

In Defense of Marxism

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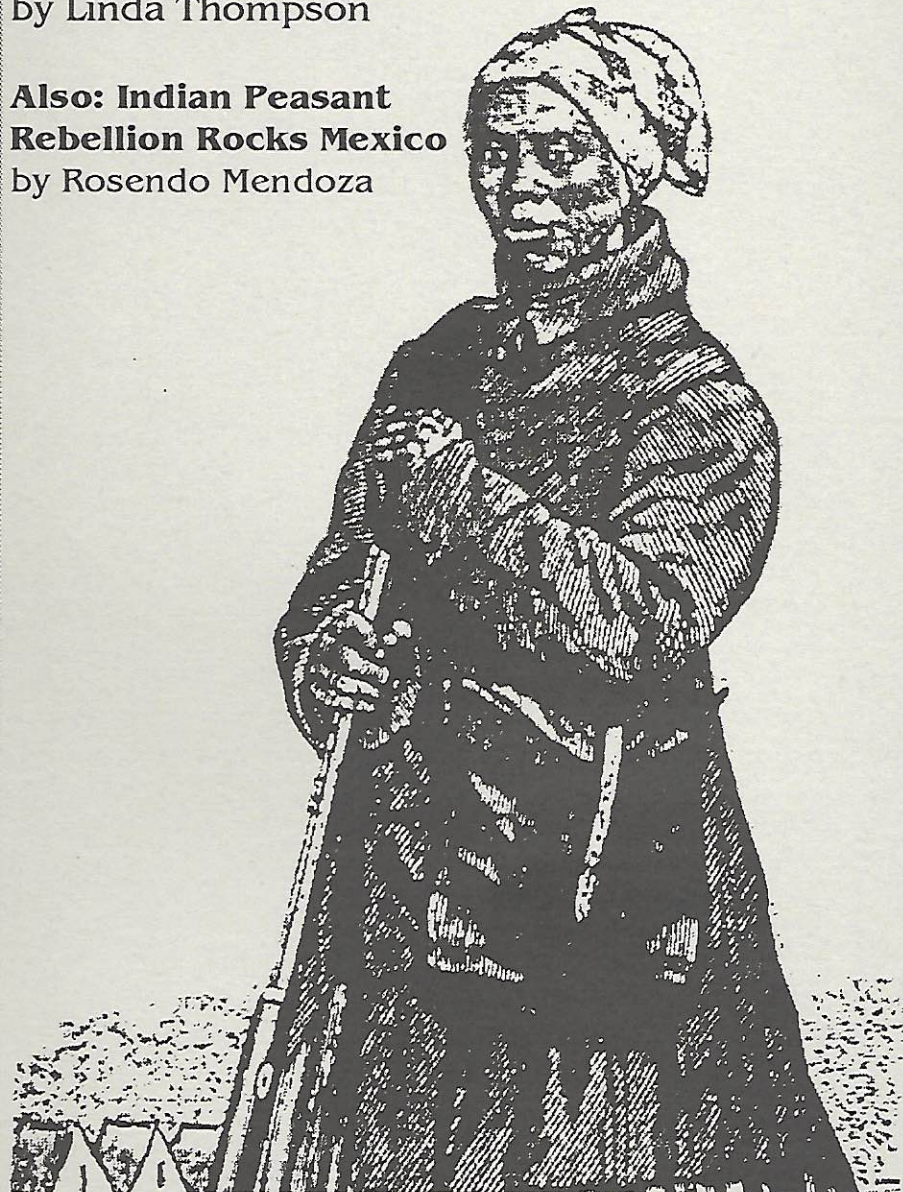
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Harriet Tubman, abolitionist and emancipator

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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Indian Peasant Rebellion Rocks Mexican Regime

by Rosendo Mendoza

President Carlos Salinas de Gortari received a very loud New Year's wake-up call. On the same day he pretended to lead the country into the ranks of the First World via the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), an indigenous peasant rebellion broke out in the southernmost state of Chiapas, along the Guatemalan border.

"We are the product of 500 years of struggles," began the initial pronouncement of the previously unheard-of Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). The statement was called "The Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle."

Reproduced in an initial edition of the organization's newspaper *El Despertador Mexicano* (roughly, "The Mexican Awakener"), the rebels' statement put forward a long list of political and social demands, such as access to farm lands and jobs as well as to basic services such as schools and medicines.

The paper also included a series of "revolutionary laws," including calls for expropriating and placing under workers' control large-scale agricultural industries, a radical agrarian reform, and requirements that foreign-owned industries pay their employees the same wages received by workers in their countries of origin.

While combatants interviewed by journalists frequently referred to the anticapitalist and socialist character of their struggle, the EZLN's formal texts made no such pronouncements, but placed the revolt in the context of popular revolutionary tradition in Mexico.

"We are the continuators of those who forged our nationality. The dispossessed number in the millions, and we call upon our brothers to respond to this call as the only way not to die of hunger in the face of the insatiable ambitions of the 70-year-old dictatorship," the declaration read.

A key leader of the rebellion insisted that the move was planned to coincide with the implementation of NAFTA, which he termed "a death sentence" on the people of the region. Chiapas is a largely agricultural state that will be particularly hard hit by the trade accord and government efforts to dismantle the remnants of the agrarian reform.

The EZLN also demanded free elections and called upon the national congress to remove the regime of Carlos Salinas de Gortari and name an interim government, as a precondition for holding non-fraudulent elections.

The EZLN appears to have mobilized at least 2,000 women and men for the offensive, though some estimates range as high as 5,000. Most are armed only with ancient, small-caliber rifles and even machetes, with a few carrying AK-47s and other high-powered weapons.

Some of the commanders appeared to be from other areas of Mexico, but the overwhelming majority of the combatants are clearly from

Tzotzil, Lacandon, Tzeltal, and Tojolabal Indian communities in the surrounding jungles and mountain areas. Most speak their respective Mayan dialects.

Rather than adopting a classical hit-and-run tactic, guerrilla leader Comandante Marcos, who led the takeover of the largest of the occupied cities, San Cristóbal de las Casas, insisted that the EZLN would follow a more confrontational perspective. "Instead of the classical guerrilla tactic of 'hit and run,' it is one of hit and advance."

After capturing San Cristóbal de las Casas and the other principal towns captured January 1, EZLN units moved on the largest military base in the region at Rancho Nuevo and undertook operations near the state capital of Tuxtla Gutiérrez. But by the sixth day of the uprising, many EZLN forces had reportedly withdrawn into the jungle, while continuing to launch scattered attacks within an increasingly broad radius of operations.

By January 6, EZLN units had claimed responsibility for blowing up power lines in the central Mexican states of Puebla and Michoacán, and rumors abounded in the Mexican capital of possible attacks against government targets and transport facilities.

EZLN spokespersons ruled out the possibility of any negotiated settlement and emphasized that they had declared war on the armed forces.

The organization appears to have a limited initial base of support in the largest cities of the region. When asked by reporters about expres-

sions of hostility by some residents in San Cristóbal, Comandante Marcos responded, "Obviously, I would prefer things were different, but the local residents and the non-Indians are very racist."

Some social organizations and residents in smaller towns had spontaneously expressed support for the rebels, providing them with food and water, and reports indicated that the EZLN was actively recruiting new fighters. Rebel-initiated confiscation of warehouses and pharmacies in the region were reportedly joined by local townsfolk who helped loot stores.

Government Response

The uprising probably did not come as a complete surprise to the Mexican army, which had issued reports of guerrilla activity in the region as far back as mid-May, when a supposed training camp was reportedly uncovered and six presumed EZLN members arrested.

But the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) government was caught off guard thanks to its characteristic overconfidence in its preponderant power.

In a confused attempt at damage control, military officials claimed they had been aware of guerrilla organizing in the region, but ominously blamed human rights groups for tying their hands.

Deploying at least 12,000 troops and indiscriminate air strikes, often against unoccupied areas and at least on one occasion targeting a group of journalists, the government in effect launched a civil war in the region. Whereas

Editor's Note

We are pleased that articles focusing on the African American struggle in the United States for this issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* highlight the intersection of race, class, and gender: for example, contributions by well-known Detroit activist General Baker, Southern labor organizer Saladin Muhammad, veteran socialist and feminist Linda Thompson, and the contribution from 1950 authored by Trotskyist militant C. Thomas. We also see the relation of specific local realities — such as the fight against police violence in Pittsburgh (discussed by Claire Cohen and Rashad Byrdsong), and the tragic incident on the Long Island commuter train (analyzed by Michael Frank and Lisa Landphair) — to the broader realities we face nationwide. Also relevant is the discussion of the achievement and failure of "the second American revolution" by Jim Miles and Vera Wigglesworth in their review of the film "Gettysburg."

We continue the discussion on building a revolutionary party in the United States, initiated by Paul Le Blanc last June, with the first of a two-part survey on the Leninist party by Roy Rollin; we anticipate more critical debate in future issues. Also related to this question is the presentation by Brazilian revolutionary Beti Burigo on the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT — Workers Party) in her native land.

Other aspects of the global struggle for liberation are reflected in other articles: David Mandel and Marilyn Vogt-Downey on the conflict between those for and against workers' democracy in Russia; Barry Weisleder on the trade-union movement's break with the sell-out policies of the New Democratic Party in Canada; George Saunders on the outcome of the U.S. miners' strike; and Rosendo Mendoza on the recent "Zapatista" uprising in southern Mexico.

EZLN forces appeared to be abiding by the rules of war in its handling of captured police and soldiers, government forces were reportedly carrying out summary executions of unarmed rebel supporters. Reports abounded of mass arrests of peasants in the region as well as of summary executions of EZLN prisoners by government troops. Most of those executed had been bound and were reportedly carrying no more than wood facsimiles of rifles. Numerous civilians have also been murdered by troops in the first few days of fighting. A major campesino organization reported government forces had "disappeared" (secretly arrested) leading members.

The government paid lip service to public calls for a negotiated settlement, but demanded total surrender, the turning over of all weapons, and identification of the rebel leaders as a precondition for offering the EZLN the "benefits" of the law. Despite initial statements recognizing the "legitimate" character of the rebels' social demands, the government has made an effort to blame the rebellion, at least in part, on outside agitators, emphasizing claims that people from "neighboring countries" were involved. Officials also floated false accusations against members of the Catholic Church and human rights groups for involvement in the uprising. Late last year the federal government tried to get Church officials to oust San Cristóbal Bishop Samuel Ruiz, identified with the Liberation Theology current.

In a characteristically racist approach to the country's indigenous population, Salinas and other officials claimed that no uprising had taken place, insisting that the Indians had been bribed or "duped" into participating. The blame, of course, lies squarely with the dictatorial PRI government and the local land barons whom its fraudulent rule has defended for 70 years.

History

Chiapas is one of Mexico's poorest states, and the region's indigenous people have been victims of centuries of brutal oppression and exploitation at the hands of the region's cattle ranchers, plantation owners, and logging operators, many of whom have terrorized the population for decades with private armies of armed thugs.

The state is rich in natural resources, whose benefits are cruelly denied to the population. Though a major source of oil and gas, 60 percent of the population depends on firewood for cooking. Hydroelectric dams generate 50 percent of the country's electric power needs, but more than 30 percent of homes have no light. Forty percent of the state lacks running water, a figure that rises to 92 percent in the case of Indian communities.

More than 70 percent of the active workforce earns less than \$3 a day, and in this largely rural state of 3 million, 1 million indigenous people suffer the daily effects of a brutal regime that has left them in absolute poverty. Last year alone 15,000 died of hunger, curable diseases, and violence, according to Church figures.

The region's peoples boast a proud history of struggle, dating at least as far back as the resistance to efforts by the Aztec empire to subjugate the region. The largest in a long history of antislavery rebellions was waged by 32 communities of Tzotziles in 1712-13, during colonial domination. In the War of the Castes (1869-1870) Chamula Indians defended their claim to the land and rebelled against the virtual slavery to which plantation owners had subjected them.

Following the revolution of 1910-1917 the Bonapartist regime of President Alvaro Obregón negotiated directly with the traditional oligarchy, placing control of the agrarian reform in the hands of the very families that had resisted the redistribution of the land. The cattle ranchers, logging operators, and plantation owners have enjoyed free rein in imposing their rapacious designs on the region, complete with the maintenance of armed groups used to terrorize and murder any of the region's campesinos who dare to defend their lands and communities.

In many ways, the local population is as bad or worse off than they were 83 years ago when Emiliano Zapata led a mass peasant rebellion as part of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917.

Indigenous rebel leaders interviewed the first day of the offensive also stressed the ecological aspect of their struggle despite the fact that the indigenous people have been hurt by government environmental programs in the region.

International human rights organizations have repeatedly documented the murders, arbitrary detentions, and rigged trials with which the PRI government has maintained its control.

Unlike other largely rural and indigenous states such as Michoacán, Oaxaca, and particularly Guerrero, Chiapas was not the site of significant guerrilla activity during the 1960s and early '70s. But the military dimensions of the New Year's offensive far outstrip those of the small guerrilla bands that undertook hit-and-run operations two decades ago. The taking of a city the size of San Cristóbal and coordinated operations of the scale and magnitude of those in Chiapas have no comparison in modern Mexican history.

The political roots of the current movement appear to have their origins both in the historic resistance of the indigenous peasant communities and in the work of leftist militants who colonized the region during the middle and late '70s. Basing themselves primarily within the most impoverished indigenous communities, they eventually developed a significant following.

The Overall Political Impact

Regardless of how fighting evolves in the region, the uprising in Chiapas has shaken the country and above all the pretensions of the Salinas regime to guarantee social stability despite its savage neoliberal agenda. Many foreign investors sold their holdings on the Mexican stock exchange in the immediate wake of events, sending stocks plunging more than 100 points. But they expressed their approval of the first reports of government air strikes against villagers in the region with a new buying spree.

Stock analysts wondered aloud if the long-awaited upgrading of Mexico's credit rating might not be indefinitely postponed by the events.

Major daily newspapers featured op-ed pieces calling for the resignation of Interior Minister Patrocinio González, former governor of Chiapas, and other top officials. Nationally, most major political parties moved quickly to condemn the violence and the use of arms by the rebels, while paying favorable lip service to the EZLN's social demands, with some laying the blame on the government. A joint congressional statement condemning the violence, signed by representatives of all congressional parties except for a PRI-satellite party that has adopted a particularly radical stance on the uprising, was used by government spokesmen in its disinformation campaign to support its cynical claims that "violence" will not offer a solution to the situation.

Unions and neighborhood organizations, however, held demonstrations in Mexico City, calling for defense of human rights in Chiapas and denouncing the government's military offensive. A poll published January 7 by the Mexico City daily *Reforma* indicated that people in the Mexican capital and in Monterrey, the country's second-largest city, weren't buying the government's version of events. As few as 6 percent attributed the rebellion to outside influences. The overwhelming majority attributed it to extreme poverty and government indifference. Between 45 and 48 percent condemned the responses of government troops in the conflict, with a mere 24 percent supporting the idea of a military solution to the conflict.

The New Year's scenes of Indian peasant leaders, struggling with their limited Spanish to denounce the ancestral injustices they have faced and denouncing the illegitimate Salinas government, clearly had a greater impact on the people of Mexico than all the diplomatic declarations of parliamentary leaders condemning violence.

Mexico approaches the end of the twentieth century in the same way it began: with an armed rebellion against injustice and an illegitimate government. Though regionally located, the mass base enjoyed by the EZLN suggests that the fighting in Chiapas will last for some time to come, despite the threat of an ongoing and brutal military offensive against the civilian population of the state.

Salinas's plans for calmly installing his hand-picked successor following the August 1994 elections have clearly been shaken, along with the arrogance with which the ruling class has implemented its brutal program of capitalist restructuring during the past 15 years.

It is of the utmost importance that support be mobilized for the people of Chiapas, and particularly for the Indian peoples of the region, against Salinas's efforts to bomb them into submission in a massive escalation of the genocidal policies and violence the PRI regime has implemented for decades. □

January 7, 1994

The December Elections in Russia, and the Working Class

by David Mandel

The following is the prepared text, with some minor revisions, of a talk given by the author on December 17, 1993, at a public meeting sponsored by Boston-area supporters of the Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia.

Although I intend to speak about the elections, the returns themselves will not be the main focus of my talk — partly because the results so far are quite incomplete. The goal of my talk is rather to discuss some of the key aspects of the broader political situation in Russia in a way that should contribute to a better understanding of the significance of the election results.

Churchill once described the Soviet Union as a mystery inside a riddle wrapped in an enigma. The paradox of the present situation is that while the official veils of secrecy have largely been lifted, our understanding of that part of the world seems to have declined. And I am not speaking only about the journalists, whose reporting over the past months has reached new lows of cretinism, if not conscious falsification. I am also speaking of professional students of that region.

Aside from the distorting effects of political commitments, which have always played a prominent role in Soviet studies, the fact is that we are today witnessing processes that have no historical precedents or parallels, namely an attempted transition back to capitalism in industrialized countries with large working classes, in a period of deep crisis and restructuring of the world capitalist system that has reached a new stage of globalization.

Only the foolhardy would claim to know where the former Soviet Union is going — I think it will be many years before anything stable emerges from the present turmoil. The challenge at present is not so much to offer definitive answers as to ask the right questions.

In particular, the present Russian political situation poses two key questions. The first is why the active popular opposition to the Yeltsin regime has been so weak. The second is why, despite the quiescence, a dictatorship has been introduced.

I will try to offer some *elements* of answers to these questions from the particular vantage point of the Russian labor movement, which has been the focus of my research and of my international solidarity activity. When one speaks about the labor movement in the former Soviet Union, one means essentially the trade unions, since these are the only stable, mass labor organizations. In fact, the trade unions are the *only* mass organizations of *any* kind in these societies, with the partial exception of the much smaller and declining nationalist movements.

The two questions I posed — why the popular quiescence and why the dictatorship — as-

sume, first of all, that one should expect stronger active popular opposition to the Yeltsin regime and, second, that that regime really is a dictatorship. If we had decent reporting on Russia, those claims would need no justification. But since we don't, I'll say a few preliminary words about them.

Why should we expect strong popular opposition? Let me cite some facts (which probably underestimate the gravity of the situation) from an article by the editor of *U.S. News and World Report*, published recently in the Russian trade-union paper *Rabochaya Tribuna* (November 13, 1993):

Over the past three years production has declined 34 percent, inflation has wavered between 1000 and 2000 percent annually, 40 percent of the population is below the official poverty line, consumer spending has declined 38 percent, two out of every three pregnancies end in abortion, the health and educational systems — once considered among the best in the world [the author's words, not mine — D.M.] — are collapsing, organized and unorganized crime is increasing at precipitous rates, the police and the state administration are corrupt, and a class of nouveaux riches flaunt their wealth in the most grotesque ways, defying all standards.

To this I would add only a recent forecast by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development that it will take over 35 years before incomes in Eastern Europe reach even half the level of average Western incomes, a figure that represents a drastic decline in relative real incomes from the time of the Communist regimes (*Financial Times* [London], September 22, 1993).

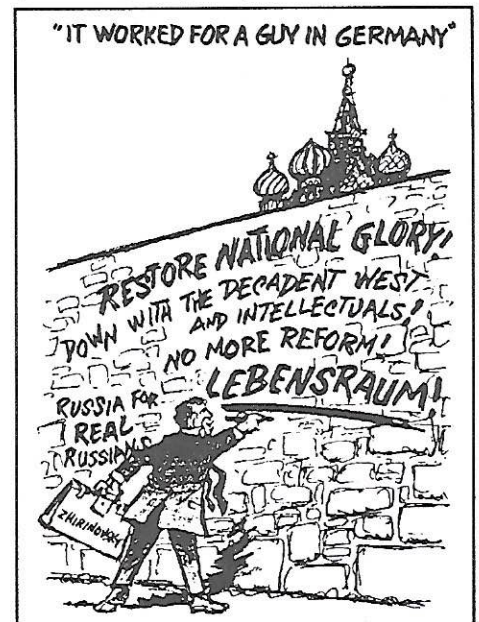
Nor is it the case that most Russians believe in Yeltsin's policies — as the recent elections amply demonstrate — and are therefore willing to tolerate the present pain. For example, on the central element of Yeltsin's market reform, privatization, a public opinion study conducted over the summer by a British university found that despite a massive ideological campaign (funded to a large extent, incidentally, by the U.S. government and run by U.S. advertising agencies), 72 percent of the population still view privatization of large enterprises negatively (*Financial Times*, October 6 and 7, 1993).

The author of the above-mentioned article concludes that what is happening in Russia would lead to "civil disorders even in a country with stable democratic institutions." He notes that Bush was voted out largely because of a relatively mild economic recession.

The recent elections were, in fact, a clear vote of nonconfidence in Yeltsin's policies [despite his attempt to rig the vote to go his way]. According to preliminary results for the half of the lower house of the parliament elected by party lists, the parties clearly opposing Yeltsin's policies (Liberal Democrat, Communist, and Agrarian) received more than twice the vote of those clearly identified with Yeltsin's reforms (Russia's Choice, Bloc of Three). (These results, taken from the *Financial Times*, December 14, and the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, December 14 and 15, do not necessarily reflect the final party composition of the parliament, since the upper house and one-half of the lower house were elected on the basis of individual candidates, most of whom did not have their party affiliation marked on the ballot.)

Moreover, one can safely assume that the vast majority of the 47 percent of the electorate that did not vote are also opposed to Yeltsin's reforms. In face of these figures, the relative calm that has characterized Russia under Yeltsin is puzzling indeed.

My other claim was that Yeltsin's regime is a dictatorship. Although civil liberties in Russia today are significantly more limited than during the last two Gorbachev years, that, to my view, is not where the evidence of dictatorship lies. After all, there is still an oppositional press (though no significant opposition is permitted in the electronic media), and elections to the parliament, though subject to numerous restric-



tions and strongly biased media coverage (not to mention gerrymandering of the electoral districts and the continued imprisonment of two leading Yeltsin opponents, Rutskoi and Khasbulatov), were conducted on a competitive basis. But one central element of any genuine democracy is the capacity of the popular will, through elections, to determine the basic course of state policy. That does not exist in Russia today.

