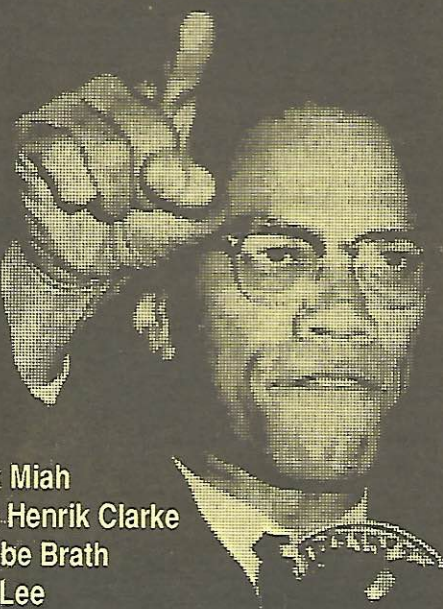


# In Defense of Marxism

## The African American Struggle Today



Malik Miah  
John Henrik Clarke  
Elombe Brath  
Paul Lee  
and Others

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By Bill Onasch

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# Who We Are

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle 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, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

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## Protest U.S. Attack on Iraq!

# Bush and Clinton Threaten Renewed Gulf War

by Tom Barrett

During the last weeks of George Bush's presidency verbal threats against Iraq have escalated into outright acts of war, culminating in the January 17 Cruise missile attack which destroyed an engineering center in a Baghdad suburb and severely damaged the al-Rashid Hotel in the center of the capital. At this writing two civilians are known dead at the al-Rashid. Casualties at the Zaafaraniyeh engineering center have not been reported.

President-elect Bill Clinton wasted no time expressing his support for Bush's latest attack as he has consistently through this latest round of threats and air strikes. He made it clear that George Bush's war policies in the Persian Gulf region would continue during his administration.

Also expressing support for the bombing and missile raids were the European states who participated in the 1991 Gulf War. The UN Secretary General and Security Council have given Washington the international legitimacy it has required to carry out the current wave of assaults. The Arab "coalition

partners" have neither been consulted nor invited to participate.

It is difficult to speculate as to Washington's motivation for this newest attack. Ostensibly, Saddam Hussein's refusal to abide by the humiliating conditions imposed after the Gulf War — including prohibiting Iraqi aircraft from flying over certain areas of its own airspace and allowing UN inspection of any facility suspected of producing "weapons of mass destruction" — is the cause of the air strikes. Bush's justifications do not stand up under scrutiny, however.

Saddam Hussein is one of the world's most brutal dictators, but that has never been a problem for the United States. State Department and CIA Middle East experts have been well acquainted with Saddam for over three decades, and his violent political career was no obstacle to the U.S.'s providing him with arms and political support during the 1980s. Iraq has at no time posed a real threat to U.S. economic or political interests in the region, either at the time of the Gulf War or now.

The 1991 war effectively destroyed Iraq as a military power. Unless the U.S.'s claims

were empty boasts — which is possible — Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons plants were destroyed by coalition bombing two years ago. In any event, Iraq has complied with UN inspectors since the war ended. Furthermore, Iraq's air force was decimated by the U.S. and has not been rebuilt. No one even claims that Iraq is posing any threat to its neighbors, let alone to the United States, or Britain or France, both of whose air forces have joined in the American raids.

The military value of destroying the Zaafaraniyeh engineering plant — let alone the al-Rashid hotel — is questionable. The CIA was well aware of Zaafaraniyeh's existence during the Gulf War, yet the U.S. command chose not to bomb it at that time, a decision it would hardly have made if it were really being used to make nuclear weapons. The UN inspection team has visited the site and can only say that it is *capable* of being used as a nuclear facility.

The al-Rashid Hotel, where most foreign journalists and other visitors stay in Baghdad, may not have been intentionally hit. That makes no difference to the families of those who died. Possibly some articulate government spokesperson can explain how a woman hotel receptionist's death contributes to world peace or U.S. national security or how the supposedly accurate Tomahawk Cruise missile strayed so far from its intended target. George Bush and Bill Clinton claim they are "retaliating" against Saddam Hussein — but it was civilian hotel workers, not Saddam, who died in the January 17 raid.

Saddam Hussein is in no way a threat to bourgeois rule in the region — indeed, his repressive regime is quite useful to imperialism. And, in spite of the rhetoric, the United States has never threatened Saddam Hussein himself. The United States is today the only military superpower on earth, and its victory over Iraq in 1991 was complete and decisive. If Washington truly wanted Saddam Hussein out of power he would *be* out of power.

Protests are being organized around the world to demand an end to this latest outrage against the Arab people. As we go to press pickets and marches are being organized in New York City, London, Toronto, and many other cities. Only with a massive show of opposition to Bush's — and Clinton's — war policies is there any hope of restraining U.S. imperialism from another criminal attack against the people of Iraq. □

January 18, 1992

## Editor's Note

This issue of the magazine focuses on the African-American struggle, with special reference to the ideas of Malcolm X. Revolutionary Marxists recognize the centrality of racism and the struggle against racism for U.S. politics, and the centrality of the African-American struggle for the progress of the U.S. working class as a whole. Malik Miah's valuable discussion of the relationship between Black liberation and the class struggle is complemented by the stimulating discussion of Malcolm X by Elombe Brath, John Henrik Clarke, and Paul Lee, a discussion generated in part by Spike Lee's controversial film, which received a critical but positive review in the last issue of this magazine. (Many thanks to Lee Denoyer for transcribing the latter three talks, which we print with the kind permission of the speakers.)

The effort to build an independent working-class political force in the United States is discussed by Black trade union activist James Gibbs in the presentation he gave at a recent regional conference of Labor Party Advocates (also transcribed by Lee Denoyer and reprinted here by kind permission).

Socialists for many years have discussed and debated the question of how best to understand Black nationalism and its relationship to the socialist struggle. In issue #101 Evelyn Sell provided an in-depth account of how Lenin, Trotsky, C.L.R. James, George Breitman, and others developed a positive orientation toward Black nationalism. In this issue Peter Johnson initiates a critical discussion counterposing to this orientation another known as "revolutionary integrationism." The questions raised are important and will certainly be discussed in future issues of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

The interrelationship of the struggles for women's liberation and socialism has also been much discussed and will be a central theme for the March issue of this magazine. But in their contribution Karin Baker and Ann Menasche focus on the related but often neglected implications that the struggle for gay and lesbian rights has for the way in which we understand and fight against capitalist oppression.

The "New World Order" continues to take shape with the deployment of U.S. military forces in Somalia and Iraq. Bill Onasch touches on the presidential transition from Bush to Clinton, but this is only one piece of the picture. Brief articles by Serge MuKende on the Congo (Zaire), by Michael Smith on Palestine, and by Pinar Selinay on the Kurds within the Turkish state illuminate other aspects of the quality of this "order." Meanwhile, the impact of attempts at capitalist restoration in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe — discussed in articles by Alexander Tarasov and Boris Kagarlitsky — raises questions about the durability of capitalism's "triumph" after the end of the Cold War era.

# In Transition to...New Flies

by Bill Onasch

We can expect to see some big differences in style in the new administration. The patrician George Herbert Walker Bush was never very convincing when he occasionally dropped into Country & Western bars or marveled at the advanced technology used to transact a purchase of socks at J.C. Penney. While he proclaimed a lust for pork rinds and taunted the liberal "wine and cheese crowd," one nevertheless felt sure this man could tell the difference between gouda and brie and distinguish his chardonnay from riesling.

Bill Clinton, on the other hand, is credible as a good old boy. We know he jogs, but we forgive him for that because he always manages to jog to a McDonald's or Winchell's. He seems to thrive on mixing it up with the common folk.

Bush comes from an old-money, ruling class family. Clinton was raised in a much more modest environment. Bush was a war hero of sorts during the long, hard one. Clinton adroitly dodged the draft during Vietnam.

Despite these differences there are important similarities. Both men have similar intellectual backgrounds: Bush a Yale graduate, the poor boy Clinton going to Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship. Like Jimmy Carter, both are former members of the Trilateral Commission, a multinational network of the influential in the imperialist G-7 countries.

Clinton himself took pains during the transition to endorse all of Bush's main foreign policy objectives, including military intervention in Somalia and Iraq and the blockade of Cuba. He sounded as though he might ease the policy of forced repatriation of Haitian refugees, but on the eve of inauguration reverted to the Bush line. Clearly there are no big changes forthcoming in foreign policy.

But what about domestic policies? The transition team is dominated by cadre of the Democratic Leadership Council — the right-wing of the party. The DLC embraces many of the policies associated with Reagan-Bush, such as deregulation, privatization, and trickle-down economics.

One instructive example: public employee unions, a key base of support during Clinton's campaign, were shocked by the actions of one team appointee — Gayle Holliday, executive director of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority and spouse of the main leader of Kansas City's Black Democratic machine, Freedom Incorporated. Holliday has been engaged in a series of legal maneuvers to avoid

negotiating a contract with Kansas City transit workers. She has urged repeal of federal legislation that gives transit workers some collective bargaining rights and protection against job loss due to privatization.

Style was in command during the labors of the transition team. Clinton had pledged to appoint a cabinet that reflects the gender and ethnic diversity of America. In the end women and people of color were chosen in record numbers — though still not represented in proportion to their populations.

But these appointees are hardly representative of women's struggles or the masses in the ghettos and barrios. Ron Brown, the most prominent Black nominee, for example, is Democratic National Chairman and runs a highly successful law and lobbying firm. His clients have included not only top U.S. and Japanese companies but also the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti. In gratitude for past services — not to mention anticipation of future favors as commerce secretary — a number of big companies chipped in \$10,000 apiece to throw a thank-you party for Brown. But establishment white males were not

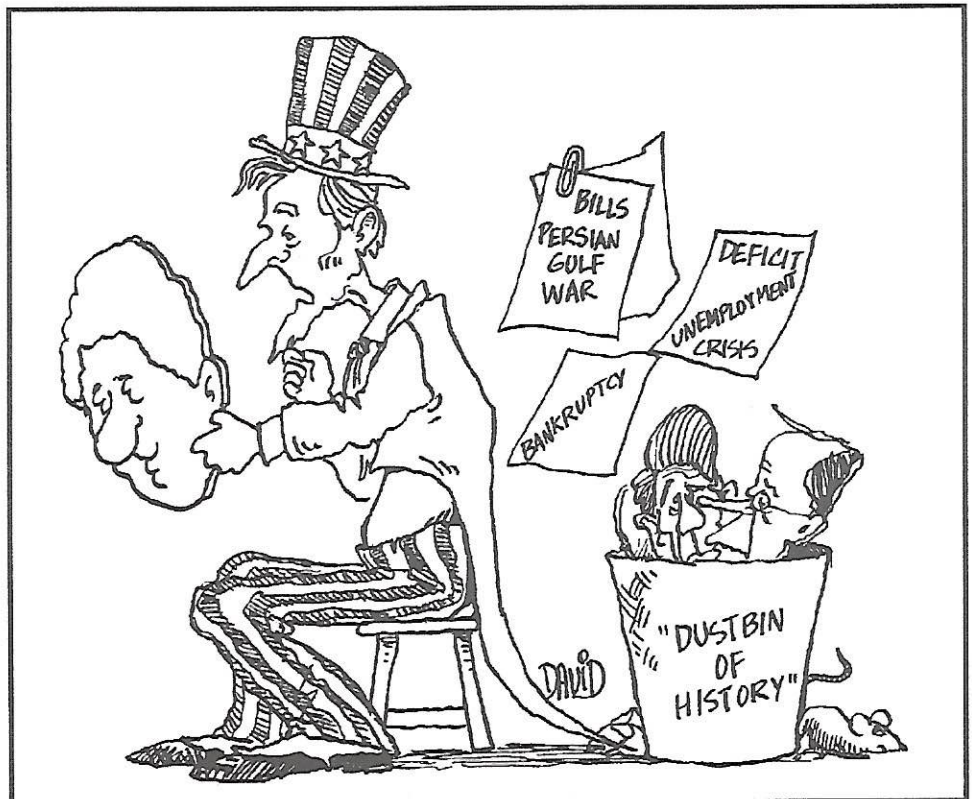
neglected either. The State Department will be headed by Warren Christopher, who helped shape Jimmy Carter's interventionist policy in Central America and, as a deputy attorney general under Lyndon Johnson, made use of illegal army spying on civil rights and antiwar groups.

Les Aspin, long-time top congressional liaison with the Pentagon, is the new secretary of defense. The brass hats have indicated that they can live with this appointment.

Lloyd Bentsen, venerable Texas senator and self-made millionaire, takes over the Treasury. In his confirmation hearings Bentsen has already given the message: forget about those middle-class tax cuts we talked about during the campaign. Some administration ideas currently being floated — "everything is on the table," says Bentsen — include: a higher eligibility age (67) for Social Security pensions and Medicare benefits; a national sales tax; a fifty-cent per gallon tax increase on gasoline; trickle-down investment tax credits for business; and repeal, or reduction, of the capital-gains tax — a long-time Bush objective.

Many labor, civil rights, feminist, and environmentalist leaders have hailed the Clinton administration as if it were the Second Coming. They will be very quickly disappointed. While new flies buzz energetically, they nest on the same old dung heap. □

January 14, 1993



## A Prelude to Worse?

# Israel's Unprecedented Mass Deportations

by Michael Steven Smith

By banishing 415 Palestinians on December 17, 1992, from the Occupied Territories to a snow-covered no man's land in Lebanon north of Israel, newly elected Labor Prime Minister Rabin, with the approval of his cabinet, including the Meretz left, has raised the level of violence and compromised the peace process, such as it is, possibly irrevocably. He has also wounded the secular Palestinian leadership and scared the hell out of them, because the deportation of so many natives looks like the transfer policy which the Israeli right offers as a solution to the Palestinian "problem."

With typical obduracy Rabin, the author of the previous "breaking bones" policy, stated that, "I have no pity in my heart for them." He had stated earlier that if he had his wishes he would like to see "Gaza sink into the sea."

Israel blocked the International Red Cross from sending food to the deportees, who huddled in a tent camp. When a number of them tried to walk south, Rabin, who has retained his position as Minister of Defense, ordered them shelled. Five were wounded. Israel then proceeded to ignore a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for the return of the deportees. As usual, the Israeli intransigence got little coverage in the American media.

Deportation of civilians from occupied territories is a war crime made illegal under international law by Article Four of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which the Israeli government signed. Israel now proclaims that the Geneva Convention does not apply to this situation. The men, most of whom are members of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, groups characterized in the press as "Islamic fundamentalist," were given no hearing, had no charges placed against them, and were not allowed to confront witnesses against them. They were merely rounded up, blindfolded, and bussed across the border. One thousand six hundred others were rounded up and imprisoned. This all was sanctioned as legal by the Israeli Supreme Court.

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*Michael Steven Smith practices law in New York City and toured the Occupied Territories in 1986 investigating Israeli deportations of Palestinians. He testified on the subject before the United Nations Special Committee on the Inalienable Rights of Palestinians.*

The deportations and imprisonments came ostensibly in retaliation for the Hamas killing of six Israeli soldiers in the Occupied Territories. The massive numbers of Palestinians thus banished is something qualitatively new for the Israeli government. The Israeli right has proposed the transfer solution to make "Greater" Israel *Arab-rein* (a parallel to the Nazi German slogan *Judenrein*, "clear of Jews"). They want ethnic cleansing of the Arab population. This position is not yet held by the majority in Israel, who would prefer a "Bantustan" solution. That is what the Israeli government would like to obtain from the current "peace" talks, which in the wake of the deportations, the secular Palestinian leadership has for the moment forsaken. Hamas opposes the "peace" talks altogether, as does the Islamic Jihad. "We believe in force," New York *Newsday* quoted Dr. Taher Loulou, a pediatrician from Gaza and one of the banished, "in using the knife and the gun. I'm a doctor, and all my life I've tried to help people, but I believe now that Israel will only respond to power."

This rhetoric, which Israeli actions provoke, only perpetuates the cycle of violence and puts the onus of violence on the Palestinians. Israel has been successful at doing this for forty-five years, since its creation in 1948.

Since 1948 U.S. taxpayers have given Israel almost \$60 billion. Last year alone it got \$4.8 billion in U.S. foreign aid, more than any other nation.

In the past five years, since the Palestinian Intifada began, more than 1,100 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli occupation forces. Over 13,000 Palestinians are now in Israeli prisons — one in every three Palestinian adults have been in prison at least once. More than 2,000 homes have been demolished or sealed as part of Israeli collective punishment. Over 120,000 trees have been uprooted in an effort to drive Palestinians off their land. More than 60 percent of West Bank land and 30 percent of the water resources in that area have been confiscated for Israeli use.

Between December 1987 and December 1989, 159 Palestinian children under the age of 16 years were killed by Israeli soldiers. The average age was 10.

Between 50,000 and 63,000 children were beaten, gassed, or wounded. More than half

of those slain were not near a demonstration when killed. Not content, soldiers interfered with over half of the funerals.

In addition to greasing the skids of the transfer solution, the provocative massive deportations have resulted in the undermining of the secular Palestinian leadership. Their authority has been continually eroded over the long and failing Intifada uprising.

As Edward Said has pointed out, the United States has helped undermine the Palestinian leadership and the prospects for true peace by the preconditions it helped impose on the Palestinians for the Middle East peace talks: no PLO representatives, no discussions of final status, no discussion of Jerusalem, no talk of Palestinian return, and no Palestinian diaspora representatives. Agreement on these points locked out any just solution to the Palestinian issue.

Thus, the influence of the secular leadership, which has sought to control the violence, has been diminished. All this is music to the ears of the Israelis, who would rather have a fundamentalist leadership. After all, the Israeli military is one of the world's most powerful. They'd like to combat a group that leads with its chin. And the Israeli government can sell itself to the U.S. as an instrument to combat fundamentalism in the Mideast.

The situation of the Palestinians after 35 years of occupation is dire. They will not be given citizenship by the Israelis because they have a higher birthrate and will soon outnumber their oppressors. Neither will they be allowed — as was mandated by the 1948 UN resolution that created Israel — self-determination and a country of their own. This would get in the way of Israel's expansionist plans.

The Israeli military has had to retain total control over the lives and institutions of the Palestinians. They would like to slough some of this off via the peace talks. To plant so much as a tomato in the territories requires a military permit. So does constructing a house, digging a well, running a school, traveling abroad, or starting a newspaper. All news articles are censored. A labor permit must be obtained to work inside Israel proper. Arab workers gather in the morning at the "slave market," are bussed in, and then must be back to the territories before midnight. To sleep over is a crime.

Writing from Jerusalem, Palestinian news analyst Khaled Abu Aker commented: "People here wonder why the United Nations is impotent in its resolutions against Israel while other resolutions — such as those dealing with Iraq or Somalia — are enforced before the ink dries on UN parchment" (*Al Fajr*, January 4, 1993). Enforced with massive military force, we might add.

Where has Washington stood on these human rights violations? The January 10 *New York Times* quoted Valman Shoval, the Israeli ambassador

*Continued on page 5*

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## A Coal Miner Speaks on Independent Political Action

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# “We Want a Labor Party!”

by James Gibbs

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*The last issue of our magazine (BIDOM, January 1993) carried an article about the Labor Party Advocates educational conference in Detroit December 5–6, 1992. It mentioned that a vivid example of independent working class political action was presented in the talk given by James Gibbs, president of the United Mine Workers Local 2490. Gibbs is a working coal miner at the Pittston Co., and was a leader in the long, hard-won strike against Pittston in 1989–90. The following is the text of his talk.*

First of all I would like to make clear that our offices with the Mine Workers are not paid positions at the local level. We do it because we love it. When I was elected it made me feel real good. I’m a third-generation coal miner. My grandfather worked for the coal company for 30 years, my father for 50 years, and I’ve been there for about 15, so between us we have a total of about 95 years in the coal mines. Whenever I hear talk about politics or labor unions I take it very personally because I’ve been a United Mine Worker virtually all of my life. That’s all I know. It’s been passed down from generation to generation. I think, in a sense, that is what has made our union as strong as it is today. Our people are families. Families pass down from generation to generation, and we respect people’s families. When you all came to help us during our strike [against Pittston] you showed some of that solidarity that we’ve been raised with.

When we do things politically we do it in such a way that we’re going to win. We elected one of our leaders [Jackie Stump], the president of our district, to public office on a write-in campaign. Totally unheard of. But that is what makes it remarkable. We ran a write-in campaign in three weeks time and we won the election. We unseated a candidate that’s been there for 24 years, and he was a Democrat, too!

This is an educational conference, so I’m trying to tell you some of the things we did in our situation. We did what we had to do. We took our members, older and younger, and went around from house to house. We had a lot of people that couldn’t read or write, especially older people. We didn’t want them to feel embarrassed. We visited them at night, brought pens, pencils, and paper, and taught them to write Jackie Stump’s name. They told us, “I can’t read. I can’t write.” We helped them. They helped us. They helped themselves. We wanted to show the state of Virginia and the politicians — Democrats and Republicans — that we had just had all that we were going to take. We had to do something to show them that we meant business.

The Republicans didn’t run anybody else against this man. Independents wouldn’t even run against this man. Democrats were afraid to even talk to him, he had so much power. We beat him almost three to one in only three weeks. To get to this point we had to go through hell, and we did.

There are six coal counties in this area around Pittston, and ten neighboring high schools. The kids organized themselves and struck the schools. They came out because they wanted to show us their support. Not only did the high school kids do this, the elementary school kids did, too. Our kids taught us. You might laugh at this, but this is very serious because we were out for ten

and a half months. This is not a laughing matter. The elementary school kids, without anybody saying anything, said, “Well, if they can do it, we can too.” The principal said, “I can’t let you go by yourselves. I’ll have to walk you to the highway. I’ll let you make signs to hold up, supporting your fathers and mothers.” That’s education; that’s the basis that you build a party on.

It’s been said over and over again, “We want a labor party.” We believe in that. Labor needs somebody to represent it. But it cannot be done without a sound foundation. We have to start with the younger generation and build our way up. If we don’t, we won’t have anything. We can say we want the Democrats out, we can say we want the Republicans out, but we’ve got to have something to replace them with. If we don’t, then all of this is just a waste of time.

I believe if you’re going to do something, do it right. Don’t ever do anything to lose. If you’ve got to strike, strike to win. We struck against Pittston, and we struck to win, but we won with your help. We did it with a sound foundation and a strong leadership. Our rank and file members took it upon themselves to do whatever it took to win that strike. We did it because we stuck together. But it wasn’t just the working members; it was the wives and the sons and daughters. They were trying to take medical benefits from our retirees. We decided that we weren’t going to let that happen. So, this year, two years after our strike, we discovered some legislation from 1950 that said that Truman had made a deal with our president at the time, John L. Lewis, that promised us health care from cradle to death. We got Senator Jay Rockefeller to endorse this, and it was passed this past year. Our retirees will never have to worry about medical benefits from this day on.

We didn’t stop with the Pittston strike. We didn’t stop with just getting Jackie Stump elected. We started to build our foundation for the next time.

During the last county election, in the coal fields alone, we got at least two Board of Supervisors members elected, two county clerks elected in two of the counties, two sheriffs, and two county treasurers. These are coal miners, now. We started with the county because we have to deal with them first when we strike and as far as going to jail, which several people did at that time. These people are now in a position to help us, or we’ll vote them out the next time. That’s the way we feel. That’s the way we’ve got to feel.

I’ve been a Democrat all my life. But not now, not now. I’m telling you, before we can do anything about it we have to build our way up. This educational conference is a start. But we’ve got to get more people involved, especially young people. We could make something great out of this, but we have to do it together. To

me, that's what made our Pittston strike great. People from all over the country and all over the world came and helped us. We'll never forget it. They showed us solidarity. They showed us that we had to win that strike, not just the coal miners, but the unions had to win that strike. We won that strike because we all stuck together and made ourselves one. That's the way we have to do it when we go to the polls. We don't want to be split.

We can make this labor party whatever we want to make it. It's just like making your union leaders whatever you want to make them. They are elected to that position by the rank and file people, not the officers, but the rank and file people. Because we care and because we are family, it is very easy for us to do whatever we need to do. We have to show these politicians that we are tired of what they've been giving us. I think it showed that we are tired in the last election, but we have to show it by getting out and working and getting more people involved.

Believe me when I say it took all of us to win the Pittston strike. When we elected Jackie Stump, it took all of us. The students formed their own organization and elected their own officers. The wives formed their own women's auxiliary. They had never been involved in anything before. Even though they went through strikes before, they had never been involved because their husbands didn't include them. They forced their inclusion this time. They said, "We're going to be a part of it." That's what's happening right now. Even if you haven't seen it, it's happening. We had, I think, six women elected to the United States senate this past election because they were going to be a part of it no matter what

man didn't want them to be. That's what it takes. There were several more Blacks elected to office. No matter what their party may be, they wanted to be a part of it, and they felt that this was the right time.

