movement for support. He charges that the UAW leadership is out of touch with the membership and the times we are living in. His appeal is for a return to the innovative negotiating strategy of Walter Reuther in the formative years of the union prior to

World War II and shortly after. He claims the present UAW leadership believes in and longs for a cozy labor-management relationship that no longer exists.

Whether this appeal will prove strong enough to carry Tucker to the presidency of the UAW this year will soon be known. What is already known is that the Caterpillar fiasco will not be resolved and forgotten with the election of union officials at this convention. It will be remembered as a sorry page in union history for years to come. □

April 30, 1992

The Caterpillar Aftermath

by Elaine Bernard

The following was written for Canadian Dimension magazine and is published here by permission of the author, former president of the New Democratic Party (NDP) of British Columbia, Canada. She is presently executive director, Harvard University Trade Union Program.

The end of the recent strike at Caterpillar bodes badly for all of U.S. labor, including negotiations next year with the Big Three auto manufacturers. Under threat of having their jobs "permanently replaced," 12,600 members of the United Auto Workers returned to work at Caterpillar after five months on the picket line. With no collective agreement in effect and the company free to implement its "final offer," the union has stated that it will continue negotiations with Caterpillar management, but clearly most of the cards are in the company's hand.

Not all the cards, mind you. Even the *Wall Street Journal* while crowing about the "defeat" of the UAW was forced to note that Caterpillar management faces a difficult morale problem in trying to convince the workers it just tried to "permanent replace" that the company values them. Such ironies are now standard fare in U.S. industrial relations. As an economist was quoted in the *Boston Globe*, "how do you motivate blue-collar workers to work harder and cooperate with management when they can't see any payoff for their efforts."

The Caterpillar dispute also demonstrates the folly of unions accepting the logic of international competitiveness. Caterpillar, in contrast to many other firms in industrial manufacturing in the 1980s, has been an American success story. It is the second largest industrial exporter in the U.S., after Boeing, with sales of \$10 billion. In construction equipment, Caterpillar is number one internationally. Yet, in spite of the fact that labor accounts for only six percent of the overall costs, Caterpillar demanded takebacks from its workforce, arguing that its competition was not U.S. manufacturers but Japanese. The imposed final contract offer includes a two-tier wage and benefit agreement, changes in the grievance and seniority system, changes to the job protection provisions, and reduced health care benefits. The logic of competition is Japan today, Mexico tomorrow, Guatemala next? Where does it end!

While much of the U.S. media applauded Caterpillar's stand against the UAW's attempt to maintain "pattern bargaining," that is, to take wages out of competition within the construction equipment industry, few pondered the overall effect of this continued management initiated "pattern" of rollbacks, concessions,

and a drive to make U.S. manufacturing a low-wage industry. Over the last decade, despite a 26 percent gain in manufacturing productivity, blue-collar workers have seen their wages (adjusted for inflation) fall by eight percent.

Key to breaking the resistance of unions to this latest management onslaught is the use of permanent striker replacements which renders almost meaningless the right to strike. In the U.S. you cannot be fired for striking, but you can permanently lose your job to a "replacement."

The legal sophistry of permitting "permanent replacements" rests on a Supreme Court decision from 1938 (*National Labor Relations Board v. MacKay Radio*) which ruled that employers have the right to continue operating during a strike. However, it was not until President Ronald Reagan's firing of striking air traffic controllers in the PATCO strike of 1981 that U.S. management has dared to turn to scabs and professional strikebreaking firms in a major labor dispute. Since PATCO, the most bitter disputes in the U.S., including the *Daily News*, Pittston, Greyhound, Eastern, International Paper at Jay, Maine, Phelps Dodge, and Ravenswood, have all featured the hiring of permanent replacements. Part of the significance of the Caterpillar strike is that this is the first time a very prosperous, large, leading U.S. corporation has threatened striker replacement against one of the most powerful industrial unions in the country. And in this confrontation, the union blinked.

There are bills before Congress calling for the banning of the use of scabs, but President Bush has said he would veto it. As Bush's veto has yet to be overruled by Congress, Bush can effectively stop the legislation. Democratic hopeful, Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, supports the anti-scab legislation and this at least partially explains why many unions who are less than enamored with Clinton will work very hard this fall to get him into the White House. U.S. labor is desperate for labor law reform—much of which is simply aimed at restoring the rights won in 1935 with the Wagner Act.

A clear lesson for labor from the Caterpillar dispute is the need to develop new tactics and to build wider community support in order to win disputes. It is ironic that the union that was born out of the sitdown strikes of the 1930s was not able to see that the go-it-alone tactics of the last decades are no match for the powerful employer onslaught of the 1980s and 1990s. The New Directions oppositional caucus within the auto workers has long advocated the tactic of an "inside strategy"—that is, mobilizing members in actions inside the plant to build worker solidarity and resistance—as a necessary organizational and educational component to a dispute. As the UAW prepares for next year's auto talks it remains to be seen who has learned the lessons of Caterpillar. □

April 28, 1992

Justice for Hamlet Workers

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Friday evening, May 1, three busloads of New York trade unionists left for a 12-hour trip to join more than 2,000 others in Hamlet, North Carolina, for a march and rally at the site of the infamous Imperial Food Products chicken processing plant fire and explosion on September 3, 1991, which killed 25 workers.

"The explosion was caused by a rupture of a hydraulic line under repair while burners under the 26-foot chicken friers were lit," according to the Justice for Hamlet-Organize the South committee which called the demonstration.

"Keeping the burners lit while fuel lines were under repair was company policy, according to the workers. Most deaths were caused by workers inhaling toxic fumes and smoke because all but one exit from the plant were locked or blocked and workers could not get out. The locked or blocked exits were also company policy 'to prevent stealing.'"

The event has begun to focus more attention of the labor movement on the deplorable working conditions in the southern states and the long-needed struggle to unionize the workers there.

Because of the "right-to-work" or anti-union laws in the southern states, this region has been the site for the relocation of "runaway" plants when corporations abandon plants in the unionized North to go to the non-unionized South where wages are lower. Only some 7 percent of the workers in the South are organized while the national average is almost twice that. However, it is important to bear in mind that only approximately 10 percent of this unionized labor in the U.S. work for capitalists. The rest are public workers.

These southern states also have strong traditions of racism, lax enforcement of safety and other regulations, and tax breaks for companies and corporations, which with the low wages mean high profits for the capitalist owners.

The "Justice for Hamlet" march had been endorsed by numerous trade unionists, trade union locals, and community organizations, including the North Carolina State AFL-CIO.

The New York buses were heavily subsidized by locals of AFSCME, the Hospital Workers union, and the Communications Workers of America District 1.

The trade union and multiracial composition of the demonstration was notable with contingents from as far away as Minnesota, Boston, and Rhode Island. Five busloads of auto workers from Ford UAW Local 600 in Michigan traveled by bus for 15 hours to attend the demonstration. One of the workers told me that they had also gone to Peoria, Illinois, to support the striking UAW workers at the Caterpillar plant.

Also notable was the apparent relative absence of organized political groups, if distribution of leaflets and sales of literature are any indication.

The protest began in front of the burned-out and shut-down plant with remarks by former Imperial workers and by friends and relatives of those who died there. This was followed by a five-mile march to a nearby college where an outdoor rally took place.

The demands of the protest were those around which the former Imperial Foods workers are fighting:

1. Prosecute the owner Emmett Roe and his associates Brad Roe and James Hair, and all those responsible for the deaths, for murder and jail them.

Emmett and Brad Roe and James Hair have been indicted for manslaughter but are now out on \$250,000 bail.

2. Just compensation for all the victims and the families of those who were killed.

3. Federal government bailout of Imperial Foods workers, victims' families, and the Hamlet community through creation of jobs and other development programs.

4. Ongoing government-provided health care for victims' families, workers and workers' families.

5. Repeal 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. (This provision allows states to not only prohibit closed-shop contracts but also union-shop agreements.)

6. Repeal all state right-to-work laws!

7. OSHA reform now!

8. Support union organizing in the South!

"We are holding the Roe family, the company, the city of Hamlet, the county, and the state of North Carolina all responsible for the suffering, pain, and displacement all of us have suffered," said Cornester Williams, a former Imperial Food Products worker.

"All of them were responsible. It was company policy to keep the burners on while repairing fuel lines and it was company policy to lock the doors. Even though there were previous fires in the plant, the city failed to act, the county failed to inspect or require any changes, and the state of North Carolina OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) failed to act in over 11 years," Ms. Williams explained.

Ashanti Binta of Black Workers for Justice chaired the rally and almost all the speakers represented the labor movement: James Andrews, secretary of the North Carolina AFL-CIO; Bob Brown, international vice president of United Electrical Workers from Philadelphia; Bob King, regional director of UAW District 1A in Detroit; Gordon Dillahunt, president of the Raleigh, North Carolina, local of the American Postal Workers Union; Carmelita Mayer of Local 1199 of the Hospital Workers in New York, as well as a representative of the American Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and the United Farm Workers, among many others.

Roe closed the plant permanently only a few weeks after the fire, leaving more than 200 people out of work and devastating the surrounding communities.

Also speaking was Willie Boseman, one of several workers at Goldtex, a textile finishing plant in Goldsboro, North Carolina, who had been fired for trying to organize a local of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union in the plant.

Willie had some good news: On March 30, a judge for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) had ordered Goldtex to rehire, with full pay, Willie and another fired worker Derek Burden. Although this is a victory for the defense campaign that the Black Workers for Justice with others have carried on since December 1990, the law allows the company to appeal this

(Continued on page 34)

Killer Gangs or Killer Government?

by Mary Scully

Horror stories about gangs of drug-dealing, Uzi-packing Black youth abound in the media. Judging from the accounts, these juvenile “narco-terrorists” or “kids who kill” have turned the Black community into a civil war zone and surely deserve a place in the annals of human rapacity and lawlessness along with Al Capone and the hordes of Attila the Hun. However, despite all that has been written and said about it in the media, hard evidence concerning “killer gangs” is difficult to come by. Undoubtedly, there is some fact and some fiction in the horror stories, but whatever the mixture, the government is using the lurid stories about “killer gangs” to justify not a “war on drugs,” but a war on civil liberties and on Black youth.

Since the declaration of the “war on drugs” the availability of drugs in the U.S. has increased. (According to a recent study of the U.S. General Accounting Office there is no direct correlation between the money spent to interdict drugs and the availability of drugs in the U.S.) What has also increased is police violence against minority youth and attacks on the Bill of Rights in the minority communities.

The drug problem is truly enormous. Conservative estimates of drug addiction in the U.S. today include 5.8 million cocaine addicts and 500,000 heroin addicts (plus 350,000 occasional users) with annual revenues of \$80 billion a year. To explain the spread and magnitude of drug addiction over the past 40 years commentators usually focus on the reasons why poor youth turn to drugs—such as staggering levels of unemployment and ever-diminishing social opportunity—but they ignore the fact that drug addiction is increasingly a problem affecting the middle class as well as the poor.

American Foreign Policy and Drugs

Mass addiction did not exist in the epic proportions of today before the development of global production, processing, and distribution systems in which American foreign policy, in particular its covert apparatus, has been largely complicit. The involvement of the U.S. government in drug trafficking is extensive and is well-documented, notably by Alfred W. McCoy in *The Politics of Heroin*; a U.S. Congress investigation headed by Senator John Kerry, the Christic Institute (a Washington, D.C., legal advocacy group) and numerous other sources.

Since the formative years of the Cold War 40 years ago, the CIA, as an agency of American foreign policy, developed a strategy to find suitable allies in the fight against communism. Those allies include drug lords and crime syndicates. CIA covert operations in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan facilitated the emergence of those regions as major heroin producers for the global market. Similarly CIA counterinsurgency efforts in Latin America, particularly their support for the Nicaraguan contras, expanded the Caribbean cocaine trade. These opera-

tions are only a part of the story of CIA drug involvement which has affected dozens of countries. Using narcotics to cover and support covert actions, the CIA has encouraged production, provided air logistics for transport, and provided protection for the drug lords and their operations. Through their alliances with crime syndicates, including the American mafia, they have facilitated the development of drug processing and distribution networks and simultaneously increased the profits and strengthened the power of organized crime.

Anticommunist policies have not only led to expansion of the drug trade but also to financial catastrophe. In early 1990, a series in *The Houston Post* exposed that fraudulent loans to finance illegal covert operations contributed to the collapse of 22 S&Ls. The evidence suggests a link between the CIA and organized crime in this fraud, along with a network of S&Ls apparently laundering the cocaine profits of Manuel Noriega from Panama, at that time an ally of the U.S. government.

The complicity of the U.S. government in the drug trade reaches from the White House (including George Bush, former head of the CIA and accomplice in Contragate as vice president), the CIA, the National Security Council, down to numerous other federal drug agencies, the state and local police, all notoriously infested with drug-related corruption.

The U.S. government may not be serious about combating mass addiction, but the “war on drugs” is not just a cosmetic effort. The campaign is not directed at the drug lords and their U.S. agents but at Black youth, using a political device as old as the hills: blame your violence on someone else, namely the victims.

The History of the Domestic Drug Policy

From its origins until today U.S. domestic drug policy has been one of prohibition and repression. Domestic drug policy has a historical connection to the exploitation of foreign laborers and the origins of American imperialism in the late 19th century with the Spanish-American War and the drive for the China market.

When the western states first passed anti-opium laws in the 1870s, the legislation was aimed less at the drug than at those considered its primary users—Chinese immigrants. The event that precipitated the campaign against the Chinese and against opium was the economic depression at that time and the high unemployment levels. Because of their willingness to accept low pay, railroad and mining companies used them as strikebreakers and as a threat against white workers. Economic hardship was blamed on the Chinese rather than the powers that controlled the economy. The anti-opium laws had minimal effect on opium use but did provide a framework for unrestrained harassment and attacks on the Chinese. During World War I, Germans became the scapegoats. To promote

hatred of Germans, antidrug zealots, in league with the U.S. government, alleged that the Kaiser's agents were spreading drug addiction in America.

Cocaine use began as an upper and middle class practice among whites. But around the turn of the century—simultaneous with a large Black migration to northern cities, the institutionalization of Jim Crow in the South, and a peak of lynchings and violence against Blacks in the South—an orchestrated campaign began to associate cocaine use with Blacks and to show that Blacks were especially dangerous under its influence. "Jew peddlers" were said to be selling cocaine to Blacks in the South. In 1910, a U.S. House of Representatives committee heard testimony that "the colored people . . . would just as leave rape a woman as anything else and a great many of the southern rape cases have been traced to cocaine." The connection between cocaine and rape is crucial because allegations of Black sexual assaults on white women were frequent and precipitated lynchings of Blacks all over the South as well as major race riots. *The New York Times* published an article on February 8, 1914, entitled "Negro Cocaine Fiends Are a New Southern Menace" detailing the "race menace," "cocaine orgies," "wholesale murders," and "hitherto inoffensive" Blacks "running amuck in a cocaine frenzy." Several scientific studies of cocaine use among Blacks demolished these claims and found, in fact, a low rate of addiction. Nevertheless, this agitation led to cocaine (which is not a narcotic) being included in the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914, the first federal drug legislation.

During the late 1920s and 1930s cheap Mexican labor in the West and Southwest began to threaten the jobs of white workers. As concern about this labor competition increased so did alarm over a new drug peril—marijuana. Since marijuana use was considered a Mexican custom, criminalization of marijuana was a lawful means to harass Mexican migrant workers as well as Chicanos, forcing them into jail and out of the job market. Despite claims of Mexican lawlessness, reliable documentation shows their crime rate was low. The Bureau of Narcotics supplemented the anti-Mexican agitation with tales about Black men and white women smoking marijuana together, the women falling for sob stories of racial persecution and ending up pregnant and syphilitic.