The plain fact is that the recent elections were irrelevant, at least in any direct way, to state policy, and the only people in Russia who seemed to believe otherwise were some Western journalists. A week before the elections the December 6 *Financial Times* reported: "Proponents of privatization have dismissed the possibility of interference from Russia's parliament, which is due to be elected next week, and are pressing ahead with plans to sell off major companies. The intention is to place 80 percent of Russia's industrial capacity in private hands by next July." No illusions about democracy in Russia from those quarters.

In reality, of course, even most Western journalists and political leaders do not really believe that elections should be able to decisively influence state policy. That's why they supported Yeltsin's anticonstitutional coup in September-October. For example, despite the massive vote against Yeltsin's reforms the same *Financial Times* is now urging Yeltsin to hold the course and quickly introduce legislation that will allow the country to attract foreign capital, accelerate privatization of land, and impose strict control of the money supply. Of course, these are the very things the majority of voters oppose. But then, elections are one thing, while the *Financial Times*, and international capital, whose interests it reflects, feel they know best what the Russian people need.

The new Russian constitution, which Yeltsin wrote for himself and which garnered about 60 percent of the vote — that is, about 32 percent of eligible voters — gives Yeltsin the power to ignore the elections. It makes the parliament essentially a consultative body, allowing the president to continue to rule by decree and to dissolve the parliament (after the first year) whenever *he* loses confidence in it. (This reminds us of Bertolt Brecht's wry comment, after the East Berlin workers uprising of 1953, that the Politburo, having lost confidence in the people, had decided to elect a new one.)

Few Russians have any illusions about the new constitution. The small percentage of the eligible electorate that voted for it should be seen as a slap in Yeltsin's face. It is important to keep in mind that the elections were preceded by a major, and very biased, propaganda offensive in favor of the constitution. Yeltsin went so far as to threaten the contenders in the election with the loss of television air time if they criticized the proposed constitution. Television is the main source of information on public affairs for the vast majority of the population. (Incidentally, Zhirinovskiy, whom our press presents as the major threat to Yeltsin's "democrats," sup-

ported this ban. And Yeltsin has Zhirinovskiy to thank for bringing out enough voters so that just slightly over the minimum 50 percent participation rate required for approval of the constitution was obtained.)

So why, in the face of all this, has the active, effective opposition to Yeltsin in society been so weak? One reason is that the collapse of the Stalinist system left an atomized society. I noted earlier that the trade unions are really the only mass civic organizations, and they leave a lot to be desired. It was relatively easy to mount mass opposition to the bureaucratic Communist regime once Gorbachev had reduced the threat of repression, since under that system, the state itself organized society in order to administer and control it. Protests, by their very nature, tended to be political; the natural target was the authoritarian state, and the goal — popular control — was clear. Today that old structure has largely been dismantled. In the key economic sector, for example, the enterprises, though still largely state-owned, are economically independent. At the same time, once democracy had won — or seemed to have won — and once the grandiose promises associated with market reform had proven empty, it became much harder to find common goals to unite an effective opposition.

In the particular case of the unions, the general state of society is reflected in their extreme decentralization: today virtually all power and most of the material resources of the unions are concentrated at the enterprise level, while the once all-powerful national union structures and the national federation of unions have been reduced to a minor, largely coordinating role. In most economic sectors, especially those that no longer depend upon the state for subsidies or salaries, industry-wide contracts are almost irrelevant, and there is no real pattern bargaining. It is basically every plant for itself. The enterprise unions are probably closer to their own management than to the unions of related enterprises, let alone unions in other sectors. This weak solidarity is the legacy of the old regime, which permitted no independent organization or action, necessary conditions for the development of a real sense of common interest and commitment. It is also a reaction against the artificial solidarity imposed from above by that regime.

A related issue is the difficulty in developing a coherent labor alternative to Yeltsin's program. Last summer the president of the former Communist coalminers' union told me of his dream of a trade union school that would serve the entire energy sector — coal, oil, and gas. He said that if those workers got together, they would be very radical. But he immediately corrected himself, saying he meant they would be "radical centrist."

That sums up the contradiction: the unions do not dare oppose the market reform, which the Yeltsin regime and the dominant ideology portray as the only alternative to a return to the Stalinist system. Instead, the unions call for a "social market," meaning that the reform

should not deprive workers of the social rights and living standards they enjoyed under the old system. Unfortunately, neither Russian nor world conditions will allow workers to have it both ways.

It is worth quoting here from an article by Igor Yurgens, first vice-president of the General Confederation of Trade Unions [the association of former official unions in the now independent republics of the ex-USSR]:

It is characteristic that practically all the [old] union centers of the independent states declare their support for the basic directions of the market restructuring. However, the nature of the discussion about the aims of the reform and the concrete policy of the government shows that the majority of unions have still not made their final choice in favor of a capitalist path of development. This question remains open, and the mass union movement is orienting itself toward the defense of the socio-economic rights that the workers have won. The political, economic, and cultural elite, which is the basic driving force of the reforms being carried out, is coming to understand more and more that the trade unions, by their very nature, are their opponents in this historical argument. [For Yurgens's article, see "Listen, Workers! New and Old Unions," *Socialist ALTERNATIVES*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1993, pp. 74-83.]

One might say that objectively the unions, and the bulk of the workers, are anticapitalist, but subjectively, that is, politically, they are unwilling to draw the conclusions: namely, that to defend their interests effectively they have to take the path of militant and irreconcilable opposition to the present regime and at least adopt an independent position vis-à-vis the enterprise directors.

That they have not drawn this political conclusion is only in small part explained by the discrediting of socialism under the old regime. That was a factor three years ago, when people took the promises of the market reformers seriously. But today, the majority of people look back fondly at their economic security and living standards under the old system, and most union leaders I have met have told me that socialism is a good idea, though badly applied under the Communists.

Nor is the labor movement's inability to put forth its own consistent program mainly a question of the ingrained conservatism and corruption of union leaders inherited from the Stalinist system, although that certainly exists. In some ways the leaderships of the new alternative unions that have arisen in opposition to the former Communist unions are even more corrupt — in the sense of being in bed with the Yeltsin regime in return for crumbs for themselves and their members, and sometimes not even that.

The most fundamental problem facing the labor movement in Russia today is the demoralization and resulting demobilization of the base of that movement, the rank-and-file workers, blue collar and white. Of course, the relationship between the base and the leadership is dialectical, in the sense that the policies of the leadership can have a major impact on the state

of mind and activism of the rank and file. But the opposite is also true — I would venture to say, even more true, certainly in the Russian case.

The central factor in rank-and-file demoralization at present is the severity of the economic crisis. The first absolute decline in production, about 3 percent, occurred in 1990, and after that it greatly accelerated to 12 percent in 1991, at least 20 percent in 1992, and a forecast of 14 percent for 1993. (See “Russia Survey,” *The Economist*, December 5, 1992, pp. 5–6; and *Financial Times*, September 23, 1993.) This decline in production, along with runaway inflation, which among other things has completely destroyed any savings, has created an entirely new situation of economic insecurity, something Soviet workers had not known for many decades.

The old social guarantees are being progressively dismantled. The next step is to allow mass unemployment, a step which the Yeltsin government, for political reasons, has so far hesitated to take. But that is a necessary part of “shock therapy.” (I recently heard from the presidents of some Russian auto worker locals that plant directors received special orders from Moscow not to lay anyone off until *after* the elections.) But hidden unemployment in the form of shortened workweeks and forced leaves at a fraction of regular pay had already become widespread in 1992.

Thus, over the course of a few short months, beginning with the start of 1992, workers experienced a veritable social earthquake that thrust them into a frightening new world for which they were completely unprepared. Until recently, for example, workers were convinced that under capitalism good, conscientious employees were never fired. Illusions about the government’s reform program were bolstered by demagogic promises, such as Yeltsin’s 1991 campaign pledge that if any citizen suffered from his reforms, he would put his head on the railroad tracks.

The reaction to this new situation, especially among the vast majority of workers with no experience of collective action, has been to retreat even further into the private day-to-day struggle for survival, while clinging to the hope, nurtured by tradition, that somehow management and/or the state would defend them. Very few believe that the unions can protect them — or that they can protect themselves through their unions.

Of course, in conditions of a collapsing economy there is not that much that traditional union activity can achieve — the real problems are political; state policy has to be changed. But the political demobilization that one now observes in Russia is not solely the result of the economic crisis. Disillusionment with political action also has its source in the workers’ own recent political experience. Workers played an important part in bringing down the Communist regime, which claimed to defend their interests but, in fact, constantly betrayed them. They then elected the “democrats” (liberals), who de-

nounced the bureaucratic arbitrariness and privilege of the Communist ruling group and promised to bring in democracy along with the market and Western living standards. Now the term “democrat” is a curse word among workers. And so the vast majority of workers are hostile to the Yeltsin government and its policies, but they are disillusioned and alienated from politics and political parties in general. The typical attitude toward the elections was: they are all the same. That of course was not true, but it expressed the workers’ sense that the elections did not matter.

The growth in support for the fascist Zhirinovskiy must also be understood against this background of demoralization. Zhirinovskiy’s party received about 25 percent of the vote, or 14 million votes. In the 1991 presidential elections, in which the turnout was much larger, he received 12 percent, or about 11 million. So he definitely has made gains, although he has not appeared out of nowhere, as the Western press seems to think. In classic fascist style he offers a false outlet for genuine anticapitalist and patriotic sentiments, as well as valid popular discontent with the dismantling of the Soviet Union. I would never want to minimize the threat presented by fascism, but it is important to understand that most of Zhirinovskiy’s vote is a protest vote *against* the Yeltsin reforms, not a positive expression of support for fascism.

And one should not forget the 47 percent who did not vote. It is in this group that one can find the majority of workers — opposed to Yeltsin but unwilling to vote either for Zhirinovskiy or for the nostalgic Communists. For example, in the heavily industrialized areas of the Urals and Kuzbass, less than 50 percent bothered to vote.

Why, when the popular opposition has been so weak, did Yeltsin feel the need to impose a dictatorship? (Incidentally, Zhirinovskiy fully supported Yeltsin’s crushing of parliament. Russian press reports preceding the elections indicated that Yeltsin’s entourage had long since ceased to count Zhirinovskiy among the opposition.) In part, the answer is that while the opposition in *society* was weak, the opposition in the old parliament was nevertheless growing. The parliamentary majority embraced a “centrist” position, similar to that of the unions, which I have described above. And the previous constitution gave the parliament the power to block key elements of Yeltsin’s reforms: especially the tight money, budget-cutting, anti-inflationary policy, the wholesale unregulated privatization, which is rife with corruption and amounts to little more than the theft of the nation’s wealth, the broad opening of the economy to the world market — that is, the very things that the *Financial Times*, but not the Russian population, says the country urgently needs and whose inevitable consequences are quite clear: mass bankruptcies and unemployment, further destruction of the country’s industrial and scientific potential, and the continued cultural and material impoverishment of the population.

But the more important factor in Yeltsin’s coup against the former parliament and consti-

tution was his political isolation, which the elections have now made clear for all to see. His policies have only narrow support in society. His domestic political base is mainly the new and aspiring commercial and financial bourgeoisie, which is closely linked to the corrupt state administration and the “mafias” (organized criminal gangs). Indeed, the three groups significantly overlap. This is not exactly what one would call a broad base of popular support. (Yeltsin does not even have the support of the small and very weak Russian industrial bourgeoisie; see, for example, the interview with P. Bocharov in *Rabochaya Tribuna*, November 16, 1993.)

In the crunch Yeltsin cannot count on the allegiance of most plant directors, nor of the army. Against the former parliament Yeltsin had to use selected officers of elite units — that is, people with something to lose — and he got them to move only after he provoked the so-called armed uprising of the parliament’s defenders. A month after the events, a colonel attached to the Ministry of Defense wrote an astonishing letter to one of the few oppositional daily papers, in which he stated:

The main feeling among military people, be it a lieutenant with peach fuzz on his cheeks or a grizzled old general, a member of the [ultraconservative] Union of Officers or a former convinced Yeltsinite, is hatred, all-consuming hatred for that gang of unprincipled *affairistes* who have attached themselves to the summits of power. [*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, November 2, 1993.]

According to some reports, Zhirinovskiy did quite well in the voting among army units. Another significant indicator is that after the smashing of parliament, Yeltsin proceeded to a major purge of the Ministry of Defense.

The shelling of the parliament building, which had absolutely no military justification, was itself an indication of Yeltsin’s sense of weakness — he needed to scare the nation. He was and remains essentially an adventurer and a bluffer. The role of the massive repressive apparatus that has characterized Russia over the centuries has always been to compensate for the weakness of the regime’s social base.

In fact, the most important base of support for Yeltsin is outside of Russia — international capital, as represented by the G-7 [the Group of Seven, the governments of the most powerful industrialized countries of North America, Western Europe, and Japan]. The G-7 and their common economic institutions (the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, European Community, etc.) will support Yeltsin as long as they feel he can deliver a Russia that is open for business (or rather, for plunder). That has been the approach of the capitalist powers since October 1917, when they supported monarchist forces against what then was still a mass-based workers’ and peasants’ revolution.

The *Financial Times* editorial of December 14 put the matter quite bluntly: “The West... should continue to support Russia’s political

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The Case of Vladimir Klebanov

Veteran Labor Organizer and Former Political Prisoner Was Among Yeltsin's Targets

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Among those arrested in the days immediately following the October 3 victory of the Yeltsin faction in its war against the parliament was Vladimir Klebanov, a longtime proponent of free trade unions who served many years in labor camps and "special psychiatric hospitals" as punishment during the Brezhnev period. According to a report from Moscow on electronic mail dated October 30, Klebanov was arrested for violation of the September decree of the ruling clique in Moscow ordering the deportation of all inhabitants of Moscow who did not have official permission to live there.

The Helsinki Watch Human Rights Advocacy Group has reported that during the 2-week state of emergency that Yeltsin imposed following the shelling of the parliament building, 9,000 people — most of them from the Caucasus — were expelled from Moscow. The same report indicated that some 10,000 others fled the city, fearing the official deportation process. "Countless legal residents and visitors from the former Soviet republics and other foreign countries, especially those with the dark complexions that suggested foreign origins, were detained, beaten, and otherwise harassed," according to a *New York Times* report of December 24, 1993.

Thousands of those expelled or forced to flee were refugees from wars, earthquakes, and economic collapse in the republics to the south over the past few years. Those few who have been granted official status as refugees are scheduled for deportation to army barracks in isolated regions thousands of miles from Moscow where there are few facilities for human accommodation and no jobs.

The racism and Russian chauvinism of these measures was obvious. Although it was cloaked as a means for ridding Moscow of hated speculators often blamed for the high food prices at the markets, it was more likely a measure aimed at removing some of the competition in favor of the criminal bands who are close to and linked with the Moscow authorities. The high food prices are the result of the market measures the Russian government has itself implemented.

The inhumanity and racism of these measures reveal graphically that the people living in Russia and the Russians themselves do not have to wait for a lunatic like the "fascist" Zhirinovsky to come to power to experience the consequences of totalitarian policies.

The arrest of Klebanov is especially revealing in this regard.

Vladimir Klebanov has been an unbreakable fighter for democratic rights since the Brezhnev era. Born in 1932 in the Belorussian Republic (now Belarus), Klebanov came to the attention of the Stalinist authorities in Ukraine when, as a brigade leader of coal miners in the Donbass region in 1965, he began to publicize the dangerous working conditions in the mines and organize in defense of workers' rights.

In 1968 he was arrested and charged with anti-Soviet activity, declared "not in possession of his faculties" and "paranoid," and sent for compulsory treatment in the Dnepropetrovsk "special psychiatric hospital." He was confined in such institutions for 5 years until his release in 1973.

Subjecting dissidents to such treatment was a very common practice during the pre-Gorbachev years and it is not at all clear that this practice has ceased.

Following his release, he was unable to find work and went to Moscow to try to get the central government to help him. There he found many people who were unsuccessfully trying to do the same.

In 1976, with 39 others, he organized an appeal to the Soviet government and the international community protesting the violation of work and residency rights and victimization of those who file complaints.

In November 1977, according to the *Chronicle of Current Events* No. 48, dated March 14, 1978, Klebanov with others called a press conference in Moscow to announce that "a group of workers and engineering and technical employees from various cities, who had been fired because of conflicts with officials (most often for criticism), had formed an association called a 'Free Trade Union.' The group's leader, Vladimir Klebanov, and other members of the group told journalists about the dissatisfaction of many workers with their situation, about the violations of workers' rights, firings, and other instances of persecution to which they and others had been subjected."

The grouping continued public protest activities over the next few months before new persecutions began.

"Several members of the Free Trade Union have been subjected to compulsory psychiatric treatment," the *Chronicle* reported. On December 19, 1977, Klebanov was detained and sent to Moscow psychiatric hospital No. 7 and held there and elsewhere for nine days before he was released. On February 7, 1978, he was detained

again and sent back to Ukraine, to the Dnepropetrovsk special psychiatric hospital where he had previously been confined for many years.

He was one of the last political prisoners to be released during the Gorbachev era of liberalization. As Kiril Buketov explained in an account of Klebanov's situation, Klebanov's late release — in 1987 — indicated that despite the brutal treatment he had received at the hands of the authorities, he had not been broken.

After his release in 1987 Klebanov lived in Moscow, where he resumed his activities to try to organize workers. He announced the formation of a Committee of Free Trade Unions, which sponsored a number of public protests but does not appear to be a real trade union as such. Nevertheless, Klebanov's reputation as a defender of workers' rights earned him an international reputation and an invitation to participate in Yeltsin's much-publicized but largely showcase "Constitutional Assembly" to allegedly discuss the merits of Yeltsin's draft constitution, which provides for a system of one-man rule.

Klebanov opposed the draft because it was antidemocratic.

Despite Klebanov's "rehabilitation" and the apparent tolerance by the Yeltsin authorities of his residency in Moscow (after all, his official invitation from Boris Yeltsin to participate in the showcase Constitutional Assembly was sent to Klebanov at his Moscow address), the authorities had never officially approved Klebanov's status as a Moscow resident by placing the proper stamp on his internal passport. They evidently expected an opportunity would come along to allow them to get rid of him.

The September decree ordering expulsion of "illegals" seemed to provide precisely such an opportunity.

On October 16, three heavily armed agents of the Interior Ministry with two members of the Moscow militia forced their way into his Moscow apartment, searched it, and hauled away Klebanov and two friends of his who were there with him, one of whom was soon released.

Klebanov's attempts to explain his status and his role on the Yeltsin constitutional commission were ignored by those who arrested him; he was informed that he was guilty of "illegal residency" and was to be deported. (Where to is anybody's guess: although Klebanov was born in Belarus, worked in Ukraine, and was released from prison camp in Uzbekistan, all

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Trotskyist Newspaper in Russia

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

We reprint below several articles from issue No. 1 of a newspaper called *Kresty 348*, printed in the Russian city of Voronezh and dated February 1993. The paper is published by a group of Trotskyists who are apparently not affiliated to any international current but retain ties with several of them. This paper was printed in a run of 10,000.

Although it is not specifically linked with any international current, the Voronezh grouping is clearly an advocate of the Fourth International. In particular, this issue contains material describing the Workers International for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (WIRFI), based in Britain, and its Russian affiliate, the *Sotsialisticheskii Rabochii Soyuz* (Socialist Workers Alliance, or SWA).

The SWA has existed for about four years and has put out several publications, although few — one copy each of a journal called *Permanent Revolution* and a newsletter — have reached us. *Kresty 348* speaks of additional publications by groupings that consider themselves Trotskyist — *Socialist Revolution*, printed in Tula, and *Rabochaya Borba* (Workers Struggle), printed in St. Petersburg.

Yeltsin the “Democrat” Strikes Again

As we go to press, we have received reports that the premises in Moscow where the Socialist Workers Alliance (SWA) does its printing were raided by Yeltsin’s police in December and that literature was confiscated. It is not clear whether there were any arrests. We hope to have more information in our next issue.

The first issue of *Kresty 348*, four pages long, devoted one page to articles about the need to build a Soviet section of the Fourth International — that is of the WIRFI — including excerpts from an article by Trotsky called the “Tradition of Bolshevism and the Fourth International” (which may be a renaming of “Stalinism vs. Bolshevism”). One page was devoted to some news briefs and reports on aspects of the international workers movement. The other two pages contained material by Trotsky headlined “Morality and Revolution” (which may be excerpts from “Their Morals and Ours”) and a few other items. Three of those items appear below.

* * *

The Split in the Bureaucracy and the Alternative of the Socialist Workers Alliance

The two key factors that determine the present political situation in Russia are the absence of a mass workers movement and the struggle between the various factions of the ruling bureauc-

racy who seek a monopoly over determination of the socio-economic course the country will take.

The economic crisis and the collapse of the previous forms of social domination caused a split in the bureaucracy leading to the formation of three basic competing groupings.

Governmental power at the present time is concentrated in the hands of the comprador section of the former *nomenklatura*, who are leaning for support on a rapidly growing layer of small and middle-sized bourgeoisie. This section of the bureaucracy is tying its future to the quickest possible integration of Russia into the world capitalist system and their own transformation into agents for the semi-colonial exploitation of the workers and the natural resources of the country by international imperialism. The policies of this faction, which are being implemented under the open dictatorship of imperialist institutions, will lead to the destruction of industry, the formation of an enormous army of unemployed, the domination of speculative capital, and the decline of culture.

The other faction, which consists of the industrial and agrarian bureaucracy, also supporting a bourgeois course of development, advances a state-capitalist model, and therefore can be called “the state-capitalists.” They insist on a slow, gradual transformation of economic relations, which must ensure that the representatives of this faction undergo a guaranteed and peaceful transformation from superintendents of state property into full-fledged owners. While this faction agrees with the idea of integration with international capitalism, it wants to be, not a servant, but a partner of the world bourgeoisie; it does not want to give up its share of the surplus value extracted from the working class. All this requires retaining a powerful state machine to regulate the economy, keep up the imperial image, and control the workers. These “state-capitalists” demagogically declare that they stand for a “socially-oriented market” and a “painless” shift to it. However, in reality, their program cannot bring anything but a prolonged death agony for the economy, the establishment of “sovereign” enterprises, a further fall in the standard of living, and repression of workers. This program benefits only the directors and the ministerial bureaucrats.