This country is due for a change. We hear it crying out for a change. This labor party could be the change. But only if we get out, get off our butts and do something. We can't force it on people, but we can tell them why we think we need a labor party. The majority already know we need one; they just want somebody to tell them and talk to them. That's what this conference is supposed to be about: education. When we got Jackie Stump elected, we got out and educated our people to the point where they could write his name on the ballot, and we won, three to one. They said it couldn't be done, but they saw it was done. Now people come and ask us what they can do to help us. We were asking what we could do to help them, at that point in time.

We had a Democratic governor, a Democratic lieutenant governor, and the attorney general was a Democrat. The judge that fined us 54 million dollars was a Democrat. But see, payback is hell! It was that judge's father that we beat in the election!

I think that the president of our union is one of the better labor leaders in this country. Our people think he is one of the better leaders. In a recent election, he won by a margin of nine to one. He doesn't ask us to do anything that he wouldn't do himself. Our vice-president doesn't ask us to do anything that he wouldn't do himself. We feel like those two fellows have led us in the right direction. When we went to jail they went to jail with us. They didn't ask us to go. They said, "You're union people, and you have to do what you have to do to win a contract." We went, but they went also. When the state trooper came up to our vice-president and said, "I'm serving you with a federal warrant for your arrest." He said, "You might as well take that back to the judge. I don't have the time to fool with you." That in itself ought to tell you something. There has to be a firm leadership, but there has to be a strong membership before there are strong leaders.

We can talk all we want to about a labor party, we can give the Democrats and Republicans hell, but if we don't have anybody to replace them with, all this is wasted time. We've got to get somebody that we can rally around, then we build our platform, and then we can go ahead with whatever we need to do. We have to do these things together and we have to start somewhere. So, I say we need to start on the lower level and work our way up. We've started something right here today. I assume there will be more conferences like this one. If we can get one or two people a day or a week, we've gained. But we have to keep gaining. That's the way we get the things that we need. Thank you for listening to me. □



James Gibbs speaking at the Dec. 5-6 LPA conference.

## Israel's Unprecedented Mass Deportations

*Continued from page 3*

to the U.S., as saying that he had been assured by the State Department at a very high level that "in no case" would Washington allow the Security Council to approve a new resolution leading to anti-Israeli sanctions.

The deportation directly affects not only the stranded men themselves. As heads of households (often extended families, including adopted victims of Israeli terror), the 413 deportees were responsible for about 5,000 others, of whom 2,000 were children. Ten of

the 413 were rounded up and expelled by mistake. Still Rabin repeats his argument that expulsion is a very moderate punishment.

As Cheryl A. Rubenberg has written, the U.S.-Israeli alliance is an institution of American society. "Israel's power in the U.S. today rests upon its alliance with America's military-industrial complex and upon the Pentagon's reliance on the Jewish lobby to get its budget through Congress." So massive Israeli human rights violations barely make a ruffle in our country. Rubenberg's perspective on how to change this necessitates mass action.

Given this institutionalization, it is unlikely that U.S. policy towards Israel will change significantly unless large numbers of Americans make such change a priority, and mobilize and struggle to bring it about. Only concerted mass activism can transform an institution. And only an informed, organized and participant grass-roots American effort working in solidarity with the Palestinian and other Arab peoples can transform American behavior. Such transformation will assuredly never come from the top down — that is the essential meaning of an institution. [*The Link*, Vol. 25, No. 2, May/June 1992.] □

# The Fight for Black Liberation and Working-Class Emancipation in the United States and the Legacy of Malcolm X for the World's Oppressed and Exploited

by Malik Miah

*This article is based on a talk given at the Socialist Activists' Education Conference, sponsored by the Democratic Socialist Party and Resistance, January 2–6, 1993 in Sydney, Australia. "Socialism now more than ever" was the theme chosen for the conference, which, as well as international topics, included many talks on current Australian society and politics. Guest speakers from the New Zealand New Labour Party and Indonesia were also featured. Speaking of the conference, DSP national secretary John Percy said, "At a time when the establishment is busy trying to convince us that there is no alternative to capitalism, we need a conference such as this."*

The American Revolution was one of the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 18th century. It ended English colonial rule and opened the door to the development of American capitalism and the formation of an American nationality. Yet that revolution was incomplete. Slavery, an institution of precapitalist society, was not overthrown. The new ruling class was a hybrid of the up-and-coming manufacturing capitalist class and the slavocracy in the South.

That class contradiction could only be resolved by war. That Great War took place in 1861–65. The Civil War, or second American Revolution, led to the physical and political demise of the slavocracy. The northern capitalists became rulers of the entire United States.

## Opened Door to Equality for All

While this great victory ended slavery, it did not lead to full equality of all people living in the United States. The bourgeois-democratic revolution remained incomplete for all people of color — former Black slaves, Native Americans, Asians, Mexicans, and later, Puerto Ricans.

The bourgeois revolution failed to accomplish its basic democratic task — national unity based on full equality of all citizens. Blacks became an oppressed nationality as a result. The right of Blacks to self-determination then became the central unfinished task of the democratic revolution.

It is the central question on whether or not the American working class will be able to successfully lead a socialist revolution against the capitalist rulers. A revolutionary leadership of the working class must have a policy of unconditional support to full equality for all its citizens. This means full support to Black equality and self-determination. Unless that's its policy the capitalists will maintain their rule over the working class. This is why socialists in the United States must have a correct understanding of the struggle of Blacks for equality. It is not a moral question.

It is a fundamental question of the socialist revolution. It is a question of whether or not workers can take power in the United States. Thus the battle for Black self-determination and equality is integrally tied to the working class leading a revolution. It is why the coming American revolution has combined tasks: to resolve the national question and the class question.

What is the relevancy of Malcolm X to this analysis? Malcolm X combined the two questions. He was one of the country's most outstanding Black freedom fighters ever, and one of the world's most determined revolutionaries in the 20th century. He spoke for the most oppressed Black nationality and his evolution pointed toward revolution as the only way to end oppression and exploitation.

It is for this reason that Malcolm X is also relevant for Australian socialists and progressive-minded workers, as well as for other revolutionary fighters in the world. Malcolm was a byproduct of advanced capitalism, just as the aboriginal's situation here is a result of the development of Australian capitalism. The fight of aboriginals and Blacks are fundamentally the same. Both seek an end to racial oppression and full equality. Likewise, the fight of Australian workers and American workers are the same. We may have different concrete histories, but we are both exploited in the same way under capitalism. Our surplus value is stolen by the bosses.

## Our Discussion Today

While my presentation today will discuss the state of the African American struggle for national liberation, it's important to recognize that the issues facing American Blacks are not unique. Oppressed national minorities internationally face the same question: how to achieve self-determination, that is, to win political power.

There is a crisis of leadership in the American Black community. There hasn't been an independent Black political movement since the victory of the civil rights struggle in the

1960s. Modest attempts at Black self-organization independent of the rulers' parties have occurred. But none were able to gain much mass support.

In fact, the fight for Black equality wasn't even an issue in the recent presidential election. Both President-elect Bill Clinton and President George Bush avoided the issue. At best, they said it was not an issue. At worst, Republican rightists attempted to use racism to whip up the vote of backward whites, particularly white workers.

Since the election, Clinton has sought to turn his administration into a "rainbow" coalition by appointing many Blacks, Latinos, and women to high posts. For example, for the first time ever he appointed four Blacks to his cabinet. These are not tokens. Black professionals who were the public leaders of the civil rights battles are now integrated in all structures of the capitalist state, including corporate America and the government. While the numbers are not proportional, they do reflect historic changes. Not surprisingly racist demagogues who are opposed to any integration of Blacks charge "reverse discrimination" is being used against whites (more accurately white men). The objective is clear: defense of the old status quo, that is, white privilege.

This attitude of a layer of whites, however, is a minority opinion in ruling circles. The majority of capitalists have come to the conclusion, after nearly 20 years of direct experience and the fact that minorities and women will soon be a majority of the work force, that cooptation is a more effective policy than repression and exclusion. Repression and segregation are of course still used. But the latter in more subtle ways. The former is typical, as the Los Angeles beating of Black motorist Rodney King showed. But even in LA, the rulers quickly sought to cool down the racial issue. Since there is no mobilized Black movement, an active racist movement is not necessary for the capitalists to rule. It is similar to the question of fascism. The



capitalists don't need an extralegal, fascist movement against workers today because the labor movement is in decline and weak. The cops, courts, and other "legal" tools are adequate for now.

(Washington's white ruling friends in South Africa are learning this lesson of cooptation too. It's why they seek a special deal with the African National Congress and other liberation forces to try and keep their power. A race war is not winnable in the long run. History is marching against the white minority.)

At the same time, while the white male rulers don't need a mass racist or fascist movement to maintain their rule, they do encourage racism when appropriate for their objectives. Racism is a key weapon of division and lets them off the hook. It gets the most backward white workers, and other whites, to blame the victims instead of their own exploiters.

### Role of Black Liberals

The leadership of the African American community historically has been in the hands of liberals — that is, people who oppose racism but support capitalism. There have been few Black socialists or revolutionary democrats of the Malcolm X caliber. Yet historically there has always been an independent Black-led civil rights movement. Legal racism led Black liberals, who were kept out of the system, to use mass action — proletarian methods — to fight for equality. Martin Luther King Jr was the most outstanding liberal in Black history. Frederick Douglass was another. They were leading democrats who, while not challenging the capitalist system, insisted Blacks be treated as full U.S. citizens.

### Liberalism Has Run Its Course

Black liberalism, however, cannot play a revolutionary role anymore. Its time has come and gone with the defeat of Jim Crow segregation. It now requires Malcolm X-type leadership to lead a fight to end *de facto* racism — that is, racism rooted in capitalism. This reality is why all questions of Black self-determination today immediately pose class questions and class leadership to advance the fight for full equality. The rulers have no more concessions to make on legal equality. In fact they must weaken and try to take back many of the strongest victories on this level.

To understand and appreciate the change this new reality opened in the 1960s for Blacks, as well as working people as a whole, we need only to review briefly the history of the Black struggle.

### Three Phases of Struggle

The first phase of Black history was one of forging a nationality of Blacks. This was not automatic. Forced from different African tribes with different languages and customs, the slaves were not a nationality. The new

nationality was created by the slaveowners with the use of force and violence.

What united slaves into a people separate from whites, Indians, Asians, and others was their status as slaves. Thus the first page of Black history was seeking to end that sub-human status. Blacks supported the American Independence struggle of 1776 because they fought a common enemy: the English colonial rulers. The George Washington leadership, however, never promised Blacks freedom. Most were slaveowners themselves. It is why the founding Constitution of the United States mentions Blacks only as representing  $\frac{3}{5}$  of a vote for slaveowners. After the 1776 victory Blacks remained slaves. This affected what "freed" Blacks could do in the North. Freed Blacks were treated as second-class citizens.

From 1776 to 1865 the main battle of Blacks and their allies was to end slavery. This abolitionist struggle was bloody, as slave revolt after slave revolt encouraged the revolutionary abolitionists to press their cause. During the Civil War Blacks sided with the North once President Lincoln made clear he would free the slaves (in the states in rebellion) to save the union. Black units fought bravely in the war. (These were all-Black units led by whites. The U.S. military would not be integrated until after World War II.) The defeat of slavery however did not automatically mean Blacks would become Americans like whites. It was possible. The opportunity for this to happen was real after the Civil War. The period of Radical Reconstruction opened the door to a nonracist America. But the rulers had used racism to justify slavery and were not about to lose that leverage to keep working people divided to reap superprofits. Racism was refined under Jim Crow.

Therefore freed slaves were denied land — 40 acres and a mule — to become economically independent. Blacks became true proletarians — workers without anything to sell but their labor power. Most Blacks became sharecroppers on the land. Some became urban workers.

The end of slavery marked a qualitative change in the fight for Black equality. The fight now was to make the amendments to the Constitution apply to Blacks as well as to whites.

### Battle against Jim Crow

The defeat of Radical Reconstruction opened the second phase of the Black freedom struggle. The forms of struggle changed. From the end of the 1870s to the 1960s the battle for full equality was focused on one issue: to end Jim Crow legal segregation. Every major Black formation had a one-point program: end Jim Crow, and allow Blacks to become full citizens. Before the civil war abolitionists assumed that the end of slavery would bring equality under the Constitution.

Organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were formed to fight the impact of Jim Crow and to push for full equality. Even more radical nationalist groups, like the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, fought Jim Crow and pushed for Black economic independence along with a push to go back to Africa to escape racism in America.

Not surprisingly NAACP (a liberal, pro-capitalist group) and Garvey's movement were treated harshly by racists and the government. The issue wasn't capitalism. It was racism. Blacks were told they could not be part of the profit system except as slaves and now as second-class exploited labor.

In response to the rulers' violence Black liberal groups who rejected nationalism and identification with Africa began to use mass action tactics to fight back.

During World War II, a March on Washington Movement was organized. It was led by A. Phillip Randolph and other civil rights leaders who supported American capitalism in the imperialist war. But Blacks were segregated in the army and also could not get jobs in the war industries. Whites did not trust Blacks to bear arms or to make armaments. So a mass march was planned. The Stalinists and others attacked these pro-war Blacks as traitors because they also demanded jobs. Blacks were told to close their mouths and suffer racism until fascism was defeated. The civil rights leaders refused and planned a march on Washington. President Roosevelt finally backed down and promised more jobs to Blacks in the military industries.

This small example of independent Black political action indicates the powerful dynamic of the democratic rights question when the capitalists deny it. The thrust of the Black struggle for equality leads to confrontation with the state if consistently fought for, no matter who is in the leadership.

The fact that the modern civil rights movement arose in the middle of an imperialist war shows its potential power and revolutionary dynamic. If there had been a revolutionary-led labor movement in the 1930s and '40s a whole different political situation could have been possible. The revolutionary socialist forces became isolated. Its key leaders were arrested and thrown in jail.

The March on Washington development also made another point to the rulers and progressive forces. Blacks, as they have throughout history, would not wait for organized labor or others before fighting for their democratic rights. In fact, Blacks inspired others to follow their militant example.

This last point is important because Blacks were still a majority in the South in the 1940s and living in rural areas as sharecroppers and agricultural workers. It was only after World War II that Blacks in their majority became urban and manufacturing workers.

## Power of Civil Rights Movement

The power of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s was the fact that all Blacks suffered discrimination, no matter what their education and abilities were. The Black middle class — professionals, small business people, etc. — had to live in the Black community. They weren't allowed to practice on Wall Street or hold top jobs at GM or Chevron. Colin Powells and Jesse Jacksons were not allowed. Baseball, probably the most popular American sport, was still segregated up until the late 1940s. There were no Black Hollywood film directors. Spike Lee would not have been allowed into Hollywood to direct a movie on any topic, much less a major movie on a Black revolutionary like Malcolm X.

The contradiction of the civil rights movement is also seen in these changes. The gains camouflage the reality for most Blacks who remain unemployed at twice the level of whites, live in inferior housing, and receive rotten education. But to understand the dynamic of the African American struggle today it is crucial to understand what happened 30 years ago. This process is taking place in Australia and other countries where the capitalists are learning from the U.S. experience on how to deal with oppressed minorities.

## What Happened?

The legal and powerful *de facto* segregation is why the civil rights movement was led by liberals and why they supported or used direct action against the state. It was a real movement. It had its ups and downs but was a real movement for decades. The issue was clear. No problem of how or what to be done: change the law. Once the laws were overthrown, Blacks could be like other immigrants and fight for true integration into the system. The liberal leaders all backed capitalism, but weren't allowed to get a piece of the pie. Black workers were always the base of the civil rights movement, but not the leadership. Even the famous Montgomery Bus boycott was led by King after it was organized by the local civil rights leadership led by E.D. Nixon, a unionist. But Black workers had no independent policy. Black workers and liberals agreed: the battle was to end Jim Crow. And in that they were correct.

It would have been ultraleft to demand the civil rights movement fight to end capitalism when Blacks could not even vote in the South. The road to broader class unity and a fighting labor movement required the defeat of Jim Crow first. That's why we socialists threw ourselves into that fight without conditions. We educated on the need for socialism as part of the fight but never attacked the leaders because they didn't raise more radical demands in addition to the demand for full equality. Likewise, Malcolm X criticized the leaders for retreating on Freedom Now to accommodate white liberals.

Malcolm X was not a sectarian, as some try to claim today or as is implied in Spike Lee's otherwise excellent movie. He simply explained that legal equality would not mean an end to racism. He wanted full human rights for Blacks. It is why he organized the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), modeled on the Organization of African Unity. His criticism of King and the liberals was their false view that Black equality could be achieved under capitalism as it was practiced in the United States and the world. While Malcolm never claimed to be a socialist or for socialism, he indicted the imperialist system as oppressive and exploitive. He told the truth. That's why he was denounced by liberals and so-called socialists (Stalinists and Social Democrats), was followed by the state, and finally was assassinated.

The power of the civil rights movement was because it focused on a simple democratic right: end to Jim Crow. It became a mass movement that won the support of white working people. Although it never got the active support of the organized labor movement because of racism in those bodies, it won the backing of workers. It changed the consciousness of millions of workers, Black and white, men and women, and other minorities. It is why the racist attitudes among whites toward Blacks is at the lowest level in American history despite continuing attempts by demagogues to whip it up.

The civil rights movement was in essence a Black nationalist movement. That is, it was a movement to end segregation and bring about Black equality. That's what Black nationalism in program means. It was a movement for national liberation, for self-determination, and it fought in the same way as other nationally oppressed people have fought and are fighting for their freedom. The overthrow of Jim Crow, however, as Malcolm explained, could not end racism. Racism is institutionalized in capitalism. Because under capitalism racism is used to keep working people divided to reap superprofits. It is acceptable to society that Blacks are paid less than whites. The battle for full equality means not only formal democracy but real economic democracy. It means sharing the wealth. Blacks voted for Bill Clinton with that hope in mind. Nothing more.

## New Stage of Struggle

A new historical stage of struggle for equality was opened in the mid-1960s with the end of legal segregation. The reason African Americans are not being mobilized against institutional racism today is because that new period is so young and is still unfolding. Moreover, because the new battle requires a fight against capitalism to end racism, the Black liberals and other liberals who led previous fights will be bypassed as effective leaders. They can no longer lead the Black freedom struggle. They can only be won as allies at best.

In fact, Chief of Staff Colin Powell, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and many other Black faces in high places are obstacles to the fight to end institutional racism. That's why, more likely than not, this layer which benefited the most with the end of segregation must be neutralized or opposed.

The material position of the new Black middle class, as they are referred to, makes them more conservative than working Blacks. Being does determine consciousness. The demographics of the Black nationality has significantly changed since the 1865–1965 period. The class divisions politically are deeper. The victory of the civil rights movement opened a new stage of the Black and working class struggle in this country. It is a qualitative change. The last 30 years of U.S. history are unique. For revolutionists to correctly participate and intervene in the Black movement we must recognize this new period.

We saw it during the Los Angeles rebellion last year. It was international news. One of many lessons was the role played by the Black leadership who run the city. The mayor is Black for example. He came down harder on the Black gang youth than the cops who beat Rodney King! Not surprisingly Black youth don't identify with the liberal Black leaders. They can't relate to them. They wear Malcolm X T-shirts and are starting to read what Malcolm said.

## Politics Is Different in U.S. Because of Changes

Politics for all working people is clearer today. During the first 200 years of the United States all class conflicts were camouflaged by the way the Black question existed. Liberals could argue with some success that racism was a legal question. Once laws were changed racism would go away. The class question was harder to see. It is why during the 1930s the CIO never fought racism as a central issue. Labor and Jim Crow could be seen as two different issues.

But in the 1990s it will be impossible for a new CIO-type movement to develop unless Blacks are a central part of the leadership and the fight against racism is a central plank of the class struggle left wing. It will not be possible to win political power otherwise.

The victory of the civil rights movement means that class divisions in the Black nationality are more pronounced. The politics of Black middle class elements and liberals are clearer to see. Liberalism for 25 years has not brought about equality in wages or equal housing or equal education. Legal equality has not lessened the divisions in society. Only a handful of Blacks have benefited. The Black liberals have the same politics as the white liberals and middle class. They have more in common with their close cothinkers among whites than with Black workers. There is a material basis for this. They don't

have to live in all-Black communities of workers. They can live in Beverly Hills or Grosse Pointe, Michigan, where GM executives live.

Racism still exists even for this layer. (Blacks are stopped for the color of their skin, not their wealth or education.) But it isn't the same suffocating racism of the past. They have less reason to use direct action to fight racism. It is them vs. us for this layer. "Them" being Black workers and "us" being the "law-abiding citizens." It is the class question. It is not only the size of the Black middle class that has significantly grown. It is the fact that this layer identifies with the system more than ever before. Before it was a goal to get in. Now they're in, they don't want out.

Another aspect of the victory of the civil rights movement is the larger layer of Black workers in skilled and better paying jobs. This layer provides a potential leadership for the Black nationality now that Black middle class elements will not lead a fightback against racism. Most of these workers face being pushed back down and do live in the Black communities. Black workers, especially in manufacturing jobs, are a higher percentage of the unions and work force than in society as a whole. The most integrated institutions of U.S. society are the unions.

## Blacks in Unions

This did not happen by accident. Black workers in the 1960s and '70s organized caucuses and filed lawsuits to force the unions to open up. Jim Crow locals were disbanded. These total changes have impacted white workers. They are less racist overall. Because of these changes the rulers in their overall offensive against labor over the last 20 years have sought to deepen divisions, using racism and sexism. Thus the attacks on affirmative action and school desegregation. As with women, with the attacks on the right to choose, the capitalists have no intention of paying equal wages to Blacks as a whole. This is why the attacks on affirmative action.

The aim, however, is not to drive Blacks back to Jim Crow. The changing demographics of the country makes that impossible. White males are now a minority of the work force. What the rulers want is a pariah section of the working class. They want to use racism to get white workers who are unemployed or facing unemployment to blame Blacks and immigrants not the employers.

That's why there hasn't been much response by Blacks to new attacks on their rights. Before it was clear: slavery and then legal segregation. Now it is *de facto* segregation and discrimination. The middle class layers that made real gains over the last 25 years are opposed to attacks on Black rights, but not ready to stand up and fight, since they still live pretty well. Their last leadership role was in the civil rights movement. A reform that could be won under capitalism. Ending

racism can't be won short of a victorious socialist revolution.

Black workers provide the only hope for a truly independent Black movement. But Black workers like white workers currently have no alternative leadership. The labor bureaucracy, including Blacks, support the system. They reject an independent labor party, and of course a Black party. They seek accommodation with the capitalists of their own country in a world of sharpening inter-imperialist competition.

There are some positive signs of future African American leadership. Black women workers, for example, are playing a role in the transformation of leadership in the Black community. More Black women are in the working class than ever before, including in basic industry. They've had to fight to gain respect as Blacks and as women.

It means the question of a new Black leadership is more tied to the labor movement than ever before. Because the rulers will try and use the race card more and more to whip up divisions (for example, Klansman David Duke and Republican Patrick Buchanan), it means Black workers will have to push the unions to fight racism, which will mean more changes in the unions.

It doesn't mean the traditional liberal civil rights groups will not play a role. They will. As long as racism exists there will be all types of Black rights' groups including ones made up of up-and-coming Black capitalists.

The rulers are not in a position to grant major concessions to Blacks, any more than to other workers. They need to weaken the labor movement. They need to weaken its allies. Because of the deepening world crisis of capitalism — and the real potential of new trade wars — the new leadership of Blacks must come from workers, or the battle against racism will be lost. It is for these reasons that a revolutionary party must be rooted in the trade unions and Black formations that actively oppose racism.

## Central Task of Socialists

Our central task is to help transform the unions into fighting instruments. This means fighting today to make them take up the issue of racism. Through those combined battles a new leadership of both struggles will arise.

What is our attitude toward formations in the Black community? We seek to work with them on specific issues where we can. We are for an independent Black movement. We seek to take Malcolm X's ideas to all youth, not just Blacks. We aim to rebuild an OAAU in the Black community. We seek a central leadership role of Blacks in the trade unions and in the social movements.

We, however, single out no Black formation as better than others. The Nation of Islam, for example, is a religious sect. Many of you have heard of Louis Farrakhan, the leader of that group. He is sometimes presented as a modern-day Malcolm X. That's

completely false. He is listened to by many Blacks because of racism. But unlike Malcolm, who he condemned at the time, Farrakhan supports the system. He is procapitalist. He supports Democrats. His evolution is not toward revolution but toward adaptation.

## Nationalism of the Oppressed

In one of Malcolm's last interviews he began to elaborate on his more refined world view after his break with the sectarian politics of the Nation of Islam. One of his points concerns nationalism, which I think is quite relevant today in light of the breakup of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. Malcolm stopped promoting Black nationalism as his philosophy. This had nothing to do with Black self-organization. It concerned alliances with others who are oppressed who are not Black.