Drugs and Crime

Defenders of drug prohibition deny that racism and the social control of minorities are involved. They instead argue that drugs cause crime, as well as psychosis and moral depravity. In 1975 a White House task force conservatively estimated the social cost of all drug addiction in the U.S. at \$10 to \$17 billion a year. Most of the crime associated with drug use is in reality caused by drug prohibition, that is, by the emergence of the black market and all its attendant problems including violence and the growth of organized crime. Drugs cause a wide range of physical and psychosocial problems but it is not their biochemical effects on the mind that cause crime. Rather it is the compulsion to obtain money to buy illegal drugs on the black market along with territorial disputes associated with drug selling that generate crime.

Mountains of "evidence" have been produced to demonstrate the psychotic effects of illegal drugs in order to

buttress the case for drug prohibition. Witness the propaganda film *Reefer Madness*, made to show the demonic consequences of marijuana use. It is now considered a cult comedy.

Horror stories abound today about the consequences of crack cocaine use. We are told that it leads to new and unprecedented forms of violence. It is no accident that the drug most demonized is the one reportedly most used by Black youth chiefly because it is considerably cheaper than powder cocaine or other drugs.

Drug law enforcement is largely targeted against crack, resulting in higher rates of incarceration for Black people. A state law recently found unconstitutional by the Minnesota Supreme Court dictated that the law treat crack cocaine offenders, who are mostly Black, more harshly than powder cocaine offenders, who are mostly white and middle class. Expert testimony agreed that the only relevant difference between the two drugs is the method of ingesting them; otherwise the effects are almost identical.

Along with the demonization of crack cocaine is the hysteria generated by the growing social menace of killer youth gangs. Homicide, especially drive-by shootings, and dealing in crack cocaine are their stock-in-trade. These "narco-terrorists," we are told, are tightly organized crime units armed with semi-automatic weapons and running sophisticated drug operations.

Despite the media hype, even many U.S. police departments downplay the extent of the gang problem. This is not to suggest that drug addiction is not a problem among Black youth; drug addiction is a mass problem affecting all youth and a considerable section of the adult population. Nor is it to suggest that violence is not a problem among Black youth. Violence is the leading cause of death among all males 15 to 24 years of age. Neither is it to deny that Black youth hang out in gangs and adopt uniform dress codes. But it has always been the natural tendency of young people to hang out in groups and dress alike. More importantly there can be no possible, valid objection to their doing so. Hanging out in groups is not illegal; it is in fact a right protected by the First Amendment.

Life is not tranquil for Black youth, plagued as they are by poverty, unemployment, and diminishing social opportunity as well as drug addiction and violence. But in order to address the problem with a commitment to Black youth, accurate information must be obtained.

Reliable data, however, is simply hard to come by, especially when manipulated by police officials. Police are more likely to arrest and charge Black offenders, and less likely to draw a line between boyish mischief and crime. Crimes committed by individuals are often attributed to gangs. Furthermore, even definitions of gang incidents and gang membership are not clear. Los Angeles, where the police department has distinguished itself by its racist violence, reports 100,000 gang members, but uses different criteria for gang membership than New York City, which reports 1,000 gang members.

Many studies—notably by researchers at the University of Minnesota, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the National Crime Survey, the National Youth Survey, and The Sentencing Project—suggest that Black youths do not commit serious or violent crimes at a higher rate than whites, and that they do not use drugs in greater proportion than whites. Nevertheless, a disproportionate number of Blacks are incar-

cerated (half the juveniles in public lockups, or one in four Black youths) primarily for drug offenses.

In the 1962 case of *Robinson v. California*, the Supreme Court ruled that drug addiction is a disease, not a crime. Still, instead of being treated as the social problem and national health problem that it is, drug addiction is approached as a criminal problem requiring punitive action such as more cops, bigger jails, and harsher penalties. One young Black man in California faces a life sentence without parole for possession of five and a half ounces of cocaine. Such extreme punishments are often justified on the grounds that the person did not merely possess the drugs for personal use, but intended to sell them. Be that as it may, this ignores the fact that drug dealers are usually financially desperate addicts who sell to support their own habits. Such people are no less deserving of drug treatment than others.

In 1989, when Bush accelerated the "war on drugs" he proposed doubling federal aid to police and allocating an extra \$1.5 billion for courts and prisons. As it stands now, 16,000 of the 44,000 inmates in the federal prison system are there for drug-related offenses, and a disproportionate number are Black. In other words, the primary treatment for drug addiction offered to Black youth is incarceration.

Police Violence Against Black Youth and the Bill of Rights

Under the guise of the "war on drugs" federal and state civil rights statutes and the Bill of Rights are violated with impunity. It is by no means an accident that the media has adopted combat metaphors, invoking emotion-laden comparisons like "Beirut, U.S.A.," "civil war zones," and "regions under siege."

In 1988, 1,000 Los Angeles cops conducted weekend dragnets through "gang-ridden neighborhoods" arresting over 800 youth on minor violations including curfew, loitering, littering, and spitting. Most of them were released without charge, only emphasizing the harassment and the complete disregard for the Bill of Rights practiced by the police.

In cities across the U.S. the police are turning inner cities into martial law zones with sweeps through housing projects, calls for deploying federal troops and the National Guard. "Suspected gang members" are frequently stopped and frisked, and sometimes face arrest, even where there is no evidence of criminal activity.

The Boston newspapers alone are replete with incidents of harassment by the police including automobiles stopped and the occupants searched while the car is torn apart in a search for drugs. In one such incident, a young man was forced to lie on the ground in a puddle of urine while being frisked, another required to pull down his pants and underwear, others held in headlocks and subjected to intrusive body searches, including

a pat-down of the genitals. This is harassment, this is police brutality, under the guise of the "war on drugs." There is also an alarmingly high incidence nationally of young Blacks being murdered during these police actions. In dozens of cases in almost 25 cities, police have assaulted or murdered Black youths, including several unarmed men shot in the back, a detainee shot while removing keys from his pocket, and a five-year-old boy. The policeman who shot the child used as his defense the fact that he had just read an article about "kids who kill," and was acquitted.

There have been several Supreme Court rulings in recent years based on drug-related cases which have made serious inroads against civil liberties. The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution requires that police have at least a "probable cause" of wrongdoing before detaining someone, even briefly. However, as a result of a Supreme Court ruling concerning drug searches police can now make dragnet sweeps on buses, searching luggage and handbags without justifying the searches. In another decision, articles dropped by a fleeing suspect are admissible evidence, regardless of whether the police who chased the suspect had adequate basis for suspicion. This can only encourage displays of force by police in order to frighten people into surrendering.

The Eighth Amendment prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments," but one recent Supreme Court drug ruling permitted the imposition of mandatory sentences of life without parole for nonviolent first offenders. Another ruling sustained the imposition of the death penalty for a man when a murder had been committed in connection with his marijuana operation. This decision reinforces the provision in the federal antidrug abuse act passed by Congress in 1988 which established the death penalty aimed ostensibly at drug traffic violence. These new legal judgments increase the possibilities for entrapment and frame-up for political activists.

The "war on drugs" is primarily a war on Black youth. It is the continuation of a policy to preempt at all costs the emergence of Black youth as a political force to be reckoned with. The rebellious Black youth in South Africa along with the civil rights movement and the Black rebellions of the 1960s in this country stand as an example to today's youth of the power of organized Black political action. But that potential is an extremely alarming prospect to the ruling elite of this country.

In addition to demanding that the U.S. government get out of the drug trade and that it repeal all drug laws, we should support every effort of the Black community to protect its youth including demands for an end to police violence; and for job programs, recreational facilities, drug treatment and public health facilities — all under the control of the Black community. □

The question of how the Black majority in South Africa can win basic democratic rights—in the context of efforts at self-reform of the apartheid regime—is an extremely important one. An aspect of this has been a discussion among South African revolutionaries about the idea of a Constituent Assembly. In the following article Shaun Whittaker, a citizen of South Africa and a supporter of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action who is currently resident in the United States, discusses the practical and theoretical implications of the Constituent Assembly idea, the general fight for democratic rights, as well as current events in the country.

Constituent Assembly: Educating the South African Working Class for Social Liberation

by Shaun Whittaker

An important lesson to be drawn from the historical events in Russia, especially in those few crucial months from February to October, 1917, is that the call for the convening of a Constituent Assembly (CA) in South Africa could also lead to the radical awakening of the working class in that country. Through the struggle for the CA, South African workers might come to fully realize that the democratic rights proclaimed by such a gathering could only be thoroughly expressed when they themselves have the political and economic control of society in their own hands. This realization would be a huge step forward for the preparation of these workers for the final victory over capitalism.

Possibilities or Limitations?

Let us briefly turn to the example of the Soviet Union, where for the first time in history the workers seriously attempted to build a socialist society, even though it was only for a few years, while the Bolsheviks were led by Lenin. The convening of a CA for universal suffrage and a one-person-one-vote system had been a key demand of the Bolsheviks for many years. In January 1905, for example, following an incident in Petersburg in which thousands of workers were killed and wounded, Lenin supported the demand for a CA by the workers and wrote that: "The demand of the rebellious Petersburg workers—the immediate convocation of a CA on the basis of universal, direct, equal, and secret suffrage—must become the demand of all the striking workers." Later in this pamphlet on the 1905 revolution, Lenin concluded that: "The people in revolt will overthrow all the government institutions of the Tsarist autocracy and proclaim the immediate convocation of the Constituent Assembly."

This was clearly a progressive demand while the tsarist regime was in power. In the tradition of the great French Revolution that made the first CA in history possible,

the Bolsheviks supported such a bourgeois democratic institution because it meant democratic rights for the masses. In addition, the struggle for the CA provided an important rallying point for the mobilization and political education of the workers in tsarist Russia. By involving the workers in this campaign, the limitations of national democratic rights were exposed and these rights seen to be formally existing only on paper for these workers, while their daily lives remained unchanged under liberal capitalism because the balance of power favored the rulers of the time. Thus the beginning of the October revolution with the demand for bread from the women working in the factories of Petersburg!

In the very same way, the call for a CA in South Africa is of tremendous educational value to the working class of that country because South African workers would seriously grapple with important questions about their democratic rights. Is the freedom of assembly possible for workers although they themselves do not own the meeting places? Should workers control the radio and television services before their freedom of speech could be fully expressed? What does it mean to have the right to vote? Would the right to vote increase the bread on their tables or should workers control the bakery first before this right is highly meaningful to their daily lives? A powerful answer to this question comes, for example, from a pamphlet of an independent Marxist organization in South Africa, the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA), in which an activist is quoted as saying: "Yes, the right to vote is better than nothing. But, no thank you, because to vote but not to eat is not enough." This statement captures the spirit of the kinds of discussions about the possibilities and limitations of national democratic rights that every worker in South Africa should be engaged in on a countrywide basis. The greater the level of participation of every worker in this nation-

al debate about the content of the new constitution and the implications of it for their daily lives, the greater the balance of power would be in favor of workers.

Rubber Stamp or Democratic?

The struggle for such a CA from below has been captured in the WOSA slogan: "The people must approve every word, every clause in the new constitution." The slogan is raised not only in opposition to the negotiations that began in December 1991 between essentially the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) at the Conference for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), but also against the real possibility that the de Klerk regime might concede to a watered-down CA that it had already rehearsed in the neighboring Namibia. Such a CA would leave political and economic power firmly in the hands of the South African ruling classes. The Namibian CA did not even discuss the distribution of wealth in the country and specifically excluded the Namibian trade unions from the discussions about the new constitution, while the latter was written by three so-called experts behind the backs of the Namibian masses. A similar South African CA might thus simply serve as a rubber stamp for a secret pact between the ANC and the NP that would probably guarantee white minority and private property rights in the new constitution. Such a watered-down CA might include a significant number of leaders from various national liberation and social democratic organizations of the oppressed and the responsibility would fall on smaller organizations like WOSA to explain to the masses why they oppose this version of a CA. In an attempt to focus the debate about the CA before any of the above-mentioned historical possibilities materialize, WOSA has suggested a set of eight minimum requirements for a democratic CA:

- 1) One person, one vote on a common voters' roll;
- 2) Proportional representation;
- 3) No prior restrictions on the constitution which the CA is to draw up;
- 4) Delegates to the CA must operate under mandates and be subject to the right of recall;
- 5) All discussions of the CA must be open and public;
- 6) The CA must operate under conditions of freedom of speech and assembly;
- 7) Measures must be taken to equalize resources and access to the media;
- 8) The security forces must be disarmed and confined to barracks except for anti-crime policing.

Through the mass campaign for such a democratic CA, the lesson about the importance of workers' control of society would continue to be taught to the South African working class, and it is for this reason that the daily fights for social reforms like a CA is an important dress rehearsal for the final showdown with the ruling classes. By asking themselves critical questions about the CA that point at the impossibility of separating national and social liberation, the workers would clearly see that even the democratically elected CA cannot resolve the crises in food, jobs, wages, electricity, housing, education, health, and so forth, that directly influence their lives. The struggles around social reforms, however, are important means of continuing to raise the consciousness of the working class, continuing to enhance its self-confidence in its ability to take power and continuing to mature its class consciousness for the final battle for workers' power. The daily fights for these social reforms are means to this important end; these are the small steps that would lead us to a socialist society.

A popular saying in progressive political circles in South Africa is that the scrapping of the apartheid legislation is like taking down the scaffolding of a house that already stands firmly. This appropriate illustration should be taken to its logical conclusion, and we should add that every social reform that is now won for the working class is a hammer blow to this House of Capital that remains standing. The final blow would come from the socialist revolution that would make it possible for the workers to fully reconstruct those bricks with their own tools into the House of Socialism. Every brick that is knocked down from the different corners of the Capitalist House (White House?) in the process of struggle is at the same time utilized to build the foundation of the Socialist House—except of course that all the bricks are now the same—that there are no more matchbox houses for the majority and mansions for the minority!

Capitalist Constitution or Socialism?

As socialists we have no illusions about the changes that a CA could bring about in the lives of the working people. Let us turn to the capitalist superpower of the world to drive this point home (mansion or matchbox?). The liberal democratic constitution of the U.S. has simply failed to bring about a high level of democracy for all Americans after more than 200 years of existence. Thousands of working class Americans are homeless, and the rate of homelessness is escalating all over the United States. Right in the heart of international capital, for example, thousands of homeless people sleep in the bitter cold in the train stations and on the streets of New York City. In the very small state of New Jersey, for example, 15,000 children become homeless every year, while 200,000 children have no health coverage in this rich state.

The right to vote was finally extended to Black Americans in the 1960s, but this national democratic right has not changed the miserable existence of the majority of Black American workers. After nearly three decades since the passage of the Voting Rights Act they remain trapped in ghettos like Harlem and the Bronx in New York City. A 1990 report indicated that 25 percent of Black American males between the ages of 20 and 29 were either in prison, or on parole or probation. The self-appointed moral watchdog of the rest of the world imprisons the largest proportion of its own population compared to any other country in the world. (And on the day of the completion of this writing, the Black youth of South-Central Los Angeles are taking to the streets of this ghetto to give vent to their pent-up anger of decades when this "spontaneous" mass uprising was sparked by the perceived racism and injustice of the Rodney King case. Incidents like these would continue to radicalize whole generations of Black youth until they fully take history into their own hands and join with the American working class in an organized way to rid humanity of the New World Order. The uprising in Southern California is reminiscent of the political situation in the ghettos of South-Western Johannesburg in 1976 that signified the turning point in the history of Black resistance in South Africa.)