The third — liberal — faction [apparently a reference to Zhirinovskiy’s so-called Liberal Democrats] represents the lower layers of the ex-*nomenklatura*, former party apparatchiks, numerous elements of the ideological establishment during the period of “actually existing socialism,” and part of the military caste. They all want revenge, feeling cheated by the process

of “reform,” excluded from the sharing of power and property. These neoliberals [and neo-Stalinists] demand the restoration of the Russian state with all its attributes: a strong police apparatus, chauvinist ideology, and a gigantic bureaucratic apparatus controlling all spheres of economic and social life, etc. Social demagogy, chauvinism, attempts to mobilize the most backward elements of the workers in a struggle for the creation of an all-powerful corporate state — all this lends to the neoliberal [or neo-Stalinist] political organizations a national-patriotic character. The active use of “Communist” phraseology only serves to hide their reactionary essence.

All three of the bureaucratic factions described above are equally antiproletarian and counterrevolutionary. They are distinguished only by the forms and methods they prefer for oppressing and exploiting the workers.

Unlike the bureaucracy, the Russian proletariat has not yet entered the political arena as an independent force. The class struggle is still limited to disparate local actions around economic demands. Decades of spying and repression blunted the political consciousness of the working class and destroyed its organizations. Therefore, today, the bureaucracy can use actions by individual detachments of workers as a tool for achieving its own aims. Thus, the miners’ strikes of 1989–90 became a battering ram for the comprador bureaucracy, guaranteeing the rise to power of the Yeltsin group. Now, seeking to buy off the miners and the representatives of several other occupations through the superexploitation of the overwhelming mass of workers, and manipulating the allegedly free (but in fact state-controlled) trade unions, the proimperialist regime is conducting a Bonapartist policy of “divide and rule.” The state-capitalist faction, in turn, appeals to the workers — above all to the All-Union Party of Communists — trying to prove to them the “identity” of interests of the administration and of the workers. (No small role in spreading such inventions is played by the old official trade unions like the Federation of Independent Trade Unions and the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions.) All this, however, only serves to camouflage the tyranny of the directors, with the workers having no rights at all, and the institutionalization of enormous social inequities.

Despite their aspiration to enlist the aid of the workers, not one of the bureaucratic factions — including the so-called “Communist” neo-Stalinists — enjoy the confidence of any substantial sector of the proletariat, which instinctively recognizes that taking any side in the present political skirmish is not in its interest. Whether Yeltsin and “Democratic Russia” continue their course or “Civic Union” or the “National Salvation Front” or “Working Russia” win, the workers will remain the oppressed and exploited class.

In this situation, the task of revolutionary Marxists is to everywhere possible promote the formation of the class and political independence of the workers and their realization that the only road to liberation lays through revolutionary organization against the bureaucracy.

This task is extraordinarily complicated because the proletariat is in its majority disori-

ented, disunited, and susceptible to alien class influences or passive, while the forces of the revolutionaries are very small in number and the ideas of communism have been distorted and discredited by Stalinism. However, the passivity and apolitical outlook of the workers cannot last forever. Stalinism annihilated the proletarian vanguard but it could not annihilate the proletariat. The objective logic of history pushes it to struggle, the first manifestations of which are not far off. This struggle will grow, parallel with an accumulation of experience and the dispelling of illusions.

Furthering the new rise of the class struggle and preparing for it, we try to conduct ongoing work to create a revolutionary vanguard, the existence of which is one of the decisive factors for the success of the proletarian movement. Only a clear antibureaucratic and anticapitalist revolutionary program can serve as the basis for the construction of such an organization. Any adaptation to the pseudo-Communist or pro-capitalist bureaucracy under the pretext of a "common opposition to the government" would be betrayal of the Marxist banner.

The Socialist Workers Alliance (SWA) speaks out for the political independence of the revolutionary party and categorically rejects any possibility of a "popular front" with one part of the bureaucracy against another. The SWA views as class enemies of the proletariat and the proletariat's irreconcilable political opponents not only the governing group but its key opponents from the bureaucratic camp — the opposition "democrats" of all shades, the "patriots," and the neoliberals. Revolutionaries must expose the attempts of the various factions of the bureaucracy to build support for themselves among the workers: this applies equally to Yeltsin's flirtations with individual work collectives, the conciliationalist policies of the official trade unions, and the organization by neo-Stalinists and "patriots" of alleged workers' structures, "strike committees," etc.

The course of the SWA is a course of extreme revolutionary opposition to all factions of the bureaucracy without exception, a course for the preparation of a mass independent workers party, a course for the liberation of the proletariat from the grip of bourgeois reformism.

* * *

Stop the National-Patriots and Anti-Semites!

In the Russia of Romanov times, anti-Semitism was an attempt to make Jews responsible for everything that was wrong. By way of example, reference was made to several Jewish financiers and capitalists, whose power and wealth were immensely exaggerated. In reality, the overwhelming number of Jews were small tradesmen, workers, or artisans. They, like the Russians, suffered from the tsarist tyranny and were exploited by the big capitalists of Russia, France, and Great Britain. That is why Engels called these malicious inventions about some International Jewish Conspiracy the "Socialism of Fools."

Now, when a process to restore "a market economy" is under way, it is not surprising that

anti-Semitism is again raising its ugly head on the streets of Moscow.

What is surprising is that people who parade with red flags and portraits of Lenin applaud these contemporary Black Hundreds, joining their demonstrations, buy their press full of lies, and allow them to be distributed along with the press that calls for loyalty to the Bolshevik heritage. In so doing, they forget that Lenin was an irreconcilable opponent of anti-Semitism. Many Bolshevik leaders were Jews: Sverdlov, Kamenov, Zinoviev, and Trotsky. They were well-known revolutionary leaders who enjoyed the confidence of the Russian workers and never participated in any conspiracy with the Rothschilds. Later, with the rise of Stalin to power, some elements of anti-Semitism were resurrected. After 1948, to cover this up, they began to call their anti-Semitism anti-Zionism.

The new anti-Semitism did not fall from the sky. Many of the fascist and monarchist leaders appeared out of the rubble of the ruling nomenklatura, or else the ruling elite and special services attracted and encouraged them.

It is debased people, who have been fooled, who believe in anti-Semitism. Only those in the grip of a dangerous paranoia or very intelligent cynics bother with anti-Semitic propaganda. The leaders of the national-patriots embody both these types. Any worker with good sense who wants to fight for his class interests needs to understand the purpose of anti-Semitism. It is an ideology of the nomenklatura which hopes to retain its privileges and the social position it had under "socialist construction."

* * *

News About Trotskyist Groups

Moscow. December 12–13, 1992. A working meeting took place of members of the Socialist Workers Alliance (Soviet section of the Workers International for the Regeneration of the Fourth International), at which perspectives for the development of the workers movement in Russia were discussed. In their work, the members of the SWA from Moscow, Tula, and Voronezh will adhere to the principle of not participating in the various blocs of political parties insofar as the bureaucracy that is represented in them is totally interested in defending only its own interests, which run counter to the interests of the working class and the majority of workers. Despite the broad spectrum of "communist" and "socialist" parties, the absence of a strike movement and a real workers movement confirms the reformist essence and bureaucratic limitations of those leaderships.

Taking part in the work of the SWA were members of the Executive Committee of the Workers International from Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Moscow. On November 21–22, there was a conference of the international Trotskyist organization "Workers Power." Trotskyists from Great Britain and Austria read reports on the history of Trotskyism (the Fourth International) and criticism of the theory of state capitalism of Tony Cliff. Taking part in the discussion of the

reports were representatives of Trotskyist and anarchist groups from Moscow, Leningrad, Voronezh, Dnepropetrovsk, Nikolaev, Kiev, and other cities.

Moscow. On November 14–15 a regular congress was held by the group "Workers Democracy," the Soviet section of the International Committee for Workers Democracy and International Socialism. Around 30 people from various cities and regions of Russia participated and discussed the proposed program of action for a mass workers movement armed with a militant program and also for the creation of a mass workers party based on general democratic principles.

Voronezh. On November 8 an expanded meeting of the Voronezh Trotskyist group was held. Trotskyists from Moscow, Tula, and Kharkov took part in a discussion on the evaluation of the political situation and the tasks of the workers movement in Russia. A representative of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Workers Party of Spain addressed the comrades. He explained the historical peculiarities of the degeneration of the workers state. A decision was adopted to publish a new journal in Kharkov. On the evening before there had been a lecture dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the October revolution entitled "On the Question of the Methodology of Marx as Applied to the Tasks of Today."

Tula. December. The fifth issue of "Socialist Revolution" has been published with a critique of the unity of interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Chelyabinsk. December 15–16. There was a working meeting of representatives of the Executive Committee of the Workers International (Great Britain) and the Chelyabinsk Trotskyist group with the aim of elucidation of the political orientation and actions of the Chelyabinsk Trotskyists in the Soviet section of the International.

Dnepropetrovsk. December. After a visit to Dnepropetrovsk by representatives of the International Workers League (Argentina and Brazil) a section of the IWL was created, which will develop agitation for the construction of a Soviet section of this international organization.

Leningrad. December. The 8th issue came out of Rabochaya Borba, published by a Leningrad group of Communist revolutionary internationalists. The Leningrad group of D. Zhvania is the only Trotskyist group in Russia that openly states its adherence to the theory of "state capitalism in the USSR."

Novosibirsk. December. The Novosibirsk comrades prepared and conducted a trip for British Trotskyists to become acquainted with their city. In return, representatives of the Executive Committee of the Workers International invited representatives of the Trotskyists in Novosibirsk to participate in the work of a London conference. □

Murder on the Long Island Railroad

by Lisa Landphair and Michael Frank

An incident that dominated national attention throughout the week of December 6 has provoked a variety of debates, discussions, and interpretations among media analysts, psychological experts, and government officials. We are referring, of course, to the shooting of 23 commuters aboard the suburban-bound Long Island Railroad. Colin Ferguson, a 35-year-old Jamaican immigrant, has been charged with killing 6 people and wounding 17 others. All of the victims were white or Asian. Notes written by Ferguson under the heading "Reasons for This" were found in his possession. They reveal his anger toward specific institutions and individuals for being racist.

Colin Ferguson

Ferguson was born in Kingston, Jamaica, the son of an affluent pharmacist and managing director of one of Jamaica's largest wholesale pharmaceutical companies. He grew up in an upper middle class suburb and attended a prestigious private high school for boys. Former teachers and friends were astonished to hear of his racial hatred since nothing in his youth foreshadowed this. Quite the contrary, they recall him as a "fat little jovial sort of happy-go-lucky kid" (according to the *New York Times*). His father was killed in an automobile accident while he was a teenager at private school, and his mother died a year later. Although not impoverished, Ferguson and his brothers had to strike out on their own. Ferguson immigrated to the U.S. in 1982 in search of economic opportunity. But instead of finding the American Dream he discovered the downside of American reality — low-paying, menial, dead-end jobs. By 1992 Ferguson had moved from the high social status and standard of living he enjoyed in Jamaica to a 6-foot by 10-foot room in one of New York's working class, West Indian communities. In what has been referred to as Ferguson's "long slide from privilege" he also underwent the trauma of divorce, expulsion from two colleges, and an on-the-job accident in which he sustained neck and back injuries. In short, Ferguson was culturally uprooted, de-classed, marginalized, and confronted with the reality of American racism.

Myopia of the Bourgeois Media

The inherent racism of the media is revealed in the extensive coverage given to this incident. The disruption of the security and stability of the lives of suburban whites merits the front page for days while the daily shootings and murders in the Black community are generally unreported and are not considered "news." This reflects the greater social value placed on white lives.

There is a problem, as we see it, with the explanation of the shooting that has been of-

fered by the media. The dominant line is that since Ferguson is mentally unbalanced, the causes for his act must be sought solely within his individual psychology. While this is certainly one aspect of the problem, Ferguson's individual pathology can still only be understood in the context of the much broader social pathology he complained of: the racism and oppression he endured. It is certainly possible that without these social contradictions and pressures Ferguson could have lived out a perfectly normal life, never harming anyone. At the very least, it has to be acknowledged that they helped shape the forms in which his mental imbalance expressed itself.

The media has saturated the public with a flood of information regarding Ferguson's personal history, interviews with people who know him, the opinions of various experts and authorities, and the reactions of the general public. Ferguson's hatred of, and obsession with, racism is seen as the result of his attempt to rationalize and account for a failure that is portrayed as purely personal. There have been interviews with individuals who have had close contact with him to shed light on his personal psychology. A former professor of his at Adelphi University, a Black South African, spoke of his constant preoccupation with racism and recounted an incident where Ferguson's claim that he was the victim of racial slurs on campus could not be substantiated. Similarly, his landlord and friends recalled his chronic complaints about Asians, whites, and "Uncle Tom Blacks." But it does not follow that because Ferguson may have seen racism at work even where it didn't exist, he didn't experience it at all or that genuine racist oppression had no effect on him. Every Black person in this country experiences racism on a daily basis.

A further implication of the media analysis is that healthy people cope with racism. After all, other people of color experience the same racism as Ferguson and don't go around shooting people. But this kind of argumentation is invalid. For example, not everyone who smokes will develop lung cancer, but that does not mean that smoking does not contribute to this disease. The underlying message is that people should cope with racism, and that someone as intelligent and articulate as Ferguson should have been able to withstand social pressures and integrate himself into American society.

Social Reality

It is not hard to understand why mass media apologists for a racist system would like to see socially unacceptable behavior such as Ferguson's as solely the result of mental illness. But to deny the sociological reality altogether is myopic.

Purely psychological explanations for individual behavior factor out the impact of social dynamics on the human psyche. People are, after all, not born angry, nor do they enter life obsessed with the problem of racism. We are all influenced by our social context.

We live in a society where racism is institutionalized. It is real and tangible to its victims. Yet that reality is systematically denied by an ideology that proclaims equality of opportunity. This lack of social acknowledgment of the daily reality of racism increases the anger and frustration of those who are victimized by it. And in the absence of a social consciousness of the multiple functions of racism in the maintenance of capitalist society it is not surprising that those who are its victims will often locate the source of the problem in racist individuals.

The absence of a mass Black movement which would confirm Black people's experience of racism, identify its roots, and organize to change reality, contributes to the victim's sense of isolation and powerlessness. The existence of such a movement, on the other hand, can change the course of an individual's life history. For example, the Black Panther Party was able to recruit from the marginalized layers of the Black community, from drug dealers to gang members. The motives, aspirations, and social consciousness of these people were transformed as a result of their political experience. Malcolm X, in his early adult life, was a petty criminal. His evolution would probably have been quite different had he not made contact with and joined the Nation of Islam.

In addition, it is important to consider the economic aspect of social reality. If Ferguson had come to the U.S. during a period of economic expansion, when there were more opportunities for well-paying, entry-level employment with real chances for upward mobility, it is possible that the problematic aspects of his personality would not have prevailed. In situations of economic growth and labor shortage people who would otherwise be marginalized are incorporated into the mainstream of the workforce.

How can we ignore the fact that a weak economy and the absence of well-paying jobs and vibrant social movements will negatively impact mental health on a mass scale.

Limitations of a Purely Psychological Interpretation

Each individual is a complex of forces and tendencies. But which ones come to predominate and get acted out will be influenced, at least in part, by social and economic forces. Consider, for example, the relation between unemployment and a variety of behaviors such as

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The Case of Maneia "Stoney" Bey

Pittsburgh Police Murder Young African American

by Claire Cohen

On Saturday night of November 20, 1993, in the East Liberty Section of Pittsburgh, police killed a 23-year-old African American, Maneia "Stoney" Bey, by shooting him 14 times in the back. The bullets that took Bey's life came from the guns of 3 of the 6 officers who fired at him. When the coroner's staff arrived, they were prevented from coming near the scene of the shooting for 3½ to 4 hours. When they were finally allowed access to Bey's body, they found it lying handcuffed on the ground with clear evidence that it had been dragged some distance. There was a 9-millimeter pistol lying nearby.

The police claim that they were responding to a call to investigate possible drug dealing on the corner of Fairmount and Penn. When they arrived, Bey, who was one of the three persons on the corner, broke off into a run. Police pursued him. He turned and fired on them. They fired back in self-defense, killing him. Such is the police version.

The coroner's examination revealed that Bey had been shot 14 times in the back, once in the groin, and once in the hand. The shots in the back had hit vital organs and killed him. The coroner could find no traces of gunpowder on Bey's hands, despite the fact that whenever someone shoots a gun there are always traces of powder. Bey's fingerprints were also not on the gun. Despite one of the officer's claims that a bullet from Bey's gun passed so close to his face that he was burned, the officer had no powder burns on his face. The coroner called on the Allegheny County police to investigate the incident.

Community Outrage

The African American community reacted to this incident with outrage. Many felt this was the straw that broke the camel's back. In the name of fighting drug- and gang-related crime, the Pittsburgh police have become increasingly oppressive in the last several years. There have been increasing complaints of police harassment and brutality, especially directed at young African American men. Telephones rang off the hook on a popular local African American radio talk show, "Black Talk," as angry citizens called in to express outrage and frustration.

This incident showed once again that the Rodney King case was no exception. Racist police violence against the African American community goes on, not just in Los Angeles or Detroit, but all over this country, and mass action is needed to counter it.

The Pittsburgh Chapter of Campaign for a New Tomorrow called an emergency community meeting for Saturday, November 27, 1993. Between 150 and 200 people attended, with a large contingent from the Beltzhoover section of Pittsburgh, Bey's neighborhood. Campaign for a New Tomorrow had already publicly put forward 4 demands: (1) the suspension without pay from the police force of all involved officers while this situation is under investigation; (2) the establishment of a community-selected and -controlled commission, financed by the city, to investigate the charges of misconduct against the officers; (3) the appointment of a special prosecutor by a coalition of concerned community organizations to prosecute the case; and (4) the indictment, prosecution, and jailing of the involved officers if the investigation finds them to be negligent or derelict of duty in the wrongful death of Maneia Bey. CNT also called on all concerned citizens to mobilize to attend the coroner's inquest to monitor the process.

At the community meeting, the CNT demands were agreed to. In addition, a demand was added to call for a federal investigation by the Justice Department of this incident. By coincidence, the Pittsburgh Human Relations Commission (HRC) had scheduled a public hearing on Community-Police Relations for December 21 from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. It was agreed that the community should mobilize to get as many people to attend this hearing as possible. Finally, the people at the meeting decided to form the Citizens' Coalition for Justice (CCJ).

At first, the mainstream Black leaders responded negatively, and the local NAACP was quiet. But when the CCJ was able to mobilize over 300 people to attend the coroner's inquest on December 8, the NAACP joined in the call for justice, while other mainstream leaders became strangely silent.

Buoyed by its success at mobilization, the Coalition then began publicly encouraging even more people to attend the HRC hearing. However, the HRC then canceled the hearings. People began calling into "Black Talk," wondering if the hearings were canceled as a reaction to the community mobilization. Several days later, the HRC announced that it had rescheduled the hearing for January 14, 1994, but from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., a period less accessible to ordinary working people.

Police Exonerated

In the meantime, not surprisingly, the coroner's jury found the police shooting of Bey "justi-

fied." The Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* announced the ruling with the headline "Case Closed." One of the mainstream television news programs ran a "public interest story" that vilified Bey (who had a history of juvenile delinquency) as a criminal who deserved what he got. The power structure let it be known that "the healing should now begin," and it was time to get on with the inauguration of Pittsburgh's new mayor on January 3.

The Citizens' Coalition for Justice responded by: (1) continuing to call for an independent federal investigation and circulating petitions and letters for people to sign calling upon the mayor, city council members, state legislators, and members of Congress to call for such an investigation; (2) publicizing a hotline telephone number for people to report police misconduct; (3) meeting with white progressives to obtain political and material support; (4) holding the first of a series of neighborhood educational discussions to inform people of their rights and about how the system works (or doesn't work) for poor and African American communities; (5) publicly calling for a civilian police review board, while privately beginning to mobilize for a referendum on the November 1994 election ballot for the strongest form of such a board; and (6) calling for a demonstration on January 17, 1994 (Martin Luther King Day), to demand justice for Maneia Bey and the African American community, poor people, and other oppressed groups in Pittsburgh.

Relations between the Citizens' Coalition and the Community

CCJ consists of African American activists of varying levels of consciousness and experience. There are self-declared socialists, "cultural nationalists," trade unionists, and "just plain progressives." Among the socialists, people come from varying political traditions. The Coalition chairperson, Rashad Byrdsong, is a former Black Panther. He is also a member of the local CNT steering committee.

It is sometimes difficult keeping people on task and mediating between ideological perspectives. But it appears that despite tensions within the CCJ, it will last at least long enough to accomplish the task of getting a civilian police review board on the ballot in the November election.

Since this is still an evolving situation, a complete analysis cannot yet be made. A preliminary assessment yields the following conclusions:

1. Regardless of the period, when objective conditions are ripe, people can always be mobilized to struggle.
2. Revolutionary activists should attempt to take advantage of every opportunity to mobilize people in response to events, even if revolution is not on the horizon, because clearly ordinary folks (such as the Beltz-hoover community) can be radicalized by their experiences.
3. The point is to help influence events so that people can learn from their experience of struggle in a way that leads to increasing radicalization.
4. Leftists of varying ideologies must and can learn to work together in coalitions. The key is to stay task-oriented.
5. While an ideological theoretical perspective is important to help give direction to strategizing and action, it is important to learn how to work with ordinary people in a way that builds the movement and wins them over to a more revolutionary perspective. This is not easy, but it can be done.
6. It is important to be flexible in recognizing potential transitional demands — in this case, the demands for justice for Maneia Bey and for a civilian police review board.
7. Finally, we revolutionary socialists need to develop a theoretical framework in which to place struggles against police brutality, crime, violence, and drugs in a revolutionary context. These are the issues that strike the biggest chord with the masses right now (aside from jobs), especially in the African American communities.

These may not be revolutionary times, but they are exciting and important times for building grassroots movements of struggle with the potential to radicalize thousands as never before. □

January 7, 1994

Protest the Police Murder of Maneia Bey Stop the Violence Against African American Communities

by Rashad Byrdsong

This statement was made by the author, a leader of the Pittsburgh Chapter of Campaign for a New Tomorrow, at the November 27 public meeting to protest the killing of Maneia Bey.

African American communities in North America have suffered throughout our history from various forms of oppression and violence, in our neighborhoods and in our homes, from 1619 until the present.

Violence and death perpetrated against Black people is not a new phenomenon. From the Middle Passage to the Southern plantations, to lynching, to being shot down in the streets, death has been a close companion.