Black nationalism is not a program. Nationalism of the oppressed is progressive only when it mobilizes Blacks (or others who are oppressed) to fight for equality. It is not progressive when it urges Blacks to support Democrats or capitalism. (Or worse, as we see in the former Yugoslavia and many parts of the former Soviet Union, where ex-Stalinists are using nationalism for chauvinist reasons. That is not progressive.)

Socialists in the United States do advocate the right of Blacks to self-determination without conditions, whatever the views of its leaders. We advocate a policy of class struggle in the Black community. We advocate a consistent fight around democratic rights. What next? Blacks will suffer as the class as a whole suffers, as the capitalist bosses seek to impose their world crisis on working people. The most oppressed will get hit hardest. In the U.S. In Australia. The future leaders will come from these battles. And I am confident new Malcolm Xs among Blacks and whites will take the leadership of the mass struggles for social change.

In closing I will quote from an interview the *Young Socialist* magazine did with Malcolm on January 18, 1965, a month before his assassination. Malcolm was asked: "What is your opinion of the worldwide struggle now going on between capitalism and socialism?"

He answered:

It is impossible for capitalism to survive, primarily because the system of capitalism needs some blood to suck. Capitalism used to be like an eagle, but now it's more like a vulture. It used to be strong enough to go and suck anybody's blood whether they were strong or not. But now it has become more cowardly, like the vulture, and it can only suck the blood of the helpless. As the nations of the world free themselves, then capitalism has less victims, less to suck, and it becomes weaker and weaker. It's only a matter of time in my opinion before it will collapse completely.

That, comrades, is why we are in business. □

# Introduction to Talks on Malcolm X

A militant nationalist trend in the African American community today is highly critical of Spike Lee's movie *Malcolm X*. The main criticism is that the movie distorts and waters down Malcolm's message and takes advantage of the growing interest in him in recent years just to make money, not to help build the movement to carry on his work and bring about the type of revolutionary transformation he foresaw in his last year when he said: "I believe there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing. I believe there will be a clash between those who want freedom, justice and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the systems of exploitation."

Such criticisms were voiced at a forum held in Harlem on November 13, 1992, a few days before the public release of the Spike Lee movie. The title of the forum was "The Continuous X-ploitation of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz: The Man, the Message and the Movement vs. the Movie." (The forum was also described as a rally to stop the pimping and selective sampling of the legacy of Malcolm X.)

The forum was sponsored by the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, which sponsors a regular series, the African International Forum, at the Harriet Tubman School in New York City's Harlem. The first speaker was Elombe Brath, leading spokesperson for the Coali-

tion, who also acted as moderator. The keynote speaker was Dr. John Henrik Clarke, African Historian Emeritus, retired from Hunter College in New York, editor of the anthology *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times*, and an associate of Malcolm's in the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). The last speaker was historian and expert on Malcolm X, Paul Lee.

Other speakers included: Dhoruba bin Wahad, former Black Panther and political prisoner, whose case is continuing in the New York City courts; Amiri Baraka, the prominent African American poet and revolutionary activist; Sonny Carson, of the Committee to Honor Black Heroes, through whose efforts streets and schools have been renamed after Malcolm X; Viola Plummer, also a former political prisoner, now active with the Harriet Tubman-Fannie Lee Hamer Collective; Olive Armstrong, of the Save the Audubon [Ballroom] Coalition.

To continue the discussion we began with Vera Wigglesworth's article on the Spike Lee movie in the January 1993 *BIDOM*, we are printing in this issue excerpts from the talks by Elombe Brath, Dr. John Henrik Clarke, and Paul Lee.

Readers interested in the entire forum can obtain videotapes or audiotapes by contacting the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, 1845 Seventh Ave., Apt. 6C, New York, NY 10026.

## A Criticism of Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*

by Elombe Brath

*The following are excerpts from Elombe Brath's remarks at the November 13 forum. He focused first on Time Warner, the giant conglomerate that produced the movie.*

We're talking about one of the world's largest entertainment and media companies, worth anywhere from \$12 billion up. In 1990, its chief executive, Steve Ross, made \$78.2 million. The kind of publicity they have been able to manifest in the last eighteen months is not just by accident. What has happened is that the movement that for the last 27 years since Malcolm's assassination has kept his name alive through efforts of its own, combating the civil rights argument, and the argument of "turn the other cheek," finally won out at least six years ago. We know that. And because of the impression young people have gained by listening to the voice of Malcolm X, reading his autobiography and his speeches, hearing people talk about him at various lectures at their universities and schools, and as the contradictions have sharpened in U.S. society, particularly as far as racism is concerned, and as the class contradictions have sharpened, they have started to know more and more the reasons why they should listen to his voice. And for that reason there's been a campaign to seize on Malcolm and give a distorted view.

Many of you might have come here on August 7, when we had a program with basically the same individuals who had knowl-

edge of Malcolm personally and had a difference on how they thought he should be portrayed. [...] But we've been fighting on this issue since about 1990 when we tried to build a campaign to save the Audubon Ballroom [where Malcolm during his last year addressed mass meetings of his new organization, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, and where he was assassinated]. That campaign was initiated by a march and demonstration on February 21, 1990, when hundreds of young people came marching up from Harlem to Washington Heights to the Audubon Ballroom with huge signs with a large X on them, and words saying "Malcolm Never Died" and "Nothing But a Man," with Malcolm's face on the back. This was the first time the X was actually used in that manner. It was done by a brother in the December 12 Movement, Omowale Clay. And it was done way before Spike Lee or anybody thought of using the X to symbolize the movie. It was used to symbolize the struggle.

Of course the X goes back even further, to the formation of the Nation of Islam in the Wilderness of North America. And of course the X symbolizes the unknown, our original names being unknown [the memory of them having been destroyed by the slavemasters].

The X was used to indicate what should have been there but was not known.

The point is that this has been exploited. About September last year [1991] *USA Today* put out an article stating that Spike Lee had designed this for his film and that everybody else was using it as a knockoff, an unauthorized copy. That's not true at all.

The movement is the one that's responsible for promoting Malcolm X, his name, his ideas, his message. The movement continues to do this against all odds. The movement came up with the idea of using the X. And all this now is being ripped off because Time Warner had an eighteen-month plan to capitalize on this the way they did with Madonna, who they also control, Ice-T, and all these others that you hear about.

As a matter of fact, a couple of months ago someone asked Spike Lee how his film was coming along, how was it going to be. He said, "Great. It's gonna be better than Batman or the Simpsons." Now when something as important as what we're talking about can be compared in any kind of way with Batman or the Simpsons, you know there's something wrong.

What happened before was that a group of activists declared they were very concerned

about the issue of a film coming out about Malcolm that was being promoted by Spike Lee. Because he had used a kind of deceptive tactic to get the film away from Norman Jewison [the white director originally assigned by Warner Bros. to do the film]. We do agree that a Black director should do the film. But by the same token if he can use that

as a reason for him to determine that this person did not have the ability to do it, by the same token we who have been out here struggling over this issue can make an assessment too, about whether he is really the one to do this film. I know for myself I felt that Gordon Parks would have been a good person. [He]

is a dramatic presenter of information, and he was not given that chance.

Be that as it may, the fact is we gave Spike our arguments and said, "We want to talk to you. We want to discuss this thing about the film." He then did a flipflop and came out with another campaign to try to make believe for the press that this was a personal polemic

## LA Times on Warner's Promotion Efforts (Excerpts from "When X Equals Dollars")

*From the Los Angeles Times, November 3, 1992*

The film *Malcolm X* wouldn't seem to have much in common with *Batman*, but image experts say the X that symbolizes the *Malcolm X* movie may already be among the most recognized film logos of all time, rivaling even the eerie black bat that was used to market [the] caped crusader.

Now the Warner Brothers marketing executives who turned *Batman* into a \$250 million box office hit are trying to make the omnipresent X also represent the almighty dollar symbol. The carefully planned marketing and public relations campaign by Warner, the film distributor, is unlike that for any previous movie from a Black film maker, industry executives say.

...Hollywood's depiction of the life of the slain Black Muslim leader, is expected to be of wide interest to various races, ages, and income levels. In fact, because the film, which opens on November 18, cost so much to make (\$34 million) [although *Batman* cost \$50 million — E.B.] it basically must be marketed to everyone, and painstakingly so.

Until now Warner executives have refused to discuss the marketing of the film, a campaign whose price tag is expected to reach nearly \$10 million by opening day. But in interviews with the [LA] Times two top marketing executives of Warner revealed how carefully over the last eighteen months each phase of the marketing strategy was planned.

In a highly unusual multipronged campaign Warner Brothers is relying heavily upon trailers that portray *Malcolm X* as a relatively moderate man in order to attract older people and whites to see the film. "If people think that the film *Malcolm X* stands for anger and fists in the air, it will be harder to market," said Joel Wayne, executive vice-president of advertising at Warner.

Warner has also taken pains to separate *Malcolm X* from its previous effort at marketing a black movie, *New Jack City*, a film about the violent rise and fall of a Harlem

drug lord, which opened in 1991 to violent incidents in a handful of cities nationwide, including Los Angeles' Westwood area.

"The material in *Malcolm X* is much different from that," said Robert G. Friedman, president of worldwide advertising at Warner. "It is epic in its look and dramatic in its feel. I don't think there's anything inflammatory in the movie."

While trying to make whites comfortable seeing the film, Warner Brothers acknowledges that the success of the film depends greatly on its appeal to Blacks. It has also undertaken an extensive public relations campaign to draw Black audiences, especially young Blacks, to the box office.

"We have set out to position it as a movie for anyone," Friedman said. "We assume the film will first appeal to adults over 25 who have more of a knowledge of who *Malcolm* was. But we also have to find ways to make the film's appeal younger."

"Perhaps the best way to appeal to cross-over audiences of whites and Blacks is to first target teenage Black culture," said John Singleton, director of the film *Boyz n the Hood*. "Young Black culture has had such a profound effect on America at large. It permeates the media. But you have to do your homework. You have to be careful not to insult the core group," he said.

"*Malcolm X* is one of the first Black films with a multigenerational appeal," said Ken Smikel, president of Target Market News, a newsletter about Black consumers. "But film distributors have minimum experience in that area. Perhaps the best way you can get an edge on the learning curve is to draw on the experience of African Americans."

That may be why one of the nation's largest Black advertising firms, Uni-World, was brought in a year ago by Warner Brothers to help it figure out how to reach Black consumers. The agency chose Black-oriented magazines, newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations for the film's ads,

and it also pieced together a carefully orchestrated public relations campaign that began nudging the opinion leaders of the Black community months ago.

"We know that we need a groundswell of positive word-of-mouth opinion about this film," said Byron E. Lewis, chairman of Uni-World, "so we're trying to touch all the bases in the Black community."

Over the last year the agency has brought director Spike Lee and cast members for the film to a series of gatherings of influential, professional Blacks. They showed them at this summer's annual gathering of the National Association of Black Journalists in Detroit, where Lee suggested that African Americans take the film's opening day off to see the film. He also met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Premier-week screenings for Black communities are scheduled in half a dozen major cities.

At the same time Warner Brothers developed a study guide for the film that it will send to urban high school history teachers in the nation's top 100 markets. It will also send *Malcolm X* book covers to schools. And even two separate sound tracks for the film. One features period music from the film aimed at adults. The other contains contemporary popular lyrics from the movie aimed at teenagers.

Certainly Lee, who declined to be interviewed, but who has had a hands-on role in each step of the film's marketing, has taken that approach. For more than a year he has been wearing the X-cap just about everywhere. And his high-profile friends, including Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson, have also donned the caps.

"The X has become an instant icon," said Elroy H. Vick, chief executive for the San Francisco corporate-identity firm Randolph Associates. "It doesn't just stand for a movie, or the passionate, deeply rooted issue of Black pride. It also stands for lots of free publicity, the best marketing that money can't buy."

between himself and Amiri Baraka. Amiri Baraka was one of the pioneers in exploring Black culture in the '60s, you know, the Black arts movement. It never was personal and it was never about getting any money.

A lot of people have been involved in this film and have gotten money for what they were trying to do, and many people are criticizing what has been done. We want you to know that in principle we've never been interested in trying to be official consultants to the film, or to try to get any money from it or from Spike Lee. All we were interested in was how Malcolm X was going to be portrayed, and how the movement was going to be portrayed, because there was more than just Malcolm during that period.

I just wanted to read an excerpt from something to give you an idea that this is not just some hyperbole, nor is it just something we're making up. We feel concerned about Malcolm X. We're not talking any kind of sour grapes or jealousy.

The idea that Time Warner has been very much involved in distorting Malcolm's image comes from some of our brothers, particularly in the Patrice Lumumba Coalition out there in Los Angeles, who sent us this clipping from the Los Angeles Times of November 3, 1992, from the business section. The article is by Bruce Horowitz, "When X Equals Dollars: Spike Lee Movie to Create Instant Icon." [See box on p. 11 for excerpts from Los Angeles Times article.]

The point is not that we were dissatisfied that Black promoters would actually get an opportunity to make money off a Black project. But this gave us the incentive, the determination, to go on line before the film even opens. From what we hear from people who have seen it, and we ourselves have seen parts of it, every criticism we have made has been justified by the product that's about to come forth next week.

And one of the reasons why we came to this conclusion is this. We had the script, and we [compared it to] the original book, the Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley. We were familiar with that. We were familiar with the James Baldwin script [in circulation since 1972], because you can buy it in paperback. It's called *One Day When I Was Lost*. You can buy it in almost any bookstore.

And then we saw the script where Spike Lee had made his own indications of how he was going to treat the whole story. But more than that was what we deduced when we saw the script. You don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to be able to use deductive reasoning. It was clear that Spike Lee was going to play the character of Shorty Anderson, who was the sidekick to Malcolm when he was in the Detroit Red stage. [...] Now, you'll find that Spike Lee has a proclivity to be in his own films but not to do cameo roles. In other words [...] if Spike Lee is going to be in the film playing Shorty Anderson, it tells you that

a sizable amount of the film is going to be based on the time when Malcolm was a hustler, doing the things that he was later going to turn away from — which is when we become interested in him.

So therefore we know the film was going to be tilted, with too much gone into Malcolm's past. Not only that, it's to the omission of half the time when he was in a particular stage that nobody even thinks about. We know about Malcolm Little, when he was a child, from his birth up to what happened with his family. We know about Detroit Red, his hustler days. We know about his prison days as Satan. We know about him as Malcolm X, as a convert. We know about him even as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, when he went to Mecca.

But the most important part, that we don't know about, that you don't often hear, is the stage of Omowale ["the son who has come home," a Yoruba name given to Malcolm in Nigeria]. When Malcolm went to West Africa, where he was able to pick up and deal with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Touré of Guinea, and all these other African leaders, and he came into contact with the Organization of African Unity, which had just formed in 1963. When he got the idea for the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Where he could meet with Dr. [John Henrik] Clarke in Ghana, with Maya Angelou, Julian Mayfield, and others, all people from our community who were based in Ghana trying to build up a relationship between Africans here in the United States and those in Africa. If that's omitted, if that's sacrificed for promotion of a hustler, then the picture has already been distorted.

No matter how glamorous it looks, no matter how slick and sophisticated the photography is, no matter if it makes you laugh at certain times and even feel passionate about dealing with his assassination, if that isn't there, if that's the kind of omission they make, the whole impression is wrong.

Now for Time Warner to be sending out these history packets as the real story, that's a travesty. If you want to know about the real Malcolm X, if you want videos, the best thing to do is get in contact with Gil Noble, with the archives he's putting together now, because Gil Noble was the one that really started pushing [...] these documentaries, like Malcolm speaking at Oxford. Gil went into his own pocket, bought the film, put this whole file together, and helped to keep the real Malcolm out here.

So I'm saying that what we're talking about is opposition to trying to institutionalize a film as being the final determinant of how you ought to view Malcolm X. [Instead you should listen to] those of us who knew Malcolm, those of us who were associated with him, even those of us who were in rival organizations, like I was, with a man who most people overlook. But if Malcolm was alive today he would tell you that the late

honorable Carlos Cooks was responsible for lots of things that people just normally think that other people have done. For instance, the promotion of the red, black, and green [Black nationalist flag], the continuation of Garvey's ideas and his organization, the African Nationalist Pioneer Movement, founded in 1941, the convention in 1959 to get rid of the word "Negro" and replace it with African and Black, the idea of natural hair being a way to indicate our pride, the concept of Buy Black as an economic vehicle for us to make sure that the economy of our community is controlled by the majority of its residents. The idea of Black uniforms. (Later on the Republic of New Africa picked up on that.) The paramilitary force. All those things came from a brother from the Dominican Republic who happened to be an African named Carlos Cooks.

If you read the Autobiography of Malcolm X, he tells you that when he got here he was influenced by the Buy Black people. And if you read the book *Black Nationalism* by Professor Essien-Udom from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, it will tell you that.



So what we're saying is that we're here trying to establish the true image of what Malcolm stood for. The rest of the idea is trying to save the Audubon Ballroom. Because we feel it should be preserved the same way the Ford Theatre was, where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, or the motel where Dr. King was assassinated. The Audubon should be saved.

It's interesting that they never make the connection with the people who were struggling around Malcolm, who shared the objectives he stood for. The same thing with those who went to the United Nations in Geneva in the last four or five years trying to bring up the question of human rights violations against Africans and other people of color in this country. That is what is important. That is what Malcolm needs to be identified with. □

# Unblemished, Uncorrupted Leadership

by John Henrik Clarke

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*The following are excerpts from the remarks by Dr. John Henrik Clarke at the November 13 forum.*

These are very critical times in our life as a people. Once more we are standing at the crossroads of history. And I have a great [feeling of] dilemma — that we are debating minor things and neglecting major subjects. I have not seen the film, and therefore I will have little to say about the film.

In my brief discussion with Spike Lee [...] I suggested that maybe the film should open when they threw the mangled body of Malcolm's father on the porch. And Malcolm as a kid, tugging at his mother's apron and asking, "What happened to father?" And his mother going slowly out of her mind.

Because that was the beginning of the making of the mind of Malcolm X. Because he began to deal with the contradiction in this nation. He had to go through a whole lot of other contradictions. People telling him what he could not be. Then the challenge within himself. And the question, "Why can't I be what other people are?"

I think one of the main reasons why at this juncture in history that a whole lot of phony people are gravitating toward the image of Malcolm X and a whole lot of sincere people are also gravitating toward that image, is that they sense something in Malcolm X that is needed not only by this people but by all people. Unblemished, uncorrupted, uncompromised leadership.

We've had so many hustlers disguised as leaders. So many peddlers of people. We keep looking back at Malcolm and keep examining him over and over again. What was the lesson that he taught? He taught a lesson around a subject that impinges on our minds now, and we are confused about how to grapple with that subject, and that subject is land and nation. Because land is the basis of nation.

You can talk all you want to about liberation. If you have no control over the land, you cannot solidify the nation. Zimbabwe is a good example. They came to pseudo independence with whites controlling most of the land and most of the food supply. That's not independence. That's programmed dependence.

Now why the gravitation toward Malcolm X? Haven't we gone through a battery of leaders? Haven't we examined them and [found them wanting]? What we miss in

looking at a Malcolm X is how Malcolm X related to the radical ministry of the past.

I knew Malcolm X from 1958, when we met, until two weeks before he was assassinated, and I talked with him consistently. I did not, even in the book that I compiled on Malcolm X, say very much about my relationship to him. So many phonies popped up after his death saying they were friends and pals of Malcolm X. I didn't want to be associated with these phonies. So I kept my relationship to myself. Most of it I have not written about to this day.

He was a man, one of the fastest learners that I have ever met in my life. You could give him information and he would read this information back to you, teaching you lessons over and above your instruction to him without offending you. He would speak to several audiences simultaneously using the same words without offending anyone in the audience. He could speak to the reader and the nonreader, to the college professor and the illiterate, simultaneously, and his message would get across to all of them.

What then is the significance of Malcolm X for today? He called not only for the restoration of nationhood, womanhood, manhood, he called for us to restore to our historical memory the time when we were not dependent on other people to make decisions for us. When we were the masters of our own destiny. He called on us to reconsider our position, not in the United States, but in the world.

The idea of an African American unity patterned after the Organization of African Unity started in the Saturday meetings after he broke with the Nation [of Islam]. He began to have these meetings at Old Flash Inn on McCombs Place on Saturday morning when the cafe had no customers. Out of these meetings came the structure and the idea for the Muslim Mosque, Inc., and the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

The constitution of the OAAU was fashioned in my livingroom. Charles Kenyatta, still alive, was there. Lynn Chipplet, now in northern California, was the secretary. My former wife was there. My mother-in-law, still alive, was there. So I'm not talking about ancient history or any kind of mystery. When we found matching phraseology in the Organization of African Unity, when we could

approximate their words in developing the constitution for the Organization of African American Unity, he was as happy as a child.

And it is little known that Malcolm X, and this is what made him so devastatingly effective, he had a non-Muslim "cabinet" that fed him information but never told him what to do or how to do it. Yet we made sure that the information he dispensed was always correct. No one told him what to do with the facts but they made sure that the facts were straight.

The most memorable thing for me in this regard is [one time when] he wanted something on history — because I was in his historical cabinet. His man picked it up at 7, he didn't get to read it until 9, and at 11 he debated four college professors on the Congo situation. He reduced them to crying children.

I gave him some newspaper clippings, some xeroxes of E.D. Morel's work on King Leopold's Congo, and I gave him a small book, tantamount to a goodsized pamphlet, by Mark Twain, King Leopold's Soliloquy, that had a lot of statistics about murder in the Congo. I told him an old trick that I used to play often when I was active in the left movement. When people are talking about something you don't know anything about, always switch the conversation to something you know about. [...] Malcolm played that trick on those college professors, and they were begging for mercy. That was Malcolm. Sharp in mind, sharp in information.

I'm going to talk briefly about some neglected aspects of his life and some misinterpretations, some misconceptions about some of the things he did. I do not think we have studied his growth, his evolution very well. I do not think that we have put the right emphasis on how he came out of the mire. [...]

I first met him in 1958 — he came to look at the Nation of Islam's exhibit at the World Trade Show building, the African Heritage Exposition. He saw someone hanging around me, a Hungarian girl, and he kept looking, and when she left, he came over and said, "That your woman?" I said, "No." He said, "Good. That's a dead-end street. I've been down that street." He went away, then he came over again, looked me up and down and said, "I bet you're a pork eater." I admitted that I visited the pork chop once in a while

and that I had been known to admire and to enjoy some chitlins. He suspected it. Throughout all our relationship he kept razzing me about being a pork eater, a swine eater. He said, "You're a decent human being, I'm gonna give you 99. Leave that swine alone, I'll give you 100." I stopped eating pork about fifteen years ago. It had nothing to do with religion at all; it had something to do with health. I wanted to live a little longer, and my high blood pressure just simply wouldn't take it.

Soon after this meeting he started a newspaper. He called it Mr. Muhammad Speaks. It later became *Muhammad Speaks*. And if you look at that first issue, if you're ever fortunate enough to get a rare thing like that, you'll find an article I wrote on the historical background of Nigeria. I told him how broke I was. I had been recently married for the second time, and the job market wasn't going too good. I was working at night at a bank and editing a magazine that paid me the magnificent sum of about \$70 a week. My wife was pregnant. Malcolm X paid me out of his own pocket, I found out years later. It wasn't the Nation's money; it was his own money.

### The March on Washington

You see, he began to pull around him people who could advise him on the facts of the evolution and change in our movement. He was interested in every aspect of that movement. On the eve of the March on Washington [in 1963] he too was restless and asked for permission to participate in the march. Permission was not granted. This was part of the beginning of some difficulties [in the Nation of Islam]. When it was discovered that Elijah Muhammad's health wasn't too good, certain jealous rivalries began to develop within the Fruit of Islam, and among some other people, who were thinking he would be the natural head of the Nation in the absence of Elijah Muhammad. Certain forces began to move against him within the Nation.

He had become the spokesman for the Nation. He had given the Nation a national presence. And many times, when he was prefacing his speech with the words "The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us," he, Malcolm X, was teaching lessons over and above anything the Honorable Elijah Muhammad ever thought about. Yet he was crediting Elijah Muhammad for his words. Because in Elijah Muhammad Malcolm X had found the lost father, the father that they threw on that porch — the Ku Klux Klan. He had again found a father image in his life. And he loved and respected Elijah Muhammad like a father and tried to communicate with him up until within a week of his death. Only to have his letters and his tapes intercepted. Elijah Muhammad would die without ever getting those last messages and that plea from Malcolm X for the two of them to get together and put that movement together again and heal the breach between them.

These are some of the things very few people know about, very few people write about.

Because Malcolm X knew the good that the Nation was doing, taking people out of prison, making them whole again, making them clean up themselves again, making them throw away old habits for new habits, teaching them respect for women again, teaching them responsibility again. And the movement of Elijah Muhammad was not stealing people from the little church or the big church, because they weren't in there. These were the people out there with no appreciable rallying point, with no appreciable leadership, who had found basic leadership.