While big capital in the U.S. continues to determine who of the candidates from the two capitalist political parties would become the next president to best serve their interests, the unemployment lines continue to grow for the have-nots, and the workers' organizations remain under attack. In April 1992, for example, thousands of United Auto Workers at Caterpillar in

Illinois had to end their strike without conditions and return to the factories when negotiations with the bosses failed. This defeat came after five months on the picket lines during the winter. This indeed is the fate of the Black working class of South Africa as long as capitalism continues to exist in that country. The adoption of a liberal democratic constitution in itself would not change the daily lives of the working people. They would continue to live in terrible conditions in the filthy squatter camps, the smoky townships and the dusty rural areas—even if they have the right to vote realized by a CA in a non-racial capitalist society. As socialists, we have no illusions about the material changes that a CA would make possible for the majority of South Africans, but we have the responsibility to struggle consistently for social reforms that improve the lives of the workers. Although the right to vote is a limited right under capitalism, it is an improvement for the Black working people over their current disenfranchisement under the de Klerk regime—in the same way that the right to vote under liberal capitalism meant an advance for the Russian working people over their votelessness under the tsarist regime. The expression of the rights of the Russian working people was certainly taken to a much higher level of democracy when the Congress of Soviets decided in 1918 to dissolve the CA. This congress made it possible to attempt the building of socialism—not the CA—but the point is that the struggle for the CA was and remains a most important lesson for the working people all over the world.

Unity or Division?

The call for a CA provides the South African left with an historic opportunity to unite around a common platform that is a democratic alternative to the unrepresentative negotiations taking place in the CODESA. The main resolution at the Conference for a Democratic Future, held almost exactly two years earlier with the participation of *all* the progressive organizations of the oppressed, stated clearly that a CA is the only legitimate method for negotiating the future constitution. For these left forces not to form a united front for a CA means that they are turning their backs on the whole liberation effort of the South African masses and that the already fragmented South African left would be further weakened for many years. A united front for a CA also provides the left with a forum to debate other important issues like their differences, the direction of the struggle, the building of democracy, and so forth. It is thus with the utmost urgency that a united front for a democratically elected

CA should be formed! Leftist activists would remain committed to the program and personalities of their respective organizations, but the simple truth is that the weight of such a front would unite the majority of South Africans and at the same time advance the long and painful struggle of the Black people by exposing the fraudulent negotiations project.

At this historic juncture, the largest number of leftist activists in South Africa are in the Congress Alliance, that is, the alliance between the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC), under the leadership of the last organization. There is at this point no evidence, however, that these Congress Alliance leftists have a strong and coherent voice with which to express their views. And the possibility of them taking over the leadership of these organizations is very remote. The so-called Independent Left in the ANC, for example, is too isolated from the working class because of a lack of revolutionary praxis and could not seriously challenge the leadership of these organizations. The point is that all these leftists have become trapped in organizations directed by a reformist leadership and that their presence in fact legitimizes the façade of democracy in this alliance. As the leftists in SWAPO had to do in Namibia, the Congress Alliance leftists also appear to have little choice but to seek a political home elsewhere in the near future.

There have already been many ruthless attempts to neutralize these leftists both from inside and outside the ANC. Radical ANC youth leader Peter Mokaba, for example, was suddenly rumored to be a security police spy prior to the ANC national conference in July 1991 in an apparent attempt by the reformist wing of the ANC to divide the leftists before the conference. Even more disturbing was the death of a very popular Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation, the ANC's military force) commander Thami Zulu shortly after being released from ANC detention, also rumored to be a security police spy. An ANC investigation posthumously cleared this leftist guerrilla of all the charges. The expulsion of the Marxist Workers Tendency leader, Martin Leggasick, from the ANC more than a decade ago, the detention of ANC Central Committee member Pallo Jordan in their Angola camp a few years ago, and the recent political isolation of the militant Winnie Mandela before the Interim Government comes to power, also have to be viewed within the context of these consistent attempts to neutralize the Congress Alliance leftists. Even the apartheid regime has always treated the ANC leftists differently

from the reformists as could already be evidenced many years ago in the assassinations of leftists like Matthew Goniwe and Ruth First, as well as recently in a security police document leaked to the press that stated the importance of protecting the "moderates" in the ANC. The message from all this to Congress Alliance leftists is that their political home is with the rest of us in a united front for the CA!

Militants or Reformists?

An incident at the beginning of April 1992 in Cape Town clearly reflected the prevailing mood of the rank-and-file members of the Congress Alliance. In an attempt to recruit Black members for the National Party (NP), F.W. de Klerk addressed a meeting in the largest township in this city at the southern tip of Africa. The activists who disrupted the gathering were chanting for the ANC during the few minutes that de Klerk was able to speak, but the reformist ANC leadership condemned the actions of these militants. What appears to be emerging is that significant political differences already exist between the heavy-handed ANC leadership and the frustrated membership that seems to be in no mood for compromises! Incidents like these show that support for the ANC leadership might change dramatically once they formally join the Interim Government to help administer the country with all its inequalities. To those who continue to believe so firmly that the ANC leadership enjoys the support of the majority of South Africans, we answer with the very eloquent words of Phyllis Jordan:

Did you poll those African women in the townships and countryside of South Africa, the ones who work in white households, keeping the whites clean, the ones who sell tripe-stew and fat cookies at train stations and subway entrances, the women who walk half a mile to fetch water and/or their menfolk in the mines, farms, and factories of South Africa, the ones who speak no English, but speak Tswana, Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Shangaan, that you could make so bold an assertion? Or, is your poll of the few who speak English, the ones that one meets at Cocktail Parties, Black-tie Dinners and Jazz Concerts in this country [U.S.] and the posh homes of white Liberals in South Africa?

The workers from the squatter camps, townships, and rural areas represent the most important force from below that will oppose any compromises of the Congress Alliance leadership in the CODESA, an advisory body of the still-existing apartheid parliament. The frightening prospect

for the Congress Alliance leftists especially is that their leadership might be silent in the Interim Government when the inevitable discontented voices from below—including these leftists—would be silenced by the South African army and police force.

Right Wing or Far-Right Wing?

Following the white referendum in mid-March 1992, it is now even more obvious that the de Klerk regime would not concede to the demand for a nonracial government but that it is firmly committed to a white minority veto because this is what was promised to the two million white South Africans who voted for the NP. Although this white referendum was fundamentally undemocratic and irrelevant to Black South Africans, it is also noteworthy for two other reasons: firstly, that the results of the referendum made it possible for the de Klerk regime to remarkably neutralize the only remaining weapon of the moderate ANC leadership, i.e., moral authority. The NP is now projecting itself as an organization of all South Africans and could be expected to continue to vigorously recruit Black members.

Secondly, it is important to note that one-third of the whites voted in opposition to the reform project of the de Klerk regime. And what makes this even more significant is that these are probably white working class people who not only support the far-right wing but also form an important part of or enjoy tremendous sympathy in the South African army and police force. Given the financial resources of the far-right wing, its limited access to the mass media compared to the NP, and less than two weeks for them to prepare for the referendum, it would seem that this was not as much of a victory for de Klerk as the formal mass media would have us believe. The greatest threat to the reform project of the de Klerk regime clearly emanates from the far-right wing at this juncture. In fact, the dramatic increase in violence in the townships around Johannesburg immediately after the white referendum raises serious questions about the covert source of this recent violence possibly being the far-right wing elements in the South African army and police force. Although there are no public indications of disunity in the South African army at the present time, it is obvious that the far-right wing possibly enjoys significant support in this establishment and that the de Klerk regime must neutralize these elements before it could fully implement its reform project.

De Klerk never had a strong base of support in the military and already attempted to do some housecleaning of the South African Defense Force (SADF) by, for example, the demotion of the former

minister of defense, the appointment of the Goldstone Commission to investigate the role of Military Intelligence in township violence, and the cutting of the defense budget. The public disagreements among key figures in the security establishment about, for example, conscientious objection and the press secretary of the Defense Ministry seem to indicate that the anti-reforms generals would continue to use far-right private armies and special units to undermine a future neo-apartheid government.

Whatever the case might be, the widespread, organized nature of the violence in the townships and the supposed inability of one of the best security establishments in the world to find the instigators raised suspicions right from the beginning that the army and/or police force could be behind what the formal mass media has referred to in a racist way as "black-on-black" violence. What has been confirmed now is that the right-wing Inkatha Freedom Party allowed at least 200 of its members to be trained by the SADF and that they were responsible for much of the violence. It is also telling that Inkatha and the far-right Afrikaner Resistance Movement signed a nonaggression pact a few weeks ago, while a white police officer was sentenced to death just a few days ago by a South African court because of the mass killing of Black funeral mourners in Trust Feed, a township near Pietermaritzburg. The main conclusion from these events is that the far-right wing probably enjoys the support of a large number of white soldiers and police officers and has the capacity to derail the reform project of the de Klerk regime.

While visiting Israel a few months ago, de Klerk stated in public that the South African government would declare a State of Emergency if the negotiations process fails. With the justification of preventing township violence and saving the negotiations for a New South Africa, the de Klerk regime might very well do just that in the near future as an attempt to neutralize especially the far-right wing as well as the Congress Alliance leftists. Neville Alexander, the national chairperson of WOSA, has referred to such a government as a

"military government of a special kind" because it would come into existence to save the negotiations between the NP and the ANC and to prevent the pro-apartheid far-right wing from further destabilizing the political situation. Such a military government would of course have tremendous implications for the whole South African left, including those who have identified themselves as socialists in an organization like WOSA.

Changing or Maintaining the Balance of Power?

Although WOSA is smaller than the national liberation (ANC, the PAC, and AZAPO) and the social-democratic (SACP) organizations in South Africa, it remains the only socialist organization with a national presence in the country. The organization is small in terms of number of signed-up membership, but its central political message, that is, socialism, enjoys the support of the majority of Black workers. WOSA was able to extend itself within one year beyond the Western Cape roots of the organization so much so that the largest branch is currently right in the industrial heartland of the working class, Johannesburg. This is a clear signal of the ability of the organization to grow in the working class and to make a noteworthy contribution to the development of a mass socialist movement that could change the current balance of power in South Africa. The reality is that the many decades of a wretched existence under the hated system of racial capitalism turned most Black workers into lifelong enemies of both apartheid and capitalism. And this is the strength of WOSA and the dilemma of the other organizations that are negotiating with the South African rulers! As soon as it becomes obvious to a significant number of Black workers that the leadership of the Congress Alliance would not be able to ensure bread, peace, and jobs for the majority of South Africans, a shift in mass consciousness about this leadership would take place, and large numbers of workers would look toward an organization like WOSA to provide alternative leadership.

WOSA has been making deliberate attempts to win the advanced activists in the structures of the workers, youth, women, etc., over to its political positions by struggling for social reforms with them in these mass organizations. Many of these leftist activists have an emotional commitment to an anticapitalist position and have been and would continue to be won over to socialism through joint struggles and open debates with socialist activists. This is the way in which the basis for a mass socialist movement in South Africa would be laid. A recent WOSA pamphlet that supported a

four-month nationwide strike for decent wages, paid maternity leave, night transport for late shifts, and so forth, by 1,200 South African workers against Kentucky Fried Chicken made the organization's general view on the struggle for social liberation very clear and perhaps justifies a long quotation:

Our struggle for national liberation was never just against legal apartheid. While we continue to struggle for full and equal democratic rights, we also struggle for a living wage, land for the landless, houses for all, equal education for our children, proper health care facilities, etc. The ruling elites who hold power and wealth, owning the factories, the mines, farms and the hotels and supermarkets are not interested in giving these things to us because they say it is too costly. They, who have everything, say we must be patient and go without.

We believe the Kentucky workers are showing the way. Their struggle tells us clearly that whatever the outcome of CODESA and the negotiations, workers are going to continue to be exploited. They are going to continue to have nothing while the bosses will have everything. The only way to change this is to continue to resist through mass action. This is the lesson we learn.

We also learn that through unity and solidarity we can defeat the bosses and build a better life for ourselves and our children.

The Struggle Continues...

Finally, let us return to the leader of the relatively small political party that directed the first socialist revolution in the history of humankind. Lenin, in his book *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, stated the relationship between social reforms and revolution rather concisely when he said that: "In the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practice full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent, and revolutionary struggle for democracy."

Regardless of whether or not a democratically elected CA is convened in South Africa, the conscientization and mobilization of the workers continue in that country. The greatest challenge to a socialist organization like WOSA is thus to persist with the all-round, consistent, and revolutionary struggle for democracy in this age of a New South Africa and a New World Order.

Forward to Socialism! We Want Everything!

April 1992

Subscribe to
Vukani Basebenzi
Paper of WOSA

One-Year Subscription—\$30 (cash,
check, or postal money order)

WOSA Publications
P.O. Box 491
Salt River 7925, Cape Town,
South Africa

Understanding the National Struggle in Georgia (Part 1)

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

It is quite common these days to hear people who call themselves progressive or even Marxist speak contemptuously of nationalism. It is blamed for bloody conflicts, full-scale wars, and territorial disputes that have erupted in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This is especially common among commentators from afar who have not themselves experienced national oppression, or worse yet, among those who by accident of birth belong to an oppressor nationality themselves—Russians, white Americans, etc.

Revolutionaries, however, who seek to build a new and just social order from the ruins around us need to understand, as Lenin did, that the national struggles of oppressed peoples for the right to self-determination are fully as legitimate as other struggles for basic democratic rights—and have the same revolutionary dynamic. Such movements directly challenge the continued existence of imperialist or bureaucratic political and economic institutions. In fact, the realization of the nationalist aspirations of the oppressed is a precondition for the realization of other democratic rights.

After all, freedom of speech and press once achieved will be in whose language? Access to science, technology, or information in all fields of knowledge will be available to a people in what language? Who will decide?

It seems obvious on the face of it that revolutionaries should embrace mass movements around the demand for national self-determination of oppressed peoples and not look down their nose at them or try to ignore them. Revolutionaries within or outside these oppressed nations have a responsibility to champion these struggles and explain: liberation from one oppressor must not be followed by subjugation to another. Genuine cultural and national liberation must be accompanied by social and economic liberation from exploitation by any nationality, including one's own.

How can that be achieved? The only reliable allies are not "enemies of our enemies"—which more often than not captures the shortsighted "solutions" offered by petty bourgeois nationalist leaders, primarily intellectuals. For all their strengths such leaders do not understand the class nature of society and have no roots among the oppressed classes. The only reliable allies are those struggling elsewhere for basic cultural, economic, and political rights—the movements of the working class and its allies, including others who are nationally oppressed.

The bloody conflicts and wars that have emerged over nationalist issues in the workers' states of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe should not be blamed on the oppressed peoples who have begun to demand their rights. These conflicts should be blamed on those who refuse to recognize the rights of the oppressed and seek to forcibly reassert their own control.

It is true that as oppressed peoples move into motion around justifiable nationalist demands, chauvinists and charlatans, bigots and brigands seek to divert the struggles toward undemocratic, self-serving goals that can—if left unchallenged—lead the legitimate struggle back into the hands of an oppressor. Often, the oppressors will even foster and encourage, finance and expedite such types.

But this does not mean that the nationalist movements themselves can be blamed, dismissed, shunned, or abandoned. Quite the contrary. After all, any struggle is vulnerable to such maneuvers. It just happens that national struggles are more susceptible because national oppression is such a basic tool of oppression and so prevalent.

It is the unique responsibility of revolutionary socialists to intervene on the side of the struggles of the nationally oppressed and to expose the deadly threat of the charlatans and chauvinists—explaining that true national liberation can only come about if working people, not the capitalists or bureaucrats, take charge of all social, economic, and political affairs. This task has never been more urgent.

In issue No. 95 of *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, we examined the events in one region of the Caucasus—Nagorno-Karabagh—an enclave where Armenians are struggling for independence from Azerbaijan. This article will examine the events in another region of the Caucasus, the Georgian Republic.

On Saturday, March 7, 1992, Eduard Shevardnadze—head of the KGB of the Georgian Republic 1965-1972 and Georgian Communist Party chief from 1972-85—flew into the airport of the republic's capital with his entourage and bodyguards in a chartered plane. He was there to resume control. Greeted at the airport by Dzaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Kitovani, members of Georgia's ruling Military Council, he was whisked away in a convoy of black Volgas to a closed-door meeting with Georgian Orthodox Patriarch Ilya II.