Urban violence is a by-product of the violent epidemic in American society. It has manifested itself in the form of poverty, unemployment, institutional racism, state-sponsored and sanctioned violence, economic exclusion, homelessness, and a school system that puts more emphasis on behavior modification than education.

The present social conditions that exist within African American communities in Pittsburgh are dismal to say the least. The deterioration of our neighborhoods is a direct result of years of neglect and of leadership that's not willing to represent the interests of the Black community. Infant mortality is escalating; substance abuse, along with drug violence, has taken on the characteristics of a plague; murder and mayhem, along with a total disregard for human life, have become part of the norm.

Government budget cuts have targeted social and economic programs, food stamps, health care, job training.

And racist laws, geared toward exclusion of African Americans from the decision-making process, have legislated away hard-won democratic rights. Cries of injustice have echoed across America, only to fall on deaf ears.

Brothers and Sisters, we are in a serious situation.

This social climate incubated and gave birth to the social behavior our young people are exhibiting. The rampant progression of senseless and destructive behavior is a mirror reflection of years of abuse and neglect they have suffered in their young lives.

They would have us believe that our children are responsible for all the social ills in this country and that they're nothing more than savage animals who love to kill. This is supposed to justify the warehousing of our babies in the many kennels they call prisons in the prime of their lives.

Government has paid lip service and has offered band-aid solutions and quick-fix policies to the social ills that affect urban America. That falls short in addressing the root causes of problems and needs of people. The war on drugs and the Weed and Seed program ended up being a war against Black urban youth. Police brutality has intensified in the name of "law and order." Who monitors the police and keeps them in check?

It's not normal to commit suicide. But if you read some of these newspapers or news reports, they would have us

believe Black life isn't important. The funeral business today is booming from the cream of our young Black men. Our Black men are dying at genocidal rates. And they would have us believe it's justified. Hell no! Not one more are we going to bury and say it's justified!

The African tradition of kinship and collective unity expresses the relationship of the individual to the group. It recognizes that only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his or her own being. Thus, when one member of the tribe suffers, the entire tribe suffers. The children from all unions belonged to the collective. Today, we lose one of ours, Maneia "Stoney" Bey. He was our father, our brother, our son. He was from our tribe.

Yes, there is internal conflict within our communities and serious problems and issues that need addressing. However, they don't warrant the blatant and cowardly behavior of law-enforcement officers with obvious psychological problems to shoot a human being 16 times and 14 times in the back. They must be a credit to the blue that they wear.

Hell no! It's not justified!

It's murder, and his murder will not be justifiable homicide!

And we won't sleep until the criminals who killed him are prosecuted and jailed for murder! □

Coal Strike Settled But Court Fights Go On

U.S. Miners Make Gains on Job Security

by George Saunders

On December 14, tens of thousands of mine workers voted, two to one, to accept a new 5-year contract, ending the 7-month selective strike by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) against the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA). The hard-fought strike from May to December involved, at its height, roughly 18,000 workers in 7 states. UMWA President Richard L. Trumka said the agreement provided coal miners with "the strongest job security and job opportunity guarantees of any National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement."

The problem of job security was one of the main reasons for the strike: "Job security was a major issue for UMWA members, who mainly work in older mines where the supply of coal is being exhausted. The union wants UMWA members to be hired for jobs at new mines, where coal companies set up double-breasted operations in an effort to avoid their contractual obligations" (*AFL-CIO News*, December 13, 1993).

Double-breasting is the term used when a company, instead of hiring union workers at a new location, sets up a dummy corporation, a disguised subsidiary that operates with nonunion labor. (See cartoon on "double-breasting" from *UMWA News*.)

As one report put it, "First the bosses exhaust the coal in union-operated mines... [where productivity has increased about 200 percent since the 1980s]. Then they go to the other side of the mountain and open a mine with cheap non-union labor. Union miners lose their jobs and their contract protection. The companies leave devastated communities and land" (*Workers World Service*, December 27, 1993).

The striking miners' determination, along with solidarity from the rest of the union movement and its allies, made the difference in winning the strike. As Trumka put it, the contract "was won through the sweat and sacrifice and solidarity of UMWA families in coal field towns across America. Because union miners stood tall and proud and fought back, we not only won a new contract that guarantees better wages and pensions while protecting our health care and our working conditions, we finally drew the line against double-breasting in this industry." Trumka also praised the "tremendous solidarity" from other unions and the international labor movement.

By the end of the summer the coal companies were feeling the pinch of the strike. For example, the British corporation Hanson PLC, the parent company of Peabody Coal, which is the largest U.S. coal owner and one of the main targets of the strike, suffered a loss of about \$185 million, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. Because of the strike there was a third-quarter drop of 7.6 percent in coal production east of the Mississippi River. In Illinois production declined 25.1 percent, and in West Virginia, 11.7 percent.

These pressures prompted the coal owners to turn to Washington for help, and in September Labor Secretary Robert Reich appointed William J. Usery as "supermediator." This resulted in the inclusion of a labor-management cooperation scheme in the new contract. This is the pet project of Reich and the Clinton administration, which wants to make U.S. employers more competitive globally by reducing labor disputes and, if possible, getting rid of unions. Reich was quoted as saying that the new agreement establishes a "neutral forum... in which miners and mine operators can meet regularly and resolve problems long before they face the urgency of an expiring contract" (December 13 *AFL-CIO News*).

As part of the settlement, mine workers made some concessions on health care and work schedules. A useful summary of the contract can be found in the January 1994 *Labor Notes*, which pointed out that the agreement "allows operators to institute productivity-enhancing alternative work schedules and, for the first time, to produce coal on Sundays" and also that the agreement penalizes "miners who seek [health] care outside a preferred list of providers."

Despite the relatively successful conclusion of the strike, mine workers face continued government harassment.

In November 1992 the Virginia state supreme court reinstated a lower court ruling demanding \$52 million in civil contempt fines from the UMWA in connection with the Pittston strike of 1989-90. The UMWA has argued before the U.S. Supreme Court that the fines are unconstitutional and should be vacated. The Clinton administration, through the U.S. Justice Department, supports the Virginia anti-UMWA ruling. Massive protest and solidarity from labor and its allies is the best protection against the conservative, pro-business bias that can be expected from the Supreme Court, which will probably rule on the case in 1994.

The UMWA's problems with courts and governments illustrate once again that labor needs its own political party, to establish a government that will defend working people instead of cracking the whip for the corporations.

Another attack on the UMWA from the corporate-dominated judicial system is a 4-count indictment that is still pending. The December 27 *Workers World Service* summarized this threat, and some general lessons of the strike:

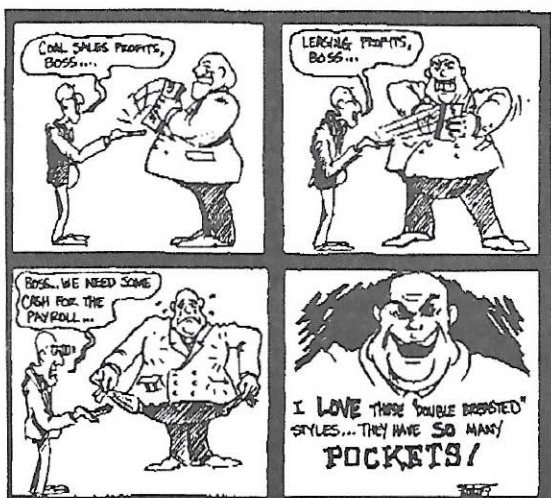
Eight members of Local 5958 face trumped-up charges that could lead to a 50-year sentence and a million-dollar fine for one defendant and 25-year sentences and \$500,000 fines for the others.

Federal and state agencies, including the West Virginia State Police, the FBI, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms all ganged up against these strikers after the death of a non-union worker during the walkout.

Union members say the real criminals are the BCOA bosses, who created paper companies to cover up their anti-union schemes to lift profits. The crime is trying to deny job security, health benefits, and pensions to people who work under hazardous conditions miles underground.

The Mine Workers' tradition — fighting to the bitter end to win economic justice — preserved most of these benefits. And the struggle assured that a considerable number of laid-off miners will get jobs in the newer mines.

The workers and their families showed stamina and courage during the 7-month strike. That, with support from sections of the organized labor movement, compelled the BCOA to sign a contract. It wasn't William Usery who pulled it off. This irresistible force — the workers in motion — brought the Clinton administration to enter the fray before it spread to other sections of the labor movement. Courage is contagious, and the bosses know it. □



UMWA Journal/Tom Turfry

OFL-NDP Rift Puts Pressure on Rae to Repeal Bill 48

by Barry Weisleder

Barry Weisleder is an Executive Board member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and delegate to the Ontario Federation of Labour Convention and Ontario New Democratic Party Provincial Council.

Operatic high tension, an ultimatum, a walk-out, an historic rebuke, an official resignation, a clash, an insult, and an altered political stance. This was the stuff of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Convention, attended by nearly 1,600 delegates in Toronto, November 22-26.

Public sector workers' rage over Social Contract cutbacks, layoffs, and contract stripping forced OFL bureaucrats to slam the Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) government. A leadership maneuver to water down an already murky and contradictory OFL statement backfired.

Instead, Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and Public Service Alliance of Canada caucuses, meeting the night before convention, repudiated an ultimatum from some private-sector union leaders and proceeded to demand that OFL Document #1 on "Labour's Relationship with the NDP When the NDP Is in Government" be toughened up.

Just prior to the key debate the next afternoon, less than one-third of the convention walked out. As the delegates from the Steelworkers, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers, United Food and Commercial Workers, and Service Employees International Union headed for the exits, many of those who remained chanted, "Free Collective Bargaining" and "Stay, Stay, Stay."

Auto workers, construction trades unions, and other private sector delegates did stay with their public sector sisters and brothers and voted overwhelmingly for an amendment that the OFL did not support the NDP at the next provincial election unless the NDP government repeals Bill 48.

(Bill 48, the Social Contract Act, was adopted by the Ontario NDP government in June 1993. It required \$2 billion in givebacks from public service unions and specified that if unions and employers, spread across eight sectors, from health to education, did not meet certain fiscal targets by August 1, the government would be authorized to impose a three-year freeze on wages, benefits, and all other increments.

(Bill 48 also gave employers the power to extract up to 12 days leave without pay in each of the three years of the freeze. Employers also gained free rein to adjust workload, vacation times, and holidays, and to impose layoffs at

will. In the workload area, for example, school boards immediately announced intentions to reverse pupil-teacher ratios upward.

(As a result of Bill 48, approximately one million Ontario public service workers stood to suffer at least a 14 percent decline in real wages, a precedent and example that would not go unnoticed by employers in the private sector. The wage controls (not accompanied by even lip service about price controls) were to end after three years, but the Social Contract Act itself has no termination date. Its provisions could be extended by a future government indefinitely.

(Another feature of Bill 48 is that it would allow the government to arbitrarily replace a union that refused to cooperate on concessions with a company union willing to bargain under the "social contract.")

One reason the Bob Rae-loyalist bureaucrats led their troops out of the hall was their certainty that they'd lose the vote. So they held a meeting in another room and reaffirmed their allegiance to the party and its anti-worker regime. In a joint statement they declared, "We will not campaign against incumbent MPPs [members of the Provincial Parliament]... We will work to re-elect Ontario's NDP government."

Meanwhile, on the convention floor, a prior amendment, making the reversal of government cutbacks a precondition for future labor support and demanding that the OFL fund candidates to run against the NDP traitors, failed, at least partly due to bad timing of the motion.

But the historic rebuke to the NDP did register. Labor's protest is an act of self-defense, not self-destruction. As Canadian Auto Workers President Buzz Hargrove put it, "We're not tearing down the New Democratic Party — they've destroyed themselves."

Late that afternoon, OFL Secretary-Treasurer Julie Davis announced that she would resign as President of the Ontario NDP, a move that most public sector union activists feel is long overdue.

On the third day of convention, nearly 1,000 delegates, private and public sector together, marched on the Legislature at Queen's Park to demand repeal of Bill 48, as well as

Workers Compensation Board reforms.

Not satisfied with routine speeches and a no-show by the NDP premier, scores of workers kicked over security barricades and pounded their fists on the locked front doors. This show of unity, with a dash of militancy, was spoiled by re-elected OFL President Gord Wilson, who attacked the militants with harsher language than he ever used to criticize the Rae government. CUPE Ontario leader Sid Ryan joined in the demagogic exercise, calling the protesters "hooligans" and "raging lunatics." The next day some delegates wore T-shirts to convention displaying the slogan "Hooligans for Free Collective Bargaining."

Under strict orders from an angry overflow caucus meeting, OPSEU President Fred Upshaw rose at convention on a point of privilege to counter Gord Wilson's insults and to demand an apology. None was forthcoming.

As the OFL convention concluded, delegates puzzled over the meaning of what had transpired. What will labor do, given Bob Rae's restated intention to maintain Bill 48? Will the OFL really, in the words of adopted Document #1, "ensure that the 66 members of the NDP Caucus that supported Bill 48 are challenged at nomination meetings"? Likewise, will the OFL truly "develop broad-based coalitions," "shift [its] resources to grassroots mobilization," and "build a strong community-based social movement linking users and providers of services"?

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The Workers Unity Network and the Proposed 1995 Convention to Establish a Labor Party

by Saladin Muhammad

This article is based on a report presented by the author to the November 6, 1993, gathering of the Workers Unity Network (WUN) in Washington, D.C.

The WUN was founded in May 1993 by a group of 25 trade unionists and activists meeting in Cleveland, Ohio. The network's program combines the fight for political empowerment, self-determination, and equal rights for African Americans with the struggle to establish a workers party and organize the South.

Since its founding the network has grown to include more than 90 members from at least 17 states, who belong to 24 different unions and a number of worker-based and other community organizations, including the New Directions Movement in the United Auto Workers, Black Workers for Justice, Labor Party Advocates, and Jobs with Justice. Membership is open to workers — employed and unemployed, organized and unorganized — who agree with the network's goals. There is no fee to join and no dues.

Our magazine will carry more information about the WUN in the next issue.

The October 9 Chicago meeting of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) was an important step forward in advancing a movement for independent working-class political action. It was held as an Interim Steering Committee meeting and was attended by 81 union activists from 28 states. They included elected local and international officers and organizing staff. The Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) and United Electrical Workers (UE) were the only two unions represented by their national officers, who have officially endorsed the call for a labor party at the union national conventions. The OCAW has committed the most resources to the building of LPA.

Tony Mazzocchi, a longtime leader of the OCAW and the main initiator of LPA, opened the meeting by explaining its purpose and its limitations in terms of its power to make formal decisions. In response to the sentiment by several people that the meeting needed to make some definite decisions about the future direction and decision-making process of LPA, Mazzocchi stressed that the meeting would not make formal decisions. He characterized the meeting as an opportunity to get input from LPA activists from around the country and their assessments of where LPA should go from here. People conceded to Mazzocchi's position, mainly because they felt that a discussion about LPA's direction was more important at this point than the question of decision making.

There had been an increasing feeling among LPA members prior to the meeting that LPA was waning because of the lack of an action program for building a labor party. This point was stressed by several participants when reporting on LPA activities in their locations and unions. It was felt that the lack of an action program was partly due to the lack of a more collective national leadership in LPA. The meeting established a clearer direction for LPA, but no actual change occurred in the decision-making process. Some committees were formed to begin planning for an LPA national convention to found a labor party. Those committees will involve participants who attended the Interim Steering Committee meeting and may serve to expand the areas of LPA national decision mak-

ing. The functioning of those committees will be key in determining if the LPA process is actually moving forward, or if it will continue to wane as just a good idea and vision of a committed few.

The main discussion at the meeting centered around the question of the founding of a labor party. It was agreed that a national convention to establish a labor party would be held in 1995. There was general agreement that the main base to be targeted for the party's founding is the trade unions. However, several speakers argued that unions should be the *exclusive* base for the founding of a labor party and that union representatives should be the only delegates invited to a founding party convention. They felt this position was justified by the fact that there are a growing number of workers within the trade unions who are dissatisfied with the Democratic Party's anti-labor policies and the Clinton administration's broken promises to labor; that the time is favorable for the launching of a movement for a labor party; and that the trade-union movement is the only potential base now ready or in a strong enough position to break with the Democrats at this point in order to form a labor party.

The general consensus about moving forward to hold a national convention in 1995 seems to have been arrived at mainly on the basis of LPA's method of polling union members through surveys, the infrequent activities of a small number of LPA chapters in various cities, and by the unspecified number of people joining LPA as dues-paying members. These efforts are important and should not be belittled. However, they don't take the movement to build a labor party deep enough into the spontaneous mass sentiment to be able to pose it as a real political alternative for the working class to begin addressing the crisis it finds itself in.

This exclusive targeting of the unions by some in LPA is partly aimed at "protecting" the labor party movement from undue influence by small "ultraleft" groups. This is a legitimate concern. But at the same time, precautions need to be taken to ensure democratic decision making, as opposed to monopolized control by top union officials.

A major concern in LPA's party-building perspective is the emphasis by some on containing the movement for a labor party within the sole parameters of LPA, instead of viewing LPA as a catalyst with an expanding base in the trade unions leading to a broader (than LPA) labor party movement. There seems to be a tendency to define LPA as the labor party in formation, needing only to amass a credible number of members to establish itself formally as *the* party. However, to date, LPA's party-building perspective has been disconnected from the actual movements and struggles currently expressing the independent working-class political action and sentiment developing among the masses.

For example, with the retreat by many unions from the demand for single-payer universal health care, LPA could and should be an identifiable force leading a movement within the unions to press forward around this demand. This would help to link the LPA campaign to form a labor party to the actual sentiment of a large section within the unions and to millions of working people outside the unions who are seeking alternatives to the current corporate-driven policies of the Democratic Party. LPA could also be an important force pushing for the unions to do more organizing in the South. This would help to establish LPA as a clear ally of the developing workers' movement in the Southern states.

The main opposition to the "union exclusive" position came from participants who are members of the Workers Unity Network (WUN). Opposition to the "union exclusive" view also opened up the issue of the importance of major participation by oppressed nationalities, especially people of color, in the labor party-building movement and about the need for outreach to the South. The racial composition and geographical representation at the meeting reflected weaknesses in these two areas. There were only ten African Americans in attendance. There was also a small percentage of women at the meeting.

The decision to hold a national convention to found a labor party, even with LPA's current weaknesses, should be viewed by the WUN as

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The Struggle for Survival

by General Baker

General Baker is a longtime African American activist in Detroit, a member of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and former member of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement. The following is a presentation made at the University of Pittsburgh on November 15, 1993, at a meeting sponsored by campus groups and the Alliance for Progressive Action.

I've been working in auto shops for 30 years. I'm a steelworker in an auto union. Ford was the only one of the Big Three [Ford, Chrysler, General Motors] that had its own steel mill. In the huge Rouge complex in Dearborn, Michigan, one of the 14 plants is a steel mill. I'm in Local 600.

I'm the chairperson of the National Organizing Committee (NOC). We're a group of people who've come together to try to fight for what we consider to be a survival movement and give a focus and political direction to that movement. The movement for survival is a general category of people who find themselves in a situation where they're no longer needed in the workplace, and they have to fight for their daily needs in order to survive. We fight alongside the homeless section, welfare recipients, and others who've been displaced and have to fight for housing, health care, food, and other survival needs.

Our experience and understanding of this comes from an estimate of the situation that we view this country is going through. We refer to it as a revolution in the economy that's taking place. We've reached a new stage of development in technology and robotization inside the shops where human labor in many instances is no longer needed to be productive.

Back in the '60s, some body shops in the auto factories had between two and three thousand people spot welding. We based our organizing inside those large shops. Today, there's not a single human being in the modern body shop. The entire work is done by robots and computer chip controls, with no human labor at all. The same thing has occurred in the paint shops. Slowly, the whole plant is being engrossed by robots and electronic technology. The final assembly plants still have human labor. Those are the departments where workers have to get inside of the car and put the ceiling cloth on, etc. These positions are more difficult for a robot to do. The costs are currently prohibitive in terms of getting a robot that's that flexible. As soon as costs are down, we assume that those positions will be taken, too.

We call this a revolution in the economy in this country. We already went through an economic revolution in the steel mills. There are now coke ovens operating around the world that have no human labor left at all. Based on that, and our understanding of human history, a revolution usually takes place first in production, and then some social upheaval follows. We're trying to prepare for the social upheaval that's going to be a result of this economic revolution that goes on as we sit here and talk. We base

ourselves in that section of society that's been thrown out of production.

In the greater metropolitan Detroit area, Chrysler Corporation used to be the largest employer in the '70s, with 29 plants. They employed 57,000 hourly employees in the city of Detroit alone. Today, Chrysler Corporation has 55,000 employees nationally, and only two plants left in Detroit. Ford and General Motors plants also closed. People who used to work in those plants find themselves living in shelters and on welfare rolls, and trying to struggle for survival.

As a result of cutbacks in the number of hourly workers and a declining tax base, the state of Michigan's budget was thrown out of kilter. In response to that, Governor Engler and the state legislature cut off all 95,000 general assistance recipients in 1991. So no aid comes for any single, able-bodied adult in the state of Michigan. What was left was the AFDC rolls [those on the federal Aid for Dependent Children program]. In the past two years, any time a family's oldest child reaches 18 that family and that child are cut off of aid because there's no aid available for single adults. These cutbacks have forced a real crisis in Michigan.

The homeless population in the greater Detroit area is about 55,000 people. We have numerous shelters concentrated in the Cass Corridor area where people try to fend for their daily lives. In Michigan a single adult can only get food stamps. People will trade these stamps each month for fuel in the winter to try and stay warm.

During the auto boom in the '60s, Detroit led the nation in the number of single-family dwelling units. Plant closings left us with something like 15,000 vacant houses in Detroit. The homeless will develop a squatters movement to take over some of these homes and then use their food stamp money to heat the homes.

Let me say to the students in this room that one of the main lessons we've learned is if one does not support the struggle of that section of society, then obviously you cheapen your own trade or profession. We've seen all the money fall away from social science studies. We've seen the cheapening of labor and an attack on welfare workers across Michigan as a result of an attack on the section that they used to serve. There have been massive layoffs in the Department of Social Services offices across the state.