[You have to understand] the good of the Nation of Islam, whether you believe in Islam or not. And that's not the issue I'm trying to get across here, because I don't believe in any form of organized religion. I believe in spirituality, and I believe in people. I believe in commitment. I believe in the worth of human beings. I believe in honor. I am an African nationalist and a Pan-Africanist. And if you ever gave me a proper definition of Marxism that would fit within my Pan-Africanism and my African nationalism, I would be a Marxist. But if it takes me out of there, then you can have it. Because we had the same thing, without dogma, without formulation, before Europeans wore shoes or lived in houses that had a window. We didn't have to go to Europe for that kind of thing anyway, for that kind of society.

What I'm trying to get at is that on the eve of the March on Washington, when he was not given permission to participate in that big arena — although in the final analysis it was a picnic on the grass that achieved absolutely nothing. [To him] it was symbolic that the other organizations were going there, participating. He wanted the right to do the same thing. And I think he would have had something meaningful to contribute to the March on Washington. It might have had substance with Malcolm X in it. Martin Luther King had a dream. Malcolm X would have had a plan. Soon after this, after the "chickens coming home to roost" speech [he was silenced]. And it really wasn't this speech. They wanted an excuse to get him out anyway, so they used this flimsy excuse. And when he saw that he wasn't going to be asked to come back into the Nation, he began to formulate ideas, organizational ideas, of his own. [He began] hurriedly, with such personnel and such support as he could get. Some were Muslims and some were non-Muslims. Some followed him out of the Nation, some rallied around him out of respect. [...] But he was moving fast.

Now when we go to Africa, the trip to North Africa was not as significant as the trip to West Africa. And yet the trip to West Africa is basically left out of the [Spike Lee] movie, so I've been told. There was an attempt to poison him in Egypt. This was no doubt because he did not know the warring factions

within Islam. In the name of Allah, there have always been warring factions within Islam, and still are, even now. He got trapped between these warring factions. Both of them wanted to control him.

When he went on the Hajj to Mecca, and when he wrote back that he saw black Muslims, white Muslims, brown Muslims worshipping together, that was an observation, not an analysis. Too many people think this means he was now an integrationalist. Soon after he arrived back here, he made clear he had not changed his ideas on race one iota — if you're trying to say that near the end of his life he became an integrationalist.

### Martin Luther King

Well near the end of his life he met Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X had the same basic objective, walking down different roads using different methodology. Martin Luther King's method would not succeed, because Martin Luther King was appealing to the conscience of the oppressor, not knowing that the oppressor had no conscience. It was idealistic, but it was totally impractical. Malcolm X said in simple direct words again and again, "The oppressor has no conscience. The oppressor has not accepted your manhood or your womanhood."

I think the most unfortunate thing of the many unfortunate things that happened to Malcolm X is that a bunch of political opportunists gained control over his speeches. [This is a reference to Pathfinder Press, the publishing house now influenced by the Jack Barnes leadership team of the SWP. Betty Shabazz, Malcolm's widow, gave Pathfinder exclusive rights to publish material by Malcolm.] They began to publish his speeches and interpret them, trying to prove that he was what they desired him to be.

Malcolm X is too big to fit into any kind of bowl. He's too big to fit into any bowl marked communism, socialism, or capitalism. He was a believer in the ultimate destiny of his people. Among his many revolutionary statements, his two last revolutionary statements [are the most important] — "Ballot or the Bullet" and "Message to the Grassroots". In both of them he dealt with political power and the land question as the basis of the nation.

Some will argue about who assassinated him and why. But Malcolm X learned something on his way home, [after] he arrived in Paris and was barred from entering — [after that] he knew that the plan to destroy him was not designed by his own people. He knew that the apparatus was bigger than anything controlled by his own people. And he became somewhat fatalistic. He knew that master murderers were out to get him and no matter whose hand pulled the trigger, that was not the planning and design of Black people.

Once you show your people the true face of power and what to do about it in this

*Continued on page 23*



# The Magnitude of Malcolm, the Enormity of His Loss

by Paul Lee

*The following are remarks made by Paul Lee at the end of the forum on Malcolm X held in Harlem on November 13, 1992. Paul Lee, a widely recognized authority on Malcolm X, was a consultant in the making of the Spike Lee movie. Paul Lee's speech is preceded by comments about him made by moderator Elombe Brath, first, earlier in the evening, then, just before he spoke.*

**Elombe Brath:** I want to introduce a young brother who is one of the few people who's seriously studied Malcolm X. He first came on the scene as a very young brother — I first met him down with Gil Noble [maker of documentaries on Malcolm X] — and he had decided as a young man he was going to dedicate his life to trying to deal with Malcolm X. I just wanted to recognize him because some people say we don't recognize the youth. But this brother, out of the various people Spike Lee says he talked to, this brother I endorse as really knowing data on Malcolm X. He's from Detroit, but he came here tonight because he wanted to hear our program. He is a brother that for the statistics and dates and everything even I myself, a collector like myself, sometimes I have to call this young brother and tell him, "Hey man, let me check this out and see if this is correct," because I know that he knows it.

Now the brother who is, like I said, an expert on following the life of Malcolm X is Paul Lee. Standing right over here, the young brother, Paul Lee. The reason I introduce him is they're saying we have a war with anyone who worked on the film. No, that's not so. I've got to say that the brother tried to do something; he did the best he could, and even so the film was still messed up.

Paul Lee, the brother that I talked about before, the young consultant, a brother that has done a lot of work on Malcolm, would like just to say a parting word to you.

**Paul Lee:** I recognize that the hour is late, but I'd appreciate your indulgence just for a few minutes. I appreciated Brother Elombe's kind and generous words earlier. I'd like to clarify something, however, about my own role as the historical consultant on Spike Lee's film. My role with Spike has been little different from my role as consultant for Gil Noble, or for the episode on Malcolm in *Eyes on the Prize II* [the Public Broadcasting Service documentary on the civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s], and others.

I see it as my duty and responsibility to assist vehicles where Malcolm can speak for himself. Because the truth of the matter is that Malcolm speaks best for himself. Unfortunately, despite the fact that Malcolm is one of the most articulate, powerful, and compelling

orators of this century, so much of Malcolm's legacy is still little understood and appreciated.

I say that from experience. I've been researching Malcolm X's life for nearly twenty years. I started when I was fourteen, and I'm thirty-two now. The research has gone beyond anything that I would have imagined. If someone had told me, when I began the research, that this many years later I'd still be doing it, I would have looked at them like they were crazy.

To give you an idea of how the research has grown and how it has changed my appraisal of Malcolm, I'll tell you this. In 1989 Gil Noble sent me to Europe to do research on Malcolm for the National Black Archives of Film & Broadcasting, Inc., which he is setting up. I began to confront Malcolm over there in a context different from that over here. In Europe — that is, the so-called metropole, which has colonized most of the rest of the world — the records of what Malcolm said in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe were preserved there. So I got a chance to see Malcolm's discourse outside of the American context. It shook me so badly that I almost gave my research up.

What I began to recognize is that it appears that Malcolm read Americans, and I think correctly so, as politically parochial. And you'll notice, those of you who read or listen to Malcolm, that often when he talks to Americans his language is full of very simplistic, easily accessible metaphors: foxes, wolves, chickens, ducks. When he was abroad Malcolm spoke in grounded specifics and displayed a political astuteness and diplomatic sagacity that made me want to give up my research. I asked myself, Who is this man? And I've come to the conclusion that I am far from being able to draw a line under Malcolm and say, This is who he is.

I think that we, unfortunately, don't recognize — WHO WE LOST!

I think we are a long way from gauging the magnitude of Malcolm's contribution and the enormity of his loss.

When Malcolm was in Egypt he described President Gamal Abdel Nasser as a leader who was *sui generis*, which means "one of a kind." He said Nasser was an African in the world of Arabs and an Arab in the world of Africans. Malcolm was similarly broad, and

difficult to pigeonhole. And I found it interesting that listening closely to the speakers tonight, you'd almost think there were as many Malcolms as there were speakers.

Malcolm actually faced these pressures during his lifetime [that different people perceived him in different ways]. After he was ousted from Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam and he traveled abroad, Malcolm X's consciousness began to broaden and also his appeal. But the appeal, unfortunately, tended to be sectioned off. People found aspects of Malcolm attractive and serviceable for their own agendas or positions.

Malcolm confided to an associate shortly before he was assassinated: "For the Muslims, I'm too worldly; for other groups, I'm too religious; for the militants, I'm too moderate; and for the moderates, I'm too militant. I feel like I'm on a tightrope." He told the same thing to Alex Haley, the writer for his autobiography, and concluded: "They won't let me turn the corner!"

I commend you not only to confront the creative works but I also suggest to you that no one film COULD do Malcolm justice, no one book could do Malcolm justice. [Applause.] And I think we need to be careful about allowing ourselves to be too distracted by creative works and interpretations.

I commend you to try to understand Malcolm more, because I think that you will find, as young people have found, that much of what Malcolm said is more immediately relevant to our lives today than it was when he said it.

Young people, as a matter of fact, in my opinion, have outstripped us during the last five years. The rap and hip-hop artists, specifically KRS-One, Public Enemy, and X-Clan, have done more to rescue and redefine Malcolm's image from the pejorative stereotyping and demonization that he suffered from during his lifetime than all us egghead scholars combined. And I suggest that you follow their cue and confront Malcolm the man as directly as possible.

I'll end by saying this: We need less rhetoric and more research. Thank you so much. □

# The Struggle over Africa

by Malcolm X

*In his last year Malcolm X often commented on the crafty, hypocritical approach taken by American imperialism toward Africa. His excoriation of America's "humanitarian" pretense is particularly thought-provoking at this time of U.S. intervention in Somalia. In the following excerpts Malcolm discusses U.S. policy toward Africa and the relation between African Americans and their home continent. The excerpts are from a speech he gave in Detroit on February 14, 1965, one week before he was assassinated. The meeting he spoke to was sponsored by the Afro-American Broadcasting Company. The excerpts are from *Malcolm X Speaks* as edited by George Breitman.*

Now what effect does [the struggle over Africa] have on us? Why should the black man in America concern himself since he's been away from the African continent for three or four hundred years? Why should we concern ourselves? What impact does what happens to them have upon us? Number one, you have to realize that up until 1959 Africa was dominated by the colonial powers. Having complete control over Africa, the colonial powers of Europe projected the image of Africa negatively. They always project Africa in a negative light: jungle savages, cannibals, nothing civilized. Why then naturally it was so negative that it was negative to you and me, and you and I began to hate it. We didn't want anybody telling us anything about Africa, much less calling us Africans. In hating Africa and in hating the Africans, we ended up hating ourselves, without even realizing it. Because you can't hate the roots of a tree, and not hate the tree. You can't hate your origin and not end up hating yourself. You can't hate Africa and not hate yourself.

You show me one of these people over here who has been thoroughly brainwashed and has a negative attitude toward Africa, and I'll show you one who has a negative toward himself. You can't have a positive attitude toward yourself and a negative attitude toward Africa at the same time. To the same degree that your understanding of and attitude toward Africa become positive, you'll find that your understanding of and attitude toward yourself will also become positive. And this is what the white man knows. So they very skillfully make you and me hate our African identity, our African characteristics.

You know yourself that we have been a people who hated our African characteristics. We hated our heads, we hated the shape of our nose, we wanted one of those long dog-like noses, you know; we hated the color of our skin, hated the blood of Africa that was in our veins. And in hating our features and our skin and our blood, why, we had to end up hating ourselves. And we hated ourselves. Our color became to us a chain — we felt that it was holding us back; our color became to us like a prison which we felt was keeping us confined, not letting us go this way or that way. We felt that all of these restrictions were based solely upon our color, and the psychological reaction to that would have to be that as long as we felt imprisoned or chained or

trapped by black skin, black features and black blood, that skin and those features and that blood holding us back automatically had to become hateful to us.

It made us feel inferior; it made us feel inadequate; made us feel helpless. And when we fell victims to this feeling of inadequacy or inferiority or helplessness, we turned to somebody else to show us the way. We didn't have confidence in another black man to show us the way, or black people to show us the way. In those days we didn't. We didn't think a black man could do anything except play some horns — you know, make some sound and make you happy with some songs and in that way. But in serious things, where our food, clothing, shelter and education were concerned, we turned to the man. We never thought in terms of bringing these things into existence for ourselves, we never thought in terms of doing things for ourselves. Because we felt helpless. What made us feel helpless was our hatred for ourselves. And our hatred for ourselves stemmed from our hatred for things African....

After 1959 the spirit of African nationalism was fanned to a high flame and we then began to witness the complete collapse of colonialism. France began to get out of French West Africa, Belgium began to make moves to get out of the Congo, Britain began to make moves to get out of Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, Nigeria and some of these other places. And although it looked like they were getting out, they pulled a trick that was colossal.

When you're playing ball and they've got you trapped, you don't throw the ball away — you throw it to one of your teammates who's in the clear. And this is what the European powers did. They were trapped on the African continent, they couldn't stay there — they were looked upon as colonial and imperialist. They had to pass the ball to someone whose image was different, and they passed the ball to Uncle Sam. And he picked it up and has been running it for a touchdown ever since. He was in the clear, he was not looked upon as one who had colonized the African continent. At that time the Africans couldn't see that though the United States hadn't colonized the African continent, it had colonized 22 million blacks here on this continent. Because we're just as thoroughly colonized as anybody else.

When the ball was passed to the United States, it was passed at the time when John Kennedy came into power. He picked it up and helped to run it. He was one of the shrewdest backfield runners that history has ever recorded. He surrounded himself with intellectuals — highly educated, learned and well-informed people. And their analysis told him that the government of America was confronted with a new problem. And this new problem stemmed from the fact that Africans were now awakened, they were enlightened, they were fearless, they would fight. This meant that the Western powers couldn't stay there by force. Since their own economy, the European economy and the American economy was based upon their continued influence over the African continent, they had to find some means of staying there. So they used the friendly approach.

They switched from the old openly colonial imperialistic approach to the benevolent approach. They came up with some benevolent colonialism, philanthropic colonialism, humanitarianism, or dollarism. Immediately everything was Peace Corps, Operation Crossroads, "We've got to help our African brothers." Pick up on that: can't help us in Mississippi. Can't help us in Alabama, or Detroit, or out here in Dearborn where some real Ku Klux Klan lives. They're going to send all the way to Africa to help. [...]

So, realizing that it was necessary to come up with these new approaches, Kennedy did it. He created an image of himself that was skillfully designed to make the people on the African continent think that he was Jesus, the great white father, come to make things right. [...] From 1954 to 1964 was the era in which we witnessed the emerging of Africa. The impact that this had on the civil-rights struggle in America has never been fully told.

For one thing, one of the primary ingredients in the complete civil-rights struggle was the Black Muslim movement. The Black Muslim movement took no part in things political, civic — it didn't take too much part in anything other than stopping people from doing this drinking, smoking, and so on. Moral reform it had, but beyond that it did nothing. But it talked such a strong talk that it put the other Negro organizations on the spot. [...]

One of the things that made the Black Muslim movement grow was its emphasis

upon things African. This was the secret to the growth of the Black Muslim movement. African blood, African origin, African culture, African ties. And you'd be surprised — we discovered that deep within the subconscious of the black man in this country, he is still more African than he is American. He *thinks* that he's more American than African, because the man is jiving him, the man is brainwashing him every day. He's telling him, "You're an American, you're an

American." Man, how could you think you're an American when you haven't ever had any kind of an American treat over here? You have never, never. Ten men can be sitting at a table eating, you know, dining, and I can come and sit down where they're dining. They're dining; I've got a plate in front of me, but nothing is on it. Because all of us are sitting at the same table, are all of us diners? I'm not a diner until you let me dine. Just being at the table with others who are dining

doesn't make me a diner, and this is what you've got to get in your head here in this country.

Just because you're in this country doesn't make you an American. No, you've got to go farther than that before you can become an American. You've got to enjoy the fruits of Americanism. You haven't enjoyed those fruits. You've enjoyed the thorns. You've enjoyed the thistles. But you have not enjoyed the fruits, no sir. □

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## One of the Dangers of the Somalia Operation

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# Stepped-Up Western Intervention in Zaïre

by Serge MuKende

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*The following remarks were made by Congolese activist Serge MuKende at the end of a forum sponsored by the Patrice Lumumba Coalition in Harlem on December 4, 1992, on the subject "Cointelpro, Covert Action, and the Destruction of Black Leaders and Organizations."*

Sisters and Brothers, Good Evening.

I have just three things to announce. First of all, the struggle in the Congo, misnamed Zaïre, has been intensified to the point that Mobutu and the forces of occupation have intensified the militarization of the society and economy of the country as a whole. Secondly, they have intensified the oppression of your people over there. As you may know, that country is occupied militarily by U.S. troops, Belgians, South Africans, Israelis, French, and Germans. But what concerns us most is the latest decision of Western countries to send more troops to help Mobutu and the present government. They said the Communists are coming and they will destroy our interests. So the Belgian government put its army on alert, and it will send its forces to the Congo in a matter of weeks.

But the reason why they can send troops to the Congo is because they convey the impression that when they send the troops there, they can recall them back. Which is not the case. Because if they were to let people know they were maintaining a military base there, a movement of opposition could develop.

So at the same time, by conveying that impression, what is happening is that the

people can say, "Oh, they are going there to save the lives of Western nationals," as they have said before. But all of us know that when they go there the first place they go is to save the regime of Mobutu, to protect his palace, and the second place is to go to the mining area and protect the mines — for reasons that everybody can understand.

More important in our case is the movement of U.S. troops into Somalia. Because that movement sends a chilling message to us. In the sense that when the U.S. troops go there, take it into account that there are also Rapid Deployment Forces in Kenya, in Egypt, in Saudi Arabia, and there is a French base in the Central African Republic, just north of us, and in Gabon, in Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Cameroun. And each time that we rise up, those troops are coming and intervening.

In the case of the United States, it has a major military base in the Congo, which can be used as a springboard to intervene in southern Africa, and in central, east, and west Africa. But in the case of the U.S. going into Somalia militarily, it has a chilling effect on us in the sense that those troops can be diverted and brought into Congo as they have been before.

We have experienced U.S. troops since November 24, 1964. They have continued to come many times, and nobody has raised a finger even to condemn them. Each time they have come up with the same excuse of a humanitarian rescue mission. Which means they are going to rescue humanitarian copper, humanitarian uranium, humanitarian gold, and humanitarian diamonds, not to rescue human beings, as you and I may know.

I don't want to take too long. I am just asking you to support us because the intensification of armed struggle on our part has reached a certain level, so that all the Western countries have begun to be concerned about their interests. Last week BBC came up with a long report on the armed struggle in the old area which was known as the Lumumbist area. We think the fact that they are starting to scream now is important for us, because we didn't have the possibility to break through into the major media. But since they themselves have started to talk about it, this is very important. So what we have to do is continue to press hard until we bring about the triumph of our people's aspirations for liberation. Thank you very much. □

# Revolutionary Integrationism and Black Liberation

by Peter Johnson

**B**lack liberation is a key strategic question of the American revolution. Next to the self-emancipation of the working class, it is *the* key question. If Black and white workers struggle together for socialism and Black liberation — under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party — they can win both. If they do not, they can win neither. This truth about the American revolution has been accepted in the communist movement, at least in words, since the Communist International first intervened to insist that the “Black question” in the U.S. was more than just an aspect of the “class question.” But there have been important differences in the way revolutionary Marxists have analyzed Black oppression and posed the concrete goals and tasks of the combined struggle for socialism and Black liberation.

The two main poles in the discussion in the American communist movement have been “revolutionary integrationism” and “revolutionary nationalism.” Revolutionary integrationists argue that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to Black equality and integration, so that Black people, individually and collectively, can decide how they want to participate in building socialism in a unified workers’ state. Revolutionary nationalists argue that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to a separate Black nation-state, so that Black people can exercise the right of self-determination in the Marxist sense, the right to secede or not to secede, as they decide.

Evelyn Sell in her article “How the Concept of the Dual Nature of the African American Struggle Developed” in the December 1992 issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* reviewed the history of the debate from a revolutionary nationalist standpoint. In this article I want to present an argument for the revolutionary integrationist view. In this I see myself as following in the footsteps of Richard Fraser, who defended revolutionary integrationism in the Socialist Workers Party in the 1950s and 1960s. In a future article I will develop and document some important historical points that I can only assert in this article, for reasons of space.

The debate in the communist movement over revolutionary integrationism versus revolutionary nationalism is of theoretical interest, but it also has profound practical

implications. What should Trotskyists say to young Blacks who have fought the cops in the streets of Los Angeles or have seen Spike Lee’s movie “X” and are trying to come to grips with the legacy of Malcolm X? Do we say that the key to Black liberation is the separatist struggle for an independent Black nation-state somewhere in North America? Or for community control of the impoverished Black ghettos? Or do we say that the key to Black liberation is the integrated struggle of Black and white workers, based on shared self-interest, for socialism, racial equality, and an end to economic and social as well as legal Jim Crow in the U.S.? These are the “practical” questions in the debate.

### Development of the SWP’s Position on Black Liberation

As Evelyn’s article points out, the American Communist Party (CP/USA) held a revolutionary nationalist position, at least on paper, from 1928 to 1959. The CP/USA distinguished between the so-called “black belt,” the agricultural area of rich black soil (from which the name is derived) and poor Black farmers extending across the inland South from Virginia to Louisiana. At the time, 86 percent of American Blacks lived in the South, 74 percent of Southern Blacks lived in rural areas, and half of these lived in “black belt” counties in which they constituted a majority of the population — about a third of the Black population in the U.S. The CP/USA called for “full social and political equality” for Blacks outside the “black belt” and “national self-determination” for Blacks in the “black belt.”

As Evelyn’s article also points out, the first exchange between Trotsky and his American followers on Black liberation was a discussion between Trotsky and Arne Swabeck in Prinkipo, Turkey, in February 1933. Swabeck criticized the revolutionary nationalist position of the CP/USA and presented a revolutionary integrationist position, although one marred by the American Trotskyists’ lack of Black comrades, lack of practical experience in the Black struggle, and apparent passivity in the face of these weaknesses. Trotsky countered with the following argument:

The point of view of the American comrades appears to me not fully convincing...

The Negroes are a race and not a nation: — Nations grow out of the racial material under definite conditions...

We do not, of course, obligate the Negroes to become a nation; if they are, then that is a question of their consciousness, that is, what they desire and what they strive for. We say: If the Negroes want that, then we must fight against imperialism to the last drop of blood, so that they gain the right, wherever and how they please, to separate a piece of land for themselves...

...I would in this question rather lean toward the standpoint of the [Communist] Party; of course, with the observation: I have never studied this question and in my remarks I proceed from the general considerations. [Uncorrected transcript of a discussion with Trotsky, February 28, 1933, in Leon Trotsky *On Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, edited by George Breitman, New York: Merit Publishers, 1972, pp. 12,13,15]

As Evelyn’s article points out, the next and last major exchange between Trotsky and his American followers on Black liberation was a discussion between Trotsky and a delegation of Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leaders including J.R. Johnson (C.L.R. James) in Coyoacán, Mexico, in April 1939. By this time Trotsky had learned much more about the situation of Blacks in the U.S. through his interaction with the American comrades, particularly after he arrived in Mexico in January 1937. Also, the information provided by Johnson and the other SWP leaders was more complete than that provided by Swabeck six years earlier. Like Swabeck, Johnson presented a revolutionary integrationist position overall, but he proposed the following formulation on national self-determination:

I therefore propose concretely: (1) That we are for the right of self-determination. (2) If some demand should arise among the Negroes for the right of self-determination, we should support it. (3) We do not go out of our way to raise this slogan and place an unnecessary barrier between ourselves and socialism. (4) An investigation should be made into these movements; the one led by Garvey, the movement for the 49th state, the movement centering around Liberia. Find out what groups of the population supported them and on this basis come to some opinion as to how far there is any demand among the Negroes for self-determination. [Uncorrected transcript of a discussion with Trotsky, April 4, 1939, in Leon Trotsky *On Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, edited by George Breitman, New York: Merit Publishers, 1972, p. 26]

Trotsky no longer held the CP/USA position of raising the slogan of national self-determination for the "black belt" South. He agreed with Johnson's formulation.

The SWP adopted the Trotsky-Johnson position at its July 1-4, 1939 National Convention. The resolution "The Right of Self-Determination and the Negro in the United States of North America" supported the right of Black people to form a separate nation-state, if they wished to do so, but opposed the SWP's raising the slogan until large numbers of Blacks began raising it themselves.