Shevardnadze's return to power after nearly seven years of perestroika to "heal the wounds" among his people and to "show the way out of the difficulties"—as he phrased it at the airport—was stunning evidence of how little the "reforms" had really altered the political structure.

Around 2,000 people turned out to welcome him, according to the Reuters release of March 7, along with dozens of "burly National Guardsmen" to keep the crowd away.

The newspaper *Izvestia* in Moscow heralded his return. "Under Shevardnadze, Georgia will quickly receive international recognition, economic contracts and credit, acceptance by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and UN membership. Under Shevardnadze, of course, there will be no

restrictions on the press, on creativity, political activity, entry and exit from the republic and all other freedoms.”

Just four days before Shevardnadze's arrival, the ruling Military Council had prolonged for another month the state of emergency and curfew in Georgia imposed when they forcibly took power January 7.

Izvestia was right about one thing: Shevardnadze had certainly achieved international notoriety in recent years. In July 1985, he had been promoted by the Kremlin to full membership of the CPSU's ruling Politburo. He then succeeded Andrei Gromyko as the Soviet Union's minister of foreign affairs. As a result of this promotion, he had spent untold hours with such foreign dignitaries as U.S. secretary of state James Baker, establishing close personal and political relations with him.

But the story goes deeper than this.

As *Financial Times* reporter Leyla Boulton put it: “Two years ago, when Mr. [Zviad] Gamsakhurdia was running for office on a ticket promising total independence from Moscow, Mr. Shevardnadze was best remembered in Georgia as a satrap of Moscow's Communist power. He was personally responsible for jailing Mr. Gamsakhurdia for dissident activities, before leaving his native Georgia to become President Mikhail Gorbachev's foreign minister.”

What had happened during those two years? Had the population really forgotten Shevardnadze's consistent responsibility for policing and enforcing the old, hated order for nearly two decades? More likely, the ruling apparatus of bureaucrat-marketeters in Moscow, along with the imperialist financiers and their politicians in Washington, had decided that Shevardnadze was the best candidate for the job of policing the “new order” in Georgia, that is: imposing market reforms and privatization.

According to *Reuters* of March 7, Shevardnadze indicated that he had the support of Baker and had held “detailed discussions with Baker about his planned return.”

This is undoubtedly the case; and certainly the discussions extended far beyond Baker.

The Presidency of Zviad Gamsakhurdia

The capitalist media as well as the media in the CIS were unabashed apologists for the band of heavily armed goons who launched a military attack on a governmental building in downtown Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, on December 21, 1991. Blockaded inside was the democratically elected president of the republic Zviad Gamsakhurdia with some 500-1,500 of his supporters, family, and friends who had been surrounded. With rocket launchers, grenade throwers, and heavy artillery, the attackers bombarded the building for 16 days, a classical “violent overthrow of a government” that destroyed much of the downtown region and left some 200 dead. Gamsakhurdia, the first popularly elected president Georgia ever had, was forced to flee the country in the early hours of January 7 with a convoy of some 200 supporters.

Gamsakhurdia was elected president of Georgia on May 26, 1991, with 87 percent of the votes and a large voter turnout. The first popularly elected parliament had previously elected him president on November 15, 1990, by a vote of 232 to 5.

However, Zviad Gamsakhurdia was more than a politician. In fact, like Vaclav Havel and other courageous opponents of

the Stalinist bureaucracy who became popular leaders when the old Stalinist order began to collapse, Gamsakhurdia was not really ready to be a political leader at all.

Like most of the prominent dissidents of the 1970s, he was an intellectual. His father was the famous Georgian writer Konstantin Semenovich Gamsakhurdia who died rather suddenly and somewhat mysteriously in June 1975.

This generation of activists was involved in examining ideas, history, and culture, and were propelled into political activity by their insistence that people should not be persecuted for expressing their ideas. They demanded “glasnost,” or the right to express their ideas without fear of persecution. They circulated their views on all conceivable topics and publicized persecutions through an informal network of uncensored and unofficial writings called samizdat (self-published). Most of these activists had no political or economic program for social change as such. However, their struggle for elementary democratic rights directly challenged the Kremlin's totalitarian control and, therefore, had profound political, even revolutionary, implications.

To a large extent, in fact, it was the totalitarian suppression of criticism, which these fighters campaigned against, that was largely responsible for the social stagnation which the reform policies of the Gorbachev era were directed toward alleviating. The rapid crumbling of Stalinist power once Gorbachev instituted a degree of “glasnost” after 1985 shows that totalitarianism was critical to the bureaucracy's hold on power. It also revealed how fragile this hold on power actually was.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava, who perished in 1990, were the most prominent figures in the Georgian democratic opposition throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s.¹ They collaborated in organizing branches of such dissident or human rights formations as the Initiative Group on Human Rights, Helsinki Watch, and Amnesty International. These groups tried to pressure the Stalinist bureaucracy to ease its repression by publicizing as widely as possible (through “glasnost”) the persecutions, arrests, and trials of individuals who dared disagree with any aspect of the Kremlin's policies. They also published a journal of dissident writings in Georgian called *Golden Fleece*, which featured uncensored poems, articles, and other works by Georgian writers. The first issue of the journal appeared in December 1975.

Gamsakhurdia devoted special attention to defense of the rights of religious believers who were being persecuted and protecting ancient churches and other monuments to Georgian culture. As head of the administration for the preservation of ancient monuments to Georgian culture and history he learned that they were being systematically used as firing ranges, neglected to near ruin, and stolen for personal profit by the Georgian bureaucrats.

In this connection, for example, he translated for foreign distribution a factual report prepared by a Tbilisi assistant prosecutor. It documented involvement of high government officials—the head of church affairs for the Council of Ministers of the Georgian Republic, head of the Georgian KGB (Shevardnadze's successor), and the wife of the former first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party (whom Shevardnadze replaced)—in a plot to substitute a false testament of the Patriarchate of the church for the real one when he died in April 1972. The false document nominated as his

successor a bureaucratic favorite who was subsequently installed illegally. The whole sleazy process also involved theft of ancient artifacts and bribes to high officials, including those named above.

The assistant prosecutor who gathered the materials on the affair and made it available—a long-time CP member—was dismissed from his post in October 1974. The woman who tried to circulate the materials was arrested and sentenced to one and a half years in a labor camp in July 1974. A witness to the plot died in a suspicious auto accident.

Gamsakhurdia also compiled and circulated in 1976 a booklet called *Torture in Georgia* which documented the physical abuse of prisoners that began systematically in Georgian prisons in 1966 and had crippled some 200 of its victims. The material caused such a stir that two torturers named in his documents were arrested and even sentenced to short prison terms. Shevardnadze was then head of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB.

Gamsakhurdia was a professor of English philology and American language and literature at Tbilisi University until he was forced from his job in 1975 after his courses were liquidated. Although he was harassed, threatened, and subjected to frequent searches, he was not arrested until April 1977—the same time that Merab Kostava was arrested.

After being held for over a year, the two were tried in May 1978 and sentenced to three years in prison and two years' exile in Siberia for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda"—one of the catch-all charges used by the Stalinist rulers to imprison dissidents.

In April 1978, on the eve of the trial, thousands of students took to the streets of Tbilisi demanding that the Georgian Republic's version of the new Brezhnev constitution retain Article 75, guaranteeing that the Georgian language would be the official language of the republic. In an effort to demoralize a struggle that would, in the end, be successful, Shevardnadze announced that Gamsakhurdia would soon recant.

While Kostava adamantly denied the charges, it appears that Gamsakhurdia, in his court statements, admitted what he had done and claimed that he had come to regret some of his activities. This played into the hands of certain emigre organizations abroad. However, he stressed that his national-patriotic position on religion, education, and language issues remained unchanged.

The two defendants were shipped off to serve their sentences.

The regime widely proclaimed that Gamsakhurdia had recanted. It had been able to wring recantations from several prominent dissidents during that period by a variety of physical and psychological pressures. Though Gamsakhurdia, in a letter of July 1979, denied it, Kostava served his entire term in the notorious Perm forced labor camp while Gamsakhurdia was pardoned and released as a result of a June 1979 edict by the Georgian Supreme Soviet.²

By December 1981, he was again publicly protesting violations of national and other democratic rights by the regime.

The decade of the 1970s in Georgia, as throughout the Soviet Union, was one of an ever-increasing suffocation. The democratic rights movements that had emerged during the Khrushchev "thaw" from 1956-63, and which managed to attain a certain prominence by the end of the 1960s, were systematically crushed throughout the 1970s by the Kremlin's repressive

apparatus. Thousands fell victim to measures ranging from job loss or expulsion from the country, to long terms in prisons and exile where some perished, to forcible confinement and abuse in psychiatric hospitals. By the end of the 1970s few protests were to be heard. The movements had been crushed.

Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze

Eduard Shevardnadze began his climb to the summits of power in the Komsomol in 1956 when he was made second secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee. In 1965, he was placed in charge of the interior police which became the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1968. He was named first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party in September 1972 where he remained until summoned to Moscow in 1985 to serve in the Kremlin. He, like Gorbachev, was a protege of Yuri Andropov, one of the planners of the 1956 bloody Soviet invasion of Hungary and from 1967 head of the Soviet KGB which oversaw the repression of the 1970s.³

As already noted, it was Shevardnadze who was in charge of the Georgian police when the systematic torture—exposed by Gamsakhurdia—took place in 1966. He oversaw and implemented the repression and stagnation of the Georgian Republic from 1972 until 1985. No doubt the Patriarch Ilya II with whom he held a closed meeting immediately upon his return to Tbilisi March 7 is the contemporary benefactor of the 1972 illegal theft of that post which Gamsakhurdia helped expose.

Gamsakhurdia, the only prominent dissident from the 1960s and 1970s to have been elected president of a Soviet republic, was Shevardnadze's nemesis. Formerly Shevardnadze's political prisoner, he had become a very popular president of the republic. Gamsakhurdia, therefore, whatever his other weaknesses may have been, was undoubtedly a wild card as far as the Kremlin was concerned. He appeared unready to forgive and forget for the sake of the Kremlin's proposed economic reforms. He had never been inside the apparatus and had even fought it during some of the most difficult periods in recent history. He knew who he was dealing with and was not taken in by the former bosses' rhetoric, nor by their new "democratic" costumes. That would make him a thorn in their side.

In November 1990, a new parliament was elected with 155 seats going to a coalition of parties (called "The Round Table—Free Georgia") opposed to continued CP domination, and 64 seats going to the Communist Party candidates. According to *Moscow News*, there were some 30 political organizations taking part in the elections, many included in the Round Table formation. Gamsakhurdia, a Round Table deputy, was elected its president in elections that demonstrated widespread nationalist aspirations. Although the CP's power had been severely curtailed and some of its ministers had been forced to resign, its apparatus remained essentially in place. □

(Part 2 will appear in the July/August issue, No. 98.)

Notes

1. The materials about Gamsakhurdia's activities in the 1970s have been taken from the Russian-language samizdat journal of that period, *Chronicle of Current Events*, Nos. 32—dated July 1974—through 61—dated May 1981.

2. *News Briefs*, ed. by Kronid Lyubarsky, No. 12, June 6, 1979, Brussels.

3. *Current Biographies*, ed. by Charles Moritz, H. W. Wilson Co. New York, 1983 and 1986.

At the 1991 World Congress of the Fourth International a discussion took place on the meaning and purpose of the FI today. What are the implications, in the 1990s and beyond, of trying to build a world movement like ours—given the global economic, social, and political changes in recent decades?

The delegates at the congress did not try to come to a final decision as a result of their deliberations, but asked the incoming International Executive Committee (IEC) to organize a discussion which could then lead to the drafting of a resolution for the next world congress, presently scheduled to take place in 1994. The first meeting of the International Executive Committee after the world congress, in January 1992, held another discussion on this subject. It was based on individual written contributions submitted by FI leaders from various countries.

For the information of our readers we are publishing here the text of a document submitted as part of that exchange by representatives of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency who had been present at the 1991 World Congress and participated in discussions there. As the document itself states, this was not intended to be the final word on such a difficult question, but a contribution in the same spirit as others submitted to the IEC. The goal of the authors was to present some important ideas based on the general historical traditions and conceptions of American Trotskyism as the FIT has come to understand them. This was seen as an important part of the necessary synthesis of many experiences and judgments which will have to take place in coming up with an adequate collective understanding by the FI as a whole.

What We Mean by the Fourth International and Why We Should Continue to Build It Today

by Steve Bloom, Carol McAllister,
Paul Le Blanc, and Marilyn Vogt-Downey

At the 1991 world congress a formal debate that was long overdue began in our world movement: What is the Fourth International? What is its role in today's world? What do we hope to accomplish through building it? A discussion of these questions has been going on informally (among individual cadre and leaders) and semiformally (for example at sessions of the Amsterdam school) during the past decade. Conceptions arrived at by some in the course of this process were behind the organizational resolution adopted by the 1985 world congress—though many of the delegates to that congress were unaware of the issues in dispute, or even that there was a discussion taking place (except for the open conflict with those who, like the U.S. and Australian Socialist Workers Party, came to reject the FI outright).

The way in which this matter exploded at the 1991 world congress—with delegate after delegate taking the floor well into the night—shows how badly we need to collectively pursue the problem. We are dealing with an inherently contradictory subject, where it is easy for all of us to develop one-sided appreciations due to our specific backgrounds and experiences, areas of expertise, peculiarities of national development, and even individual personalities.

We in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency believe that both our historical and our more recent experiences in the United States put us in a position to contribute something important to this discussion. Since the Communist League of America was formed as a component of the Left Opposition in 1928 the U.S. movement has undertaken a broad range of party-building tactics under a wide variety of conditions. These include functioning as a small and persecuted minority in the broad workers' movement, fusing with non-Trotskyist revolutionary forces (the American Workers Party in 1934), entry into a

reformist party (the "French turn" to the Socialist Party in 1936), surviving in the face of a severe right-wing witch-hunt during the 1950s, and helping to lead the mass movement against the Vietnam war that exploded during the 1960s.

More recently, our experience with the degeneration of the SWP has given us a fresh appreciation of some important points which we all need to take into account as part of the present discussion: the centrality of programmatic questions in shaping a revolutionary organization, as well as the importance of defending the real organizational expressions of that program which exist in the world today—the Fourth International and its sections. At the same time we have experienced firsthand the damage that can be done to the revolutionary movement when such a commitment to our organizations becomes transformed into simple organizational fetishism. This is something which trapped many sincere and honest SWP militants and blinded them to the truth about what their party was becoming. We also appreciate more fully the inherent vulnerability of institutionalized expressions of working class interests.

Of course, we also understand the limitations of our experiences in the U.S., in particular the lack of any mass left-wing workers' movement—which affects everything, from the trade unions, to the struggles of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, and of women, to the specific forms of vanguard politics.

That is why this written contribution makes no pretense at providing a complete solution to the difficult problem we are discussing. Instead, it raises certain key aspects with the goal of advancing our overall thinking—with all of the inherent limitations of an individual effort. We hope that what we say here can be combined with ideas being presented by others in order to develop the well-rounded appreciation our movement

desperately needs. Our collective goal, in this case especially, must be a clear and coherent *synthesis* of what is correct and valid in the various conceptions that exist among us, not the “triumph” of any one viewpoint over its “opponents.”

We apologize if some of the points made in this article seem elementary. But whether the discussion ends up reconfirming our commitment to the FI in familiar terms, or redefining it in some new way, our conclusions must be based on an agreement about what is fundamental—even if that means simply restating and reconfirming certain basic propositions. If we can begin by agreeing which of these ideas remain common to all of our perspectives, and on what points we may have differences of opinion, our discussion will already have made substantial progress.

1) The Fourth International is primarily a political—not simply an organizational—reality.