There is another aspect to this. There has been propaganda hype about the welfare recipient always being Black, which results in the race question being used to divide the working class. Out of the 95,000 cut off of aid in Michigan, the

majority were white. One tactical question we face is a demand that the welfare cuts are not painted as Black so that we can establish the broadest base of unity for the fightback.

The fundamental question that we deal with is: how do we now try to fight alongside a section of people who no longer are needed to be productive in society? How do we view society in the upcoming stages when human labor is not needed in production? Obviously, we need jobs in order to get money to participate in the economy and get the necessities of life. We can eat with food stamps, but we don't know if we're going to get rent stamps, clothing stamps, etc. Because of this, we've developed a tactic and an outlook, particularly around housing, that says we're prepared to take what we need; that we'll only get what we're organized to take.

In Detroit there are 4,000 empty public housing units with heat and light. We set up a base of operations, kicked in the doors of empty public housing units, took the locks off, bought new locks, set up an extralegal housing authority, took people out of the homeless shelters, had them sign applications, and put them in the empty units. This brought us directly into confrontation with the state. Many of us were arrested and the people thrown out of the units. But we just regrouped and went back and took over other units. We had basic support from those already occupying public housing. For example, D Building in the Jeffries Project had 125 units and only 9 occupied. The 9 occupants felt safer with people living in the building. If we could keep the new tenants in a unit for 30 days, then we could use the Landlord-Tenant Court to prevent eviction. Now, after about a year and half, we have 100 homeless families in public housing projects. They don't pay rent because they have no income. We learned from that struggle that we have to seize what we need in order to live.

According to *USA Today*, 2,000 people get pink slips every day in this country. That's 500 more per day than last year. If this is going to be a growing section of society, then we need to learn the tactics and strategies of struggle and political outlook for this section. We are placing ourselves in what we call the survival end of the struggle. This is a critical struggle which actually tests the question of revolutionary development of society. We think this is a revolutionary section of society, not because it consciously thinks that, but because objectively it's forced to confront the government in a fundamental way in order to get the necessities of life. We're prepared to test the system to its limits. The

question of organized or conscious discipline is not necessary. This is the outlook the National Organizing Committee has been pursuing.

Most of our experience has been gained out of the organization Up and Out of Poverty. The leadership there is from the National Homeless Union, the National Welfare Rights Union, and the Anti-Hunger Coalition. These bodies are headed up by women. The organizations are fighting for survival of these people.

We're not sure where the struggle's going. We didn't anticipate some of the confrontations that developed in the course of trying to seize the necessities of life. Once, when we were getting thrown out of the projects, a homeless person suggested that we get tents and set up sort of a revival meeting, like the churches do, that we could use as a base of operations. We set up tents, which became known as Tent City. Every night, the Detroit police would tear down the tents and arrest everybody. Past fellow travelers of mine, like the Detroit director of the Health Department, would claim the tents were health hazards. The police would arrest us for trespassing on property. But we had a right to be on that property because we had agreements with churches to set the tents up on their property. People got a great education about the role of the state and police.

We also ran into a lot of other difficulties. Homeless people, for instance, didn't have a right to vote because they didn't have an address and therefore couldn't register. We battled with the city and the state legislature and were able to use the shelter address to register to vote. We registered tens of thousands of people in Michigan to vote in order for them to sign a petition to recall Governor Engler. People would stand in line all day to register to vote so they could sign the petition. We battled with the Board of Education to use the shelter address to get homeless children in school. The way the system is set up, if you don't have an address you can't go to school.

These struggles taught us a lot. The Wayne County Homeless Union developed a daytime drop-in center to take the overflow from the shelters. Most of the shelters throw people out on the street during the daytime. They don't want homeless people coming together during the day so that they could try to collectively solve their problems. So they have to roam the street during the day and come back by 6:30 p.m. to reclaim their beds. The Homeless Union also developed a rotating ministry that takes in one church every week of the year — 52 weeks. For one week, a church feeds dinner and breakfast to the homeless and lets them sleep in the basement. We take about 150 foam mattresses to these churches. Then the people come to the drop-in center during the daytime. This sensitizes a lot of church people to the plight of the homeless.

The NOC asks, How do we approach the question of a new society in which we're not needed any longer to be productive? We want to ask this of students of sociology and history. If we were archeologists digging up tools, we

could decide what the form of society was, based on the tools of production. Tools mark different epochs and different kinds of social structures that follow in order to implement the tools. If we dug up the robotic tools of today, what kind of society would need to exit in correspondence to them? We think it's a real revolutionary potential. We need more help to study which way we're going. How will we approach a situation where there are masses of people who need to live but are no longer needed in the process of production? That's the contradiction that we're confronted with in society as a whole. The NOC was designed to be based in that particular section of the population.

This is an international phenomenon. We view the districts where our homeless people gather in this country — like Detroit's Cass Corridor — as our developing shantytowns. These shantytowns are all over the world. The largest is probably in Brazil, where close to a million people are in one shantytown. In the United States, shantytowns are developing in the midst of all this plenty. All the stores, warehouses, and car lots are full. There are supposed to be 11 million empty luxury housing units. There are 6 million homeless. Housing isn't built for people to live in, but for real estate companies to make money. That's basically the nature of the system. We realize that homeless people will not be given these housing units because other renters will stop paying rent. That will threaten the existence of capitalism as related to housing.

Well, those are the kinds of things we've been fighting around. I wanted to bring this message to Pittsburgh in terms of our experience. I hope we now can get an exchange of ideas from others in the room.

Question and Answer Period

Question: Let me express my gratitude that you came to speak to us. It's a pleasure to listen to someone who's not afraid of the word "revolution." I'd like to ask you about the specific consciousness of the people you work with. How do they come to think about the state and the police in these actions you helped organize? How are they thinking about their own situation?

Answer: It's not been difficult working with the impoverished section. People have a lot of pride. Even homeless people and welfare recipients don't want you to know that they're homeless or on welfare. I guess this is a holdover from the American psyche. You first have to break that up. People have a tendency to blame themselves for their problems and don't see the social consequences that helped in their collapse. There's a little story: the National Homeless Union was first organized by two guys out of Philadelphia. They were going every day to New Jersey to pick fruit on the surplus labor market. Neither knew the other was homeless. Finally, one of them got thrown out of the abandoned building he was living in, and the other guy saw him on TV. People have such a

pride, it's hard to break through that. The same is true of welfare recipients.

These pockets of people are already finding ways to survive. They do it kind of illegally. You can't make a legal movement out of it as long as there's illegal individual behavior. There were a lot of people stealing gas from Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. The gas company wanted to bring a case against them, but they were afraid of a Wayne County jury. And I don't blame them, because wasn't no jury gonna convict nobody for stealing no gas from the gas company. Nearly every time you see three or four people on the street corner, they're trying to figure some kind of way to get something that they need to live. Oftentimes, it's not nothing for pleasure, it's just things they need to live. How do you take this movement and make it legal and public and break the illegal cycle that exists within it?

To try to get at your question, the slogan of the homeless union is, "We're homeless, not helpless." We hear that one-third of the homeless population in Los Angeles has college degrees. You're not talking about what people normally conceive of as homeless people. People gravitate to California and the South because they don't have to worry about the cold.

When we first started out, the big thrust was at the point when general assistance [GA] was cut off. That increased the number of people filling up the shelters. Most people believed they would not be cut off for long, that something benevolent was going to happen and they would get the GA back. General assistance is not much. We call them conduits [that is, the recipients are just a means for distributing money to the landlords]. The people themselves weren't getting any money. Most of the stuff they got was vended [paid directly to the landlord]. The social service office would vend the rent and utilities before the recipient would get it, so most of them would have only about \$10 left each month. Matter of fact, the landlords were our allies to keep GA on. This was an odd coupling.

Mayor Coleman Young had such an attitude about our tents that he sent the police every night to tear down the tents. We hadn't anticipated that. We'd sit there at night. The later we waited and mobilized, the later they would come. The last time the tents were torn down was at 3:00 a.m. We'd try to mobilize the press and as many people as possible. After they would leave, here would come 200 police officers. They'd line up in formation on the corner, march down, tear up the tents, and arrest everybody. And people on the street were getting outraged: "Why don't you tear down the dope house over there, man? You know they're selling dope there? Why do you want to bother the tents?"

People learned an awful lot about how the whole system works, particularly against them. They understood clearly that Michigan was trying to balance the budget on the backs of the poor, the most helpless section in the state. The real danger is that Governor Engler's plan will become a national plan. He's a national hero.

Everybody wants to follow the Engler plan. He's a leading proponent of welfare reform. His welfare reform is to cut everybody off and let them fend for themselves, regardless of how they find themselves living.

My experience working with auto workers is quite different. They go to work at 6 o'clock in the morning and are quite disciplined. When you work with homeless people, the discipline is over a period of time. A homeless person might run up on \$30 and they're gonna disappear. You won't see them for another 3 or 4 days until that runs out, and they come back. You have to tune yourself to understand the life they're living.

In Michigan all our social service workers are organized in the United Auto Workers. They're the largest local in the UAW, Local 6000. Their treatment of welfare recipients is atrocious. We have all kinds of difficult fights at the welfare office with the way welfare mothers are treated. That's a whole other level of associated struggles.

Question: I appreciated all your comments, especially about women's leadership. Could you talk about the particular organizing issues that women face?

Answer: There's a lot of them. When the Homeless Union first got organized in Detroit, we had to learn an awful lot about how to deal with some of these issues. When the Union was very infantile, the organizers would come in and stay in the shelters a few nights, talk to various people, and come up with some kind of public activity. This was used to call a founding convention among homeless people to develop a union.

We could not let women with children get arrested. Once they were arrested, the children were taken and sent to foster homes. We had to find single women. The housing authority would give homes to women with children, but not to single females and males. When we took over houses, we would put AFDC recipients in them. When we took over public housing units, we would put single males and females in them. Every step of the way we had to have a broad discussion on the questions of gender and children. There also were all kinds of health care discussions around women's issues. I'm sorry [my wife] Marian isn't here to discuss this further. I can say, however, that women play a real critical role. If it don't be for the women that's fighting in this movement, we wouldn't have a survival movement.

Leona Smith out of Philadelphia is the president of the National Homeless Union. My wife Marian is the president of the National Welfare Rights Union, and Gloria Richardson is head of the National Hunger Coalition. The three basic organizations leading the fight are

headed by women. And their ranks are full of women. A lot of men are in supportive roles, but actually the women are carrying the fight.

Question: I'm from Youngstown. It's a smaller version of Detroit, with vacant lots and an official unemployment rate of 15 percent. We're trying to make a connection between the failure of the labor movement to address job cuts and the situation we're in. What has your relationship been with the labor movement, particularly in labor-management cooperation, which we argue simply is a way to cut jobs?

Answer: I've been in auto for 30 years. I've been the past president of the coke oven - blast furnace unit of UAW Local 600. We have a pitiful relationship with the survival movement. We struggle wherever we can. There's real hatred and misunderstanding of what welfare rolls are. There's a real difficulty in trying to break down the prejudices.

Welfare and general assistance were developed for the working class in this country. In Michigan, general assistance was created right before the Flint sit-downs. Model changeover in the auto industry used to last for six months. For six months of the year you would not work. General assistance was created so those people could survive during the changeover period. It's been a battle to get working people to understand that welfare belongs to you. It was created in your name. How can you turn around and hate it? Now, we got a changeover that takes 15 minutes. You got a 1991 model here, and in two skips you got a 1992 model there. It's electronically done. The old logic of assistance is obviously gone, and it's probably the material basis of why they could cut it like they did. Now they don't ever need these workers, so they don't ever need to feed them.

But I have a pretty progressive regional director, Bob King, and we have a homeless and hunger task force out of my region. We have weekly meetings with all 41 locals in my region. We do supportive work, but don't try to provide leadership. At the same time, that's not the going trend inside the shop. Clearly, everybody is trying to work as much overtime as they can at the expense of other people being hired. The new auto contracts set up two tiers, so that now

new hires work at 60 percent of the wage for three years. It's a new slap at the so-called "unknown." In the trade union movement they ask, Why are you gonna fight for the unknown? I say, "Well, they ain't unknown; that's my next door neighbor that needs a job." It's a real struggle for us.

Question: What, if any, role are students and universities like Wayne State playing in relation to the struggle, either contributing or undermining?

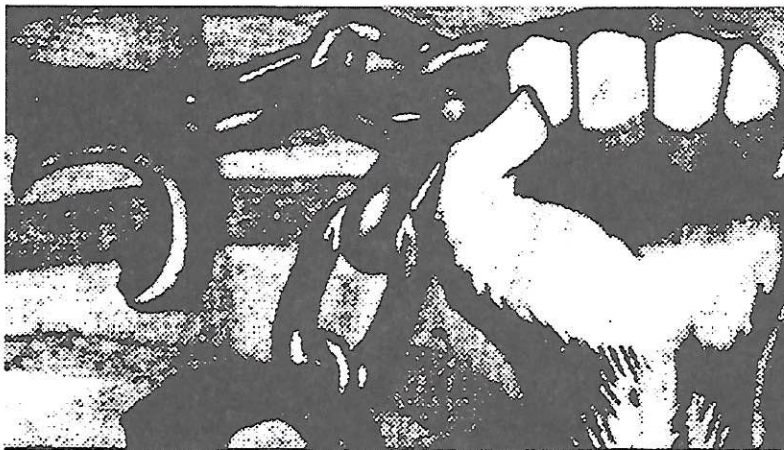
Answer: We haven't had a lot of help from Wayne State. Wayne State sits right on the edge of the Cass Corridor. Homeless people have to be very careful not to run into the Wayne State security patrol. There's a hostility between homeless people and university security. They're always running those people off campus who might be trying to pick up pop cans that have a 10-cent deposit in Michigan. Occasionally, we use the university facilities for meetings and conferences, but that's about all. We haven't had much student input, either.

Early in the '70s, we seized the Wayne State student newspaper, *The South End*. We won the editorship. We passed out that newspaper at the plant gates every day for a year. We left a couple hundred on the campus. We just stole that resource for what we considered to be the proper place for it. We didn't need no newspaper floating around the campus talking nonsense. If we could lead another section with this paper, let's take it and use it. But no, we've had little support from the universities.

Question: Are there any Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in Detroit, and what kind of roles do they play?

Answer: We've got CDCs. We've got a big CDC in the Cass Corridor. Homeless people hate the CDC. They'd like to overthrow it. The CDC says, There are too many shelters down here; we need to make our neighborhood a neighborhood; we don't want all these homeless people. We have a constant battle with the CDC. The CDC is based out of Cass United Methodist Church. A lot of us joined the church so we could get on the board and vote out the old leadership, so we could keep them from being in our way. The relationship between the CDC and the homeless struggle is antagonistic.

This CDC hustles all the state money. The state knows all these homeless people are down here. The CDC gets money on the basis of all these homeless being down there. They want to take the money and do some nonsensical stuff about rebuilding apartments and houses that will rent for \$400 to \$500 per month. Homeless people don't have that money. They do things in *your* name and use it for something else. □



Black Women's Role in the Struggle for Black Liberation



by Linda Thompson

Women's studies emerged from the grass roots of the women's movement some 20 years ago. Its goal was to write women back into his-story and to extend the perception of the class origins of ideas to gender. This was and is a huge undertaking, since women's story has been excluded from the history of Western civilization, which spans centuries. Even before the rise of the contemporary women's movement, Marx and Engels, based on Lewis Morgan's study of the Iroquois, rewrote the history of ancient society, showing that prior to the period of patriarchy women held a very high and powerful position in early matrilineal societies. Evelyn Reed, Eleanor Leacock, and other Marxist-feminist scholars, further explained that it was women who first developed the skills and technology which put humanity on the path to civilization.

Women's studies have been critical of the mass of the standard body of knowledge that has been written by males, which has passed off the white male view of reality or the Black male view of reality as reality. Women's studies have produced and provided corrective information, which is inclusive of the roles of women in our perception of the past and current events. However, this has resulted in not just more information but has necessitated revised frameworks for studying society. Women's and certainly Black views are more inclusive, as they have no reason to mystify reality. Thus not only a wealth of knowledge of society has been added to our understanding of the past, but an expanded progressive and Marxist theory as well.

It is possible to expand our understanding of the dynamic of the struggle for Black liberation by understanding the role that women have played in it. There are many Black feminist historians and social scientists who are producing invaluable material on this subject, and we are fortunate to be living in a time when Black women are speaking for themselves. The material has been taken mainly from three sources that I highly recommend. They are *Ain't I a Woman?* by Bell Hooks, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*, by Paula Giddings, and *Black Macho and the Myth of Superwoman*, by Michelle Wallace. Unfortunately, much of women's studies material to date is still ghettoized and has not been incorporated into many writings in the movement or mainstream histories written by males.

African Heritage

In the history of Western civilization, patriarchal historians have presented the stereotype of the Black woman who has always been poor or oppressed. We are never taught the true history of the African woman who led ancient societies and built the foundations of civilization. I would refer comrades to Ivan Von Sertima's *Black Women in Antiquity*, in which he documents the role of Egyptian and Ethiopian queens in matrilineal societies before the rise of the patriarchy.

Black studies, which mushroomed in conjunction with the rise of the Black struggle in the 1960s, began to give us a picture of

the African woman who never was subjugated under patriarchy the way women were in the West until the advent of colonialism and imperialist oppression. In many African societies prior to the colonial conquest, women played a leading role in society because of the economic independence that their role in agriculture provided. Also tribal culture had survived far later on the African continent, and it has been demonstrated that women fare better in tribal or clan relations, which preserve many earlier egalitarian customs of communal relations. This could be seen in many Third World cultures, such as the Native American tribal societies that whites encountered on the North and South American continents. In these societies property passed through the female line.

Black women played a leading role in the struggle against colonial conquest in Africa. Queen Nzingha of Angola led her people in the struggle against the Portuguese in the 17th century, and Yaa Asantewa of the Ashanti in Ghana led the fight against the British in the 19th century when the men had faltered. Their examples provided inspiration for later anti-imperialist struggles in the 1950s and '60s. Although the impact of colonialism began to reverse the more egalitarian gender relations in Africa, it was still necessary to break the spirit and independence of the African woman in order to make her fit for the humiliations of slavery in the New World.

Black Women Under Slavery

This country was founded on the institutionalized racism and sexism of the white male property owners. It was necessary to prepare the Africans for the role they were to play in the Southern labor force, and this process was begun during the crossing of the slave ships. The sexism of the slavers held particular horrors for the female, who was especially humiliated by sexual harassment and rape. Once sold into slavery, her position on the plantation was one of total vulnerability to her owners and overseers, as she was protected by neither law nor public opinion.

Black females suffered the distinction of performing both male and female labor, according to Bell Hooks in *Ain't I a Woman?* African women were accustomed to agricultural labor, but in their homeland they were not robbed of the fruits of their labor, nor where they prevented from rising to positions of leadership and power as a result of it. Patriarchy favored the male slave and afforded him a position of dominance over the Black female. He was never made to do "women's work," and patriarchal values were taught in order to reverse the heritage of the Africans' own culture.

When the demand for labor power increased, with the development of the cotton gin, Black women were forced to become breeders of slaves, which was psychologically destructive and physically abusive. Rape was then, as it is now, an institutionalized method of terrorism against an oppressed group. Black women were also particularly vulnerable to the hostility of the white women, who often blamed Black women for the sexual abuses of



Sojourner Truth

the white male. White women could be equally as physically and psychologically abusive as the white male and often were.

Black women under slavery played leading roles in the resistance to oppression. Many armed themselves and participated in the leadership of slave rebellions. Nancy Prosser and her husband Gabriel led over 1,000 slaves in a march on Richmond, Virginia. Many Black women who participated in armed rebellions were burned at the stake.

They also played leading roles in the Abolitionist movement wherever and whenever possible, given the fact that they had to confront the prejudices of both Black males and white feminists in order to do so.

Sojourner Truth's famous speech ("Ain't I a Woman?") was delivered to a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio, where the white women were initially afraid to have her speak. Racial, sexual, and class hierarchies that existed prevented alliances between middle-class white women and working-class women, and with all women of color as well. The racism of the white women in the Abolitionist movement and later in the feminist movement is well documented in Bell Hooks's *Ain't I a Woman?* and elsewhere.

In the debate over support to the 15th Amendment, Black women were divided between those who supported its passage and those who did not. Many Black women did not trust the white feminists' sudden concern for the plight of disenfranchised Black women when they noted their own exclusion from leadership positions in the suffrage movement. They were further justifiably alarmed when Elizabeth Cady Stanton took the position that giving Black men the vote was virtually a license to rape.

"Freedom"

After the Civil War ended in defeat for the South and the freeing of the slaves, patriarchy again used a strategy of divide and conquer by seeking to sow divisions between Black men and women. The 15th Amendment gave the vote to Black males, justifying the continued subjugation of both the white and the Black woman. The myth of the sexually loose and immoral Black woman was perpetrated to devalue Black women in the eyes of whites and Black men and also to make the continued sexual exploitation of Black women possible. Bell Hooks writes that sexual assault on Black women was so prevalent in both the North and South after slavery that Black women attempted to mount a public campaign for their own protection, which largely fell on deaf ears. This abuse was a deliberate campaign to undermine the rising self-confidence and self-respect of freed Black women.

During the Reconstruction years, Black people rapidly moved into many areas of endeavor, destroying the myth of inferiority. Racist whites countered these gains with a racial system of apartheid — Jim Crow — to turn back the gains made during Recon-

struction and to "keep Blacks in their place." Among working-class Blacks it was difficult for males to subordinate the Black female because of the inability of the Black male to rule his family through economic domination.

But among the middle class, more patriarchal family values were established. However, this never prevented middle-class Black women from playing socially active roles. According to Paula Giddings in *When and Where I Enter*, "following the civil war, men attempted to vindicate their manhood largely through asserting their authority over women,"...a process that we would see again in the Black struggle in the 1960s. Such institutions as the church in the Black community sought to insure the male's position of dominance in the family.

After the end of reconstruction, both Black men and women were engaged in the fight to win the right to vote for women, and Black women participated in all the efforts of women to gain access to jobs, careers, and education. Both white and Black women played powerful roles in the reform movements around the turn of the century; however, white women excluded Black women from their women's club movement, and Black women were forced to form their own clubs. During the years between 1870 and World War I, white women activists focused on getting the right to work in various occupations. However, their efforts did not include fighting for Black women, who were confined to jobs as agricultural workers and domestics.