This remained the SWP's position on Black liberation through the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s, however, the SWP sharply revised its position in a nationalist direction. George Breitman was the main theoretician of the change. The document "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation" adopted by the 1969 National Convention reflects four major shifts of position. First, Blacks in the U.S. are identified as "an oppressed nationality." This is presented as a reality, rather than a future possibility. Second, "self-determination" is presented as the goal of the "nationalist" aspect of the Black liberation struggle, rather than a possible future goal. Third, "self-determination" is advocated by the SWP, rather than held as a possible future slogan. Finally, and most revealing, "self-determination" is redefined. It is no longer used in the Marxist sense of the decision by a nation whether to secede and form a separate state, but rather in the "Bundist" sense of "control of the Black communities and all the institutions within them."

### Fraser's 1955 Position

There are times in the development of Marxist science when revisions of position and even method are essential. By the mid-1950s the SWP needed to revise its position on Black liberation, using the method of the 1939 discussions with Trotsky and the National Convention resolutions that derived from them. The necessary revision, however, was in the opposite direction of the one the SWP actually made in the 1960s.

In 1939 the SWP had adopted a dual perspective: a revolutionary integrationist struggle in the present and a possible revolutionary nationalist struggle in the future. In their discussions with Trotsky, both Swabek and Johnson had supported the right of national self-determination for a possible future Black nation, but they were more skeptical than Trotsky that such a nation would develop. By the mid-1950s it was obvious that they had been right.

The SWP needed to revise its position, maintaining the general proposition that any oppressed group that wished to separate had the right to do so, but that Black "self-determination," in the sense of state secession, was almost as irrelevant to Black liberation as secession of a Jewish state from the U.S. was

to Jewish liberation or secession of a women's state was to women's liberation.

Richard Fraser was the most prominent voice in the SWP demanding a change of position in the 1950s and early 1960s. His 1955 document "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle" was a landmark. While the document has secondary problems, such as the view that Jews outside Israel are "a nation without a territory," it is correct in its main propositions. Fraser summarized these as follows:

1. The Negro question in the United States is not a national one, but is a question of racial discrimination.

2. I disagree with the proposition that the study of the national question in the Russian revolution gives specific illumination to the Negro question in the United States, except that it reveals a qualitative difference between them.

3. Essentially, only the complete victory of fascism in the U.S. could transform the movement for direct assimilation through immediate equality into one of racial independence.

4. The dual nature of the Negro struggle arises from the fact that a *whole people*, regardless of class distinction, are the victims of discrimination. This problem of a whole people can be solved only through the proletarian revolution, under the leadership of the working class. The Negro struggle is, therefore, not the same as the class struggle, but in its independent character is allied to the working class. Because of the independent form of the Negro movement, it does not thereby become a national or separatist struggle, but draws its laws of development from its character as a racial struggle against segregation and discrimination.

5. The question of self-determination is not the question which is at stake in the Negro struggle.

6. We have in our resolution and in the party consciousness on the Negro question, as expressed by Comrade Breitman, a conception of Negro nationalism and the importance of the idea of Negro self-determination. I believe that this should be combated and eliminated. First, because it is dialectically incorrect. Second, because most Negroes are hostile to it on a completely progressive basis. Third, because it teaches white workers nothing but tends to confirm their traditional race prejudice. ["For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle," in *SWP Discussion Bulletin* A-30, August 1955, original emphasis]

### "Nations Grow out of the Racial Material under Definite Conditions"

Fraser's choice of a title for his document was not accidental. He wanted to stress an element in the Trotsky-Johnson approach to the Black question that was almost wholly absent from the later Breitman approach: materialism. Trotsky acknowledged the subjective element in the development of nations when he said, "We do not, of course, obligate the Negroes to become a nation; if they are, then that is a question of their consciousness, that

is, what they desire and what they strive for." But he took for granted the Marxist truth that, in the final analysis, "being determines consciousness," or, as he put it with regard to the development of nations, "Nations grow out of the racial material under definite conditions." That is, Trotsky took for granted the Marxist analysis of the national question, as developed most fully by Lenin.

A Trotskyist explication of the Marxist position on the national question requires reference to, of all people, Joseph Stalin. Before Stalin became "Cain Stalin," the leader of the Thermidorian bureaucracy, he was a comrade of Lenin, a leader of the Bolshevik Party, and an expert on the national question, whom the Bolsheviks chose to be Commissar of Nationalities after the 1917 Revolution. Stalin's most important writing on the national question was "Marxism and the National Question," published in 1913. The key passage in the article is the following well-known definition of a nation:

*A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*

It goes without saying that a nation, like every historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation. ["Marxism and the National Question," in *The Essential Stalin*, edited by Bruce Franklin, New York: Anchor Books, 1972, p. 60, original emphasis]

A dialectical relationship exists between the material basis of a nation, described above, and national consciousness. Under capitalism, including the periods of its rise and fall, the material basis tends to generate national consciousness, and national consciousness tends to reinforce the material basis. In the long run, the material basis of the nation — the relevant "being" — determines national consciousness, which is the reason Lenin refused to recognize the dispersed Jewish population of the Russian Empire as a "nation," despite the "nationalist" claims of the Bund. But in the short run, the process of nation-building and the exercise of the right of national self-determination depend heavily on national consciousness.

Some contemporary Marxists challenge this historical-materialist analysis of nations and national consciousness, saying the views Stalin expressed in "Marxism and the National Question" do not coincide with Lenin's. They are wrong. Lenin regarded Stalin's article highly, as he indicated in the following complimentary reference:

This situation [in the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party] and the fundamentals of a national program for Social-Democracy

have recently been dealt with in Marxist theoretical literature (the most prominent place being taken by Stalin's article.) ["The National Program of the RSDLP," in Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, edited by Robert Daglish, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973, p. 539]

Trotsky also regarded the article highly, although he credited mainly Lenin for its content.

During his two month's sojourn abroad Stalin wrote a brief but very trenchant piece of research entitled "Marxism and the National Problem." Since it was intended for a lawful magazine, the article resorted to a discreet vocabulary. Its revolutionary tendencies were nonetheless distinctly apparent. The author set out by counterposing the historico-materialist definition of nation to the abstracto-psychological, in the spirit of the Austrian school. "The nation," he wrote, "is a historically formed enduring community of language, territory, economic life and psychological composition, asserting itself in the community of culture." This combined definition, compounding the psychological attributes of a nation with the geographic and economic conditions of its development, is not only correct theoretically but also practically fruitful, for then the solution to the problem of each nation's fate must perforce be sought along the lines of changing the material conditions of its existence, beginning with territory...

"Marxism and the National Problem" is undoubtedly Stalin's most important — rather, his one and only — theoretical work. On the basis of that single article, which was forty printed pages long, its author is entitled to recognition as an outstanding theoretician. What is rather mystifying is why he did not write anything else of even remotely comparable quality either before or after. The key to this mystery is hidden away in this, that Stalin's work was wholly inspired by Lenin, written under his unremitting supervision, and edited by him line by line. [*Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence*, edited by Charles Malamuth, New York: Stein and Day, 1967, pp. 154–157]

Trotsky was working on his biography of Stalin, from which this passage is taken, when he was killed by a Stalinist agent in August 1940. His strong endorsement of Stalin's — or rather, Lenin's — historical-materialist method on the national question is contained in chapter five of the manuscript, which Trotsky had finished and revised in Russian and then checked and corrected in its English translation. In other words, this passage is a later, more carefully formulated, and more polished statement of Trotsky's views than the uncorrected transcripts of the 1933 and 1939 discussions. When Trotsky referred in the 1933 discussion to the "definite conditions" out of which nations grow, this historical-materialist analysis is what he had in mind.

## The Actual Course of Development

In the 1930s it seemed possible that Blacks in the U.S. would develop into a nation to which the right of self-determination, that is, the right of state secession, would apply. The most likely way for this to have happened would have been for the Black population of the "black belt" to cohere on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological makeup; attract Blacks from the rest of the South and the North; develop urban centers, industry and an industrial proletariat; and in the process build national consciousness and a desire for a separate state on the part of large sections of the population. This would have meant the "black belt" South developing as Québec — at the time another poor rural area inhabited by a distinct, oppressed people — actually developed.

The possibility of this development underlay the CP/USA's 1928 position, Trotsky's 1933 position, and, with some qualification, Trotsky's and the SWP's 1939 positions. The qualification is that by 1939 the likelihood of the development of a Black nation in the "black belt" South was receding. Trotsky knew this and proposed two other hypothetically possible scenarios for the development of a Black nation.

Under the condition that Japan invades the United States and the Negroes are called upon to fight — they may come to feel themselves threatened first from one side and then from the other, and finally awakened, may say, "We have nothing to do with either of you. We will have our own state"...

There is another alternative to the successful revolutionary one. It is possible that fascism will come to power with its racial delirium and oppression, and the reaction of the Negro will be toward racial independence. Fascism in the United States will be directed against the Jews and the Negroes, but against the Negroes particularly, and in a most terrible manner. A "privileged" condition will be created for the American white workers on the backs of the Negroes. The Negroes have done everything possible to become an integral part of the United States, in a psychological as well as a political sense. We must foresee that their reaction will show its power during the revolution. They will enter with a great distrust of the whites. We must remain neutral in the matter and hold the door open for both possibilities and promise our full support if they wish to create their own independent state. [April 4, 1939 transcript, pp. 30–31]

The development of a Black nation in the U.S. was a historical possibility in 1939, but it did not occur. The rural Black population concentrated in the "black belt" South dispersed to cities across the South and North and became proletarianized. Japan did not invade the U.S. (This had been only a very hypothetical scenario, since Trotsky knew and wrote in other places that Japanese imperialism was too weak to wage the sustained

war necessary to drive U.S. imperialism back to its mainland.) And fascism did not triumph in the U.S., driving Blacks out of the working class and the cities.

Fraser analyzed the changes in the material situation of Blacks in the U.S. and also the character of the struggle for Black liberation as it was actually developing. The union organizing drives and sitdown strikes that built the CIO in the 1930s had been battles for integrated industrial unionism. Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s the U.S. ruling class had been forced to make many concessions to Blacks. In its own self-interest, for domestic and international reasons and to allow the development of industrial capitalism in the South, the capitalists were even moving slowly to eliminate the Jim Crow system of legal segregation. Truman's 1948 executive order ending official segregation of the armed services and the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* declaring legal segregation of schools unconstitutional indicated a shift in the relationship of forces between the Black working class and the white ruling class.

The mass civil rights movement for equality and integration that opened with the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott was based on this shift in the relationship of forces and quickly became far larger, more powerful, and more effective than the 1920s "back to Africa" movement of Marcus Garvey, the largest Black nationalist movement in U.S. history. Fraser recognized this emerging reality and urged that the SWP draw the necessary conclusions.

## Revolutionary Integrationism Today

There is no Black nation in the U.S. today, no "historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." On the contrary, Blacks are now the core of the multiracial American working class, particularly the industrial proletariat, and of the population of most major American cities. There is no possibility of Black national self-determination today, in the Marxist sense of secession of a Black nation-state, without a massive population regroupment which Black workers are, to say the least, extremely unlikely to undertake voluntarily.

If a population regroupment should occur and large sections of the Black working class should demand the right of national self-determination, Trotskyists should support that demand, although almost certainly we should oppose actual secession, since separation of the Black and white working classes would limit what either could do. Following the approach Trotsky suggested in 1939, Black Trotskyists should participate in the nationalist movement and say, "The Fourth

International says that if it is our wish to be independent, it will help us in every way possible, but that the choice is ours. However, I, as a Black member of the Fourth, hold a view that we must remain in the same state as the whites."

The possibility of this is so remote, however, that Trotskyists today should base our policy on Fraser's correct observation, "The question of self-determination is not the question which is at stake in the Black liberation struggle."

If a separate Black nation-state is not the question in the Black liberation struggle, what is? In fact, the question is the same as it would have been in most areas of the country if the hypothetical Black nation had developed and separated: revolutionary integrationism, the removal by revolutionary means of the obstacles to Black equality and integration.

The struggle for equality and integration, that is, the struggle against discrimination and segregation, will not be easy, since rac-

ism runs deep in the U.S. But the socialist revolution will provide the political and economic basis for success: the proletarian dictatorship of democratically elected workers' councils and the collectivized, democratically planned, worker-controlled economy, both on a world scale. In the U.S., Black and white workers will have had to fight together to defeat and overthrow the capitalists. Politically conscious Black workers, "convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class," will have become an integral part of the revolutionary leadership, the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, and will have played a vital role in the revolution. For the first time in history, the American and world working class will be in a position to control the destiny of society. And for the first time in history, Black people in America will be able to demand and get what they need.

Some Black activists have expressed alarm that an "integrationist" position, even a revolutionary integrationist position,

means dictating to Black people and trying to force Blacks who do not want to integrate or to associate with whites to do so. Their fear is misplaced. It is not possible to say now what the future socialist society will look like. As Marxists we can observe that the development of the social forces of production tends to break down all barriers, to unite and mutually assimilate nations, races and cultures. This suggests that the future socialist society will be more international and more interracial than the present capitalist society, that the revolution will foster integration and mutual assimilation.

The object of the socialist revolution is freedom, however, which includes the freedom to separate, as well as to unite. We can leave it to future generations that have grown up without political, social or economic coercion to decide for themselves how they, as truly free people, will relate. □

January 15, 1993

## NY Marxist School Seminar with Ernest Mandel: 'Money and the Human Condition'

**Monday, February 22, Wednesday,  
February 24, and Thursday,  
February 25, 1993, 6:00-10:00 p.m.  
Tuition: \$95**

**(does not include public lecture)**

### **Capital, Money and Capitalism (February 22)**

Although money had appeared in precapitalist societies as a means of exchange and of storing wealth, capitalism as a system based on money capital emerged only after a variety of large-scale social struggles and transformations had taken place. Under capitalism, money became the necessary starting point as well as the final result of the process of social reproduction. Within this system, workers are compelled to sell their labor power because they lack any independent access to money. They are enmeshed in a series of contradictory relationships with money, being alienated not only as producers but also as consumers and citizens.

### **Money under Late Capitalism (February 24)**

Late capitalism is characterized by permanent inflation, a debt economy, and hyperliquidity. Capital has been internationalized, the power of the nation-

state has declined, and money is being reprivatized. Corruption has spread at both the private and public levels, leading to an increasing criminalization of bourgeois society.

### **Money and the Transition to Socialism (February 25)**

The survival of money in a period of transition carries a potential for corruption, for increasing inequality, and for extending the power of bureaucracy. How can these pitfalls be reduced and the conditions created for a gradual withering away of money? What is the psychological impact — on individuals and society — caused by money-mediated human relations? And what is the potential for creativity, intelligence, cooperation, and affection to blossom when human beings are unshackled from the constraints of money?

### **Public Lecture (\$10)**

**Sunday, February 21, 7:00 p.m.**

### **The Crisis of Neoliberalism.**

**Contact the NY Marxist School: (212) 941-0332, 79  
Leonard St., NYC, 10013, for more information.**

Ernest Mandel is a leader of the Fourth International and is one of the most renowned Marxist political economists. His many books include *Late Capitalism* and *Beyond Perestroika*.

# Turkey: Spreading Racism and Seeds of Ethnic War

by Pinar Selinay

While both outraged and horrified over the spread of neo-Nazi racism and xenophobia in Germany and indignant over the tragic sufferings of the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a shockingly small percentage of the Turkish population seems to be able to draw parallels with the deepening polarization and ever widening gap of ethnic intolerance in their own country. Indeed, to read the local press, anyone would think that Bosnia-Herzegovina was of greater concern to people in western Turkey than Kurdistan, despite the fact that a large portion of Kurdistan lies within Turkey's own borders.

The insensitivity of the Turkish population to the war being waged against the Kurds in eastern Turkey (northwestern Kurdistan) is a direct result of the official ideology with which all citizens of Turkey are inculcated from primary school on. Nursed on the historical myth that everyone in Turkey is a Turk (attempts to face the multi-ethnic reality are only now being broached for the first time in the history of the Republic) most Turks in the western part of the country insist on viewing the war in the east as a struggle against "terrorism." Oblivious to the fact that the Kurdish population has been subject to nothing but terrorism on the part of the state in the latter's brutal efforts toward assimilation ever since the Republic was founded in 1923, few Turks seem to recognize the Kurdish struggle as a valid movement for national liberation following decades of ethnic denial, oppression, successive massacres, and forced resettlement.

A look at the most recent events in the escalating war only points toward a further increase in racism and intolerance spearheaded by the local media in conjunction with the military and government secret services.

## Northern Iraq: What Really Went On?

Following a month of all-out combat and a sweeping publicity campaign extolling the exploits of its own forces, the Turkish army concluded its adventure in northern Iraq (southern Kurdistan) in mid-November, having dealt the 13,000-strong Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) a little over one hundred losses.

The war in northern Iraq originally broke out on October 5, when peshmergas [Kurdish fighters] linked to the Kurdistan Front, the official governing body of Iraqi Kurdistan, led by the pro-American leaders Massoud Barzani and Jela Talabani, attacked PKK

bases on their territory at the instigation of the Turkish government, who threatened to impose economic and political sanctions against them if they did not rid northern Iraq of all PKK forces at once. Having watched their own authority undermined in recent years by the decisive action and spreading influence of the PKK, and repeatedly denounced by the latter as traitors to the cause of Kurdish nationalism, Barzani and Talabani launched their attack on the PKK with a round of assurance to all observers that the area would once and for all be freed of PKK guerrillas within a matter of days.

Several days later, having suffered heavy losses from the unexpectedly firm guerrilla resistance and faced with widespread demoralization, desertion, and the growing discontent of the local population, the peshmergas cried out for assistance from the vast Turkish army, which plunged in from the north with tens of thousands of troops, tanks, armored vehicles, artillery, bomber planes, and special Cobra helicopters, aimed at strategic annihilation.

While the Kurdish forces eventually came to an agreement among themselves, much to the evident displeasure of the Ankara government, the Turkish army concentrated all its might on exterminating the PKK, only bringing the operation to a halt once the area was determined to be guerrilla-free. The surprisingly small number of losses suffered by the PKK can be attributed to the nature of the guerrilla warfare and the PKK's familiarity with the terrain. Not dependent on maintaining a fixed line of defense, the guerrillas maintained their integrity by ceding territory and simply moving further across the mountains. They survived air raids by burrowing into vast underground tunnels at the first sign of reconnaissance planes, which would scout the territory prior to each successive wave of bombing.

Having brought its Iraqi adventure to what it calls a "successful" conclusion, the Turkish army has already initiated a domestic extension of the same operation. The strategic mountains of Arami and Cudi were under siege in late November, accompanied by a massive evacuation project, with the eventual aim of changing the ethnic character of the region. The first part of the project, presently underway, consists of driving away hundreds of thousands of villagers from their ancestral homes, while the area is later to be repopulated with non-Kurds (possibly refugees from the Caucasus republics — or even the

Balkans). Similar programs of forced resettlement have been carried out in the past, particularly in the early days of the Republic, when the policies of assimilation and ethnic denial on the part of the young Turkish government met with repeated uprisings on the part of the Kurds until decades of successive massacres and relentless oppression eventually brought them "under control."

## The 29th Rebellion

Nevertheless, the billions of dollars and hundreds of lives lost in the military operations against the PKK are only one of the numerous facets of the overall state effort at quelling the Kurds' bid for self-determination. A far greater sector of the Kurdish population has been affected by a new phase in extermination policies inaugurated last August, with the sweeping destruction of Sirmak, a town of some 30,000 inhabitants located at the base of Mt. Cudi. Following more than 48 hours of continual bombing and gunfire by the Turkish military in conjunction with the "special teams" (specially trained counter-insurgency forces with license to harass, destroy, and murder at random), shops and residences which remained intact were pillaged and then set on fire. In the last few months numerous other towns, including Gole, Agri, Kulp, Cukurca, Varto, Hani, Cizre, and Dargecit, not to mention dozens of villages, have received the same treatment.

The destruction of Kurdish towns and villages and the continual arrest, torture, and murder of local peasants by state forces is a clear sign from the state that being Kurdish is in itself enough to be regarded as guilty. In fact, original claims that the PKK was "no more than a handful of brigands" have long since lost credibility, while in a statement made on November 10, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel characterized the current war as the "29th Kurdish rebellion," to be put down just as all the rest were — through state force and torrents of blood.

## Westward Migration Gives Kurds No Relief

In this atmosphere of total insecurity, way beyond the realm of human rights and legal justice, economic pressures are also taking their toll. Cut off from the land, peasants swell the already overburdened cities, while the few businesses which manage to stay afloat are frequently destroyed in the fighting. Having lost their homes and incomes, hundreds of thousands of Kurds opt to migrate to western Turkey, where they most frequently have no recourse but to eke out their living through street peddling, hard labor, and the performance of other menial, poorly remunerated tasks.

Yet recent months have shown that even this option offers no respite. Racist instigators have made use of the rising death toll of Turkish soldiers to play on national sentiments and incite anti-Kurdish pogroms. En-



tire Kurdish neighborhoods in towns such as Fethiye, Alanya, Bigadic, and Urla have been victims of racist violence, including lootings, attempted lynchings, and forced evacuation of the areas. In the heavily Kurdish working-class city of Adana, the once ubiquitous Kurdish peddlers have now been forced off the streets, although they have virtually no hope of finding other means of earning a living. Furthermore, for the first time in history, applicants for jobs are being asked to declare their ethnic background. Woe to any who do not answer "Turk."

Outraged at the brutalities in their towns of origin and frustrated by the widespread insensitivity and racism in western Turkey, more and more young Kurds who have immigrated to the metropolitan centers, such as Istanbul and Izmir, have begun expressing their indignation through violent incidents in these cities as well. However, such actions as the bombing of places of business and the throwing of Molotov cocktails in store windows are certain only to increase the intolerance and racism which, already widespread throughout the Turkish population, are fueled on a daily basis by the brashly biased Turkish media.

### ***Ozgur Gundem* — Struggling Against All Odds**

Spurred on by the spread of the Kurdish national movement and the unanimously anti-Kurdish bias of the Turkish media, the daily paper *Ozgur Gundem* made its first appearance at newsstands throughout the country last May. In less than no time *Gundem* established itself as the voice of the struggle and soon displaced all other newspapers in the Kurdish region, in addition to gaining a following among thousands of leftists in the western cities who were more

than happy to find an alternative to the chauvinist dailies which besiege the reader with scandals, sensationalism, and sexism.

*Gundem's* presence has not gone unnoticed. Out of the twelve journalists who have been assassinated by government secret service forces in recent months, half wrote for *Gundem*, including the 74-year-old beloved writer and Kurdologist Musa Anter, whose death was mourned nationwide. In the last month, trucks and drivers distributing *Gundem* throughout Kurdistan have been assaulted, and in several cases the drivers have been murdered outright. Police harassment of newsstands where *Gundem* is sold has been so intense that in many cases the newsstands have responded by refusing to sell any newspapers at all. Persons who continue to sell the paper despite the continual threats do so at the risk of their lives. For the people of southeastern Turkey, for whom the state and official ideology have long since lost all credibility, *Gundem* is a lifeline to be defended at all cost.

### **What Lies in Store?**

With the Balkans on one side and the Caucasus on the other, it is no surprise that the regional winds of nationalism and ethnic intolerance are sweeping through Turkey as well. Yet the leftist rhetoric and anti-imperialist orientation of the PKK single it out as a potentially destabilizing force in the eyes of the U.S. and major European powers, none of whom favor a PKK-led Kurdish victory. The Turkish government itself clearly has nothing to offer except more violence and bloodshed. All possibilities for a negotiated solution have been chucked, and not even moderate Kurdish nationalists who seek reform within the framework of the existing state are free from continual harassment and repression.

Yet with access to all other roads firmly sealed, the Kurds have no other choice but to continue their struggle. Nothing short of blanket genocide, such as was applied in the early years of the Republic, is likely to stop the momentum. On the other hand, without the support of other regional movements and barring any unforeseen uprisings in the area which could alter the balance of forces, it is unlikely that the Kurds will achieve any sort of decisive victory. In the meantime, a growing number of young Turkish boys are coming home in body bags, while an even greater number are returning from the front inculcated with fear and hatred and accustomed to taking life on a regular basis. For many who took part in the bombings of Kurdish towns and villages, the inhabitants who subsequently fled those towns and villages are now their neighbors in the swollen fringe neighborhoods of Istanbul. The same Kurds they were taught to view with hatred and suspicion while doing military service are now roaming the streets of the big cities in western Turkey, selling fruit out of handcarts.

In a brutal display of what may lie in store, the funeral of four Istanbul policemen killed by the extreme left organization Dev-Sol in November was attended by some 20,000 Turkish nationalists shouting oaths of revenge and chanting a variety of racist and fascist slogans. Anti-PKK slogans characterized the organization as "Armenian lackeys," while other slogans attacked the government for its inability to arrest the growing Kurdish movement. Human rights were denounced, and the marchers swore to take blood for blood.