The most important fact about the FI is not organizational, but political and programmatic. We are defined both by our history—that is, by accumulated class-struggle experience and the related evolution of our political ideas—and by our current political practice—how we act today based on what that historical experience has taught us. The combination of these two elements is what we mean when we talk about program. Our present ideas do not exist in an historical vacuum. They come from the whole history of the workers’ movement—from the Paris Commune, from Russia in 1905 and 1917, from Germany between 1918 and 1923, from the Chinese revolution, from Cuba, Algeria, France in May-June 1968, the Prague Spring, Chile from Allende to Pinochet, Nicaragua, etc., etc. Our wing of the workers’ movement, the *revolutionary Marxist* wing, has drawn (or confirmed and elaborated on) particular lessons from each of these experiences. Along with our general theoretical knowledge in fields such as economics, historical materialism, etc., we try to apply these lessons in our present practice as active revolutionaries.

The following list contains some of the most important points in this programmatic reality of the FI:

- A) We fully and wholeheartedly support any and all struggles of the masses around demands coinciding with their objective interests, no matter how partial their consciousness and no matter how inadequate their leadership. We stand by what Marx and Engels said in the *Communist Manifesto*: Communists “have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.” We “do not set up any sectarian principles of [our] own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.”
- B) In order to advance every struggle to the greatest extent possible we urge the formation of united fronts, striving to bring together all those elements in the workers’ and mass movements which can be won to appropriate demands—no matter what differences may exist among us on other questions.
- C) Within the mass movement and in the context of the united front we call for struggles around appropriate immediate economic, democratic, and transitional demands. Transitional demands are particularly important since they can both appeal to the present general

level of consciousness and advance that consciousness to a higher level.

- D) We advocate, and actively practice to the fullest extent possible, international solidarity—among the struggles of working and oppressed peoples in general, and among revolutionaries in particular.
- E) One corollary of this internationalist outlook is our appreciation, today, of the interconnections between the three sectors of the world revolution—in the colonial and semicolonial world, the advanced industrial powers, and those countries which, despite rapid changes in many of them during the past few years, can still best be characterized as bureaucratized workers’ states. Each of these sectors has a different set of problems to be resolved by the masses. But the struggles within them are constantly interacting with and reinforcing each other. And they share the global reality that none of their problems can be finally resolved without a *combined* triumph of the world revolution.
- F) We understand that no victory for the masses is secure until a new society has been constructed on a world scale with production for use, rather than profit, as the basis of economic activity. That is why, though we wholeheartedly participate in struggles that take place for reforms, we do not consider the fight for reforms to be, by itself, an adequate response for the workers’ movement. We truly believe in revolution, and work for it uncompromisingly.
- G) In this context we fight for a permanent revolution—that is, one led by the working class even in countries where that class may be in a minority and seemingly weak, one in which the struggle for democratic demands spills over into the conquest of working class power, and one that in every country aims to aid the workers of other nations to also organize their own revolutionary struggle. Only the workers, implementing a program in their own interests and therefore in the interests of the overwhelming majority, can really start to create a new society—the kind of revolutionary society on a world scale talked about above—which will not end up backsliding into another round of exploitation and oppression.
- H) The workers can only successfully undertake such a revolutionary struggle by making an alliance with other social forces: the poor in the countryside, oppressed nationalities, those fighting for women’s liberation, lesbian and gay liberation, against environmental destruction, etc. The workers’ and revolutionary movements must champion every legitimate demand against the abuses of the present system raised by any and every social layer—both because it is right for us to do so and because it is indispensable to the victory of our collective cause.
- I) We stand for the complete and total independence of the working class and of the mass movement. We reject any reliance on or expressions of confidence in the ruling class or any of its institutions. The liberation of the masses must be the work of the masses themselves.
- J) We understand that real independent self-activity of the rank and file can only be based on workers democ-

racy (which includes political pluralism). This is not just a preferable option, but a necessity—in the revolutionary vanguard organization, in the mass movement, and in postrevolutionary society.

- K) We therefore fight against all forms of bureaucratism—up to and including our call for political revolution in those workers' states dominated by bureaucratic elites.
- L) We strive to build a revolutionary vanguard, a Leninist party, in this context of workers democracy: the right of tendency, honesty in debate, etc. We also understand that the struggle to overturn bourgeois society is deadly serious and that it will require a strong, resolute, disciplined, and self-sacrificing leadership from the most conscious advocates of social change.

We believe that these points, taken as a whole, *uniquely define the FI in the world today*. While other political currents share some of these ideas with us, none both believes in and acts on all of them.

2) Because of our commitment to this political understanding we have a profound commitment to the organizations of the FI on both a national and international level.

We are convinced that this political program, which represents the historical legacy and present perspectives of our movement, is essential to the ultimate success of the world socialist revolution. To a large degree it is also essential for the success even of national revolutionary movements (there have been exceptions, though generally only under the most advantageous of conditions), and even of partial struggles that do not go beyond the bounds of bourgeois society.

Yet an understanding of these points, so necessary for victory, cannot be achieved spontaneously by the masses in the course of their day-to-day struggles. In addition to efforts at agitation, organization, and coordination of activity, a consistent process of education by those who understand such concepts is essential. This allows new, and hopefully broader, layers to gain the necessary experience, understanding, and consciousness. But such a process cannot take place without the initial presence of at least a small organization that appreciates the need for it. And we know from historical experience that such an organization, under the right conditions, can grow as a result of its activity, transforming itself into a genuine leadership of the workers' movement.

Building the FI, in reality, means two fundamental things: 1) building groups of committed cadre in as many countries as we can who are able to understand, develop, and apply our basic programmatic perspectives—that is, who can translate the lessons learned from history and from current experience into a language that speaks to the specific needs of the masses in any particular time and place; 2) creating active links of collaboration and collective thinking on an international level between such groups. The conditions for building revolutionary organizations vary widely from country to country. But whether we are talking of a truly mass party with a membership in the tens or even hundreds of thousands (a stage that no organization of the FI has ever achieved) or the smallest propaganda group consisting of a mere handful, this party-building, cadre-building task needs to be carried out as effectively as possible at all times and under all conditions.

Even in the most unfavorable of circumstances, where there is no possibility of significant mass opposition to the established order, there are always individuals whose consciousness rises above the apparent lethargy of the masses, who are able to see the need for revolutionary change and are willing to commit themselves and their lives to a fight for it. In such cases these individuals represent the essential framework around which a future mass organization can be built when objective conditions become transformed. And no one can ever predict when such a transformation will take place. History usually surprises the revolutionary movement and catches us off-guard with its dramatic shifts that can, on very short notice, completely transform the consciousness of the masses. We can, therefore, never wait until we see the gathering clouds of the revolutionary storm before we begin to build a disciplined, educated, and effective cadre organization.

We also know from our own and from historical experience that national groupings of revolutionary activists require a network of international discussion and international collaboration on both theoretical matters and practical tasks. This is true precisely because each national experience is limited and distorted by so many factors that are unique to our individual countries. The struggle for socialism is a worldwide struggle and the consciousness of those struggling must be a worldwide consciousness, which is impossible to achieve solely on the basis of our national experience. The centrality of Vietnam to the radicalization of millions of young people in Europe and North America during the 1960s and '70s is one obvious example. Recent experiences in Mexico, Canada, and the USA with the struggle against the North American free-trade agreement, or the similar problems faced by European workers as a result of their governments' effort to forge a unified imperialist bloc, are more recent illustrations.

Thus we come to the inescapable conclusion: If our own revolutionary organizations in each of our countries are to be part of a broader international network of revolutionaries committed to the kind of programmatic perspectives outlined above, then we need the Fourth International. There is simply no alternative in the world today.

This leads directly to the next essential point:

3) The Fourth International as it now stands is not the revolutionary international we really need—but it remains an indispensable prerequisite for achieving what we need in the future.

The profound crisis of bourgeois society and the even more profound crisis of revolutionary leadership remain as real as ever. The historical weakness of revolutionary forces has flowed primarily from the weight of the reformist and bureaucratic apparatuses within the broader workers' movement. Ironically today, with the collapse of the international Stalinist current, the ideological crisis of those around the world who looked to the Warsaw Pact countries for leadership in the anti-imperialist struggle has, in certain important respects, further deepened our isolation, though in other ways it has opened important new opportunities. The Fourth International, as it stands today, is far too weak—both internationally and in every individual country—to fulfill the leadership needs of the working class and its allies.

But we would do well to remember the analogy used by Trotsky: of a worker who is confronted with a job armed only with an inadequate tool. She is unlikely to give up the tool at hand, no matter how inadequate, until she can create or find a better one.

It is a most striking fact: political currents that have abandoned the Fourth International, declaring that our world movement was insufficient as a revolutionary leadership and insisting that they would find a way to link up with others to create something better, have all too often ended up as isolated sects, or else abandoned revolutionary politics altogether. Never have they succeeded in replacing the FI. The leaderships of our former U.S. and Australian sections are only two of the most recent examples. The FI remains the only truly international organization (as opposed to a national organization with a few satellites in other countries posing as an “international”) that maintains its revolutionary identity.

The reason for this failure of the revolutionary wing of the workers’ movement to construct an adequate international instrument over the past half century is not hard to understand. It is *not* fundamentally attributable to some subjective failure on the part of the Trotskyist movement. Of course we have made mistakes, and had we made fewer mistakes we would certainly now be bigger and more influential than we are. But it seems unlikely that the difference would be qualitative given both the objective conditions and overall relationship of forces on the left (i.e., domination of Stalinism and Social Democracy) that we have confronted.

We know that a proper international *can* be built when some revolutionary party with a genuine mass base in its own country, and adhering to at least a significant portion of the basic programmatic tenets listed above, decides to participate in and lead the process. The last time such a thing happened was with the formation of the Third International after the Russian Revolution, led by the Bolsheviks. Before World War I the German party, a mass organization even if not one that held governmental power, was the backbone of the Second International.

So far, however, since the degeneration of the Comintern in the late 1920s and early ’30s, no organization which might even remotely be considered a candidate for such a task (for example, the Cuban CP or the FSLN in Nicaragua) has been willing to undertake it. Whether this has been due to a lack of consciousness or for reasons of diplomacy (or, most likely, some combination of the two) makes little difference.

We cannot predict today how a mass, revolutionary organization that might play this key role in overcoming the international crisis of revolutionary leadership will ultimately come to be constructed. Conceivably, one of the parties that is presently part of the Fourth International will grow to a significant stature, within a sufficiently important country, and thereby develop the international influence necessary to transform our present movement. (We can imagine the Brazilian comrades accomplishing this, for example.) Or else it may be that a party from some other tradition than our own or broader than simply us (again, such as the FSLN or Cuban CP, or a formation like the Brazilian PT as a whole) could make the breakthrough in consciousness necessary to call for a new international alignment of revolutionary forces.

But until such a subjective development occurs, putting a new international revolutionary formation on the agenda, there will be no shortcuts, no organizational gimmicks, on the road to achieving our goal of a mass revolutionary international—and the FI will probably continue pretty much as we are. Yet even if the party that takes the lead in creating a different kind of movement ultimately arises from forces outside of ourselves, our present work of building a something-less-than-adequate international movement will still be an essential part of the process. And here, once again, we return to the basic programmatic tradition that we represent. This makes our movement an indispensable link—the link of the Left Opposition, of Trotskyism—without which the chain that ties our new international to the entire history and continuity of the Marxist movement would be incomplete. If any international revolutionary movement suffers from an inadequate understanding of this history and continuity, it will prove difficult, or even impossible, for it to understand what is happening in the present or what will happen in the future.

This does not mean that any new international movement must be identical programmatically and theoretically with the FI. That would be a completely sectarian conclusion. But we must still act on the conviction that at least *the most important elements* of our own programmatic tradition will need to be included in the perspectives of any genuine mass revolutionary international—even if it takes some time to accomplish this and even if these programmatic elements are ultimately expressed in a different form from what we are used to. (For example, it would be silly to quibble over terms like “permanent revolution” or “deformed workers’ state” as long as *a real common understanding exists of the necessary revolutionary processes.*)

Once again we come to an inescapable conclusion: In order to prepare ourselves and the workers’ movement as a whole for the time when a true revolutionary mass international movement is on the agenda, we have to undertake the most vigorous work to build ourselves and our own current within the workers’ movement today—on both a national and international scale—even though we know that this, by itself, is inadequate to the objective needs of the moment.

4) We can be flexible in our organizational forms as long as we preserve the essence of our revolutionary Marxist politics.

It should be clear, then, that we reject any *organizational fetish* about the Fourth International which might get in the way of building a broader and stronger movement when the opportunity to do so arises. Simultaneously, however, we must hold tenaciously to the *present organization* of the Fourth International, precisely because there is no such opportunity at the present time. The *form* of the FI as it exists today is, for us, a *contingent* necessity, not one that was historically inevitable. The contingent historical realities which shaped the FI include Social Democratic and Stalinist domination of the workers’ movement and the fact that no other currents aside from the Trotskyists were prepared to establish a revolutionary international. The FI will remain a necessity as long as the historical contingency which brought it into being remains basically unchanged. We might summarize our problem as follows: to be clear and consistent in terms of our political and program-

matic perspectives, but flexible about the potential organizational forms through which that program might find expression.

Although we have no opportunity to demonstrate such organizational flexibility on an *international* level today, we *are* sometimes presented with possibilities for fusions and/or regroupments in specific countries. And here the same general formula applies: political firmness, organizational flexibility. Our goal, after all, is not to create a sect with the “right program,” but to use and improve that program in a creative and interactive way, forging real links with any other revolutionary forces that exist and with the mass movement as a whole.

For the most part, a decision about what course to follow in any particular country is a tactical question, on which different comrades can, and usually will, disagree. But if we can begin to appreciate this *fundamental principle* with which our tactical judgments must be consistent, it can help to narrow the scope of whatever differences arise. Once we have accomplished this, it becomes a matter of goodwill, and judgment, on the part of the comrades concerned.

It is in this context that we need to draw serious balance sheets on the specific recent experiences in a number of countries, including Germany, Italy, Peru, the USA, etc. (We leave out Brazil, because it represents a qualitatively different sort of development.) But as things seem to us, two cases stand out, one on each side of the ledger. In the first, where our comrades actively preserved our programmatic and organizational integrity in the context of a fusion (Italy), the results have clearly been positive for our movement. In the other, where we simply dissolved *both* organizationally *and* programmatically in the hope that this would somehow generate something new and better (Germany), the end result has been decidedly negative. The answer, then, is not “yes” or “no” to *fusions and regroupments in general*, but yes to fusions which enable us to broaden the audience for our programmatic perspectives and build a bigger and better current on a genuinely activist-revolutionary basis, and no to those in which there is a likelihood of simply losing our own programmatic identity.

We have made a distinction here between the question of *program* and its *organizational* expression. It is, of course, always necessary to keep in mind that many “organizational” questions—such as the dialectical interaction between democracy and centralism, commitment to building a vanguard grouping, etc.—also have a strong programmatic aspect. But it remains useful to abstract from this for our present discussion because doing so allows us to look at a different kind of link between program and organization, one that is extremely important. The fact is that if we aim to maintain our historical program in the context of some political formation that is broader than ourselves, it would be utopian to think that Fourth Internationalists will not need to constitute *at the very least* an ideological current or tendency that can propagandize around, or agitate for, its own ideas. Of course, this need not manifest itself in any *formal* sense. That is a purely tactical matter. But the only time we will really be able to dissolve completely and organically into a broader organization—and not even think of ourselves as a distinct ideological current—is under conditions of an extremely profound programmatic convergence. Such cases are rare, to say the least.

Once again, there are no pat formulas for accomplishing this. It would be tempting to say that a press reflecting the views of the FI is one essential component. But we can conceive of situations where our movement might correctly be willing to sacrifice even this. It would also be tempting to insist that our political identity should be maintained by agreement, in an open, comradely, and collaborative fashion with the other currents that are involved in the broader formation. That is certainly the most desirable variant. But we can also imagine situations where this would be impossible. The only generality we can make, therefore, is that in some way the link of our own cadre with our own particular programmatic identity will, in general, have to be maintained—at least for a period of time. The specific form for this will have to be determined case by case.