Black female workers who were called into industry during World War I (because of the demand for cheap labor) worked in commercial laundries, food industries, and less skilled branches of the needle trades. Black women were forced to take jobs that were considered too hard for white women and constituted a cheap source of labor for the capitalists, as they were paid a lower wage for all their work. Often they were confronted with racist attitudes from white female coworkers who saw them as competition for jobs. After the war was over, it was Black women who led the anti-lynching campaigns in the Black community. Women like Ida B. Wells and Mary Talbert built mass national and international campaigns to stop this outrage.

In sharp contrast to the sexism in the Nation of Islam, the nationalist Universal Negro Improvement Association, led by Marcus Garvey, guaranteed women's rights in its constitution, and women were an integral part of the organization from its inception. It appears that the nationalism of the organization fueled a passionate feminism in its female members, and Paula Giddings documents that "there were Black Cross Nurses, 'Lady Presidents' who headed women's auxiliaries and influential female national officers." Women also wielded much authority as international officers. Marcus Garvey's second wife Amy Jacques Garvey wielded power in the organization second only to Garvey himself. She edited the *Women's Page* in the UNIA newspaper, and her columns praised socialist movements throughout the world, especially as they impacted on the advancement of women. In 1925 when the UNIA's militancy began to wane, she spoke for the organization's Black women, warning:

We are tired of hearing Negro men say, "there is a better day coming," while they do nothing to usher in the day. We are becoming so impatient that we are getting in the front ranks and serve notice that we will brush aside the halting, cowardly Negro leaders...and press on until victory is ours. [Giddings, pp. 193-195.]

The 1930s and 1940s

In the 1930s and 1940s, Black women joined the growing militancy in the ranks of labor and led and participated in many labor actions in the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the tobacco industry. But their progress was checked in the broader labor movement, which at the time still excluded white women and Blacks. They had to deal with both racist and sexist attitudes within the American Federation of Labor. From 1940 to 1945, because of World War II, the number of women in the work force increased from less than 14 million to 20 million, and by 1945 they constituted 38 percent of the work force. But the great employment wave in the war industries by and large excluded Black workers, and Black women in particular.

It was a Black woman who suggested the idea for a March on Washington, which A. Philip Randolph took up to redress discrimination in the defense industries. This resulted in an Executive Order banning discrimination in the hiring of workers, and Blacks began to trickle into these industries. As late as 1950, 42 percent of Black women were domestics, representing an overall drop of 18 points since 1940. Where Black women were allowed into industry, their work as domestics was simply shifted from private homes to commercial enterprises without any change in the type or grade of work.

Black women were not immune to the barrage of capitalist propaganda that constituted the "feminine mystique" of the 1950s, and like many of their white sisters they also bought into the Madison Avenue hype of the happy homemaker. But while their white sisters were dropping out of school, more Black women than ever were attending college. Increased college attendance led to an increase of Black women in the professions and in the job market in general. In the early 1940s and 1950s Black women gained respect through outstanding achievement in the arts and literature. In reaction, E. Franklin Frazier, in his *The Negro Family and the Black Bourgeoisie*, set the tone for a generalized backlash within the Black community against the gains that Black women had made. Black women were scolded for being too domineering and ambitious by him and other Black male leaders.

This backlash and the conservatism of the time placed unbearable contradictions on the Black woman, who was castigated for being unfeminine but was denied the material means to enjoy the American dream. By the end of the 1950s, one-quarter of all Black families were headed by women; one out of every three Black women was divorced or separated, and between 1947 and 1967 out of wedlock births rose over 100 percent. The median income of Blacks was 51 percent that of whites, and Blacks had been losing ground relative to whites since 1945.

A high proportion of Black women were attending college and working in the professions, and 57 percent of Black women worked — compared to 37 percent of white women. However, the median income of Black women was 57 percent that of white females. It is this set of material conditions, added to the rise of the colonial revolution internationally, which led to the explosions of the late 1950s and early '60s. It was the unbearable contradictions of the Black female's existence that propelled her to the front ranks of the civil rights struggles.

The Unfinished Revolution

"The movement of the fifties and sixties was carried largely by women," wrote Ella Baker. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X are household words to most Americans, but most Americans, including many Blacks, don't know the names of Ella Baker and

the other Black women who actually masterminded and built the civil rights and Black struggles. As early as the 1940s and 1950s Black women were taking the initiative through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and became key organizers within it. Daisy Bates became president of the NAACP branch in Little Rock, Arkansas, and led the battle there to integrate the schools. Rosa Parks was one of the first women to join the Montgomery, Alabama, NAACP, and Ella Baker became head of the New York City branch. It was through women's influence, organizational skills, and standing in the community that the ranks of the civil rights groups began to swell.

E.D. Nixon of the NAACP in Montgomery wanted to test the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* through the school system, but the Black women of Montgomery, having had a special relationship with the public transportation system, had a different agenda. Many had been involved in humiliating experiences riding the buses to work, and the Women's Political Council, led by Joanne Robinson, decided that a bus boycott would be an effective tactic. Even before Rosa Parks, who was the NAACP secretary and ran the office for E.D. Nixon, refused to give up her seat on the bus, the women had prepared for a struggle by printing flyers for distribution in the community and had set a date and a time for a mass meeting.

After Rosa Parks was arrested, the Black ministers who were approached for help — including Martin Luther King, Jr. — wavered and hung back from taking decisive action. E.D. Nixon and Black women in the community had to force the ministers into the struggle. It was the firm resolve of the Black women domestics who refused to ride the bus every day to their jobs that inspired the community, held the strike, and won this decisive battle in 1956.

After this victory the momentum faltered, and it was up to Ella Baker to provide the leadership for the next phase of the struggle. She, Bayard Rustin, and Stanley Levinson were leaders of In



Ida B. Wells, leader of the struggle against lynching.

Friendship, a New York-based group which had supported the boycott. *Since Martin Luther King had no perspective at the time to continue the struggle, it was Baker's idea to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).* King was the nominal head of the group, but it was Baker who was chosen to run the office and develop the organization. It was also this woman who was to provide the leadership for the next phase of the struggle — that led by the student wing.

The student movement began in the South as a grass roots groundswell beginning with the sit-ins. It was Ella Baker who grasped the significance and potential of this movement and who was responsible for encouraging the SCLC to fund a student conference to pull it together. All the adult civil rights organizations wanted to control the new organization, but Baker insisted that it be independent to counter what she understood as a tendency to glorify and rely on "leaders." She encouraged the students' radicalism and enthusiasm, which she said "was refreshing indeed to those of the older group who bear the scars of battle, the frustrations and the disillusionment that come when the prophetic leader turns out to have feet of clay." Thus, Paula Giddings wrote, "Ella Baker had become the midwife to the two organizations that would have the most far-reaching impact on the civil rights movement: SCLC and SNCC [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee]."

Women played similar roles in other struggles. Diane Nash and other students were instrumental in the success of the innovative Freedom Rides, and it was the poor rural women of the South like Fannie Lou Hamer who were the real heroines of the struggle. They faced beatings, jail, and economic reprisals for helping the young students of SNCC spearhead voter registration drives. It was their standing and respect in the Black community that inspired Blacks in the rural areas and gave them the courage to act.

Robert Williams of Monroe, North Carolina, was not the only leader to take up arms in self-defense against racist night riders who terrorized the Black community. Gloria Richardson of Cambridge, Maryland, was head of the NAACP and was the first woman to be recognized as the unquestioned leader of a major movement and one of the first to question nonviolence as a tactic. Cambridge was one of the first fights to center around the economic issues of jobs and housing as well as civil rights. When the white community responded with vigilante terror, Richardson organized the community for armed self-defense. The National Guard was called in, and she led a prolonged struggle until concessions were finally granted to the Black community in this town on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

After the March on Washington in 1963 and the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), in spite of profound improvements in the legal rights and lives of Black people, institutionalized racism and sexism remained intact. This set the context for a more militant struggle based on economic demands and the demand for Black Power. But many Black women who had played leading roles in winning the civil rights victories began to be shoved aside by Black males and white females who were in a better position in the power hierarchy to jockey for the benefits stemming from the race and sex provisions of the Civil Rights Act. In addition, female leaders such as Ella Baker, Angela Davis, Kathleen Cleaver, Gloria Richardson, and many rank-and-file leaders all complained of an increase in blatant male chauvinism in SCLC, SNCC, the Black Panther Party, and other Black Power organizations, which limited their roles and crippled their ability to lead and take initiatives.

In 1965 the release of the Moynihan report gave Black males who may have been feeling resentful of women leaders the justification they needed to attack their public roles and to try to put them back into an auxiliary position of supporting male leadership. The report, ignoring institutionalized racism, placed the responsibility for the problems in the Black community on "the reversed roles of husband and wife" and advocated the restoration of the Black male as head of the family. This report was a conscious move on the part of the ruling class to create antagonisms between Black men and women and to behead and derail the most militant section of the Black masses, its female leadership.

Martin Luther King took the idea for a poor people's campaign from the female leadership of the National Welfare Rights Organization without acknowledging their efforts or their initiative (Giddings, p. 312). Elijah Muhammad taught the Muslim ethic that the man is the unquestioned leader in the organization and the home. To my knowledge, Malcolm X never questioned the gender relations in the Muslim movement. In his autobiography he expresses his gratitude to Betty, his wife, who supported him and raised his numerous children while he led the struggle.

Malcolm was cut down before the real rise of the women's movement, and he may have responded to it in a healthy manner and embraced it. But given the fact that to this day many Black women have not yet been able to completely identify with feminism, it is unclear just how he would have evolved. Black women were assaulted from every quarter, both materially and psychologically. Michelle Wallace and Paula Giddings document how Black male writers and intellectuals such as C. Eric Lincoln, Imamu Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), Calvin Hernton, Eldridge Cleaver, and James Baldwin all took either contradictory positions on women or outright misogynist ones, declaring the need for the "castrating Black female" to assume a submissive role in relation to the Black man. Hernton, Cleaver, and Baraka all advocated the rape of white women as a justifiable political act (Giddings, p. 310, Wallace, pp. 62-69).

Black Women and the Feminist Movement

So, while Black women were experiencing the brunt of a vicious backlash against them from many quarters, white women were forging ahead and broadening the white women's movement. When a predominantly white, moderate, reformist, and middle-class leadership emerged in the National Organization for Women (NOW) after 1966, they set an agenda for the women's movement without consulting or collaborating with either poor white or Black women.

Many of the initial victories that NOW won benefited all working and Black women, like the victory against AT&T. Certainly the fight for abortion and birth control impacts on poor women far more than it does on well-off white women. It is a fact that more Black women support the goals of the women's movement than white women, and so the fact must be explained why many Black women have not yet embraced the feminist movement or joined NOW.

But Paula Giddings and Bell Hooks, who are themselves committed feminists, have analyzed that a combination of forces created this situation, including the legacy of a history of racism in the suffrage movements, which created distrust between Black and white women, racism and insensitivity to a Black women's agenda in the NOW leadership, the chauvinist betrayals of Black

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Negro Workers and the CIO

by C. Thomas

The following article was originally published in the Fourth International, May-June 1950. In this article, the use of the terms "Negro" and "colored" (rather than Black or African American) of course reflects the general practice, including in the African American community itself, of the time before the rise of Black consciousness in the late '50s and early '60s.

In the years before the formation of the CIO, when craft unions dominated the American labor movement, not only the employers but the bulk of organized labor itself was militantly Jim Crow. White workers sought deliberately to keep Negroes out of jobs. The trade unions constituted a hostile barrier to the employment of Negro labor in the organized sectors of industry and trade. Where obvious self-interest dictated the necessity of organizing Negro workers, they were usually shunted off into second-class Jim Crow locals.

Under the circumstances, the Marxist contentions that the future of Negroes lay with the labor movement and that the only road for workers, white and black, was solidarity in the struggle against their mutual capitalist enemy, appeared like lunacy to the majority of Negroes.

The CIO brought a great change. Today about a million and a quarter Negroes are established in the labor movement with approximately half a million in the CIO. Compared to the pre-CIO days the present situation represents a great advance. But it is necessary to recognize that only the first steps forward have been taken. Negroes still suffer heavy discrimination in industry and in the unions.

A wartime study, published in 1944, disclosed that some 30 national unions, AFL, Railroad Brotherhood, and independent, either excluded Negroes through constitutional provision and ritual or accorded them only segregated auxiliary status. Exclusionist provisions by unions affiliated to the AFL violate its national constitution. Yet numerous attempts to invoke disciplinary action have been sidetracked by the AFL hierarchy with the hypocritical assurance that the problem can best be solved by "education." This beneficent approach to its Jim Crow affiliates is in sharp contrast to the AFL leaders' ruthless expulsion in 1936 of unions comprising the Committee for Industrial Organization for "violating" the AFL constitution because they sought to unite all workers in a given factory or industry in a single organization.

The Indispensable Cornerstone

The unions which launched the CIO had to deal, from the beginning, in a forthright manner with the Negro question. Fortunately, the most powerful of the group, the United Mine Workers, International Ladies' Garment Workers, and

Amalgamated Clothing Workers, had gained insight and experience through intensive organizing campaigns in the early '30s. Thousands of Negro workers had been recruited without discrimination and comprised a substantial section of their membership. The inclusion of all workers, regardless of race, color, or creed, was immediately recognized as the indispensable cornerstone of any lasting union structure in the basic mass production industries. This was especially true in steel and auto, two of the main citadels of corporate resistance to unionization.

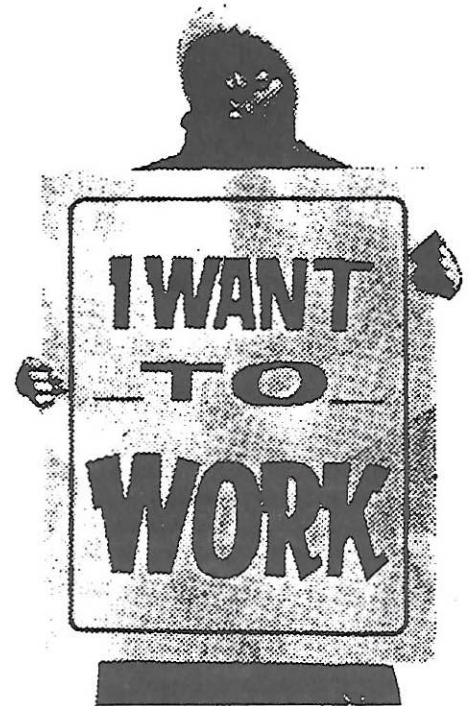
The United Steel Workers and United Automobile Workers are the largest and most influential in the CIO. Each contains a large proportion of Negro members. Their attitude on the race question exerts great influence on the policy of the CIO and its affiliates. While no comprehensive survey of the entire CIO can be given within a brief article, it is possible to give a fairly accurate indication of the situation of Negroes in the CIO and to draw certain conclusions from the experience of its major unions.

How Negroes Got into Unions

How the Negroes got into industry and the unions is essential to an understanding of where they are today. Prior to World War I the rapidly expanding steel centers of the North relied on immigrants from Europe for an ever-increasing supply of cheap labor. Negro labor was concentrated in the South, particularly in the Birmingham region. The war shut off immigration, and subsequent restrictive legislation dried up that source of supply.

The steel industry then turned to the South for its cheap labor supply, recruiting thousands of Negroes for its northern mills. In the two decades from World War I to the launching of the CIO, Negro labor in basic steel more than tripled. In the '30s, between forty and fifty thousand Negroes were employed in basic steel production. This was a factor to be reckoned with in the calculations of the CIO leaders. It would have been impossible to organize basic steel without tacit support from the Negro labor force.

Very few Negroes were employed in the automobile industry prior to World War I. The 1910 census figures show only 569 Negroes in a total labor force of 105,759 automobile workers. An acute labor shortage during the war attracted thousands of Southerners, white and



colored, to the automobile industry center in Detroit. This mushrooming industry continued to absorb Negro labor, so that by the middle '30s between twenty and thirty thousand Negroes were employed in auto plants.

An additional factor that made the race question a key issue in the organization of auto was the Ford Motor Company's potent bid for the sympathy and support of Detroit's Negro community. Ford made a practice of hiring Negroes to the extent of 10 percent of his labor force. These jobs were distributed primarily through Negro ministers, who in turn were expected to bolster the ferocious anti-union policy of the Ford Motor Company and deliver the Negro vote to Henry Bennett, head of the notorious Ford Service Department. Although Ford rarely departed from the accepted racial occupation pattern of confining Negroes to the dirtiest, heaviest, and most dangerous jobs, the fact that he hired so many colored workers established his reputation as a "friend" of the Negro. He tried to use this reputation to the very last to prevent organization but failed. By the time the UAW leadership tackled Ford, it had already demonstrated in action its adherence to the CIO policy of non-discrimination and thereby gained the active support of prominent Negro spokesmen, who played an important role in critical stages of the 1941 strike which brought Ford into the UAW fold.

Basic Racial Patterns Unchanged

Although the CIO has organized Negro workers without discrimination, it has done little to alter the racial occupation patterns imposed by capitalist operation. Unionization found the Negroes concentrated in the heaviest, dirtiest, most dangerous, and poorest paying jobs. By and large, that is where they remain. This is true of steel auto, mining, textile, tobacco, etc. The

Negro is unskilled, semi-skilled, common laborer, while the white is mechanic, machine-tender, skilled maintenance, and white-collar worker.

The persistence of this inequality must in large measure be laid at the door of the CIO leadership. Negroes were able to penetrate industry in large numbers only during periods of acute labor shortage. It is in such periods that the greatest advances can be made. The CIO organized the Negro worker without discrimination but neglected to take advantage of the wartime opportunity for eradicating the discriminatory employment practices of the bosses. The wartime policy of national unity, equality of sacrifice, and the no-strike pledge, left employers free to exercise discriminatory practices in the field of hiring, transfer, and promotion.

Most union agreements in the mass production industries contain departmental or occupational seniority clauses. Plant seniority clauses are very rare. While department seniority protects the Negro worker in case of layoffs within the department, it makes no provision for upgrading or promotion to more desirable or higher paying jobs in other departments. This tends to freeze Negro workers in the least desirable departments.

The wartime labor shortage provided CIO leaders with their greatest opportunity to lead Negro workers out of this blind alley. Despite the acute labor shortage, many employers refused to hire Negroes; others persisted in maintaining the traditional racial occupation pattern of industry, while a few made token moves infringing on this pattern by upgrading Negroes to hitherto all-white departments. To the credit of many national and local CIO leaders it must be said that in the latter case they moved with vigor to quell any Jim Crow strikes or demonstrations designed to exclude Negro workers. Usually a threat of drastic disciplinary action was enough to send the "rebels" back to work.

Negroes Took the Initiative

Where the employer took the initiative or could be induced to hire or upgrade Negroes into all-white departments the CIO threw the support of the union, if necessary, to make it stick. But such cases were rare. In the overall struggle for equal opportunity of employment, the Negroes themselves took the initiative through the March-On-Washington Movement. This promising movement proposed to substitute mass action for ineffective pleas, petitions, and pious wishes. With active support from the CIO it would have been invincible. But the CIO leaders remained aloof. They were unalterably committed to a policy of collaboration with the Roosevelt administration and would do nothing to embarrass their "friend" in Washington.

However, the mere threat of a nationwide march on Washington sufficed to compel Roosevelt to issue the executive order establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Inadequate as it was, the FEPC represented the greatest concession wrested from the government in the struggle for Negro rights during

the war. It demonstrated the superiority of militant methods of struggle over the moral preachments, appeals to patriotism, legislative lobbying, and "education" practiced by the liberals and labor leaders.

Bolstered by the FEPC, the Negroes made some notable advances during the war. The number of Negroes employed in industry increased. Jobs hitherto reserved to whites were opened up to Negro workers. These gains were most marked in the section of industry organized by the CIO. But the number of Negroes who succeeded in breaching the Jim Crow occupation pattern was too small to make any appreciable alteration in the basic pattern. Today the racial occupation pattern remains essentially what it was before the war.

Meanwhile, the presence of Negro members in significant numbers, their active participation in union affairs, plus the exigencies of internal union politics, has made them an important factor in the key unions of the CIO. In most steel locals, for example, Negroes function as officials, executive board members, stewards, committeemen, etc. The same is true in auto and other CIO unions with substantial Negro membership. It is above the local level, however, where the top brass is further removed from direct contact with the ranks, that Jim Crow rears its ugly head.

The "Jim Crow in Reverse" Argument

While a Negro is usually appointed in each district of the steel union, it is the practice to assign him a special department where his duties as a representative of the national organization do not bring him into direct contact with the employer. In the UAW repeated demands have been made for Negro representation on the International Executive Board. The Board is composed of regional directors and executive officers who represent the national organization in negotiations and disputes with the corporations.

The demand for Negro representation has been met by Reuther and his close associates with the charge that this constitutes "Jim Crow in reverse." The specious argument is made that advancement to top union positions must be made solely on the basis of "ability." This is poppycock. There are Negro leaders in the UAW as able as any now occupying top positions in the union. Underlying the "Jim Crow in reverse" argument is an unwarranted concession to white chauvinism.

This concession to prejudice stems from the pattern adopted by the United Mine Workers Union in organizing the coal miners of the deep South. In setting up mixed locals in which Negroes constituted a majority, it was arranged for the president to be white and the vice-president a Negro. The president was the official who represented the men in meetings with the employers. By this system, corporation executives were spared an affront to their Jim Crow prejudices.

When the UMW organized steel the same system was adopted for the mixed locals of the South and extended into the North — with

harmful consequences. Prejudiced white workers are quick to sense the attitude of the leaders. Supervisory personnel are emboldened to practice discrimination in a hundred insidious and devious ways. Rising employment sharpens the competition for jobs. Exacerbated friction can lead to dangerous explosions. The complacent attitude of International Presidents like Reuther and Murray who feel they have discharged their obligation by giving lip service to the struggle for Negro equality and by using a few Negroes as window-dressing to display their "good will" acts as a spur to chauvinism. At this juncture, Negro representation on leading bodies of CIO unions — and not for showcase purposes — is the minimum required to demonstrate the seriousness of union leaders in the struggle against industrial Jim Crow.