Did someone mention Nazis? Or was it Bosnia? □

*December 7, 1992*

## **Unblemished, Uncorrupted Leadership**

*Continued from page 14*

country, one of three things is going to happen to you. You're going to be driven into exile, driven into suicide, or you're going to be assassinated. Once your people understand the true face of power and know what to do about it, someone's going to have to give them some power, or they're going to take it. Once he began to teach that lesson he was writing his own obituary. The same thing is true of Martin Luther King in his speeches on the war in Vietnam.

When Malcolm X was assassinated I was

in Connecticut making a speech on great Africans in history. I was in the home of a Jewish family, having dinner before the speech. When they came in and told me they were as cold as ice, and someone said, "After all, he was anti-Semitic." I didn't know what to say. I wanted to hit somebody. I wanted to kick and scream. I went into that bathroom and cried like a child for fifteen minutes. I came out and made a fast speech later that day and came home.

But during that year after his death, after I had participated in the memorial for him, I

often felt that I was having a conversation with an old friend. And near the end of that year, sitting alone in my downstairs office, with the conversation going again, I asked figuratively, "Malcolm, what can I do?" And I felt that somewhere someone said, "Do your best work. In my memory and as a tribute to me, do your best work." I knew then that my best work was part of what he lived for and part of the reason he died. To tell the truth and suffer the consequences — that was my best work. □

## Vouchers and Shares — Two Con Tricks

### Fool's Paper

by Alexander Tarasov

Throughout Russia, the campaign of “voucherization” has begun. Its official aim is to make everyone rich, but its real purpose is to make us all poor, apart from a tiny proportion of less than 0.7 percent of the population who will become wealthy. This figure is a rough calculation on the basis of figures cited on April 20 by S. Vasilev, an economic adviser to the Russian government; he estimates that the country will finish up with 100,000 owners of property and 150 million nonowners.

Plenty of people argued that voucherization would be a con game. They predicted correctly that mafiosi and corrupt bureaucrats would buy up vouchers and invest them in enterprises they knew were profitable. Meanwhile, other less well informed citizens would either lose the value of their vouchers through investing them in unprofitable firms or would simply be forced to sell them. After the first round of redistribution there would be a second one; a small group of moneybags would buy up shares from small investors. The result would be the same — a few people would finish up with everything, and the rest with nothing. It would be theft, of course, but legalized theft.

Here I want to explore the theoretical basis underlying voucherization.

The vouchers, as we know, will be exchanged for shares. Why for shares? Because, the government informs us, the holder of a share certificate is a property owner, and as Yeltsin has said, we need “millions of property owners.” And we need millions of shareholders because they will feel responsibility for their property and, as zealous proprietors, will save our economy and industry.

This is where the main conman's trick comes in. The owner of a share certificate is not a property owner. He or she doesn't own property, or the means of production, but only that particular share certificate. A share certificate is a security. Its value is supposed to be secured by the property of the joint-stock company that issued the share. In just the same way, the value of the ruble is supposed to be guaranteed by the assets of the state bank. But just try gathering up as many rubles as you can, going to the state bank, and demanding that in exchange for these paper securities they hand over the “material guarantees” — for example, gold ingots. (If you haven't enough rubles for a whole ingot, they should saw a piece off, since you are the owner of securities guaranteed by this gold!) You'll be lucky if they simply throw you out and don't pack you off to the lunatic asylum.

Now try to do the same with your shares. You're a shareholder in a particular firm, and the value of your shares is equal, let's say, to two lathes. You don't like the way the firm is run, or what it produces, or the small dividends. So you decide to go to the factory of which you're a co-owner and demand that in exchange for your shares they pull up two lathes from the floor. Or that they just stop using the lathes to turn out the products you object to — military weapons, for instance. Very funny. Most likely, you'll finish up in the same lunatic asylum. Or you might be lucky — to avoid wasting time and effort on you, they might simply say, “If you don't like it, you don't have to put up with it. You can sell your shares to whomever you like.”

But the owner, or co-owner, has the right to use, direct, and/or dispose of his or her property! Yes, Messrs. Gaidar and Chubais tell us straight-faced, the shareholder in common with other shareholders has these rights over the assets of the joint-stock company. All questions relating to the firm are decided by the annual general meeting of shareholders.

This, of course, is hogwash. Judge for yourself. Suppose that the assets of an enterprise are valued at 100 million rubles. Let's say that the enterprise has issued one million shares valued at 100 rubles each. Let's further suppose that 500,000 people have bought them. (Some will buy one share, and some will buy 100 shares, but on average they have two shares each.) Does this seem like a lot of people? All right, let's say 300,000 people, or even 250,000. According to Gaidar these 250,000 people assemble every year from across the whole country (!) to discuss the urgent problems of their enterprise. Where, I would like to know, do they assemble? According to the militia, as I recall, the entire Manezh Square holds no more than 120,000 people.

And how are these multitudes to discuss their problems? How do you hear one person out of 250,000 if he or she wants to speak? And what if everyone wants their say? Every person for an hour, since people here are incapable of talking for less. It's not hard to calculate that the meeting would stretch out for 18 years, provided the shareholders were prepared to talk around the clock.

Of course, this is absurd. If you own a single 100-ruble share, which every year yields a dividend, let's say, of somewhere between one and four rubles (rather a good rate, as it happens), then you most likely won't travel anywhere at all, since a ticket would cost you hundreds or thousands of rubles.

It's exactly the same throughout the world. Annual “general” meetings of shareholders are a fiction, play-acting, a myth. They take place, but who is represented at them? The people who really control the company, who decide all the questions: the board of directors. Plus representatives of the holders of controlling packets of shares. They run the whole show, controlling assets worth billions.

The ordinary investor has none of the rights of a property owner. Such a person cannot sell their property (here I am referring not to the share certificate, but to the actual piece of the enterprise which is supposedly embodied in the share) and cannot bequeath it or give it away. He or she does not determine the nature of the goods produced, nor the structure of the productive relations. The typical shareholder has not the slightest influence on either the development strategy of “his” or “her” enterprise or its marketing strategy.

So what is the typical shareholder left with? The right of access to financial documents? And what will he or she understand of them? I once worked as a bookkeeper in the production department of an enterprise, and I can say from experience that the ordinary shareholder won't understand a thing. That's not to speak of the fact that a normal capitalist enterprise will generally have two sets of books.

Consequently, shareholders are not owners *de facto*, even if they are considered such *de jure*. They can become owners *de facto* only if they acquire controlling packets of shares. But this requires the kind of money that the average investor can only dream of. Even in the West the owners of controlling packets of shares are almost never private individuals; as a rule they are banks, holding companies, and corporations.

It's no mystery to me why the economist Gaidar and his cronies try to pull the wool over our eyes, telling fairy tales about “millions of property owners.” They're spitting on the country in which they live, and on the people of the country as well. But they're not spitting on their own personal interests. They've calculated correctly: the mafiosi and bribetakers who as a result of the government's reforms will become the legal owners of the country will not forget them, and will reward them with a lifelong rain of gold.

As a specialist, I'm interested in another question. In a bit over a year or so the majority of the population will realize that they've been robbed and will start getting angry. Then Messrs. Gaidar and Chubais will say, “That's right, folks, you've been robbed, but LEGALLY!” Do they really think the victims are going to be hypnotized by the word “law”?

I doubt it very much. I know they can send in the police, the KGB, even finally the army against the victims of the robbery. But will the police and the KGB have the strength to deal with 150 million people? And most importantly — will the troops be prepared to fire on them? □

October 1992

# The Elections in Lithuania and the East European Left

by Boris Kagarlitsky

"The Lithuanians have elected former communists!" The results of the elections in Lithuania still had not been finalized when this sensational news flashed across the pages of the newspapers. For the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union, the reports shouldn't have been so stunning. Weren't former Communists in power in Russia, the Ukraine, Moldavia, and the republics of Central Asia? Weren't former party functionaries running the new democratic Rumania? And hadn't Gorbunov, a leader of "totally democratic" Latvia and a convinced Latvian nationalist, once been among the leaders of the local Communist Party?

Nevertheless, something important has indeed happened in Lithuania.

For the first time, an organization which is the direct and official successor to a Communist Party has emerged as a country's dominant political force through a free expression of popular will. And, most importantly, nationalism in Eastern Europe has suffered its first defeat.

The Democratic Labor Party of Lithuania (DLPL) has never been distinguished by particular radicalism. In 1989, when the question of independence came onto the agenda, the Communist Party in Lithuania, as in the other Baltic countries, underwent a split between supporters and opponents of independence. The orthodox minority suffered a defeat, and after the events of August 1991 was forced into clandestinity. The majority, headed by the popular and pragmatic Brazauskas, declared itself a social democratic party and changed its name.

The party program was phrased very cautiously. The leaders of the DLPL did everything possible to prove that they were not Communists or "Reds." Brazauskas and his supporters might better have been called social liberals than social democrats. They accepted the need for privatization and for restructuring the ownership of industry on a shareholding basis. They insisted that without the development of private property it was impossible to create a market and constantly declared their adherence to the idea of the national revival of Lithuania. Alongside the DLPL stood a social democratic party proclaiming even more right-wing positions.

The liberal wave sweeping Eastern Europe could not have failed to have an effect on the Lithuanian left. But although Brazauskas and his supporters made numerous concessions to liberalism, they could not avoid accusations of "Communism." A furious propaganda campaign was unleashed against the DLPL. Not only nationalists and right-wingers attacked it, but also centrists and social democrats, who justifiably saw it as a dangerous rival.

Meanwhile, new political winds were blowing in Eastern Europe. In elections for the Polish Sejm the Left Democratic Union, founded by "social democratized" Communists, scored big gains. The party missed out on becoming the largest parliamentary group by only one percent of the vote. The Communists in Czechoslovakia did not change their name; in 1968 their party had headed the "Prague Spring," and earlier still it had been the main force in the antifascist resistance. In the 1992 elections the left bloc formed around the Communist Party enjoyed considerable success. A number of former dissidents with left-wing views were elected to parliament on the same list with Communists. The old division between "democrats" and "Communists" has given way to a new demarcation between right and left.

The elections in Slovakia were won by a left-centrist coalition calling for independence. Many observers were surprised by the Slovaks' desire to take their leave of Prague, but the people of Slovakia feared being turned into an internal colony, the semi-developed periphery of a capitalist Czechia. In the municipal elections in eastern Berlin in the spring of 1992 the most successful grouping was the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), formed on the basis of the former Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The PDS is headed by the popular lawyer Gregor Gysi, who in the 1970s achieved fame in the German Democratic Republic as a defender of dissidents. The PDS proclaimed itself a radical left party; in rejecting the ideology of the Communists, it did not accept the mild reformism of the social democrats either.

Reformed post-Communist parties have strengthened their positions throughout Eastern Europe. For voters, the ideological packaging in which these parties have served up their programs has not been especially important. The reformed Communists in Poland did their utmost to social-democratize themselves and won the support of every fifth Pole. The Czechoslovak Communists, on the other hand, stressed their fidelity to the traditions of their party. They also scored successes. The PDS in Germany presented itself as a party with a quite new and original ideology. It made gains as well.

Millions of people who supported the post-Communist parties did not do so because they believed in the new ideas. They had simply realized that they had been deceived by the politicians who had promised that independence and capitalism would bring them prosperity and a flowering of democracy. Neither prosperity nor a particularly meaningful democracy had resulted. In these circumstances people voted for the most left-wing party contesting the elections, or for the most

familiar and serious of the left parties. This was almost always the "post-Communists."

In Lithuania as elsewhere, people voted not only in favor of the left but also against a right-wing government. The leaders of Sajudis were confident they enjoyed the support of the population simply because they had led the country to independence. But in independent Lithuania, people found life nowhere near as pleasant as they had hoped. The economic crisis deepened; bitter, pointless conflicts broke out with Russia and Byelorussia; national minorities suffered oppression, and authoritarianism was strengthened.

Ultimately, all the republics of the USSR received their independence, even those which had not demanded it. None of them, however, received the prosperity they had been promised. An "era of name changes" began.

Very likely Lithuania will not be the only country of the former Communist bloc where a left party wins a majority in parliament. The crisis of capitalism in the West, popular disappointment with nationalism, the failure of privatization, and the chaos of the "free market economy" are creating a new situation in Eastern Europe.

A great deal depends on the DLPL. Brazauskas's party now has to show whether it is capable of forming parliamentary coalitions and of arriving at compromises with other political forces, without at the same time renouncing its own principles. Above all, the party must put forward a real way out of the crisis.

While they were in opposition, the leaders of the DLPL sought to prove their moderation and good sense. Now that they are on the threshold of power, they are about to discover that moderation and half measures are not of much use in a crisis. People voted for the DLPL because they wanted change. If this change doesn't come about, the party will lose its popular support.

But if the party begins a serious fight for change, it will have to enter into serious confrontation with the forces that have led not only Lithuania but Russia and all of Eastern Europe into a dead end — that is, with the forces which are destroying the state sector through "nomenklatura privatization," and which are undermining production in the interests of speculative trade. In short, the DLPL will have to mount a fight against the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the International Monetary Fund.

The choice will not be easy; radical changes are always hard to implement. But the DLPL now has a chance. It is not only the people of Lithuania who have spoken out for changes, for a regulated economy, and for social justice. The people of Russia as well have grown tired of the Yeltsin-Gaidar experiment. We, too, have to find a way out of the dead end.

The lesson of Lithuania is quite straightforward: leftists can win elections in "post-Communist" societies, and not in ten years' time, but right now. We should not underrate ourselves. In Russia, the Party of Labor has a future; democratic leftists have real prospects. The main thing is not to let the chance slip through our fingers. □

# Greek Socialists Put on Trial for Treason

by Lance Selfa

Last month, the Athens Public Prosecutor initiated a treason trial against five Greek socialists.

The five are being charged with "exposing the friendly relations of Greece with foreign countries to risk of disturbance"; "spreading false information and rumors that might cause anxiety and fear to citizens and disturb international relations of Greece"; "inciting citizens to rivalry and division, leading to disturbance of the peace."

The acts of which the socialists, members of the Organization for Socialist Revolution (OSE), are accused stem from their publication and distribution of a pamphlet entitled *The Crisis in the Balkans, the Macedonian Question, and the Working Class*. The first issue of the pamphlet, in February 1992, sold out of its press run of 1,500 copies.

Police arrested two of the accused on March 25, 1992, for selling the pamphlet on a street corner in Athens.

The Department of Public Prosecution decided to press charges against the two OSE members arrested for selling the pamphlet and three of its authors.

The five are charged under Greece's Law of the Press and under the treason section of the Greek penal code. The Law of the Press, which allows prosecutions of journalists and publishers, dates from 1938, when the fascist Metaxas dictatorship ruled Greece. The treason charges date from laws passed following the 1946-1949 civil war.

Each charge carries a maximum five-year sentence and heavy fines. Witnesses for the prosecution include well-known right-wing academics; a former minister for Northern Greece; a member of parliament from the conservative government party, New Democracy; and Constantine Plevris, a member of the fascist 4th of August Party.

Plevris is known for his twin claims that the ancient philosopher Plato inspired Hitler and that the Nazi Holocaust never happened. He has testified that the OSE "pamphlet supports policies that lead to Greece ceding territories... these people are guilty of treason."

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*Lance Selfa is a member of the International Socialist Organization, the sister organization of the Organization for Socialist Revolution in Greece. He is the secretary of the Committee to Defend Greek Socialists in Chicago.*

The prosecution of the OSE members is only one of a number of trials against individuals and groups which oppose the Greek government's policy on the Balkans War.

In January 1992, six members of a group called Organization for the Reconstruction of the Communist Party were arrested while putting up posters reading "Recognize Independent Slav Macedonia." They were sentenced to fourteen months in prison.

In April, four Athens students, members of the Coalition Against Nationalism and War, were sentenced to nineteen months in prison for passing out leaflets headlined "The neighboring peoples are not our enemies." Both cases are now on appeal.

Why all the hysteria over the publication of pamphlets and the distribution of leaflets? At the heart of the matter is the question of Macedonia.

When Yugoslavia began to dissolve in 1990, it opened the way for rival national groups to assert demands for independence. In rapid succession, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina declared their independence from the old Titoist federation.

In a referendum held in 1991, Macedonians voted to declare their country independent of the former Yugoslav state. In January 1992, a European Community commission ruled that Macedonia should win recognition as an independent country. The U.S. initially agreed with the EC. Immediately this set off alarm bells in Athens.

The Greek government, asserting that an independent Macedonia might raise territorial claims against Greece, opposed the recognition. Athens set down three conditions for recognition of Slav Macedonia: (1) that the republic, whose capital is Skopje, eschew the name of "Macedonia"; (2) that the republic change its constitution, which refers to Macedonian populations in Greece and Bulgaria; and (3) that it "cease hostile propaganda" towards the Greek government.

Athens is not so much concerned with the national aspirations of the small Macedonian population within Greece. Instead, it believes that if it can dictate terms to the Macedonian republic, it can hold the decisive influence in a future carve-up of that section of ex-Yugoslavia. The stakes are so high that "a defeat on the name argument could bring the [Greek] government down," argues *The Economist*.

Following months of pressure from their North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally, the

EC and the U.S. finally agreed in June to accept Greece's terms denying Macedonia recognition. Since Macedonia voted for independence, Greece and Serbia have collaborated on an economic blockade that has crippled the republic's economy.

The economic blockade could be the first step to a shooting war which many experts believe will break out in Macedonia. British Broadcasting Company journalist Misha Glenny, BBC's reporter in the Balkans, recently predicted that "a Balkan war will most likely be fought to a large degree on the territory of the republic of Macedonia."

The Macedonian question had seemed to lie dormant until the late 1980s, when it became obvious that Yugoslavia's days were numbered. But only when the civil war in Yugoslavia broke out did the Greek government begin the anti-Macedonian campaign in earnest.

It announced plans to extend military service for six months in the conscript army. Moreover, it encouraged a popular boycott of Italian, Danish, and Belgian goods in Greece to protest those governments' initial support for Macedonian independence.

At the same time, it launched a "Macedonia is Greek" campaign in the country and in Greek communities, including those in the U.S. and Canada, around the world. The capstone of this mobilization was a 250,000-strong anti-Macedonian demonstration in Salonika held in February 1992. A similar demonstration was held in December 1992 in Athens.

Although New Democracy has taken the lead on the "Macedonia is Greek" campaign, it has received endorsement from much of the opposition in Parliament, including from the social-democratic PASOK.

The increased importance of the Macedonian question in Greek politics is not only a result of the breakup of former Yugoslavia. It has domestic implications as well. Leading Greek political figures have attempted to deflect anger at their policies by stoking the flames of nationalism.

For instance, during the September 1992 strikes against New Democracy's austerity measures, the government played the national card in Salonika.

A planned appearance by Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis in Salonika, where he was scheduled to unveil his 1993 economic package, prompted Athens bus drivers and

thousands of others to stage a demonstration against the prime minister.

Trade union leaders and the main business federation in Salonika called for workers to abandon plans for the demonstration. They argued that such a demonstration close to the Yugoslavian border would have the effect of "destabilizing" Greece.

Mitsotakis banned the demonstration, which was to involve a march of Athens bus workers to Salonika. Still, the bus workers refused to call off the demonstration. They stopped the march only when they confronted a cordon of riot police outside Salonika.

In response to the government's use of soldiers to break the Athens bus drivers' strike, a popular chant on demonstrations

during the September strike wave was "No soldiers in Yugoslavia, no soldiers breaking strikes."

Despite the fact that Mitsotakis's government, which holds only a two-vote majority in Parliament, has been able to prevail in these confrontations, it has emerged weaker — and this has taken some wind out of the sails of its "Macedonia is Greek" campaign as well.

Although Greece recently turned down a Serbian proposal that Serbia and Greece jointly carve up Macedonia, the possibility of a Bosnia-like situation developing there is real. A dismemberment of Macedonia would involve Serbia, Greece, Albania, and Turkey

— a prospect which would spread the Balkans disaster further.

With the December announcement that the United Nations is dispatching 500 "peace-keeping" troops to Macedonia, the conflict there is no longer simply a Balkan matter. That is why international support for those in Greece willing to oppose their government's designs in Macedonia is crucial.

A strategy which links support for Macedonian self-determination with Greek workers' opposition to New Democracy — the potential for which was glimpsed in September 1992 — is the most effective way to prevent a third Balkan war. □

Hundreds of trade union activists, socialists, civil libertarians, and academics have endorsed the Committee to Defend Greek Socialists' demand that the Greek government drop the charges against the OSE Five. Among them are:

Executive Committee, General Confederation of Greek Workers

Antonis Amypas, deputy secretary, Bank Workers' Union (Greece)\*

Benedict Anderson, professor, Cornell University

John Baglow, vice president, Ontario Federation of Labor

Yiannis Banias, Renovative Communist and Ecological Left (Greece)

Tony Benn, MP, Labour Party (Britain)

Robin Blackburn, editor, *New Left Review*

Deborah Bourque, national vice president, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Robert Brenner, professor, University of California at Los Angeles

Alex Callinicos, lecturer, York University (Britain)

Pete Camarata, co-chair, Teamsters for a Democratic Union

Jeff Chandler, professor, University of Chicago

Noam Chomsky, professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Jeremy Corbyn, MP, Labour Party (Britain)

Jonathan Culler, director, Society for the Humanities, Cornell University

R.T. Davies, U.S. Ambassador to Poland (1973–78), Deputy Asst. Secretary of State for European Affairs (1971–72)

Demetris Desyllas, MEP, New Left Current (Greece)

Bogdan Denitch, professor, CUNY Graduate Center, Democratic Socialists of America

Michel Edouard, journalist, *Haiti en Marche* (Canada)

Samuel Farber, professor, Brooklyn College

David Finkel, editor, *Against the Current*

Milton Fisk, professor, Indiana University at Bloomington

Paul Foot, journalist, *Daily Mirror* (Britain)

George Galloway, MP, Labour Party (Britain)

Lindsey German, editor, *Socialist Review* (Britain)

Bernie Grant, MP, Labour Party (Britain)

Fred Halliday, professor, London School of Economics

Costas Haritakis, National Union of Students Executive (Greece)

Chris Harman, editor, *Socialist Worker* (Britain)

Howard Hawkins, Green Party U.S.A.

Quintin Hoare, editorial board member, *New Left Review*

Katerina Iatropoulou, MP, Alternative Ecological Federation (Greece)

Phyllis Jacobson and Julius Jacobson, co-editors, *New Politics*

Ron Kaminkow, president, Local 634, AFSCME, Madison, WI

William Keach, professor, Brown University

George Katsiaficas, professor, Wentworth Institute of Technology

Erwin Knoll, editor, *The Progressive*

Stratis Korakas, MP, Communist Party of Greece

Lambeth Trades Council, London (Britain)

Joanne Landy, Campaign for Peace and Democracy

Costas Lapavistas, University of London (Britain)

Paul Le Blanc, managing editor, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*

Henry Lowi, United Jewish People's Order (Canada)

Mike McCallister, secretary, AFSCME Local 82, Milwaukee

Harry Magdoff, editor, *Monthly Review*

Manning Marable, professor, University of Colorado; national coordinator, Committees of Correspondence

Ralph Milliband, co-editor, *Socialist Register*

Kim Moody, *Labor Notes*

National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies, and Shottfirsers (Britain)

National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO), Harringey Branch (Britain)

NALGO, Islington Branch (Britain)

Kristi Nelson, professor, University of Iowa

Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Provincial Council

John Palmer, European editor, *The Guardian* (Britain)

Leo Panitch, professor, York University (Ontario); co-editor, *Socialist Register*

Yannis Panagopoulos, Bank Workers Union, executive committee (Greece)

James Petras, professor, SUNY-Binghamton

John Rees, editor, *International Socialism* (Britain)

Theofilos Sakalides, Teachers Union, executive committee (Greece)

Stephen Rose, professor, Open University (Britain)

Nikitas Sgouros, Youth Secretariat of General Confederation of Greek Workers

Ahmed Shawki, editor, *Socialist Worker* (U.S.)

Sotiris Siokos, Trade Union's Peace Movement in Greece and Bank Workers Union (Greece)

Maria Styllou, editor, *Socialism from Below* (Greece)

Paul M. Sweezy, editor, *Monthly Review*

G.M. Tamás, member of parliament, Hungary; chairman, national committee, Free Democratic Alliance

Jerry Tucker, organizer, New Directions, United Auto Workers

Mariana Valverde, professor, York University (Canada)

Pura Velasco, president, INTERCEDE: Toronto Organization for Domestic Workers' Rights

Alan Wald, professor, University of Michigan

Gregoris Yannaros, MP, Coalition of the Left and Progress (Greece)

Please send messages of support, contributions or requests for information to the Committee to Defend Greek Socialists, c/o International Socialist Organization, P.O. Box 16085, Chicago, IL 60616.

Copies of an English translation of the pamphlet, *The Crisis in the Balkans: The Macedonian Question and the Working Class* are available for \$3.00 each from the same address. Please add 50¢ per copy for shipping and handling.