Over the past few years a number of comrades have addressed our general party-building problem as if the formula “build a section of the Fourth International in every country” could resolve it. But, of course, the real question that often has to be asked is not *whether* to build a section of the Fourth International, but *how* to do so. This cannot always be done by simply gathering together whatever people happen to be ready to declare themselves “for the FI” at any particular moment. Sometimes, especially where there is a living mass movement and/or another, genuinely revolutionary force which is active in society, the problem can be much more complex.

Let’s look at two obvious examples.

The question of Nicaragua and the relationship of the FI to the FSLN has been an ongoing topic for debate within our ranks. Here is an organization of revolutionaries which took power, and which held it for a decade under very difficult conditions. To the best of their ability the FSLN leadership worked to advance the interests of the Nicaraguan masses. In these actions, as well as in many of their general perspectives, the program of the FSLN is clearly consistent with our own. And the Sandinistas still maintain a mass base among the Nicaraguan people; the most revolutionary elements in the country continue to be its adherents.

But the views of the FI and of the FSLN are not identical. On certain key questions we have profound disagreements. So a need exists for political discussion and debate between us.

It would have been foolish and sectarian for revolutionary Marxists in Nicaragua who might agree with the general political perspectives of the FI to place unnecessary organizational obstacles in the way of such a discussion—and of the common activity necessary to resolve that discussion—by forming a “section” as an independent organizational entity, necessarily in competition with the FSLN. But isn’t it just as true that our inability (as a result of both objective and subjective difficulties) to create even the minimum organizational form discussed above—that is, an ideological tendency within a broader revolutionary formation—has made the necessary political dialogue between the Fourth International and the FSLN as a whole much more difficult? As useful as the contacts made with the Sandinista leaders by our Mexican, Brazilian, and other comrades proved to be, something was still lacking.

There is nothing sectarian in the notion of creating an independent ideological grouping within a broader revolutionary current such as the FSLN. In fact, it is the most honest and honorable of actions, because it states clearly and openly what

we think about our relationship and how we would propose to address both our agreements and our disagreements with others.

So it would not have been particularly helpful had our world movement simply adopted an approach during the 1980s of “building a section” in Nicaragua and left things at that. Still, even though there was little immediate possibility of implementing such a perspective, it *would* have been helpful (for both the FSLN and the FI) had we defined a general goal of finding and trying to work with activists inside the FSLN who might have been drawing conclusions similar to our own, and seeking ways to present such conclusions in a nonconfrontational manner within the discussions taking place in Nicaragua—that is, to find an *organizational* expression of our *political* and *programmatic* reality, but one that was appropriate to the specific situation.

A similar discussion could be had about South Africa. For years those who accuse the present FI leadership of abandoning a party-building perspective cited this country as a prime example. Even now there is no “section of the FI” in that country. But there is a socialist revolutionary organization: the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA). It’s the only such group that really exists there, and its political approach is completely consistent with what an “FI section” would have to do and say. The problem, in this case, is clearly to follow up with solidarity, dialogue, and political collaboration between the FI and WOSA—as comrades responsible for work in the international center have been doing—not set up some sectarian goal of “building a section” of our own.

Perhaps it would help if we reformulate our goal not as “building a section of the FI in every country,” but as “building an organization advancing coherent revolutionary Marxist politics in every country, in alliance with similar organizations throughout the world.” Demanding a loyalty oath to the FI is not a prerequisite to joining with others in such a project. But we also have to recognize that an extreme contradiction will inevitably arise for any such national organization, given the real situation in the world today, if in the medium to long term it does not find itself *collaborating in a comradely way* with the Fourth International.

In any event, no “section of the FI” worth its salt can be constructed under any other terms than these. And thinking of things in this way can help us avoid any danger of falling into a false organizational schematism, making clear for ourselves and for others that when we “build the Fourth International” it is not some parochial conception, not something counterposed to the broad interests of the revolutionary vanguard and the masses in any particular country, but a task that can only be carried out when those broader interests are served as well.

5) Our Marxism is not immutable and unchanging, but learns from our experiences and those of the working class and its allies.

It is not enough for us to simply note the importance of program and theory in the process of building an international revolutionary movement, and leave things there. We have to delve more deeply into this idea, because many sectarian groupings can speak a similar language, yet give their words a completely different and completely false meaning. Unless we are conscious of this it would be too easy to misunderstand

what we mean by the fight for our own programmatic perspectives in the process of building a broader revolutionary organization whenever and wherever this becomes possible.

Again, let’s look at Nicaragua to see what we mean.

Our world movement did not expect the victorious Nicaraguan revolution of 1979. When it happened we were surprised, and we were confronted with a significant theoretical challenge. The approach implemented by the FSLN seemed to be at odds with certain general theoretical ideas we had historically considered to be fundamental for our movement—in particular the theory of permanent revolution as most of us had come to understand and explain it.

Other groups on the left who also believed in permanent revolution made two opposite errors: Some, like the Barnes faction in the U.S. SWP, affirmed that there was a conflict between the Nicaraguan events and our theoretical outlook. They concluded that our theory was completely wrong and needed to be replaced by something better. Others, affirming the same conflict, determined that the FSLN was completely wrong and needed to be replaced by something better—that it was a petty-bourgeois leadership incapable of moving the revolution forward.

The FI, taken as a whole, did far better. We neither abandoned our theory nor rejected the Nicaraguan revolution and its leadership. Instead, we were able to understand that our theory, valuable as it is, can never fully anticipate life with all of its complexities, all of its nuances, all of its subtleties. While theory helps us create correct abstract models, every real revolution will inevitably look different from our theoretical abstractions. Each will raise a unique set of questions that can only be answered in terms of the concrete reality that it confronts. Analyzing the Nicaraguan revolution in its own right helped us, in the end, to understand our theory better than we did before 1979, to develop it and sharpen it.

The attitude of sectarians and dogmatists who know no more about the revolutionary process after a decade of experience in Nicaragua than they did in 1979 provides a striking contrast. It’s not hard to find such folks. Their “theoretical” analysis of the FSLN’s electoral defeat in 1990 is marked by assertions about how they predicted the demise of the revolution ten years before unless the Nicaraguan people followed their advice.

It would be interesting to ask such thinkers whether they can point to any great revolutionary of the past—people they admire and want to be like such as Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky—who went through any ten-year period of their lives, especially ten years of a revolutionary experience such as Nicaragua, without knowing more about revolutionary theory at the end than they did at the beginning. Can anyone imagine Marx having nothing more to say after the defeat of the Paris Commune than, “you see, I knew it wouldn’t work”?

There is, here, a real theoretical problem that Marxists have to deal with, and it is the same one which confronts any nonexperimental science. We are rarely able to plan and organize events in order to test our theories. We cannot run the Nicaraguan “experiment” again, applying the ideas of the sectarians, and see whether the result is the same, better, or worse than what actually happened. We must instead use our creative intelligence and reach appropriate conclusions. But others are free to draw different conclusions, and it is hard to shake a conviction based on schemas in a case like this.

What Marxist theory tries to do is to draw generalized conclusions from what has happened in the past and from what is actually taking place in the present. Revolutions, especially successful revolutions which provide the richest lessons for us, occur only at rare intervals. That is why we must squeeze every ounce of knowledge from those experiments which life itself presents to us. But genuine Marxists understand what the sectarians do not: that no knowledge gained in this way, no such generalizations can be absolute. They are provisional, because it is never possible to know with *complete* certainty which aspects of our experiences are a proper basis for theoretical generalization, and which will turn out in the longer term to have been situation specific, unique to that portion of reality that we have actually been able to observe.

That is why Marxists must be especially critical, especially willing to reexamine old assumptions at every opportunity. And our task is all the more difficult since it is often possible to find more than one reasonable theoretical explanation for the same event. Probably, no completely coherent theory of the transition from capitalism to socialism will be arrived at (if it is arrived at even then) until historians look back after the end of the entire process—and that is at least a few generations down the road. In the meantime we can only do the best that we can.

And yet we must act on the basis of what we do know, in spite of the uncertainties. How can we deal with this contradiction?

During our debate at the world congress Marx's famous dictum, "doubt everything," came in for a good deal of discussion. This is an important idea in the present context. But these words, valid enough by themselves, do not tell the whole story. Doubt, in this Marxist sense (in its scientific sense), can and should be a force for advancement of knowledge. Badly handled, however, it can easily become a force for destruction, the basis for demoralization and dissolution. The key here is appreciating that doubts, when they arise, must be used to lay the basis for new questions—for further investigation and further discovery. They should never become an excuse for paralysis, for a refusal to act when action is called for.

We must reaffirm: everything we think is legitimately open to question. We welcome the challenge offered by those who

Fuera de Línea

A quarterly magazine devoted to promoting international labor solidarity featuring articles on workers' struggles in Mexico and the United States.

Published in both English and Spanish by Solidarity of the U.S. and the Partido Revolucionario de las y los Trabajadores (PRT) of Mexico.

four issues \$7.00 (U.S. & Mexico) \$15.00 (elsewhere)
Send your subscription today to:

Fuera de Línea
P.O. Box 86479
San Diego, CA 92138

disagree with one or another aspect of what we consider to be revolutionary Marxist essentials. We should not dismiss even those sincere fighters against injustice and seekers after truth (as opposed to the genuine cynics) who express, in the context of today's world, doubt about the validity of Marxism itself. But having raised this or any other question we cannot allow it to simply remain open without seriously addressing it. There is enough accumulated experience over the past century and a half to convince us of the value of the Marxist approach to reality—not in small measure because Marxism, to be true to itself, continues to grow and develop. New discussion, new investigation, new discovery cause us to either reaffirm our previous appreciation (even if only on an interim basis as the best we can do for now), or else come up with a better one. When this happens our questioning becomes the driving force for an improved understanding of reality.

Our revolutionary theoretical tools can become perfected more and more only in the process of use, the resultant discovery of their weaknesses, and the struggle to improve and correct them. If we simply abandon what we presently understand in the name of searching for something better, we will in all probability find ourselves completely unprepared, rather than better prepared, when the decisive moment for action arrives.

6. We have multisided tasks with no quick or easy answers.

The situation we face is contradictory and difficult. We must maintain our confidence in ourselves and our ability to act as organized revolutionary Marxists. At the same time it is essential to avoid organizational arrogance as we work to establish comradely relations with real revolutionaries who emerge from other traditions. We must maintain and defend our program while at the same time honestly entertaining any and all legitimate questions about what we believe. We must build the Fourth International and its sections while also participating in the process of uniting broader organizations of revolutionary-minded activists whenever and wherever it becomes possible to do so without sacrificing our political integrity. If we understand the entirety of this problem, and find ways to combine these tasks, we will survive and build ourselves while at the same time laying the basis for the broader, stronger revolutionary international that must come about in the future.

If, on the other hand, we are paralyzed with self-doubt, plagued by feelings of inadequacy, abandon (or, perhaps worse, simply forget to mention) essential programmatic elements in the interest of some short-term "marriage of convenience" with other forces on the left, we will fail to build ourselves or *anything* worthwhile. We will, in fact, become an obstacle to the construction of the kinds of revolutionary vanguard organizations that the workers' movement really needs in every country, and the kind of revolutionary international required to liberate the entire human race.

Nothing worth having has ever come into existence without a struggle. The one tendency we must avoid at all costs is the desire to somehow *avoid* a struggle—either within the FI or with other forces—in order to find quick and easy solutions to these problems. If we comprehend this fact, we will be able to respond creatively and positively to the broad party-building problems that we have now begun to discuss. □



For those familiar with the rhetoric of the radical milieu, Trotsky's statement in the *Transitional Program* that the crisis of humanity could be reduced to the crisis of working class leadership must today sound at best like a hackneyed cliché and at worst serves as a rationalization for the myriad of sectarian splinter groups which characterize that milieu. In addition to the utter irrelevance of most of the self-styled "vanguard parties" that litter the landscape of the far left, the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has severely tarnished the reputation of socialism and communism in general, and Leninism in particular, in the eyes of millions of workers around the world. Needless to say, they have had little experience with, and have even less understanding of, the subterranean squabbles that pass for politics in the underworld of "Trotskyoid sectariana."

Does this mean that the very conceptions of revolutionary leadership and the type of party necessary to provide for that leadership—something that Lenin and Trotsky fought for and that the Fourth International still fights for today—should be cast overboard? Should we get on the bandwagon alongside the practitioners of "New Thinking" who dominate much of the left today? And, more importantly, does this mean that the characteristics of the working class as a class, or the exploitative and oppressive nature of capitalist society—which, in turn, condition the existence of the working class and thus gave rise to the theory and practice of Leninism in the first place—have also gone the way of the horse and buggy?

Those of us in the Fourth International think not. At the same time we reject any tendency to cling to antiquated theoretical constraints in order to maintain our purity in splendid isolation. Rather, we think that

Their Leninism and Ours

by Roy Rollin

the basic premises underlying the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party are still firmly rooted in reality. Furthermore, they reflect this reality and, most importantly for us as participants in the class struggle (another allegedly antiquated concept), understanding them will help us *transform* this reality in the interests of the exploited and oppressed.

Marxists have always looked to the working class as the key agent for revolutionary change in capitalist society. This is because as a mass of propertyless producers the workers have no vested interest in the status quo. They do, however, have a real interest in its overthrow, and remain the only social force powerful and organized enough to play such a leading role. Obviously there exists a tremendous chasm between a working class that exists as a class *in* itself and a working class organized *for* itself. That chasm is reflected in its heterogeneous makeup and the resulting unevenness in consciousness among workers. The socialist revolution, however, being the first attempt in history to reshape the world according to a plan, requires the conscious participation of millions of organized and active workers. They will have to throw off the all-sided shackles that class society imposes on every aspect of their lives, and in the process of making the revolution revolutionize themselves. The need for a revolutionary party is predicated precisely upon the gap that exists between this necessity and the actually existing reality.

This unevenness means, in fact, that left to their own devices, the majority of working people are not going to go beyond the most elementary level of class consciousness; or what Lenin referred to as "trade union" consciousness. That is to say they will organize a fight against different aspects of their oppression, but will not yet grasp the underlying connection between those struggles and the need to overturn the entire system. Only a minority of working people understand this totality in normal times. And a majority is not even able to maintain its basic trade union consciousness in periods of downturn in the class struggle. Those who can do so constitute the vanguard, or advanced workers. If they

did not exist then the working class as a whole would have to start from scratch whenever a new round of battles broke out.

From this vanguard layer of the class it is essential to organize and maintain a vanguard organization, usually with the support and participation of radicalized intellectuals, which consciously organizes around the idea that it is the capitalist system as a whole that has to be confronted and eventually overturned. One thing that is essential is that this vanguard organization remain immersed in the workers' movement as a whole lest it find itself so far "out in front" of the rest of the class that it loses contact with it. This, needless to say, is what has happened to a good part of the U.S. "far left" today.

The vanguard must maintain that link at all costs, combining it with a strategic and tactical outlook that accurately reflects reality as it is and not some preconceived conception of what it should be. This can insure that in periods of rising workers' struggle the minority which is part of the vanguard organization will be able to grow in size, as more and more members of the working class become aware of where their real interests lie. Basing itself upon an understanding of the lessons of the past as well as the experiences of the present so as not to repeat the same mistakes in the future, this vanguard serves as the collective memory of the workers' movement; a memory that is codified in the revolutionary program. That program must above all else be a method of analysis and a guide to action; a combination of what one does as well as what one says. It cannot be a set of sectarian shibboleths that serve only to justify the separate existence of this or that splinter group over and apart from the movement as whole. It must bring together and centralize in theory and practice the experience of all the struggles of the exploited and oppressed in a comprehensive world view, since involvement in one area of struggle alone, or in any one country, cannot produce the necessary perspective.