In the Taft-Hartley Era

Labor is now living in the Taft-Hartley era. The business unionism of Gompers and Green and the mossbacks of the AFL Executive Council is a relic of the past. Every major struggle involves the unions in conflict with the government, which functions as the executive agency of the capitalist ruling class. Politics has become a life-and-death matter for the unions. And the Negro question is, above all, a political question. If the union leaders were unaware of it before, the so-called Republican-Dixiecrat coalition has forcibly reminded them of the fact.

The CIO campaign to organize the South ran smack into the Negro question in all its political and social ramifications. Lacking a correct policy on this crucial problem, the drive has bogged down. The Southern drive was undertaken with a view toward breaking the political monopoly of the Dixiecrats by exerting the pressure of organized labor on the Democratic Party. The Southern Negro is extremely sympathetic toward the CIO. But he is disenfranchised, along with a large proportion of white workers, and in addition is subjected to an atmosphere of intimidation and terror. A policy based on an appeal to support "good" Democrats against "bad" Democrats cannot arouse much hope or enthusiasm. For in the South, even the "best" of the liberal Democrats, as witness the campaign pronouncements of Claude Pepper, are Jim Crow practitioners.

The Republican-Dixiecrat coalition is a political fusion of northern capital and southern demagoguery. Northern capital bolsters Southern reaction. Southern reaction upholds Taft-Hartleyism. As long as labor adheres to the fraudulent two-party system, monopoly capital can't lose. To organize the South while supporting the Democratic Party is a more formidable task than Hercules faced in cleaning the Augean stables. And [CIO head] Philip Murray is no Hercules!

Education, Organization, Leadership

The CIO top brass is fond of emphasizing that Jim Crow will be conquered through education, organization, and leadership. That is true in the abstract. But the heart of the question is, what

sort of education, what type of organization, and what kind of leadership?

In steel, the Murray machine initiated an educational campaign through the establishment of a Civil Rights Committee. The committee calls various conferences to promote... Truman's civil rights program. The emphasis at these conferences is on legislative lobbying, letter writing, and CIO-PAC types of political action. The sum total of Murray's educational program consists in covering up and white-washing the Truman administration's failure to deliver on its election promises and drumming up support for the election of Trumanite Democrats next fall. This sort of "education" is worse than useless.

Effective education in the struggle against Jim Crow must lay bare the real function of racial discrimination, must expose its capitalist class character and the role it plays in dividing and

weakening the working class in its struggles for emancipation from exploitation and wage slavery.

Effective organization must be based on the recognition of the class division in capitalist society, the knowledge that Democrats and Republicans alike represent the interests of the ruling capitalist class, and the necessity for an independent working-class party to carry forward the struggle of exploited labor, black and white.

Effective leadership can be provided only by those who recognize the revolutionary implications of the struggle for Negro equality and are prepared to lead such a struggle to the very end.

The entrance of Negroes into industry during the First World War coincided with the beginning of the decline of capitalism as a world system. Encompassing a brief span of 30-odd years, this period has been marked by major convulsions: wars, depression, colonial revolts, and socialist revolutions. It required a major split in the American labor movement and the

tumultuous rise of the CIO before Negroes gained admission to the unions on a near-equal basis. The same period witnessed a gigantic growth of union membership to some 16 million strong. These tremendous historical events are a harbinger of what is to come.

Taft-Hartleyism and Jim Crow are twins. Decaying capitalism, which exudes the poison of racial discrimination from every pore, is bent on using its political monopoly to destroy the labor movement. Necessity will drive the American working class into the political arena to engage the enemy in mortal combat. They will learn the truth enunciated by Marx: labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded. Working-class solidarity, fertilized in the womb of the CIO, will see its fruition in the conquest of political power and the establishment of a workers' and farmers' government. The death knell of Jim Crow will have sounded! □

A Note on Charlie Curtiss

A Founder of American Trotskyism Dies in Los Angeles

by George Saunders and Kathleen O'Nan

This note mentions some highlights in the life of Charlie Curtiss and his family. BIDOM hopes to carry a more substantial appreciation in a future issue.

Charles Curtiss (known to his friends as Charlie) died of heart failure on December 20 in Los Angeles at the age of 85. Born on July 4, 1908, Curtiss was one of the original small group of American Communists who, led by James P. Cannon, founded the Communist League of America, the U.S. component of the world Trotskyist movement, after their expulsion from the U.S. Communist Party in 1929.

In the late '30s and 1940 Curtiss was one of Leon Trotsky's guards in Mexico, and his wife, Lillian Curtiss, was one of Trotsky's secretaries. Charlie was also the official representative of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International to the Mexican section. In that capacity he also served as Trotsky's primary link with the Mexican Trotskyist movement because Curtiss was fluent in Spanish and because it would have been illegal, under the terms on which Trotsky was admitted to Mexico, for Trotsky himself to have direct contact with political movements in Mexico. At one time, when Trotsky was having personal conflicts with Diego Rivera, the Mexican artist who had provided Trotsky with a home, it was Curtiss who shuttled between the two, trying to resolve the conflict.

Shortly before Trotsky's murder by a man who called himself Jacques Mornard (alias Ra-

món Mercader), an agent of Stalin, the Curtisses, along with other friends of Trotsky, had grown uneasy with the access this man was being allowed to Trotsky. They planned to urge Trotsky to exclude him. Unfortunately the warning was not given in time. Curtiss, who was not at the house in Coyoacán when the assassination occurred, did tell Trotsky he thought Mercader was odd, unreliable, and a waste of time.

During World War II Curtiss saw front-line combat service with the U.S. Army in Europe. In 1950, during the postwar period of reaction (the cold war, Taft-Hartley, and the McCarthyite witch hunt) Curtiss resigned from the Socialist Workers Party. One of his reasons was that he came to disagree with Leninist organizational concepts. He joined the Socialist Party USA the same year and remained active in the Los Angeles local of that party until his death. His wife, Lillian, remained in the Trotskyist movement until her expulsion from the SWP in 1984, when the new leadership team around Jack Barnes, in its turn away from Trotskyism, expelled more than a hundred members who remained loyal to the program of the Fourth International. Lillian died not long after that, in November 1985. Their daughter, Carolyn Curtiss, had also been an SWP member until the expulsions of 1984

and remained a revolutionary activist until her death in January 1983.

(Lillian was put on trial, but the Barnes team announced that "because of her historical role" — almost everyone in the Los Angeles branch loved her — they were going to make her an exception and not expel her. She wrote a statement rejecting this. She counted herself one of the "honorable expellees.")

Charlie was a shop steward in the Typographical Union at the old Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*, part of the Hearst chain. During his years in the Socialist Party he held various posts on the California state level and until last year was the editor of the party's national paper, *The Socialist*. He was active in the movement against the Vietnam war, as well as against the Gulf war.

He is survived by a son, David Curtiss, and two grandchildren.

A memorial was scheduled for January 23 in Los Angeles. Messages for the memorial meeting can be sent to Kathleen O'Nan, 2125 Duane Street, Los Angeles CA 90039. Messages to the family can be sent to David Curtiss, P.O. Box 5312, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502. □

A Review of the Film and a Look at the History

Gettysburg and the Second American Revolution

by Jim Miles and Vera Wigglesworth

The following is a review, together with political/historical background, of Gettysburg, a film by Ronald F. Maxwell from Turner Pictures, starring Tom Berenger, Jeff Daniels, Sam Elliot, and Martin Sheen (4 hours and 18 minutes). It is also scheduled to be shown as a 6-hour miniseries on Turner Network Television (TNT). The film is based on the 1974 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel The Killer Angels by the late Michael Shaara.

Out of ammunition...and here come the Rebels for yet another charge. His battered regiment, already down to half its strength, would not be able to hold. Yet their assignment was to "hold to the last." The colonel in Union blue, only recently a humanities professor, now a fighter for his abolitionist convictions, had only a few moments to decide. As wave after wave of Confederates charged, his men had given as good as they got — more, for they had the advantage of the high ground. But the line of the 20th Maine regiment had been bent back as far as it could go to meet the constantly flanking attacks of the Confederates. They were the extreme left of the Union line at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, entrenched on a soon-to-be-famous hill known as Little Round Top. If the regiment was flanked, the Union line would be too. Their orders were clear: "You cannot withdraw. Under any conditions." But with empty rifles, they would cave in to the next charge, and then the whole Union line, 85,000 men, would be taken from the rear. They would lose the day, the battle, possibly the war. What was it they had talked about?... that "we've got to win this war"... Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was swift and resolved. He ordered, "Fix bayonets!" His men froze. He explained. Then, "Charge!" The whole regiment rose and poured

over the rock walls and charged down the hill, straightening out the bent-back line, swinging downward to the right "like a door." They swept the fleeing Rebels off the hill and kept going as neighboring Union regiments cheered. Chamberlain and the 20th Maine saved the day for the Union, July 2, the second day of the battle of Gettysburg.

The American Civil War of 1861–65 was a democratic and social revolution which liberated 4 million human beings from slavery. The abolition of slavery represented a confiscation of about \$3 billion worth of "property" (\$3 trillion today), the greatest uncompensated revolutionary seizure of property in history prior to the 1917 Russian revolution.

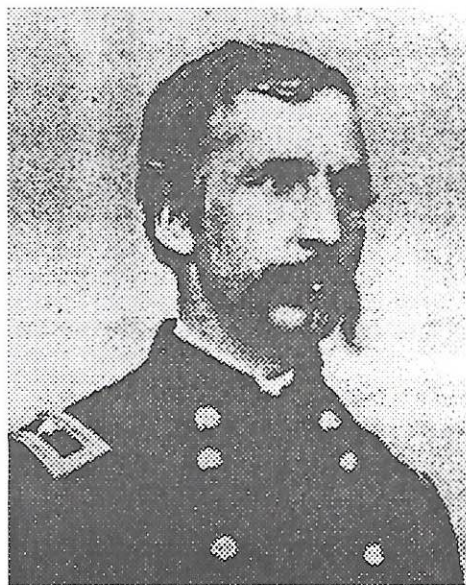
Over 620,000 soldiers died in the Civil War out of a total population of 31 million (the equivalent of six and a half million today), nearly equaling the number killed in all the rest of America's wars. In the Vietnam War, 58,000 Americans soldiers were killed over a period of ten years. The *three days* of the battle of Gettysburg resulted in combined casualties of 53,000. The American Civil War was an enormous cataclysm that constituted the greatest social revolution of the 19th century. The whole world was watching. When victory by the North forged the United States into a single nation, it sounded a death knell foretelling the doom of aristocracy worldwide and a toll of victory for the republican form of government and the democratic revolution.

Gettysburg is a powerful cinematic recreation of the titanic battle fought July 1–3, 1863, the military turning point of that revolution. Meticulously researched, the film's historical accuracy extends from belt buckle and water bottle to battle maneuvers executed with the precision and experience that only the thousands of Civil War re-enactors who volunteered to participate could bring to the arduous task. But what makes the film unforgettable is its moving, sweeping grandeur, a fitting tribute to what was accomplished at Gettysburg. The music, swelling with glory and tragedy, sweeps through battle scenes and poignantly underscores the moments of individual soul-searching and reflections on the purpose of the war. The cinematography (much on-location), the directing, casting, and the performances combine with the music to tell an overwhelming drama of heroism and high purpose.

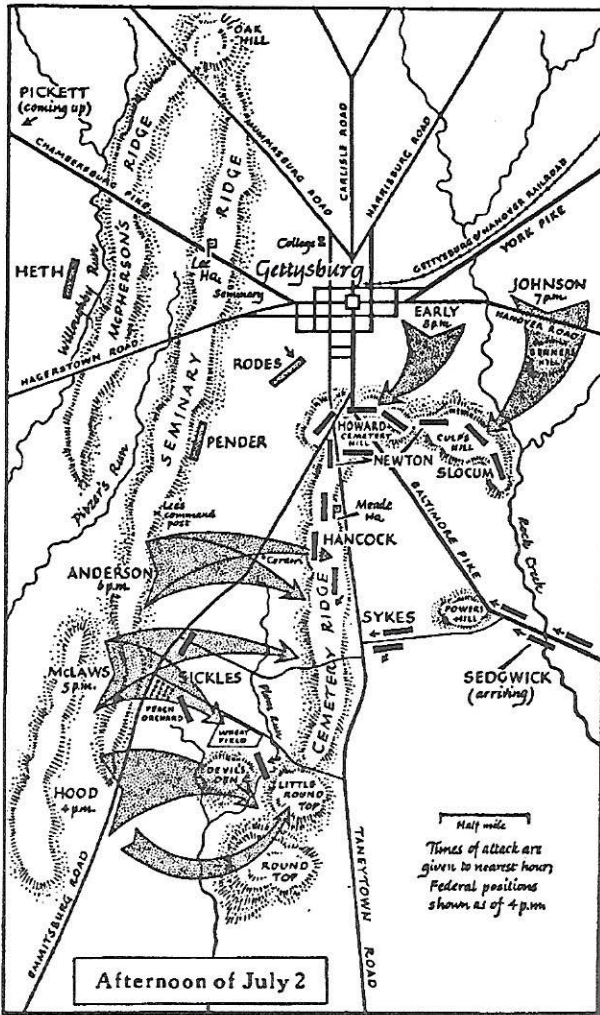
"This is a different kind of army..." says Colonel Chamberlain, beginning his motivation to 120 mutinous men who had been assigned to his regiment a few days before the battle. It was mostly a volunteer army; the regular professional army was small in those days before America's rise to imperial power. The soldiers were mainly farmers and urban workers, who had signed up for a short war, with no idea of the horrors that lay ahead. With only brief training they had to learn warfare the hard way. Chamberlain himself became a self-taught tactician. He was a professor of rhetoric whose request for a leave of absence to fight in the war was denied by Bowdoin College. He thereupon had put in for a sabbatical to Europe; when it was granted he promptly enlisted instead and was commissioned an officer! But what Chamberlain meant by "a different kind of army" was its purpose.

"We're here for something new... This hasn't happened much in the history of the world." He was struggling with the individual motives that make men fight. The volunteers of the North signed up to put down the Southern uprising and to protect free (white) labor and "free soil" by preventing the spread of slave labor and the plantation system. Ordinary Union soldiers, like the fictional character Sergeant Kilrain in the movie, had a hatred of "gentlemen" (aristocrats) and saw the war as a war for justice against that class. The American Revolution was still a close memory and some of the many immigrants to the America of that time were refugees from the defeated 1848 democratic revolutions of Europe. His men knew what they were fighting against, but Chamberlain wanted them to understand what they were fighting for.

"We're an army going out to set other men free." The movie's greatest accomplishment is providing center stage to the character of Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, carefully researched and portrayed by actor Jeff Daniels. We thus get to see how the antislavery political vanguard, abolitionists like Chamberlain, provided the inspiration and ideological cement to hold individual Union army units together. They did so by fusing the antislavery struggle with the soldiers' own democratic values — a crucial task at the point in the war when the Union Army of the Potomac was on the verge of disintegration from a long series of defeats and massive casualties.



Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, commander of the of the 20th Maine Regiment at Gettysburg



Gettysburg and the Strategy of Counterrevolution

One of the Union generals at Gettysburg noted the high morale of the Confederate troops and remarked that, in contrast,

[excerpt] among those on our side who are fighting this war upon anti-slavery grounds, there is not much earnestness nor are there many noble feelings and sentiments involved. (Gen. Francis Barlow, quoted in Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, p. 24.)

During the war most Northerners, particularly in the cities, continued to be influenced by the racist demagogic appeals of the Northern wing of the Democrats, the slavocracy's party. Most white workers, even those who loyally fought for the Union, feared that Black emancipation would mean millions of Blacks flooding North to take their jobs. By mid-1863, these fears had combined with opposition to the newly instituted draft (which allowed the rich to purchase a "substitute" or buy an exemption) to create a political powder keg behind Union lines.

It was this war-weariness and disaffection with the Emancipation Proclamation that the counterrevolutionary government of the Confederacy counted upon when Robert E. Lee, commanding the Army of Northern Virginia, invaded Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863.

If Lee could deal a final blow to the Union Army of the Potomac in the North, then several of the Democratic-dominated state governments of the North might rally to a "peaceful settlement" of the war and impose a recognition of the Confederacy upon Lincoln and the Federal government in Washington.

Using the Blue Ridge Mountains as a screen on the east, Lee's forces slipped away from under the watch of the Federal army in central Virginia and marched northward. The Federals followed on the east side of the mountains, keeping themselves between Lee's forces and Washington D.C. In the days before aerial reconnaissance, armies relied on the cavalry to scout and report the positions of the enemy. Bereft of his cavalry (commanded by J.E.B. Stuart and unaccountably missing), Lee received belated word of the Federals' movements at the end of June. His three corps were spread out in southern Pennsylvania and he hastened to concentrate them before they could be smashed one at a time. The most convenient location was a small town called Gettysburg, since several roads intersected there. It was the most convenient location for the Union army, too.

On July 1, 1863, they clashed. Union Cavalry General John Buford had discovered the Confederates near Gettysburg, realized that a

fight would take place there, and saw that the battle's outcome would be heavily dependent on who occupied the ridge and hills south and east of town. He dismounted his cavalry and deployed them west of Gettysburg to fight like infantry (an unusual, "modern" thing to do), keeping the Rebels at bay until General Reynold's Union infantry corps could arrive. This scene in the movie features great acting by Sam Elliot as John Buford. He is filled with brooding, bitter resolve to hold the high ground, hoping to be reinforced on time (as he had not been in the earlier battle of Second Bull Run). After heavy fighting the Union forces were driven south through the town, but Buford's delaying action, little recognized by history, saved the heights on which the Federals entrenched.

On the second day the Confederates attacked both flanks of the Union line, which was shaped like a fish hook all along the high ground. They were repulsed at great cost to both sides. The Union left flank took the brunt of the assault and the heroic action of Chamberlain saved the day. The 20th Maine's defense of Little Round Top is the most wonderful dramatic sequence in *Gettysburg*.

On July 3, Lee's last hope was to attack the Union center, thinking it to be the weakest point in the line. The hopeless assault by 15,000 men

under the command of Gen. George Pickett would become a famous tragedy for the Confederates known as "Pickett's Charge." The second half of the movie (after the intermission) focuses on this day, which opened with a massive artillery exchange of over 300 guns, heard as far away as Washington. The Confederates then launched their massed ranks of infantry, which were mowed down as they crossed a mile of open field. The second climax of the movie, it is a scene of panoramic drama. A few hundred Confederates, led by General Lewis Armistead (Richard Jordan), managed to make it over the stone wall that marked the Union line before being hit or taken prisoner. The charge was broken. The "high water mark of the Confederacy" had been reached; the tide of two years of Southern victory now receded.

In the film, moments of dialogue in between the military engagements provide a revealing North-South counterpoint. The empty ideals of the Confederacy are reflected in the musings of Confederate, mostly professional army, officers; Stephen Lang's flippant George Pickett is the personification of the Southern gentleman aristocrat so despised by Kevin Conway's tough-minded Union Sergeant Kilrain. On the Union side, it is the lower-ranking volunteer officers, sergeants, and privates that speak, articulating the historic, democratic mission of their army.

It is understandable why almost nothing is heard from rank-and-file Confederates in either the book or film. The real tragedy of the Confederacy was that armies of poor whites were fighting and dying for an imagined identity of interest between themselves and 300,000 slaveholders. This false consciousness provided the unifying basis of Southern nationalism in an imagined "white people's democracy." Thus, despite the fact that the vast majority of whites in the South owned no slaves, many captured Confederate soldiers insisted, as shown in the film, that they were fighting neither for nor against Blacks, but only for their own "rights." In reality these "rights" boiled down to the dim prospect of one day owning and controlling the labor power of slaves, the only avenue of economic and social advancement held out to poor whites in the old South. Slavery was thus very much at the core of the Confederacy's fight for "state rights," the right of individual states to maintain the institution of slavery.

Although Lee's army nearly won at Gettysburg, the Confederates were defeated by those Union soldiers who held onto the high ground and gave, as Lincoln said in his Gettysburg address, their "last full measure of devotion."

Northern Politics and the Significance of the Union Victory

After the battle, for tactical reasons, Union commander General Meade declined to pursue Lee, who was thus able to slip back into Virginia with his army to fight on for another two years, to the anguish of President Lincoln. When Meade telegraphed that he had driven the invaders from "our soil," Lincoln, who desperately wanted the destruction of Lee's army and an end to the

war, raged: "Will our generals never get that idea out of their heads? The whole country is our soil."

Gettysburg proved to be the military turning point of the war because the first decisive victory of Union arms under the banner of emancipation made foreign intervention by France or Britain much less likely, without which the South's dwindling resources could not be replenished. This meant that the war would become a war of attrition, weighted on the side of the North's greater agricultural and industrial resources.

Most important was the survival of the new Union "abolition" political coalition of 1863. There had been two before. The Republican "stop the spread of slavery" coalition of Northern capitalists, free-soil Western farmers, free-labor white artisans and workers, and Eastern abolitionists won the 1860 election. When the South responded with secession, this electoral coalition broke up in the scramble to make concessions to border state slaveholders and to appease the South.

The South's intransigence forced the formation of a new "war for the Union" coalition that, while including all other members of the first coalition, virtually excluded abolitionists. This new war coalition added Northern Democrats and Southern and border state Unionists (including slaveowners) and the majority of Northern white workers, led by the Democrats. It prevented the secession of the border states, buying the North valuable time to organize resources and an army.

However, the "war for the Union" coalition proved incapable, over a two-year period, of successfully prosecuting the war, precisely because it was "too soft" on slavery. A new war coalition based on winning the war for the Union through decisive antislavery measures had to be formed. The new "abolition" coalition, made possible by the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, returned the abolitionists to active coalition partnership, and for the first time recognized and organized the participation of Blacks.

The abolitionists were the political vanguard, but it was the masterful bourgeois revolutionary politician Abraham Lincoln who held the new, third, coalition together. In the course of consistently prosecuting the war, he became an abolitionist "shaped by events," as he later said. He knew that military victories were essential to ever renewing a coalition's lease on life; the first two years of defeats saw the split of Northern Democrats into "War Democrats," who wanted a limited prosecution of the war, and "Peace Democrats," who wanted to let the South go. Gettysburg was the first military victory of the new abolition coalition.

Black Emancipation had already provoked the break-up of the old war coalition, some of whose participants openly went over to the counterrevolution. The most visible and dangerous manifestation of this was the New York City draft riots, a massive reactionary insurrection occurring only a few days after the battle at Gettysburg.