\*Individual's institutional affiliations for identification purposes only.

# Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Liberation in the Struggle for Socialism

by Karin Baker and Ann Menasche

There are multiple reasons for socialists to be concerned with the topic of lesbian/gay/bisexual liberation. Supporting lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men is important, given their position as an oppressed group and given the fact that socialists oppose oppression. In addition to this, lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are among those in the working class who oppose the ruling class, but these working-class elements will only be willing to join with us to the degree that we earn their trust by supporting their particular struggles.

It is necessary to go beyond this, however, to understand the concerns of lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men. We believe it is little understood that they have a particular and critical contribution to make to socialist struggle. An elaboration of this is our main focus in this article.

We want to acknowledge that our arguments here have been informed by ideas which come out of more radical branches of feminist thought. These ideas — especially those concerned with gender, the heterosexual family, and compulsory heterosexuality — have great relevance for lesbian/gay/bisexual liberation and have been a major influence on our position. Thus, although our article is about this liberation struggle and socialism, much of what we write has meaning for women's liberation.

## The Social Construction of Sexuality

A basis of our approach is the idea that sexuality is culturally constructed. Adrienne Rich is a well-known lesbian feminist who has taken this position. In her article "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" [in Rich's, *Blood, Bread and Poetry*, New York: Norton, 1986], Rich examines the social forces that compel women into relationships with men. She demonstrates how social influences channel us toward heterosexuality, putting into doubt the traditional assumption that heterosexuality is natural or biologically determined.

John D'Emilio, a gay historian, takes the position in his article "Capitalism and Gay Identity" [in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983], that the concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality were constructed along with the development of capitalism. In precapitalist society, women and men were economically interdependent, and heterosexual families were formed as

economic productive units. Although there was knowledge of sexual "acts" between people of the same sex, it was only with the advent of wage labor that it became possible for individuals to construct a life independent of the heterosexual family and to develop "gay identity." (D'Emilio is interested by what this suggests — that contrary to the idea that a fixed number of people are born gay, lesbian, or bisexual, there are now more people who identify as homosexual or bisexual than there were 75 years ago, and there is the potential for this number to increase. He is also interested in how such an idea affects the way we address heterosexuals.)

A large majority of lesbians have at least some heterosexual experience in their past; many have been involved in long-term heterosexual relationships or been married to men prior to "coming out" later in life. Lesbian feminists of today view their present sexuality as a political choice and an emotional preference for female companionship and intimacy, not based on biology, but arising in the social context of a patriarchal society where gender roles and unequal power continue to characterize heterosexual relationships. Many lesbians credit the feminist movement for making such a choice both desirable and possible for them. They affirm, as do radical gay theorists, and as did Kinsey in the early 1950s, that people are born simply sexual, biologically capable of response to sexual stimulation, regardless of the source. Thus the lesbian feminist slogan that became popular in the 1970s (taken from a song by Alex Dobkin) "any woman can be a lesbian."

Many politicized bisexuals likewise challenge a biological determinist view by questioning a framework that allows people only the opposing choices of heterosexual or homosexual identity, an "either/or" proposition. They see the division of sexuality into a dual system based on attraction to one of two genders as itself a social construction. These bisexuals are critical of our cultural tendency toward creating systems of categorization whereby we organize people into clearly defined groups which are perceived to be opposites, without acknowledging variations and nuances.

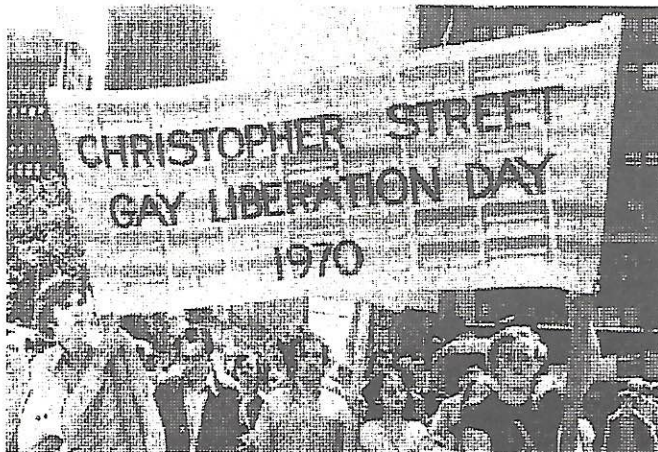
They perceive sexuality as a continuum rather than a combination of opposing categories.

(It should not be overlooked that the two positions described above, identified as that of lesbian feminism and the view of some bisexuals, do not necessarily agree, at least as they are commonly interpreted, but both are illustrations of the concept of the social construction of sexuality.)

Feminists and lesbian, bisexual, and gay theorists who hold the view of sexuality as being socially constructed perceive gender, the sexual division of labor, and the family in the same light. Although most cultures, including our own, see their gender/sexual/family systems as natural, as "just the way things are," there has actually been tremendous variation — across cultures and throughout history — in ideas of what makes a person a woman or a man, and in social patterns of childbearing and of interpersonal bonds such as marriage.

Marxists from earlier periods, such as Frederick Engels, Leon Trotsky, and others, though they failed to question heterosexuality as an institution, did recognize the social (and not biological) origins of the family and male supremacy and the role of the family in maintaining class hierarchy. In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* [New York: International Publishers, 1972, p. 131], Engels states:

...Wherever the monogamous family remains true to its historical origin and clearly reveals the antagonism between the man and the woman expressed in the man's exclusive supremacy, it exhibits in miniature the same oppositions and contradictions as those in which society has been moving, without power to resolve or overcome them, ever



since it split into classes at the beginning of civilization.

And Trotsky in *Problems of Everyday Life* [New York: Monad Press, 1973, p. 87]:

The most compelling motive of the present cult of the family is undoubtedly the need of the bureaucracy for a stable hierarchy of relations, and for the disciplining of youth by means of forty million points of support for authority and power.

## Social Constructionism and Socialism

These ideas of earlier socialists and of contemporary radical theorists (such as Rich, D'Emilio, and others) have relevance for revolutionary socialists of today. The absence of an analysis of gender roles, and the sexual division of labor, compulsory heterosexuality, and the patriarchal family among the socialist projects that have been attempted has, we perceive, been a factor in their failure thus far.

Alexandra Kollontai, another early socialist who wrote a great deal on the subject of women and the family under capitalism and socialism, spoke of the need to transform interpersonal relationships and culture as we work to achieve socialism when she said, "The new morality is created by a new economy, but we will not build a new communist economy without the support of a new morality." [See Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings*, edited by Alix Holt, New York: Norton, 1980.]

The most central feature of attempts at creating socialism has been the accumulation of power by a few leading to their domination over society and the oppression of many. Those who want to create a democratic economic and social life must put greater effort into understanding power.

The absence of a feminist critique of gender has limited socialists' understanding of power. The question of power in society has relevance on the level of marriage, the family, and childrearing, as well as in broader arenas such as politics and the economy where it is traditionally considered. What happens in the former areas affects the latter. Many feminist theorists have developed radical critiques of power as manifested on all levels of society (the economy, politics, etc.), using gender roles and the patriarchal family as their starting point.

The conceptions of power and oppression developed out of the liberation movements of the 1960s and '70s — not just women's, but gay and lesbian, Black, etc. — offer conceptions of oppression and power that are necessary to the success of socialism. These can involve specific concerns such as sexism, racism, class oppression, and issues of sexuality, especially reproductive rights and compulsory heterosexuality. But they have general application to revolutionary struggle

as a whole, including such notions as empowerment, feminist process, and consensus.

For contemporary socialists who have had the benefit of both traditional Marxist theory and recent social movements, there can be no question that the patriarchal heterosexual family supports capitalism in a number of ways. As suggested in the earlier quotation from Trotsky, the family is organized to ensure authority and control over the majority of young people as well as male control of women — through violence against women, women's economic dependence, and women's traditional roles as caretakers of men and children. The family also plays the role of teaching children to obey authority and, by example, how to dominate others.

In addition, the traditional family channels personal bonds of affection and loyalty to a limited and specified number of others for each individual. People are not expected to trust or look out for those to whom they are unrelated by blood or marriage. This undermines larger communities and people's willingness to work for the common interest. It also puts a great burden on the family to provide emotional support and resolve difficulties in relative isolation. Furthermore, if people are divided into family units, each struggling to survive, they are more economically vulnerable, and thus economic threats by employers are more effective in keeping people in line. Commodity production is given increased importance, as well, because people organized into individual family units consume more than if they related through less atomized groups.

Class divisions are organized and maintained through family ties. How would the meaning of property change if it were not channeled primarily through family connections? Ending family-oriented distribution of property would not automatically result in socialized distribution, but basing the organization of property on the family provides a simple mechanism to ensure the perpetuation of class society.

Lesbian/bisexual/gay liberation poses a challenge to traditional concepts of family and present forms of social organization. Recent studies of lesbian and gay subcultures by the Kinsey Institute and others show that not only are intimate partnerships formed and children raised outside the traditional family system, but strong and lasting bonds of friendship beyond blood and marital ties are more commonplace within these subcultures than among heterosexuals. Such incipient community building — partly, but not entirely, a result of estrangement from homophobic blood relatives — may be precursors of the new social forms that will be created in a socialist society.

Moreover, homosexual relationships threaten "masculine" and "feminine" gender roles, and male control over women's bodies

and labor, structures that permeate both the family and the workplace and that demand heterosexual coupling at their base. It is no coincidence that same-sex relationships are not only denied the social recognition that is automatically given heterosexual relationships, but viciously punished and/or rendered invisible. Nor should we be surprised that antigay measures are on the top of the agenda of the far right, along with opposition to abortion rights. Society does everything in its power to insure an overwhelmingly heterosexual population, including marginalizing homosexuals as immoral, sick, or degenerate, or else as biological freaks with hormonal abnormalities or "gay brains."

This tremendous social pressure to be heterosexual is even stronger in the case of women. Lesbianism has been, in most women's lives, removed from the realm of possibility. Women's choices have been limited by their frequent economic dependence on men, as well as by social expectations that hold childbearing, childrearing, and marriage as women's highest occupations. However, no woman is free until she is free to choose to live as a lesbian. As long as women's lives are perceived as necessitating the presence of men for complete fulfillment, or women find themselves economically dependent on men, women's liberation has not been achieved. And sexuality cannot be liberated until men no longer have power over women and heterosexuality is completely deinstitutionalized. Such deinstitutionalization would mean not only an end to the most blatant forms of antigay discrimination and homophobia, but an overhaul of the popular culture, so that homosexual relationships would be recognized in books, movies, television, schools, etc., as completely normal, acceptable, and commonplace.

## Conclusion

We, as socialists, have as our goal nothing less than the end of all forms of oppression and the liberation of the whole of humanity and thus we must actively support lesbian/bisexual/gay liberation. But our support should also come from an awareness of what lesbians, bisexuals and gay men have to offer us as socialists: a deeper understanding of interpersonal power relationships which have an effect beyond the immediately personal. This involves a challenge to the contemporary family and its foundation, the gender system and the oppression of women — all props of capitalism. It also involves a contribution toward the development of more socialist forms of social organization. In other words, lesbian/bisexual/gay liberation is an integral part of a challenge to capitalism and a step in the process of building socialism, and therefore it should be central to the socialist vision. □

# The Purge of the Trotskyists from the Socialist Workers Party

*In Defense of American Trotskyism, Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy*, edited by Paul Le Blanc. New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1992. 412 pages, \$12.00.

Reviewed by Michael Frank

This is the second in a series of books about the political and organizational decline of the Socialist Workers Party and the opposition to the Barnes leadership that developed in the late '70s and early '80s. The editors of the series and authors of most of the documents included were victims of the wave of expulsions that took place from 1981 to 1984. They share a particular perspective, and they date and explain the party's decline accordingly.

The volume begins with a long, remarkable introduction by the editor, Paul Le Blanc. Le Blanc does not try to explain the party's evolution solely through an internal history of its policies, mistakes, factions, etc. Rather, he locates the SWP in a broad historical framework and examines the social forces impacting it — considering the world economic and political situation and the changing material conditions and consciousness of the American working class. Particularly useful is his account of the transformation of this class from the '30s (with its militancy and immigrant working class cultures) to the '50s (with its significantly higher consumption levels and social gains won by earlier struggles). The very successes of the militant struggles of the '30s and '40s helped create the material conditions for the erosion of a distinctive working class culture, thereby eliminating the social base for a mass revolutionary party.

Unable to do any substantial recruiting during the '50s, the SWP went into a holding pattern and waited for the next radical upsurge. That radicalization did come in the '60s, but it differed significantly from that of the '30s. The party was able to recruit young people of, broadly speaking, working class origins out of the social movements. But the radical ideas of this layer were limited by the nature of the radicalization itself, which was largely confined to students who lacked any real experience with the unions or the workers movement as such. The current leadership of the SWP, including National Secretary Jack Barnes, was part of this levy of recruits.

But if a broad understanding of social context and social forces is necessary to account for the evolution of the party, this does not

mean that one can completely ignore organizational policies and practices. This level of reality has a life of its own. Le Blanc in fact provides a detailed account of organizational practices that, in his opinion, paved the way for and contributed to the party's degeneration. For example, Barnes was selected, groomed, and elevated to his current position by the former leadership team of Dobbs-Kerry on the basis of their assessment of his potential. His leadership position was not the result of a consensus reached by his peers on the basis of actual accomplishments.

Le Blanc describes the organizational principles and practices alien to Leninism that developed in the handling of opposition tendencies in the party such as the Wohlforth and Robertson factions that gave rise to the Workers League and the Spartacist League, the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, and the Internationalist Tendency. He does not try to absolve those who became oppositionists in the '80s from their rightful share of responsibility for these developments, and does not excuse himself or others for not raising their voices earlier. That is why Barnes was able to point out, in one of the documents included in this volume, that most of the '80s oppositionists who were members of the National Committee at the time supported the party's method of dealing with the Internationalist Tendency.

On yet another level Le Blanc examines the group psychology that tends to develop in an overly-centralized, authoritarian type party. Such an organization creates an over-identification with and dependency on the leadership and a downplaying and underdevelopment of members' own critical and creative capacities. They tend to feel validated and valuable only when their thinking coincides with that of the leadership. Le Blanc claims that such a dynamic developed among at least part of the SWP rank and file. It is not surprising that such an organization is unable to produce an interesting literature or an engaging political practice.

The editor's analysis of the SWP's decline — which integrates broad social, economic, political, and cultural perspectives with organizational history and internal psychodynamics — is, in my opinion, an exemplary model of how Marxists should try to understand a phenomenon. And it is the most comprehensive account of this party's evolution available.

The oppositionists of the early '80s saw the Barnes leadership abandoning the theory of

permanent revolution and downplaying Trotsky's contributions to revolutionary Marxism in order to adapt to Castroism. Democratic centralist functioning was also abandoned as these political and programmatic changes were implemented in piecemeal fashion without discussion, debate, and decision-making by the party as a whole. Members who expressed differences with this new political course were expelled under various pretexts and accused of violating organizational norms.

The book is organized into nine sections plus appendices. Included are materials on the Cannon tradition, the expulsions of National Committee members, the expulsions in California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and New York, statements by leadership bodies of the Fourth International calling for the reinstatement of the expelled oppositionists, and an article on the relevance of the theory of permanent revolution, junked by Barnes, to the Black struggle in the U.S.

There are many statements by members describing their frame-ups, protesting their expulsions, and affirming their loyalty to the party, while criticizing the political and organizational course of the Barnes leadership. Here are some examples:

The veteran Trotskyist Max Goldman began his trial statement this way: "Comrades, I have been given ten minutes for 64 years of revolutionary activity."

Dianne Feeley and Carole Seligman sent an open letter to 700 SWP members in which they warned of the consequences of the leadership's methods and tried to arouse the party.

In contrast to the traditions of the SWP, the leadership is using organizational methods to deal with serious political questions. But suppressing discussion does not solve the political disputes. Rather, it handicaps the party's ability to evaluate its work, rectify its errors, and correct its course.... Party democracy is the *means* whereby the policy and leadership of the party can be evaluated. Subverting that democratic process weakens the party and endangers its combativity and its political program.

Steve Bloom described the methodology of the final frame-up campaign carried out against dozens of remaining oppositionists in January 1984. The leadership drew conclusions about an action by one particular group of oppositionists in California, and asked other members who had previously expressed political differences to repudiate the



action as a test of their loyalty to the party. Members who refused to do this were expelled. People were expected to accept the leadership's characterization of events without having access to any other information or point of view. Bloom ends his analysis with the following: "This purge is, of course, an attack on the democratic rights of the oppositionists who were expelled. But even more than that it is an attack on and partial foreclosure of the democratic rights of all party members. As such it is a threat to the life-blood of the party."

Dave Riehle's statement also deserves to be quoted at length.

A cadre organization of revolutionary workers that can meet the tests of struggle that will be posed in the course of the American revolution can be composed only of self-reliant, independent-minded, contentious, and combative individuals. Only people of this type can impose on themselves the kind of iron discipline necessary for the fight ahead. These are not the kind of people you are going to keep or attract. By pursuing the methods you are currently using, you will end up with an illusory and complacent "homogeneity." A party membership assembled along the lines you are now pursuing

will blow apart at the first serious pressure exerted on it by the ruling class. People selected for leadership and membership on the basis of political passivity and willingness to change views on cue are not the human material out of which American Bolshevism will be constructed.

Also included in this volume are statements in which the SWP leadership gives its side of the story. These are grim, depressing documents by Larry Seigle and Jack Barnes. Two points struck me about these contributions. First, the leaders speak as if the majority and the elected bodies of the party *are* the party, and that minorities are somehow outside the parameters. And second, the leadership essentially claims the right to determine who is permitted to communicate to whom and about what. They seek to limit conversation, correspondence and the exchange of ideas. The bureaucratic leadership of my union unsuccessfully attempts to run the organization in this way, but they would never have the nerve to publicly proclaim it as a principle!

This book will be of great interest to all those who passed through the Socialist Workers Party. Hopefully it will also find its way

into the hands of some current members. It should be read by all those interested in American Trotskyism and, more broadly, the history of the radical movement in this country. If this party had gone through a different evolution and retained something of its earlier dynamism and attractiveness, the political climate might be more favorable for the left today.

But the importance of this book is not only historical. The SWP experience of the late 1970s and 1980s offers important negative lessons for the building of a mass revolutionary party. The material gathered here contributes to a proper understanding of Leninism, democratic centralism, the role of dissident minorities, and discussion and debate which are necessary for the education of party members and the clarifying, strengthening, and correcting of the party's program, strategy, and tactics. These lessons will have to be assimilated by a significant layer of radicals if we are to construct a revolutionary party capable of guiding the working class in its struggle to overthrow capital. This book is therefore of interest to all those who aspire to build such a party. □

## A New Collection of Jim Cannon's Writings

*James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism (Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928)* Edited by Emily Turnbull and James Robertson, Spartacist Publishing Company, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. 624 pp., \$22.50 hard back, \$14.50 paperback.

*Reviewed by Frank Lovell*

This book makes available to the reading public new archival material from the formative period of the American Communist movement. It is a useful and revealing supplement to the 2-volume study of American Communism by Theodore Draper (completed in 1960) and *The First Ten Years of American Communism* by James P. Cannon (1962). Cannon's *First Ten Years*, readers may recall, consisted mostly of letters to Draper from a correspondence which began in 1954 at Draper's initiative. When he began his study Draper discovered almost immediately that relatively little documentary record of early American Communism could be found. He resorted to interviews with party founders who were still living and willing to cooperate. He later said (in his introduction to the first edition of the Cannon book): "For a long time, I wondered why Jim Cannon's memory of events in the nineteen-twenties was so superior to that of all the others. Was it simply some inherent trait of mind? Re-reading some of these letters, I came to the conclusion that it was something more. Jim Cannon *wanted* to remember. This portion of

his life still lives for him because he has not killed it within himself."

### Cannon's Uniqueness Among CP Leaders

Draper's last point raises other questions on how Cannon differed from other Communist Party leaders. Why did Cannon want to remember? And how was he able to remember so well? He wanted to remember because he believed the experience of the early years and all that went wrong then was useful in understanding the class struggle in the U.S. and would continue to provide clues to the successful political organization of the working class. He was able to remember because he alone among the founders of the American Communist Party remained an active participant in the movement until his death in 1974, at age 84.

Interviewed by Sidney Lens only a month before his death, Cannon responded to questions on the history of the CP and his own role in it. At the time of the interview Lens was an antiwar activist and an editor of *Liberation* magazine. In the 1930s he had been a member of the Trotskyist movement. So he and Cannon were not strangers, except in the realm of ideas, as revealed in the wide-ranging interview. One of the questions was about the revolutionary potential of the American working class in the 1930s, and Cannon answered that if the CP had remained a revolutionary party, "it could have made great

things out of that mass movement of the thirties." Later Lens asked him about prospects for revolution in the 1970s, or in the near future. Cannon answered that "anything



James P. Cannon

is possible in this century in the years that are left of it." When Lens observed that he didn't sound very optimistic Cannon said, "I don't want to make any categorical statements, but I say we're living in a time when capitalism is plunging toward its climactic end."

### **The Driving Force of Cannon's Activity: A Consistent Revolutionary Outlook**

Lens reminded Cannon that he had said the same thing in the 1930s, and 1940s, and all the decades following. And Cannon responded that "the history of humanity is a very long one, isn't it? And a quarter of a century is only an instant in the history of the human race." He said, "I see one crisis piling upon another. I don't think the capitalists have ever been in such a jam in this country as they are right now, both politically and economically." Here in this interview at the end of his life can be seen the driving force that animated Cannon's activity from his early involvement in radical politics.

This latest book is neither a history of the early CP nor a biography of Cannon. It is a compilation and selection of documents from the first eight years of American Communism. All the documents were written by Cannon, some in collaboration with other CP leaders. It is not the first of its kind, but another of what can properly be called "Cannon books." At least ten other volumes (full length books) of his writings from different periods and episodes of his life as an organizer and agitator for a new socialist society are extant. (See box.) But this is the first such book on the early CP period. It deliberately avoids duplicating Draper's history and Cannon's memoirs of these years. It is an additional aid to the study of revolutionary Marxist principles, and the strategy and tactics of Leninist party building. (Or what at the time was thought to be "Leninist party building.")

The helpful introduction by the editors gives background pointers on social struggles and radical politics of the time, and Cannon's contributions. Each document is also prefaced by a brief note on the circumstances under which it was produced and where or whether previously published. An example is the document titled "The American Question," circa November 1922. The introductory note says, "The following unpublished and undated document was written at the behest of Leon Trotsky during the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (held in Moscow, 5 November – 5 December 1922) by Cannon and other American Communists who were struggling against the maintenance of the dual structure of a clandestine Communist party alongside the legal Workers Party." This is the document, stipulated by Trotsky to be written on one sheet of paper, that Cannon said years later he would give a lot to recover.

### **The Labor Party Question in the '20s**

One of the problems of the early Communist movement was the formation of a labor party based on the then existing union movement. Such a party in embryo had been conceived in 1918 by the Chicago Federation of Labor under the leadership of John Fitzpatrick, a progressive unionist and supporter of William Z. Foster's Trade Union Educational League. In 1923 the nascent Workers (Communist) Party, which Foster had joined, becoming part of its leadership, was trying to establish a working relationship with the growing progressive union movement in the hope of developing the union-based labor party. At the same time sentiment for a third party, opposed to the Democratic and Republican two-party system and generated in large part by the 1921 crisis in agriculture, was becoming a prime factor in the U.S. political equation.

What to do in this situation divided the Communist leadership as well as the leadership of the progressive union movement. In the ranks of the Communists the division took the form of a factional struggle between the Foster-Cannon group on one side and the Ruthenberg-Lovestone-Pepper clique on the other. In the union movement the progressive forces that had endorsed the labor party idea joined with conservatives (led by the reactionary AFL Gompers bureaucracy) to endorse the 1924 presidential campaign of Robert La Follette, the U.S. senator from Wisconsin who split from the Republican Party to head the ticket of the newly formed Farmer-Labor Party.

This was the first and only endorsement by the official union movement of a candidate for president of the United States who challenged the two-party system. After the election the AFL bureaucracy reverted to its previous position in support of Democrats and Republicans which was "vote for the candidate; reward friends and punish enemies."

Within the Communist Party the factional division on the labor party question deepened as other issues arose, and the Foster-Cannon group eventually split. But the composition and personnel of the contending factions remained essentially unchanged until the expulsion of the Cannon group for Trotskyism in 1928. The labor party problem was never resolved in the CP, and it has not to this day been solved by progressive forces in the unions. The course of the class struggle will yet determine the formation of a "genuine" labor party.