Last but not least, the vanguard must be prepared not only to teach the class, but also to learn from the class. To paraphrase Marx, the educators themselves are in constant need of education; an education that

only participation in the real living struggles of the working class can provide. After all, vanguard militants are only human and their superior understanding of society can only provide so much protection against the pressures that society exerts. This holds particularly true when there is a lull in the level of the class struggle.

This concept of a vanguard party—of an advanced minority whose program and practice tries consciously to represent the interests of the majority of working people—arose in opposition to, and continues to confront, what amounts to a rear-guard party of the backward majority whose program and practice represents the interests of a minority of the class, that is, the labor or trade union bureaucracy. Formations of this type, which include labor and Social Democratic parties as well as the social democratized Stalinist parties, claim to represent the working class as a whole. However, they can make that claim only because of the existing level of class consciousness. As we have seen, this consciousness is uneven and those with a revolutionary perspective are usually in a minority except in periods of accelerated class conflict. Thus, such reformist parties represent not the struggle and self-activity of the working class, but its passivity and inactivity.

Far from being vehicles through which to advance the class struggle, these organizations are more often to be found holding it back. Their leaders, who in the words of one of them, “hate revolution like sin,” see parliamentary politics, where they can rub elbows with the bourgeoisie minus the irritating interference of the mass of rank-and-filers, as the be-all and end-all of their political existence. Thus, in the quest for an ever elusive majority at the polls, they must continually water down whatever advanced, proletarian content exists in their program and try to woo the more backward, middle class elements of the electorate.

This is the reason for the undemocratic structure and functioning of such organizations. The reformist goals of their leaderships, which run contrary to the interests of the masses, could be threatened by a real ability of the rank and file to discuss and influence policy.

Vanguard-type formations properly understood, on the other hand, involve a minority of selfless and dedicated activists—those who recognize the incompatibility of their aims with the status quo and hence the need to overthrow the existing state rather than to reform it. This conforms to the objective needs of the majority of workers. And it is for this reason that such an organization can only benefit from the highest possible level of participation

by the rank and file in a real decision-making process.

The vanguard militant, to paraphrase Lenin, takes as a model the tribune of the oppressed—seeking to unite all the exploited and oppressed—not the trade union secretary who is concerned solely with one or another particular constituency. The vanguard party bases its very existence on the actuality of the revolution—not on its impossibility or undesirability as does the “broad church” of reformism. The vanguard organization is not a vote-gathering or dues-collecting machine for a handful of parliamentary politicians. It is a democratically disciplined and centralized combat party prepared to lead the workers in confronting the bosses’ own organ of centralization—the state—and not the other vanguard groups closest to it in practice and program.

In light of what has just been said, let us examine whether these ideas have stood the test of time. Have they been confirmed or rejected by the actual experiences of various revolutionary upheavals during the twentieth century? Looking at this will provide us with the best possible evidence from which to draw some preliminary conclusions.

In Russia in 1917, Lenin’s Bolsheviks were a minority in the working class at the outset of the revolution. Within a relatively short period of time, however, they were able to become a mass revolutionary party enjoying the support of the overwhelming majority of the workers, with enough support from the soldiers and peasants to lead them all to power in the world’s first successful socialist revolution. They accomplished this not just because they had the right program on paper, but because they had been rooted for a generation within the ranks of the working class. Maintaining and enlarging their base of support by going through the masses’ everyday experiences, they demonstrated the superiority of their program in practice. At the same time that program was enriched by their experiences within the struggle—as the Bolshevik party sometimes found itself in the rear rather than at the head of the ascendant masses.

In Germany, however, during roughly the same period of 1918-23 just the opposite transpired. The revolutionary vanguard was not organized in a preexisting party formation, but was faced with the necessity of putting a vanguard organization together during the course of the First World War and the struggle against it. Dispersed in a smattering of small groupings, each with its own following among the most advanced workers, the vanguard layer came together too late to prevent the reformist Social Democracy from putting a break on the revolutionary process. The

labor bureaucracy, desperately trying to maintain its power and privileges within the framework of the capitalist status quo, was able to use the more backward sectors of the working class as a club against the vanguard. By the time these workers realized what was happening, and were ready to move in the direction of revolutionary struggle, the revolutionary elements had already been beaten. And as soon as the situation stabilized the ruling class felt secure enough to dispense with the services of the reformists as well—turning to repression against their former Social Democratic allies.

Needless to say the same scenario has been played out in any number of prerevolutionary situations since the time of the Russian and German revolutions. In France and Italy, to name just two fairly advanced and industrialized capitalist countries, capitalism found itself in crisis both before and immediately after World War II, and again in the late 1960s. It was only able to emerge relatively unscathed due to aid rendered by the reformist labor bureaucracies—both Social Democratic and Stalinist. Likewise in Portugal in 1975. In these countries as in Germany during the ’20s, the working class had to pay the price for failing to construct a revolutionary leadership in advance of a revolutionary crisis—a vanguard party that might have been able to help the workers gain power as a result of these crises. It was with Germany, Italy, and France in mind—along with the experiences of the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 and of the Spanish civil war of 1936-39—that Trotsky spoke of the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the passage from the *Transitional Program* that began this article. A revolutionary leadership was no sure-fire guarantee of success, but without it, failure, defeat, and mass suffering was the most likely outcome.

Today it is fashionable in radical circles, as they echo the sentiments expressed by bourgeois “public opinion,” to belittle Marxism, Leninism, revolution, and class politics in general. Yet what have all the assorted anti-Leninists—at least, those who haven’t made their peace with capitalism altogether—to offer in its place? In spite of the talk about how outdated and antiquated revolutionary Marxism is, their so-called “New Thinking” is mostly the same old reformist garbage served up in containers barely distinguishable from those used by the reformists of Lenin’s time. Their reformism remains consistently reformist because their opposition to revolution itself is just as consistent.

Some try to breathe life into the leadership of the British Labor Party by having it water its already watered-down program

(Continued on page 34)

American Betrayal

American Dream. Documentary, produced and directed by Barbara Kopple.

Reviewed by Frank Lovell

The documentary film, *American Dream*, made by Barbara Kopple about the 1985 strike in Austin, Minnesota, against the Hormel meatpacking company is currently showing in commercial movie houses across the country. It won the Academy Award for best documentary feature in 1991, the second time Kopple has won the coveted prize. Her first major success was *Harlan County*, about striking coal miners in Kentucky which also ran commercially and received critical acclaim. The difference in the two films and problems of labor-oriented documentaries were addressed by Kopple in an interview in the *Guardian* newspaper in 1991. Her comments reveal her appreciation of union struggles and explain in some respects the impact of her film artistry on audiences. She said, "I learned from doing this film that everything is not all cut and dried. There are a lot of different avenues and ways in which people have to fight. . . . In *Harlan County*, the issues were very black and white. In this film the issues were more gray. Everybody always says to me, 'Who were you rooting for?' My answer is, 'For the workers.'" She went on to explain how she saw the situation. "What you had in Austin was a union local where the members' grandfathers and fathers had worked at the Hormel plant. They took a lot of pride in working there. They had collectively helped to build a new plant and had been promised they would never make less than they were making. Hormel is one of the most profitable meatpackers. They are not a conglomerate. Their corporate headquarters are in Austin. So when the company cut them to \$8.25 (from \$10.69) an hour, shock and betrayal just echoed through Austin. This was not only an issue of the wage cut, which was a very important issue. It was also a sense of their own dignity, a sense of having been betrayed. There had been only one strike in the 75 years of Hormel's existence."

The wage cut was a provocation. Hormel management had decided to get rid of the local union, a decision taken in collusion with the top officials of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) with which Local P-9 in Austin was affiliated. The P-9 strike occurred because the workers had no other choice: either fight or give up. They chose to fight. The fight went on in various forms for more than a year, from August 17, 1985, when the Hormel workers voted to strike until August 28, 1986, when top UFCW officials announced that they had signed a contract with Hormel covering scabs that had been hired to help break the strike.

Throughout the year of their struggle the strikers faced many crises, made many crucial decisions, enjoyed newfound comradery, won support and respect from unions across the country, attracted the attention and sympathy of millions of TV watchers, fought tenaciously against court orders and police attacks, defied the national guard of the state of Minnesota, and finally adjusted their lives as dictated by the superior social forces arrayed against them. Kopple films some dramatic events: the decision to prepare for a showdown with the company, to bring in labor consultant Ray Rogers whose organization, Corporate Campaign, had been used by other AFL-CIO unions to help force large corporations (J. P. Stevens, textile manufacturers, for one) to bargain and sign contracts; the early enthusiasm and later inadequacies of strike preparation, the union commissary, the delivery of food donations,

the huge rallies and messages of support; the long winter of 1985-86 when hope of victory began to fade, the secret meetings of strike saboteurs, the anguish of workers considering how to get back their jobs, the shock of local police (who had originally seemed sympathetic) harassing the strikers, the tragedy of foreclosures on mortgaged homes, the frustration of watching scabs go to work under protection of the state militia; the final recognition that the strike was lost, workers leaving to find jobs elsewhere, the assessment of their experience by union militants and by those who deserted. All this is captured with powerful effect through actual scenes of meetings and debates in the union headquarters, in the homes of strikers, on the picket line, even in policy-decision meetings of the union's executive committee and in clandestine meetings of UFCW officials with their local strikebreaker agents. The Kopple film ends dramatically with the news that in the twenty-fifth week of the strike the Hormel plant in Austin is in full operation: "no jobs remain." Kopple shows a scene with four scabs, two company-minded self-seekers and two weaklings. The impression is that somehow forces beyond their control victimized these four, that they were caught in a bind between company and union. This pathetic scene captures the meaning of Kopple's remark, when asked which side she is on, that she is "on the side of the workers." Her film doesn't sharply distinguish between strikers and scabs, or strikers who stand firm and those who desert. All are victims of the union and the company. And both company and union are at fault.

The conflict is dramatized by her selective shots and remarks of the two principal participants, P-9 president and strike leader Jim Guyette, and the head of UFCW's meatpacking division Lewie Anderson. Guyette seems to be always in the shadow of Ray Rogers, the organizer of the corporate campaign that was expected to bring Hormel back to the bargaining table and force a settlement favorable to the workers. Guyette is shown to be a well-meaning and honest representative of the strikers who is incapable of seizing the initiative against the company. As the strike winds down, Guyette is seen in close-up saying, "Belief is something that will carry you a long ways." Lewie Anderson comes on as a stronger character, lacking belief in the strike or anything else. At the outset he is shown warning the P-9 membership that they cannot win, that they can only lose. Throughout he comes on as a modern tough-minded sad Cassandra predicting inevitable defeat. The film fails to reveal that Anderson's prophecy is self-fulfilling, part of the UFCW-Hormel strategy to undermine the strikers' morale and destroy their union solidarity.

It may be that this is what a documentary film does. It shows what happened. We see the participants in the action and hear their voices trying to explain their motives. But the film director selects the dramatic scenes and the portions of dialogue that tell the story. In this case it is the story of a strike waged against what seem insuperable odds. Viewers come away convinced that the strike was poorly conceived and conducted, that strikes today are out-moded and cannot be won, that contemporary society is thoroughly corrupt and not much can be done about that.

Murry Kempton, the popular columnist in New York's daily newspaper *Newsday*, wrote that the voice of UFCW international president William Wynn (who says in the film that nothing much was involved except that Hormel workers "are just going to have to roll back their wages a little") is that of complacent cynicism.

"Such is the voice that accepts the reality of what America has become, takes its salary, awaits its pension and bears no grudge," says Kempton, "except against these meatcutters who dared to think that they could defy the facts of life." Kempton interprets the political significance of the film: "Barbara Kopple has made it rather hard to look at this presidential campaign with the requisite tolerance and detachment. The surviving Democrats arraign George Bush for being unconscious of the pains of ordinary people. Who are they to pretend to be different? He and they are alike, calculating machines. Barbara Kopple's strikers are losers, and losers don't count in the calculations, whether they are white pickets in Austin, Minn., or Black teenagers wasting on city street corners. The next candidate who speaks of a 'new industrial policy' ought at least to be asked what will be new about it. You can be sure it won't be fairness."

Whatever other conclusions viewers may draw from *American Dream*, all will agree that the strike was lost and the strikers were losers. Most will think that if the workers had decided not to strike, they might not have lost so much. They would not have lost their jobs, or not so many would have lost their jobs. Was the strike a mistake? Are those who deserted entitled to the same sympathy and sense of victimization by malignant social forces as the many who held out?

In her *Guardian* interview about how the film was made Kopple says she spent three years on location. She probably left on the floor of her cutting room enough film for another full-length picture of what actually happened. She explains that the final result of a documentary depends not only on the artistry of the director but on her political orientation as well. "I wanted to get underneath these people," she says. "What would make good union workers have to cross a picket line?" She answers her own question. "I don't condone anyone crossing a picket line, but I wanted to take it a step further." That "step further" turns out to be a condemnation of the system that destroys worker solidarity. But it also excuses the scabs.

The other side of this story could be shown, perhaps even more dramatically, if the causes of the strike could be seen in historic perspective. Instead of what we see in *American Dream*, the truer version might be called "American Betrayal." The struggle to organize Hormel began with a strike at the Austin plant in 1933, led by Frank Ellis, a former member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). This strike was one of the early precursors of the CIO movement, and the union Ellis founded later became part of the CIO Packing House Workers union. It raised wages and improved working conditions and won broad community support in Austin. In the early days Hormel management adjusted its labor policy to the needs of the workers and the power of their union, and adopted a paternalistic attitude which contributed to the illusion of a happy Hormel family where workers and employers share the company prosperity.

The betrayal of the workers began in post-World War II boom years with the technological transformation of the meat processing industry which eventually reduced the workforce and so weakened the union that it merged finally with the commercial workers to form the United Food and Commercial Workers, the union that collaborated with the employers to undermine working conditions and lower wages, and helped defeat the P-9 strike. Kopple's shots inside the slaughterhouse show the insufferable working conditions. The idea of the strike was not to save those jobs, but to create better ones.

Some of the fathers and grandfathers of three younger P-9 strikers that Kopple knew and filmed, themselves active in the leadership of the defeated strike, were veterans of Hormel union history going back to the days of the CIO. These men and their tradition gave the P-9 local its militant character, and insured the election of the young leadership personified by Jim Guyette. Guyette was far more forceful and imaginative than shown in the

Kopple film. He, along with Ray Rogers, was responsible for mobilizing P-9 members and devising outreach strategy to appeal to other packinghouse workers and to broader sections of the union movement. Representatives of the Austin strike committee fanned out to all parts of the country, staying in the homes of union supporters and speaking at union meetings everywhere to win support and arouse the spirit of militant unionism.

From the beginning of the strike UFCW international president Wynn advised all AFL-CIO affiliates and central labor bodies that P-9 was acting independently of the parent union. Despite this effort to sabotage strike support, the 1985 convention of the Minnesota State AFL-CIO, soon after the strike began, had to recognize the presence of P-9 strikers who showed up to lobby the delegates for official endorsement. As an official P-9 delegation entered the convention hall it received a standing ovation, and the convention voted to endorse the strike. This was a dramatic moment that Kopple's camera missed.

During the strike many mass rallies were held in Austin, more publicity for that city than ever before in its history. Many notables came to speak in support of the strike, including Jesse Jackson. Unionists came from all parts of the country, some veterans of hard-fought strike battles from as long ago as the 1930s. Support poured in from union locals everywhere, money and food and picket line reinforcements. One of the heroes of the P-9 strike was Jake Cooper, a member of the Minneapolis Teamster movement in the 1930s. Cooper was directly responsible for delivering hundreds of tons of food to the P-9 strikers. He was a frequent speaker at Austin strike rallies. Kopple shows only a fleeting shot of him.

Other supporters of the strike, visitors in Austin while Kopple was filming, included Harry DeBoer and Shaun Maloney, both prominent leaders of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes. Maloney came on more than one occasion with delegations of longshoremen and other waterfront workers from Seattle where he was for many years after the Korean War president of the longshore local of the ILWU. The Seattle longshore local contributed several thousands of dollars to the P-9 strike. Maloney himself is featured in the documentary retrospective on the 1934 Minneapolis strikes, *Labor's Turning Point*.

Another prominent P-9 strike supporter and active participant was Tom Laney, an official of UAW Local 879 in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area. On at least one occasion he joined the P-9 picket line along with reinforcements from his local to help close down the Hormel plant.

There is no indication in Kopple's version of how widespread this support movement was for the P-9 strike. It poured in from all parts of the country and nearly all sectors of the labor movement. Interviews with supporters from a variety of backgrounds would have added another dimension to the Austin strike picture, and helped to explain what it contributed to the reawakening of the union movement at that time. The huge mural painted by the artist, Mike Alewitz, was a graphic symbol of this. Surprisingly shots of this mural are left out of the film. They would have helped to show how the influence that the P-9 strike exerted will endure even though it failed in its immediate goal.

Despite what it might have done the Kopple film catches dramatic moments and reveals individual anguish. It succeeds in putting the viewer in the position of the strikers, some strikers anyway. At the end movie goers will feel they have seen a good picture and come away the better for it. But the message they receive is wrong. This strike did not bring suffering to the Hormel workforce as shown on the screen. They suffered great hardship and emotional stress because the Hormel company slashed wages and eliminated jobs. They were the losers whether they struck or not. The truth is they would have been greater losers if they had not struck.

This strike was not a spontaneous, poorly organized walkout. It was carefully considered and well planned. It was finally called because Hormel and the UFCW bureaucrats left no other choice for the members of Local P-9. Their strike was well conducted. By their example they helped to inspire a new mood of militancy throughout the labor movement. Even though the strike was betrayed by the top AFL-CIO bureaucracy it made labor history and will be remembered as a turning point in the merciless anti-union attacks of the 1980s. Austin is where the workers fought back. They did not win the battle, but they helped prepare

future victories. Not every strike can be won. But the lessons of those that are lost become part of the heritage of the resurgent movement. In this case the lesson was the need to replace the treacherous union bureaucracy, personified by Lewie Anderson, with a militant class-struggle leadership. What Eugene Debs said of the defeat of the famous Pullman strike at the close of the last century applies with equal validity to the Hormel strike in the closing decade of this century, "Its defeat but blazed the way to economic freedom and hastened the dawn of human brotherhood." □

Hamlet (Continued from page 12)

decision. The NLRB did not order the company to rehire Ina Mae Best, who had worked 18 years at the plant with no absences when she too was fired for this unionizing effort. However, the NLRB did dismiss the company's cases against Ina Mae and several other fired workers. Ina Mae was also at the rally.

Although all the speakers at the rally expressed their disgust with the twin political parties of the corporations and emphasized the need for the union movement to organize independently around its own demands, none of them mentioned any of the three initiatives for independent political parties—Labor Party Advocates, the National Organization for Women, or Ron Daniels' Project New Tomorrow—or urged those present to join such efforts even though the need for this is obvious.

The campaign by Black Workers for Justice and supporters of the Organize the South Campaign has helped collect considerable information about the consequences of the anti-union and other pro-capitalist laws in North Carolina which is very useful to the organizing drive as well as to such political efforts:

- There are an average of more than 150 deaths per year of workers on the job.
- North Carolina will have roughly 76 health and safety inspectors this year, with each having 2,000 workplaces to

inspect. There are approximately 180,000 employers in the state.

- The average fine for serious, willful, or repeat violations is \$453.
- North Carolina's predominately Black counties have been placed in the worst 4 percent of 202 health service areas in the U.S.
- In 1988, North Carolina had the worst infant mortality rate of the 50 states. Among African Americans, it is twice as high as North Carolina's average.
- Nearly one-third of the people in the state have no health insurance or have insurance that is inadequate. 69 percent of the poor children in Eastern North Carolina are uninsured.
- If workplaces even offer health insurance, the monthly premiums are often so high that workers cannot afford it, and high deductibles prevent workers and their families from seeking any kind of routine care.
- Only 4.8 percent of the three million workers in North Carolina are unionized. □

Leninism (Continued from page 31)

still more in order to snare a few additional middle class votes. Others tail after strikebreaking, union-busting, war-mongering, and budget-slashing Democrats in the USA. Anywhere and everywhere their song remains the same: to preserve the institutionalized mass misery of the capitalist wage slave system and keep the wage slaves shackled to it in passivity and apathy. The Fourth International, on the other hand, remains as committed as ever to the building of a mass revolutionary organization that can help lead the working class and all the exploited and oppressed in eradicating their exploitation and oppression once and for all—by unleashing an unprecedented level of proletarian self-activity and self-organization.

Of course, most of the self-proclaimed "workers' vanguards" and "revolutionary parties" believe that they have all of the answers—to any and every question—in spite of, or rather because of, their lack of connection to any and every mass movement. Such grandiose pretensions account for much of the hostility towards "Leninism" expressed by many on the far left today.

Our Leninism, on the other hand, "only" offers militants a chance to play a part in the recomposition of the workers' movement and its revolutionary vanguard. Such a role entails support to and, if possible, participation in any and every struggle wherever and whenever it may break out. And we reject limiting ourselves to those that fit textbook patterns, or correspond to

our preconceived notions—as is demanded by sectarians who preach down to the masses (and to us) from the safety of their editorial offices. Fourth Internationalists are just as willing to learn from the actual experiences of the class struggle and through a dialogue with others as were Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and other great revolutionaries of the past. We place just as much value on this process as we do on what we have to contribute in the form of our program, derived from the lessons of the past. That combined, dialectical process of dialogue between the vanguard party and the mass movement—in the process of collective action—is the only one that will allow us to achieve our goal of the world socialist revolution. □

For Free Trade Unions in China

The following material is reprinted from the March 1992 issue of *October Review*, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. It has been slightly edited for publication here.

As a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO), China has the obligation to observe the ILO Convention. According to the ILO Convention No. 87 concerning the freedom of union organizing, it should recognize and protect independent free trade unions from the control of the party and enterprise owners. The right of workers to organize free trade unions should not be dictated by the vested interests of any party or individual. The right to organize free unions is an internationally endorsed right.

Under the present Chinese constitution, citizens enjoy freedom of association. As Chinese citizens, Chinese workers should naturally enjoy the freedom of association to form their own free trade unions.

During its 40 years of rule, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has deprived workers of the right to organize free trade unions. This is a violation of the international convention and also of the Chinese constitution.

This not only compromises the good faith of the international community, but also of the Chinese workers.

The present CCP regime can only restore its credibility within and beyond the national boundaries through adopting cooperative and accommodating attitudes towards the free trade unions.

The officially condoned All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is not only a tool of the CCP and the ruling regime. It is a feudalistic body of a small minority of scabs who betrayed the interests of the workers. It has long been scorned by the majority of workers.

The workers will recognize only a free trade union as their own organization. Only a free trade union truly represents and safeguards the workers' interests.

The authorities refuse to recognize the free trade unions formed by the workers; the workers refuse to recognize the officially condoned ACFTU. This is the reality in China.

We believe that most workers will withdraw their membership from ACFTU and join the ranks of the free trade union. This day will come very soon.

Ten years ago, the union Solidarity was organized in Poland. It has now won its crucial victory. Now, free trade unions are

also being organized in China. Ten years later, we will also win our victory.

What does it matter if the authorities refuse to recognize and authorize our own unions? The establishment and development of free trade unions does not depend on the recognition and authorization of the government, but on the courage and strength of our own workers. Wasn't Polish Solidarity banned and suppressed ten years ago? What were the results? Solidarity won, and their oppressor fell. The Chinese free trade unions will definitely succeed; and those who suppress the free unions are also destined to fall.

It is very easy for anyone among our workers to join a free trade union. Workers can first make connections and link up with friends who share similar goals and principles. They can first organize within their own units or locality; then gradually expand their network. With the establishment of free union

groups, workers can independently organize their own discussion or educational activities according to their ability. Under the non-recognition by the authorities, the free trade unions should carry out safe and effective activities in possible legal ways to carry out our activities; and organically combine all tangible and intangible, aboveground and underground activities. The purpose of organizing an association is for the sake of the activities. We have to develop our organization through activities.

Do not try to look for a free trade union to join. Avoid being discovered by the CCP secret police in the course of expanding our network. Do not treat the free trade union as an organization for idle talk.

Now, free trade unions are emerging everywhere from the land of China like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. This is where the hope of Chinese labor lies!

Preparatory Committee of the Beijing Free Trade Union
January 16, 1992

This leaflet was obtained and translated from Chinese into English by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions. Address: 2/F, 101-107 Portland Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Han Dongfang, a 29-year-old railway worker, was a leader of the struggle for independent trade unions which emerged in the 1989 Tiananmen democracy movement. He has returned to his efforts following two years' incarceration, apparently with some success.

Worker Activist Han Dongfang Demands Free Trade Unions in China

Han Dongfang, leader of the Beijing Autonomous Trade Union which was set up in May 1989 and subsequently crushed in the June 4 aftermath, applied to the Beijing police on March 17 for a permit to hold a demonstration on March 23, while the National People's Congress was in session. The two subjects his proposed banners and leaflets would cover were medical benefits for railway workers, and new laws guaranteeing the right of workers to freely organize. His application was rejected.

Han Dongfang, 29, was released in April 1991 after 22 months of detention without trial. He was very ill with tuberculosis while in prison, and was subsequently exempted from prosecution.

Letters

Labor Solidarity Has No Borders

I read the article about the Caterpillar strike in *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*. I did not know anything about this struggle. I am working at the VME Eskilstuna plant. VME stands for Volvo-Michigan-Euclid. After Komaku it is the biggest competitor of Caterpillar. Here they are trying to indoctrinate us with corporate ideology. Learn production, learn from the Japanese, etc.

It would be of great importance to be able to inform the workers here about the Caterpillar strike, to show the necessity to link up with our own class brothers and sisters in the "competing" company. Please send material about the strike.

Here the working class still is not actively responding to the attacks from the bourgeois government and the capitalist class. Sweden is changing rapidly. State enterprises are privatized, so also the public sector, parts of hospitals, schools, childcare, libraries, etc. Cutbacks in the public sector are dramatic. Unemployment in industry rises, antistrike laws introduced, \$400 fines for wildcat strikes.

At the same time racist violence has increased. The Nazis are not big but very fanatic, preparing race war. Twelve immigrants have been shot during the winter, one killed, the rest severely injured. Sweden is definitely changing.

And the Social Democracy is going the same way as the "new realism" labor leaders in England, accepting privatization and the "market." Where the Social Democrats have a majority in local councils, they are carrying out the same policy of cutbacks, etc.

Not as extremely as the conservatives, but they walk the same road, only a little bit slower. So we are continuing the struggle for a real labor party. The coming year will be very important. The Left Party (ex-Euro CP) is in total crisis. One faction has openly stated that capitalism is better than planned economy, that the goal must be "capitalism with a human face." We are trying to talk to members who still want socialism and a workers party.

Greetings and thanks for a very good *Bulletin!*

Peter Widen, Sweden

Conscientious Objector

My name is Paul E. Cook and I'm a conscientious objector in the Marine Corps Brig, Camp Le Jeune, NC. My parole evaluation won't be complete for the next month. I'm humbly asking for letters supporting my parole, to be sent to my parole coordinator.

I'm gathering addresses of fellow gulf war vets who also have stories and photos from the war. We plan to get

these out in the public eye, where they belong!

My own story includes becoming against the needless killings and destructions in U.S. wars after being in Panama with my marine unit in 1989. I was told that my beliefs were "too political" for C.O. status in 1990. I got orders to Saudi "during time of war" in February of 1991. In going to Saudi, I refused to have a weapon or contribute, except with my radio skills for medivac and troop support.

In Saudi I was denied the use of chemical protective gear and desert uniforms. I was the only marine singled out to wear targeting-green uniforms, while I was the only C.O. in the unit.

I was forced onto the Kuwait border where I was kept for four days "in the presence of the enemy" without the proper gear. Then, as if to help justify my treatment, I was charged with "failure to do utmost to engage the enemy," which holds a maximum sentence of life in prison.

I plan to do all I can to support justice and peace, when I'm able to be released.

As many letters supporting my parole as can be sent would greatly be appreciated! (Parole Coordinator, Marine Corps Brig, Camp Le Jeune, NC 28542.)

Paul Cook, Camp Le Jeune, NC

China, Marxism & Democracy

Selections from
October Review
1980-1990

136 pages

\$3.00

Order from FIT

Celia Stodola Wald, 1946-1992

Celia Stodola Wald, an activist in the U.S. Trotskyist movement for nearly twenty-five years, died after a long battle with scleroderma, on May 7, 1992, in Torrance, California, where she had gone to receive medical treatment. She was forty-five years old and is survived by her husband, Alan Wald, cultural editor of the socialist journal *Against the Current*, and their daughters, Sarah, 12, and Hannah, 9.

Celia was born August 27, 1946, in East Orange, New Jersey, and graduated from high school in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1964. She received a B.A. degree in psychology from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1969. On the Antioch campus she was a well-known activist in SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. In winter 1966 she was a member of SDS's Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) in Cleveland, Ohio. In March 1968 she joined the Young Socialist Alliance.

A year later, in Los Angeles, California, she joined the Socialist Workers Party

(SWP). In 1971 she was a full-time staff member of the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) in San Francisco. Until mid-1975, she was an activist in the Oakland-Berkeley branch of the SWP. She then moved to Ann Arbor where she attended the University of Michigan School of Nursing and was a founder of the Ann Arbor Committee for Human Rights in Latin America. She graduated in 1979 and was elected to Sigma Theta Tau, the national nursing honorary society. From then until the fall of 1982, she practiced nursing in the ante-partum unit, Women's Hospital, University of Michigan Medical Center. In 1986, she was a founder of Solidarity, a socialist organization based in Detroit, and of its Fourth International Caucus, of which she remained a member until her death.

Cremation took place in Torrance, California. During the summer or fall, friends will hold a gathering in Ann Arbor to remember her life. □

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

For New Subscribers—Special Subscription Offer! (good until September 17, 1992)

1 year—\$24 Bonus: Receive free of charge, new publication just off the press: *The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party, 1979-1983* (328 pp.). Volume one of the three-book series entitled "In Defense of American Trotskyism."

6 months—\$10 Plus, your choice of one of the following:
(Regularly \$15)

- A Tribute to George Breitman: Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary*
- The Transitional Program—Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the U.S.*
- American Elections and Issues Facing Working People*
- A Year of Decision for U.S. Labor—The Hormel Strike and Beyond*

3-month introductory—\$5

Name (Please Print) _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Mail and make checks payable to: Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009

International Viewpoint

A unique fortnightly magazine with news and analysis of the international class struggle from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, published in Europe.

___ 1 year: \$57 ___ 6 months: \$32

- With a 6-month or 1-year subscription, receive a free copy of *A Tribute to George Breitman—Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary*, edited by Naomi Allen and Sarah Lovell (a \$5.00 value).

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

Write *International Viewpoint*, P.O. Box 1824, New York, NY 10009

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS FROM THE FIT

\$1.00 PAMPHLETS:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vanguard Parties, by Ernest Mandel

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

MATERIALS FOR A HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM IN THE UNITED STATES:

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

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

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

BOOKS AND OTHER LITERATURE:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New! Just Off the Press!

The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979-1983

volume one of the three-book series

In Defense of American Trotskyism

This book consists of the documentary record of the theoretical and political issues involved in the fight against the abandonment of Trotskyism by the current leadership of the SWP. An introduction by Frank Lovell addresses the meaning of the struggle, its outcome, its lessons.

An FIT publication

328 pages

\$10.00