In November 1923 Foster and Cannon drafted a "Statement on Our Labor Party Policy," which describes in detail the condition of the union movement of that time, the political and social consciousness of different sectors of the working class, and the prospects for a labor party. Some of the specific arguments in the context of that situation

remain cogent today. They contended that "the labor party sentiment is at once the most healthy current in the American labor movement, and the most dynamic issue in the hands of the Communists. It is the issue," they said, "by which the Gompers machine can be smashed and the ground broken for the leadership of the Communists." But they cautioned against impatience. "It is the greatest folly for us to caricature this basic issue and reduce it to a sectarian or factional basis," they said. "When we set up our own labor party we lose the main issue entirely. Our enemies are able to wave the red flag and scare the mass of immature rank and file workers away from us. The working masses are not yet ready to rally to the standard of Communism openly displayed in definitely labeled Communist organizations, but ample experience proves that they will accept Communist leadership in mass labor parties."

In 1924 the Foster-Cannon group had won the majority in the CP leadership, and after the intervention of the Communist International the party ran its own presidential ticket, Foster for president and Gitlow for vice president. A footnote mentions other aspects of the Communist electoral policy: "In Minnesota, Washington and South Dakota, the Workers Party supported local candidates of state Farmer-Labor parties. Julius F. Emme, a member of the machinists union and an open Workers Party supporter, was the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the Fourth Congressional District of St. Paul. According to the 6 November 1924 *Daily Worker*, Emme polled over 13,000 votes though he lost the election; Emil Youngdahl, a Communist who was FLP candidate for the Minnesota legislature, won his seat with 4,483 votes. Youngdahl served in the legislature until 1933 and he remained active in Minnesota Farmer-Labor politics."

### **Debate on Electoral Policy**

The debate over the party's electoral policy continued after the 1924 presidential campaign and was conducted in the pages of the *Daily Worker*. Among the documents is an article by Cannon (DW, Dec. 8, 1924) titled "Lovestone Quotes Mahoney," wherein Cannon states the different approaches to the politics of the day: "From the very beginning of the discussion, the CEC (Central Executive Committee controlled by the Foster-Cannon faction), placing itself on the ground of reality, has put one insistent question to the advocates of 'an intensified campaign for a class farmer-labor Party.' That question is: Where is the sentiment amongst the working masses for this so-called 'class' party? Time and again we have begged them to tell us in what trade unions, in what cities, states, or localities this sentiment exists and how it is manifesting itself." In this article Cannon observes that "Comrade Ruthenberg complains because we are not observing the amenities of parliamentary debate," only to

accuse Ruthenberg-Lovestone of seeking to eliminate Communism from electoral politics and substitute "farmer-laborism."

At this time another article appeared in the *Daily Worker* (Dec. 27, 1924), signed by Cannon, Foster, and Alexander Bittelmann. It reviewed the 1924 party record under their leadership. This is a lengthy document detailing issues and incidents in the factional struggle. It also states a special problem that arose out of the isolation at the time of the Communists in the unions. They attributed this temporary isolation to the false policies of the previous administration led by Ruthenberg-Lovestone. But the problem they described is recurrent in the radical movement. They said, "We had to be constantly on guard and at war against a peculiar state of mind of our organization which, for lack of a better name, we shall call the spirit of inflation. By this we mean disregard for objective facts and reality, dangerous self-conceit as to the strength and abilities of our party, the worship of empty phrases, and a grave lack of realism, practicality and Leninist objectivity."

Whatever else may be learned about Cannon and the group around him from the documentary material of this book, one thing will remain: Cannon was a realist from the early days. He was party education director in 1924, and in that capacity he submitted an article to the *Daily Worker*, "How to Organize and Conduct a Study Class." For anyone who wants to learn about communism or socialism, or even for those who aspire to become leaders of the working class, this article alone is worth the price of the book. It explains how to undertake serious study.

### Tribute to a Miners' Leader

Another article, written in 1921 and published in *The Liberator*, "The Story of Alex Howat," should be an inspiration to young workers in the modern union movement. Howat was the fearless and incorruptible leader of the Kansas district of the United Mine Workers. He was imprisoned in 1919 for refusing to call off a local strike. Frequent wildcat strikes by the Kansas miners so enraged the mine owners that they had the state legislature set up a special Industrial Court in 1920. The miners under Howat's leadership declared the mine owners' Industrial Court unconstitutional and voted to abide by miners' law. Howat was the antithesis of the professional labor leader. He was no "labor statesman," and did not aspire to become one. Cannon's tribute to Howat speaks about "the famous Kansas contribution to statecraft." It is a contribution contemporary union officials ought to study and try to emulate.

### Cannon at International Meetings

Several items in this book are statements by Cannon in Moscow at meetings of the Communist International. He was there for seven months in 1922 and returned at other times as a member of one or another delegation. These delegations increasingly became factional mendicants as CI control grew. Cannon tried to explain the political situation in the U.S. on several occasions. In 1925 Foster and Cannon drafted a lengthy statement on "Controversial Questions in the Workers Party of America," intended for consideration and discussion in the CI. They did not know at the time that the CI was by then dominated and controlled by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Their report on the U.S. eco-

nomic and political situation was replete with data on population shifts, industrial concentration and transplantation, declining wages, increasing unemployment. They noted that 6 million were out of work in 1922, that the average wage in 1924 was \$35 dollars per week and unskilled industrial workers lived in poverty. They said that of the approximately 30 million wage earners at the time only 3.5 million belonged to unions, about one in 10. They argued that the controversy over the Farmer-Labor Party issue was responsible for failure of the CP to win greater support and influence in the unions and urged that the CP put that question aside and concentrate attention on the more immediate daily problems of workers, the need to help build up the unions and organize the unorganized, and establish united front work with other organizations in defense of civil liberties and the rights of the foreign born.

Along these lines Cannon and Foster submitted eight recommendations to the CI's "American Commission," including one for a review of past mistakes. They said, "There is a danger in the party in the tendency to cover up past mistakes by posturing present theories to fit them, which hinders the party from turning back from a wrong path once it has entered it." The "present theory" in Moscow at the time was "Bolshevization of the CI sections."

Cannon addressed this matter in remarks to a plenum of the CI in March 1925, published under the heading "The Situation Is Different in America." He asserted the basic facts first off: "The problem of Bolshevization in America has certain concrete aspects: the problem is concurrent with the problem of organizing the party, for we are *at the beginning of the task of forming a Communist party in America*, and the situation is different from the countries of Europe. We never had a revolutionary mass movement in America and have few traditions and experiences to draw upon. We have a large proletariat in America, but the party has only 20,000 members of which only 2,000 are in the English speaking organizations. The American proletariat is politically very backward and the most elementary tasks are necessary in the attempt to set it in motion."

This is a measure of Cannon's realistic appreciation of the U.S. political situation at the time and, indirectly, the limited understanding in Moscow. A few days later he made further remarks on the needs of the American CP, "We must acknowledge our mistake, but we need no fake labor party."

During this trip to Moscow Cannon and others in the American delegation met with ex-IWW leader Bill Haywood, then an American exile, and drafted plans for the founding of the International Labor Defense. From then until his expulsion in 1928 the ILD was Cannon's main public political activity. Its success gained respect and influence for the Cannon group among CP ranks.

## Books by and about James P. Cannon

1. *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (memoir, theory of history)
2. *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* (Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928)
3. *Speeches for Socialism (1921-1953)*
4. *Notebook of an Agitator* (Selected Speeches and Writings, 1926-1956)
5. *The History of American Trotskyism* (lectures, 1942)
6. *The Left Opposition in the U.S., 1928-31* (documents, correspondence)
7. *The Communist League of America, 1932-34* (documents, correspondence)
8. *Founding of the Socialist Workers Party (minutes and resolutions, 1938-39)*
9. *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* (polemical writings, speeches, and correspondence, 1939-40)
10. *Socialism on Trial* (testimony in the 1941 Minneapolis "sedition" trial, and writings about the trial)
11. *Letters from Prison* (from Sandstone penitentiary, 1944-45)
12. *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II* (Writings and Speeches, 1940-43)
13. *The Struggle for Socialism in the "American Century"* (Writings and Speeches, 1945-47)
14. *Speeches to the Party (1952-54, selected speeches and correspondence)*
15. *America's Road to Socialism* (lectures, 1952-53)
16. Also, *James P. Cannon As We Knew Him* (thirty-three reminiscences)
17. *James P. Cannon, A Political Tribute* (interviews from the last year of his life, including the one with Sidney Lens)

During the years 1926 through 1928 Cannon grew increasingly aware that something was drastically wrong with the assistance and directives from Moscow. Upon returning from Moscow in the spring of 1926 he reported on the work of the Executive Committee of the CI. He said, "There cannot be any doubt that in all the parties (and especially in America where the party is as yet comparatively small and weak) a real genuine party democracy must be established unconditionally and without delay." He went on, "The practice of controlling parties by mechanical means, of setting up military factional regimes, of excluding qualified comrades from participation in party work and leadership — all these practices have ended in complete bankruptcy everywhere and have brought a number of parties to the danger of disintegration and smash-up."

### **His Work Against Factionalism**

He himself set about the task of eliminating factionalism in the American CP and early in 1927 arranged a conference with leaders of the Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction for this purpose. An unpublished summary of that conference is included in this collection of documents. Some prominent members of the Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction had previously been won over to Cannon's position, and in the conference Ruthenberg indicated his general agreement. He died suddenly March 2, 1927. His death signaled a renewal of factional intrigue for the appointment of a new national secretary and control of the party apparatus. Cannon's hopes for moderation of the factional warfare were swamped by the frenzied scramble to grab control. In the course of this struggle it was an accepted fact that Moscow would hand out the prize. So the game at that stage was played according to Moscow rules, but these rules were not yet clear to the players. Cannon continued his campaign against factionalism and formed a bloc with Foster and William Weinstone, a leader in the Lovestone faction, to curb the fanatical factionalism of Lovestone.

In a letter to the American Commission written in June 1927 in Moscow and signed by the Cannon-Foster-Weinstone bloc they outlined in specific detail their view of party tasks and perspectives at that juncture and castigated Lovestone factionalism. "The factional regime of the Lovestone group, its theories of permanent factional organization with the role of 'hegemony' over the party, and its refusal to work with the other groups on a basis of equality, must be condemned as the principal barrier to party unity and consolidation," they said. They urged that the Lovestone-right wing alliance be "dissolved unconditionally." Despite these pleadings Lovestone was awarded the prize. He and his faction reigned like feudal barons in the

American party until a new line was adopted and implemented following the sixth world congress of the CI in 1928.

It was at this congress where Cannon was converted to Trotskyism, but it is clear in the documents of the preceding period that he had developed a critical attitude that prepared him for the conversion. At the congress he spoke forcefully "against the opportunism of the Lovestone majority" in the American party, charging it with submitting false reports of the actual political situation in the U.S. Meantime he had read with an open and receptive mind Trotsky's critique of the Comintern's draft program.

The last of the Cannon documents in this book consists of excerpts from an interrogation of him in the political committee of the Workers Party, October 27, 1928. He was asked if the fact that he had recently stopped speaking on motions of the Central Committee although he still voted for them had something to do with doubts on the question of Trotskyism. Cannon answered yes.

At the end of this book it is fair to ask oneself if there is anything here that applies to the political scene in the U.S. today. Our post-World War II world is vastly different from the world that survived the first world war. There are hardly any similarities at all between the U.S. of the 1920s and what we see in this country today in the closing decade of this century. The composition of the working class has changed completely, the life style is different, and the way of thinking is different.

While remaining mindful of the sweeping economic and social contrasts that divide the pre-World War II period from the shambling world it created, some basic facts of social reality remain unchanged. The employing class, through its political structures in the industrialized countries, continues to rule the world. The working class remains exploited and in the vast majority impoverished everywhere. The struggle between the employing class and the working class continues unabated. And in this context the strategy of working class struggle for emancipation from the wages system and the creation of a new society of the free and equal, as envisioned and enunciated by Cannon in the early days of American Communism, is relevant and can be applied in the continuing effort today to build a mass revolutionary working class party.

### **What Cannon Learned About Organization**

Cannon learned from his early experiences as a conscious revolutionist and organizer of working class struggles within capitalist society that partial successes and small gains, as well as ultimate victory, depend upon the shifting moods and developing social con-

sciousness of the working class. He was largely self-educated and learned early from the teachings of Marx and other socialists that the working class, in its massive numbers, is the only power capable of replacing capitalism. His first experiences in strike struggles as a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) taught him that the potential power of the working class must be organized, and that this requires education and special training of vanguard units. (In the days before the first World War these vanguard troops were known as "Wobblies," different from run-of-the-mill IWW members. The vanguard was the devoted, experienced, and educated core of the organization.)

One of the things this vanguard learned at that time was that nothing in the way of limited organizational efforts or sweeping social change can succeed without relating to and being involved with the broad mass of working people. Furthermore, this requires patience and devotion to the safeguards of democracy in all matters. This is the thread that ran through Cannon's whole life, and it is seen as the guiding line of all his activity in the early days of American Communism. It led him to Trotskyism, as shown in the documents published here in this book of his selected writings and speeches, 1920-1928.

The construction of this book, its skeletal frame and attachments, make it a pleasure to read and use as reference. It comes with a complete index, appendices about activities of some of Cannon's collaborators and co-thinkers of the time, 16 pages of rare photographs, a bibliography of Cannon's writings and speeches, 1912-1928, numbering 184, from which the 60 selections in this volume were drawn, a glossary of all persons referred to in the book, plus the previously mentioned introduction and the prefaces to each item.

There is also a short two-page introductory essay "About James P. Cannon," with a facing picture of Cannon in his mid-30s, about 1925. This is a nice way to start the book, creating a favorable first impression, with one slight oversight. The otherwise well-done piece about Cannon says he was National Chairman of the Socialist Workers Party at the time of his death and goes on to say that the SWP had abandoned the Trotskyist program more than ten years earlier. This seems to imply that Cannon ceased to be a Trotskyist in his last decade.

The editors have produced a thoroughly professional work and deserve to be congratulated and forgiven their political lapses. This book is an essential part of the library of American labor history. It deserves careful study by all who think of themselves as radicals and aspire to help the U.S. working class achieve political power. □

# Reader's Responses to the New *BIDOM*

Our readers have expressed a lot of enthusiasm about the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* and the new circumstances under which it is being produced. Several readers, including editorial board members, have offered to take larger bundles or to help sign up new subscribers.

Dayne Goodwin reports from Salt Lake City that "*BIDOM's* popularity is rapidly increasing" in his area and has upped his monthly bundle order to fifteen.

Jim Miles and Vera Wigglesworth in Chicago sold nine subscriptions and numerous individual copies at the Radical Scholars and Activists conference in that city in November. More recently they informed us that they xeroxed copies of the Malcolm X review from the January *BIDOM*, together with a

subscription blank, and passed them out to audiences leaving the Malcolm X movie. A good idea that others too might like to try.

Jim and Vera also report: "We have a new and serious supporter in the Los Angeles area, who wants a bundle of ten *BIDOM's* to sell. He really likes the magazine. He's very enthusiastic about it."

Harry Kopyto from Toronto writes: "On behalf of the Forward Group, which is a Toronto-based Trotskyist tendency of modest size and which considers itself to be in sympathy with the Fourth International, we wish to congratulate you on your recent success in joining Solidarity while maintaining your own publication to promote your views at the same time."

"We were profoundly inspired by this significant move toward unity of Trotskyist forces in the United States and wish to extend our hearty congratulations."

He said they found our issue no. 100 "highly educational" and sent \$30 for ten copies, "so that we can circulate it within our group," then closed with wishes for "ongoing success in your efforts to unify all sympathizers of the Fourth International into a common organization in the United States."

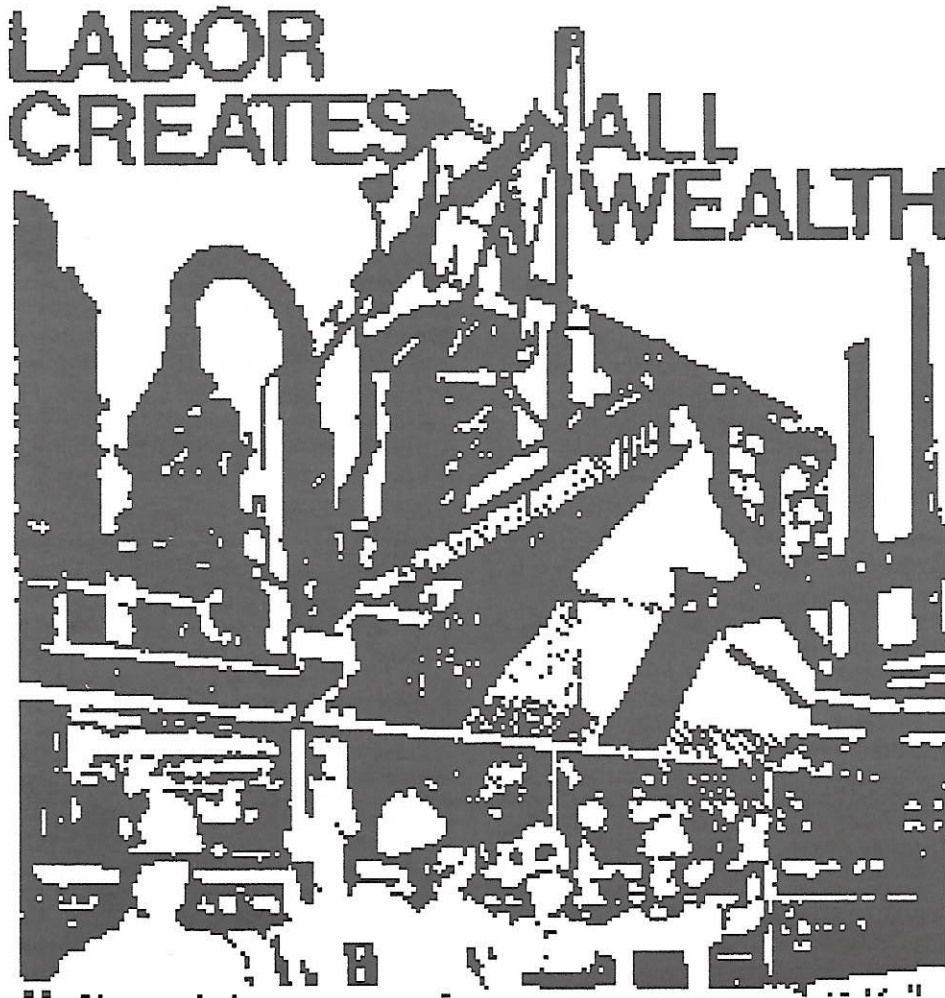
Similar sentiments came from Fred Valle in Detroit: "From the way I see it, without knowing all the details and nuances, it seems that the FIT made a right decision. The minority in the FIT was a bit larger than I expected [see the article "Fourth Internationalist Tendency Votes to Join Solidarity," in *BIDOM* no. 100]. But as I understand it, they will cooperate in publishing *BIDOM*. The 100th issue was probably the best issue put out, but they were all good! I hope that good will and tolerance will abound from both sides."

From Flatrock, Michigan, Phil Watson writes: "I just received your bulletin '*In Defense of Marxism*.' It was interesting, to say the least. I particularly found the write-up on the Marxist revolutionary movement in Peru and the piece on the Fourth International to be of interest, as I prefer international 'Socialist' or 'Communist' politics. I lead a small group and publication called 'The Red Front.'"

And from Wolfgang L. in Berlin: "Please find enclosed a [\$30] contribution for (a) renewal of my abo [subscription] for your fine *Bulletin IDOM*, which I don't want to miss, and (b) for your good and worthwhile political work. By the way, heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of the issue no. 100 and on the occasion of FIT's joining forces with Solidarity; I sincerely hope that other groups of the true Left will follow the example set by you and your comrades."

Rosemary G., a reader from Washington state, writes: "I could be without the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* but not without the *BIDOM*. It's the only reading I do that gets my head screwed back on straight. Both of us are buoyed by the progress toward unification, by the way."

We urge our readers to help support and circulate *BIDOM*, to get subscriptions for it, and keep giving us feedback. Let us know what you think about particular articles and about the magazine in general. Give us your suggestions for improving it and for circulating it more widely, and let us know what you are doing. □



# Letters

## On Committees of Correspondence Convention

Paul Le Blanc's article on the Committees of Correspondence convention in Berkeley was very disappointing. How someone of Le Blanc's stature, how someone who wrote an entire book on the topic of the revolutionary party, could write an article such as the one he wrote, is puzzling. These oppositionists — Bloice, Davis, Aptheker, et al. — recently booted out of the CP by their fellow Stalinists, are bad news. They're just as bad as, if not worse than, Gus Hall and company. These are the same people who have preached class-collaboration at every election season, misleading workers into voting for "lesser-evil" imperialists. There's no sign that they're going to change. If anything, they're going to imitate their fellow Stalinists in the East European and West European CPs by turning into social-democrats. It's a good thing if they're abandoning their pretense of Leninism. That leaves the field open for real Marxists. But it doesn't matter one iota if Herbert Aptheker can make pious noises about how bad Stalinism in the former USSR was. Is this really going out on a limb, in the 1990s? Ask him about Labor Party Advocates. Where does he stand? Isn't that one of the crucial questions facing revolutionaries today? And isn't it true that Bloice, Davis, and Aptheker come down on the WRONG side on that question? And is that really any surprise, given their years in the CP?

Who cares if a group of expelled Stalinists and their supporters can hold a conference in Berkeley and get some well-meaning people to show up? Are we promoting the idea of discussion for the sake of discussion? Revolutionaries definitely should show up at events like that — and promote Labor Party Advocates, and expose Bloice when he talked about supporting Clinton. Is Le Blanc really waiting to see if this organization becomes "durable"? Let's hope it doesn't. Let's hope it dies a deserved death. If anything, the "discussion" at these gatherings will center on forming another social-democratic grouping such as DSA. Do we really need that? Sorry, Mr. Le Blanc, these people are not my comrades.

If Bloice, Davis, and Aptheker, et al. want to build Labor Party Advocates, then we can put a label on them reading "useful." Otherwise, they're part of the problem.

Marc Vigilmo  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
December 4, 1992

## Paul Le Blanc Responds:

In Issue #99 (September 1992), I wrote a straightforward, objective report about the Berkeley conference of the Committees of Correspondence, which I attended, noting that there were valuable discussions as well as serious contradictions at the conference. I suggested that this organization might not become "coherent or revolutionary," adding: "It remains to be seen whether or not the internally diverse, and clearly divergent, forces within the Committees of Correspondence will be able to transform the organization into something durable." Why such comments should provoke an indignant reaction is not clear to me.

When more than 1200 people gather in one place to discuss socialism, democracy, the class struggle and social movements, etc., this should be of interest to revolutionary Marxists, especially when conference participants are critically evaluating their experience in the Communist Party. Some of those gathered in Berkeley, from various parts of the United States, were formerly prominent CPers, many more were honest rank-and-filers, and there were also significant numbers of left-wing activists who had never been in the Communist Party. It is worth going to such a gathering to listen and discuss, and even learn, as opposed to being satisfied with "denouncing" and "exposing."

The stress which Marc gives to Labor Party Advocates is by no means misplaced (even though some LPA members are active in the Democratic Party). One of the foremost tasks of those influenced by Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky in the United States today is to help build a mass work-

ing-class party. For many years the Bolsheviks were simply the revolutionary wing of such a party in Russia. Without the existence of such a party in the United States, we lack an essential precondition for making revolutionary politics practical for the working class, and we lack an essential precondition for bringing about a working-class revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society.

To accomplish this elementary task, we must be working with all kinds of people. We will need to join with others on the Left, including those with whom we have had fierce and fundamental differences, and sometimes even be willing to learn from them. (Remember Lenin's 1905 advice to his Bolshevik comrades: "Take a lesson from the Mensheviks, for Christ's sake.") If done properly, this places revolutionary socialists in the best position to be able to teach something of value in the context of a mass workers' movement.

To assist us in learning, we will need to have more information and discussion about such groups as Committees of Correspondence in the pages of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Readers may also wish to send \$4.00 for the proceedings of the Berkeley conference, entitled *Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s*, available from Committees of Correspondence, 11 John Street, Room 506, New York, NY 10038. I don't think this organization, in and of itself, is the organization that we need — but at least some of its members may well end up helping to build the future organization that can mobilize the working class for its emancipation.

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This book focuses on the waves of expulsions which hit the Socialist Workers Party from 1981 through 1984. It provides an inspiring record — and reaffirmation — of the revolutionary ideas and commitments of those who were being forced out of the organization to which many had given "the whole of their lives." also included are: substantial pieces by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Larry Seigle defending the expulsions; a critique by representatives of the Fourth International; letters and a talk by pioneer Trotskyist James P. Cannon, originally published under the title *Don't Strangle the Party*. A substantial introductory essay by Paul Le Blanc, "Leninism in the United States and the Decline of the Socialist Workers Party," relates the 1981-84 experience to broader questions of "the vanguard party" and Leninism, the history and character of American Trotskyism, the development of the U.S. working class, and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

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