When recruiting for the army began in July 1863, a mob in New York wrecked the main recruiting station. Then for three days, crowds of white workers marched through the city, destroying buildings, factories, streetcar lines, homes. The draft riots were complex — anti-black, anti-rich, anti-Republican. From an assault on draft headquarters, the rioters went on to attacks on wealthy homes, then to the murder of blacks... They set the city's colored orphan asylum on fire. They shot, burned, and hanged blacks they found in the streets. Many people were thrown into the rivers to drown.

On the fourth day, Union troops [recently] from the Battle of Gettysburg came into the city and stopped the rioting. Perhaps four hundred people were killed. No exact figures have ever been given, but the number of lives lost was greater than in any other incident of domestic violence in American history. (Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, pp. 230-231).

Some radical historians have attempted to minimize the racist and objectively pro-Southern nature of the riots. They fail to remember that every revolution divides classes. The Civil War divided Northern workers too. As Iver Bernstein notes in *The New York City Draft Riots*, the rioters were predominantly Irish immigrants, yet so were the workers in uniform who helped suppress them. The workers of New York's Irish 69th Regiment, which had also fought at Gettysburg, had a higher loyalty to the Union and thus were both a result and a contributing part of the process that created a nation and a modern working class. "I don't think race or country matters a damn," says Sergeant Kilrain in the film. "What matters is justice. 'Tis why I'm here."

By August, 20,000 Federal soldiers had "occupied" New York! If Lee's gamble invasion of the North had paid off with victory at Gettysburg, there would have been no Union troops to restore order in New York. The draft riots would have placed the North's leading financial center under the control of pro-Southern "Peace Democrats." This, in conjunction with a Confederate victory at Gettysburg, would have forced a reactionary peace settlement between Washington and Richmond.

Gettysburg and the Emancipation Proclamation

Gettysburg as the military turning point reinforced the gains of the political turning point reached six months earlier. In January 1863 Lincoln and the Republican Congress had taken a gamble of their own, one prompted by the actions of escaping slaves themselves: emancipation and the use of Black troops. This ultimately proved the key to winning the war, but in 1863 it was still a big risk.

"In reference to the Proclamation of Old Abe's," wrote Illinois infantryman Michael Gaspen to his sister from his campsite, "... I did not like it at first myself, but I have now come to the conclusion that it is the best thing that can possibly be done." (Quoted in Benjamin Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro*, p. 139.)

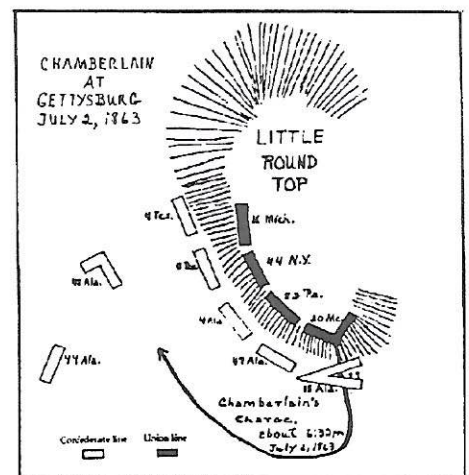
The great Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass, in his 1876 "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," summed up the importance of the timing of the Emancipation Proclamation in the context of the political realities of the North during the first two years of the Civil War:

I have said that President Lincoln was a white man, and shared the prejudices common to his countrymen towards the colored race. Looking back to his times and to the condition of his country, we are compelled to admit that this unfriendly feeling on his part may be safely set down as one element of his wonderful success in organizing the loyal American people for the tremendous conflict before them, and bringing them safely through that conflict. His great mission was to accomplish two things: first, to save his country from dismemberment and ruin; and, second, to free his country from the great crime of slavery. To do one or the other, or both, he must have the earnest sympathy and the powerful cooperation of his loyal fellow-countrymen. Without this primary and essential condition to success his efforts must have been vain and utterly fruitless. Had he put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union, he would inevitably have driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent; but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined. (*The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 4, p. 315-316.)

Douglass might have added that it took two years of military defeats for most whites in the North to realize the military necessity of abolition. Given the rocky state of things in the North, the risky Emancipation Proclamation needed backing by something as significant as the Gettysburg victory to hold things together.

Gettysburg and African Americans

Public interest in the American Civil War goes through periodic cycles, the most recent of which began about 4 years ago with the appearance of the movie *Glory*, the story of the first Northern Black regiment to win the right of African Americans to fight. Both *Glory* and *Gettysburg* highlight the role of abolitionists-in-uniform



like Colonel Robert G. Shaw and Chamberlain. What makes *Glory* more moving than even *Gettysburg* is the theme of Black self-liberation. *Gettysburg's* focus is on the battle itself, which was fought between two white armies. Yet a scene could have been added showing the central contribution to victory made by African Americans both in and out of uniform. For example, escaped slaves played an important role in providing intelligence information to the Union Army at the beginning of the Gettysburg campaign. In early June, the day after the cavalry battle at Brandy Station, Virginia,

a Negro servant, captured from an officer in Stuart's artillery, furnished [Union cavalry general Pleasonton] with remarkably reliable intelligence about the location of the various parts of Lee's army. (Coddington, p. 63.)

Gettysburg, like *Glory*, shows the morality of the Union cause once it had adopted abolition as its goal. Yet *Gettysburg* bends to Hollywood and fiction-publishing tradition in romanticizing the Confederates. The brutal reality of the Confederates can be seen in their treatment of African Americans during the Gettysburg campaign, as reported by Coddington:

More reprehensible than any destruction of property was the search for Negroes by Jenkins and other semi-independent cavalry commands. Any that were found were seized and sent South into slavery...particularly around Merceburg where they took free Negroes who had been born and raised in Pennsylvania...Fortunately many escaped, and one group was released by some people in Greencastle after capturing their guards. According to one account, at least fifty Negroes were sent into slavery in this way. Under no circumstances could the Confederates justify the hunt on grounds of military necessity. Even members of the high command were not above engaging in this practice. Longstreet instructed Pickett, who was in Chambersburg, to bring along the "captured contrabands" (a military term for Negroes) when his division rejoined the First Corps on the road to Gettysburg. (Coddington, p. 161.)

By late June Pennsylvania's capital, Harrisburg, was filled with thousands of Black refugees from the Cumberland Valley fleeing the invasion route of the advancing Confederates.

Defeat of the counterrevolutionary army at Gettysburg undoubtedly saved Northern Blacks from slavery. But the consequences for Black liberation went beyond that. The victory of a Union army fighting under the banner of emancipation at Gettysburg was backed up two weeks later by the first, heroic action of Black Union troops at Fort Wagner, South Carolina (the subject of *Glory*). Together, these two battles made possible an increasing acceptance of the arming of Blacks North and South under the Union banner, which, as Lincoln pointed out, helped turn the tide of war.

Gettysburg and the World

At the end of the film General Lee asks himself if it matters who wins the war, "Was that ever really the question?" It was always *the* question for the people of the world. In 1863 most of

Europe was ruled by monarchical governments, who viewed democracy — that is, government elected by the common people — as an unworkable experiment that would surely fail in the United States, as it had in Europe. Emperor Louis Napoleon of France took advantage of the Civil War to invade Mexico and install a puppet Emperor. The Mexican people's struggle for independence would surely have been set back by a defeat of the Union in the American Civil War.

The break-up of the American Republic would have resulted in two weak nations becoming neo-colonies, subordinate to the industrial might of Britain. In the movie, Confederate General Longstreet asserts to British Colonel Freemantle that Britain would never ally itself with a government upholding slavery. But as James Rawley points out in his *Turning Points of the Civil War*, a section of the British ruling class was waiting upon a massive Southern victory in the North to do just that.

Yet the Union had allies in the British working class. Even though thousands were made unemployed by the Union blockade of Southern cotton to British textile mills, many workers resisted British ruling class agitation for military intervention on the side of the Confederacy. Karl Marx reported on one mass workers' meeting in London in 1862 which passed a resolution sent to the Union government that proclaimed "sympathy with the United States in their struggle for the maintenance of the Union" and expressed "the warmest sympathy with the strivings of the Abolitionists for a final solution of the slave question." (Marx and Engels, *The Civil War in the United States*, p. 143.)

The American Civil War and Working Class Emancipation

The turning of the tide of war toward the victory of the Union after Gettysburg influenced the formation of the International Workingmen's Association, which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels participated in and helped lead. Marx took responsibility for drafting a congratulatory address by the International to Abraham Lincoln on the occasion of his second inaugural in 1865:

The workingmen of Europe feel sure that as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American anti-slavery war will do for the working classes. (Ibid., p. 281.)

And in fact, it was only six years after the end of the Civil War that the world witnessed the first attempt by the working class to seize and hold state power in its own name, the Paris Commune of 1871, while in the United States the year 1877 witnessed the first general strike of railroads and the brief appearance of workers' councils in St. Louis.

Marx summed up this advance in class consciousness for American workers:

In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.

But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours' agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California. (*Capital*, Vol. 1 [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963, Vol. 1, p. 284.]

David Roediger, in a recent study on the role of racism in the formation of the American working class, *The Wages of Whiteness* (London: Verso, 1991), explains the vast distance that the consciousness of white workers still had to travel after the war. Before the war most white workers thought Black emancipation would reduce white wages through competition, resulting in further white "enslavement" to the capitalists.

Although the war proved them wrong, Roediger points out that

the link between Black freedom and white labor mobilization still needs explanation. The meager record of biracial organization does not allow us to fall back on the generalization that Black-white unity automatically placed labor in a better tactical position from which to attack capital.

Rather, Roediger asserts that

the Civil War and emancipation removed the ability of white workers to derive satisfaction from defining themselves as "not slaves" and called into question self-definitions that centered on being "not Black." [pp. 169-170.]

Further, Roediger comments that

if Northern white workers developed new attitudes toward people of color only slowly and contradictorily, emancipation made for much more consistent and dramatic changes in how such workers conceived of *themselves*. No longer could whiteness be an unambiguous source of self-satisfaction. No longer could a counterpoint with slaves define whites as "free labor." [p. 175.]

Thus the Civil War created a working class that *could* become a class *for itself* (rather than merely a class *in itself*, to use Marx's famous distinction). The overthrow of slavery wiped away the precapitalist classes (slaves and slaveholders), clearing the way for struggle between the workers and the capitalists.

Although white workers would prove susceptible to the racist appeals of the capitalists (after the capitalists had turned their backs on their own revolution), never again would American workers be the tool of reactionary precapitalist classes like the slavocracy.

Gettysburg and the Legacy of the Second American Revolution Today

The American Civil War was a bourgeois democratic revolution led by radical elements of the Northern petty bourgeoisie and industrial capitalists. Today, the American ruling class, like all modern bourgeois ruling classes, cannot but deny the real legacy of its revolutionary heritage. As long as African Americans remain second-class citizens the Civil War remains incomplete, to be concluded by a third American revolution. These two conflicting legacies mean that *Gettysburg* is a movie into which various

political perspectives can be read. While the movie makes room for those who still sympathize with the "Southern Cause," who would avoid the painful issue of the war, it also makes clear what was at stake: the overthrow of aristocracy and human bondage. While the "new birth of freedom" so dearly bought at the battle

of Gettysburg was eventually betrayed after the war by the overthrow of Radical Reconstruction, the legacy of political clarity and courageous leadership by vanguard abolitionists in or out of uniform during the Second American Revolution forms a permanent part of the inspiring heritage of revolutionary fighters today. □

Further suggested reading:

Bruce Catton, *Gettysburg*.

Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *A House Divided*.

James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*.

Black Women's Role in the Struggle for Black Liberation

Continued from page 21

men, the successful government attempt to divide Black men and women, and the conservatism or justified fear of many Black women themselves, who are afraid to lose the gains they have made. All these factors have so far prevented many Black women from taking up the feminist banner as they were inclined to do in earlier periods of history.

However, it would be shallow not to understand that Black women are organized massively as Black women into their own organizations to press for their demands, although they have not yet joined street demonstrations in large numbers. Black women are still organized in the Black church, in Black women's sororities, in the Black Women's Health Network, in the Coalition of Labor Union Women, and in Black women's professional organizations. Progressive women leaders such as Reverend Cecelia Bryant of the Bethel AME Church in Baltimore and Reverend Willie Barrows of Chicago participate in a giant network of Black churchwomen, which holds conventions of 3,000 and more to discuss issues of concern to women of color.

Black women often constitute the majority of

members in trade unions, such as the ILGWU, 1199E (Hospital Workers), and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and they have influenced these trade unions to become the most progressive trade unions in the country. They are always present on mass marches in large numbers and often play progressive roles within the AFL-CIO as a whole. Black women may or may not ever join NOW in massive numbers, but they are very likely to join coalitions with other women and probably would be doing so now if encouraged by a conscious feminist leadership.

Black women have shifted their focus to their own issues as Black women instead of the broader issues in the Black community. Many would not support the 20th Anniversary Commemoration of the 1963 March on Washington because they refused to build the movement for Black males any longer without getting the recognition which is their due.

In spite of the massive organization of Black women into their own interest groups, the NOW leadership continues to act as if it represents all women and refuses to collaborate or consult with Black women in either drawing up its own agenda or in setting dates and places for marches. This is why large numbers of Black women

wore green armbands in the April 1992 pro-choice march in Washington. They were protesting the fact that they were excluded from the planning for the march and were only asked after the fact to endorse. Many remarked that they did not intend to make the white feminist leadership look good, since that leadership continually insulted the Black female leadership. Feminists must be sensitive to the conflicts and feelings of Black women and intervene in NOW whenever possible to counter the racism of the NOW leadership.

Just as in the late 1950s, economic contradictions in the Black community are bearing down on Black women, who are the heads of households and single parents in far greater numbers than they were then. These contradictions will again have to surface, as they did in the 1960s, and will propel Black women once again to the head of the struggle for Black liberation in this country. But this time Black women will have to take up the banner of feminism and lead in their own right for their own demands as women as well as fighting for the liberation of the Black race. The extent to which revolutionary forces grasp this powerful dynamic and assist Black women in this process will determine the outcome of the battle for Black liberation and a new society. □

Murder on the Long Island Railroad

Continued from page 9

wife beating, child abuse, alcohol and drug addiction, depression, suicide, homicide, street crime, etc. Each increase in the rate of unemployment will result in a significant increase in all of these behaviors. Psychological factors must be taken into account in order to explain why certain individuals respond to increased social pressure in these specific ways and not in others. However, it remains a fact that many would not have exhibited such behavior had they not been subject to this pressure.

In emigrating from Jamaica to the United States, Ferguson was stripped of his culturally based identity as a Jamaican and acquired a racially based identity as a Black. What was salient in the U.S. was his skin color, not his educational and cultural background. It is hard to imagine that such a shock would have absolutely no impact on his psyche.

Furthermore, an exclusively psychological explanation abstracts from the historical context. For instance, the media described an incident in which Ferguson intervened to challenge a professor who was speaking on South Africa. "We should be talking about the revolution in

South Africa," said Ferguson, "and how to get rid of the white people!" His "disruption" and militancy were seen as evidence of mental instability. But the same behavior in a different historical context would have been understood and reacted to differently. Had this outburst taken place in a university classroom in the '60s, it would have been seen as a political act and other militant students would have echoed Ferguson's point. He might have been drawn into a political group where he would have had the chance to engage with others, argue his views, be criticized, learn, etc. It is quite possible that such an experience would have had a positive effect on his mental health. He certainly would not have experienced the same sense of social isolation.

Lastly, it is only in racist America that Ferguson's obsession (anger and resentment toward whites and Asians) could have taken this specific form. Had he remained in Jamaica, it would have been impossible for his mental imbalance, had it emerged at all, to manifest itself in this way.

Conclusion

In its attempt to absolve the present system of racist capitalism of any responsibility for vio-

lent crime, the bourgeois media tend to oversimplify what is in reality a very complex interplay between the individual psyche and social forces. As we have tried to demonstrate, there are many dimensions to consider in understanding individual behavior. It is clear that Ferguson underwent a process of increasing isolation and experienced an increased sense of powerlessness. The absence of societal validation and of a mass Black social movement coupled with his particular psychological makeup resulted in his displaced, distorted, and violent act. What is surprising is not that it occurred, but that it hasn't happened more often.

As socialists we struggle for the creation of a society where one's opportunities in life are not affected by the death of one's parents, where 6-foot by 10-foot living quarters do not exist, and where people are not atomized and forced, as isolated individuals, to confront giant social forces beyond their control. When these and other material underpinnings of mental illness have been eradicated, then, and only then, will we be able to build a humane society, free from racism and free from the fear of being victimized by random acts of violence. □

Problems of Building a Mass Workers Party: The Brazilian Experience

by Beti Burigo

The speaker, a representative of the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores — PT) of Brazil, gave this speech at the April 1993 conference of the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) in South Africa. The text is taken, with minor changes for reasons of style, from WOSA's collection of materials from that conference. The brief section on "The Socialist Perspective" seems to be just an outline, perhaps from the speaker's notes, and consequently is incomplete and unclear. We include it nevertheless for our readers' information.

There are many similarities between our reality and yours. But of course each society has its particular history and features. I'm going to talk about our concrete experiences that cannot be transplanted to any other country. At the same time it is important to acknowledge the similarities.

I'll begin by talking about Brazilian society and its recent history in order for you to understand why it was possible that a party like the PT could be built and the role it has played in our society and so that you can draw possible lessons from our experience.

Brazilian Society

Brazil is at one and the same time a dependent country (on the economic and technological levels) and a powerful economy. For some years it has been among the 10 biggest Gross National Products (GNPs) in the world (8th in 1988). It is no longer an agrarian society. About 75 percent of the population live in the urban areas. Industrial production represents 35 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which implies a large working class. (Agriculture accounts for less than 10 percent.) Industrial growth started in the '30s and then accelerated from the '50s until the end of the '60s, when we had our so-called economic miracle (average growth of 7 percent a year).

On the other hand, the majority of the population hasn't had any benefit from that economic growth. The concentration of income is one of the worst in the world: the wealthiest 1 percent have as much income as the poorest 50 percent; 45 percent of the population, 65 million people, don't have enough food to live on, adequate housing, and available health and education services. With regard to the concentration of landed property, 1 percent own about 50 percent of arable land.

The situation of Black people is particularly bad, since their average income is about 40 percent of white people's income. We are said to be the second largest Black country after Nigeria, with a Black population of more than 60 million people.

The average income of women is around one half of men's income.

We are still a dependent country. The world economic crisis and the imperialist offensive have had a particularly sharp and unbearable impact in Latin American societies.

In the '80s the average income in Latin America decreased by around 20 percent. Foreign debt payment has been one of the major factors of increasing impoverishment in Latin America. [Other factors are] the falling prices for our products on the world market and imperialist pressure against any attempt at achieving technological autonomy. (There is a special offensive in the field of chemistry and foreign ownership of biological resources.)

Add to this the ongoing, permanent IMF (International Monetary Fund) direct intervention in our internal affairs, like controlling our government spending and pressure for privatization of the economy.

In the last 3 years, the situation has become even worse:

- The new government which was elected in 1989 has implemented a recessive policy aiming at global restructuring of the economy.
- In 3 years the average income in Brazil has decreased by 10 percent.
- Jobs in industry fell back to the level of 1971.
- Minimum wages have been around \$40 per month.
- Rapid growth of the informal sector and illegal work (with no minimum wages or limits on the hours of work).
- Generally speaking, civilian governments (since 1985) with a new democratic constitution didn't have any impact in terms of better conditions of life. Instead, the living standards of the majority have become worse and worse.
- Violence in the countryside has increased rapidly in the last 8 years. More than 1700 people have been killed fighting for land, and the killers have never been put on trial.
- Urban violence has grown so that in the last year, in the city of São Paulo alone, the police killed about 4 people daily (not counting 111 killed in a prison rebellion).

The Origins of the PT

The proposal for a Workers Party was put forward in 1979 after 15 years of harsh repression. In 1978 and 1979 the metal workers in the biggest industrial area went on strike. They confronted not only the bosses but also the state. At that time the military and the bourgeoisie were trying to work toward a gradual and con-

trolled transition to bourgeois democracy. The party system was to be changed from a two-party system to a multiparty system.

The entire left, not considering the Communist Parties (CPs) [pro-Soviet and pro-Maoist], was seeking an alternative. Some union leaders in contact with left groups put forward the idea of building a Workers Party, both as an alternative to populism and to the "traditional left" as represented by the CPs.

Populism was a strong tradition. Unions had been subordinated to the state and populist bourgeois parties for a long time. For the proponents of the workers party, class independence was an organizational issue and beyond that a political perspective, i.e., an anti-capitalist perspective. This was the case from the very beginning, even if it was challenged on many occasions afterward.

The policy to be put forward was also different from that of the CPs, which were much more cautious and avoided major confrontation with the state. Another major difference from the existing CPs was to be on the question of inner-party democracy in the PT, since there was a commitment to the practice of decisions coming from below.

Both CPs responded to the call for a workers party by saying that it was unnecessary, since such a party already existed [i.e., themselves].

The union leaders were joined by a whole range of left groups and militants, namely Marxist groups (including so-called Trotskyists, but not only), [unaffiliated] left militants, people in the church, intellectuals, etc. Not all groups had a clear revolutionary perspective or a Marxist background, but there was a common (somewhat vague) perspective of workers control, which was neither the same as a workers government, on the one hand, nor the same as workers power, on the other.

The emergence of the PT was in itself a break with the controlled transition the bourgeoisie had been planning. There were many attacks on the PT, mainly from the bourgeoisie, but also from other quarters. The PT was said to be a "workerist" party which did not represent the general interests of society. The CPs would say that the PT represented only the "aristocracy of labor," i.e., skilled workers in the most advanced industrial branches. Moreover, the PT was alleged to be dominated by the intellectuals,

with too many students in it. It was accused of dividing and weakening the left (mainly by the CPs and some elements inside populist parties).

The military regime tried to block the formation of the PT by requiring a huge number of members in different regions as a precondition for participation in elections. We denounced this but easily met the requirements. Instead of blocking the PT, the result was a massive national campaign through which 300,000 people joined as members in less than one year.

The role the PT played in the '80s was to create space for mass political activity and to block any kind of compromise that would guarantee stable bourgeois rule.

The party was subjected to some very decisive historical tests.

1982: We received 3 percent of the vote, which was much less than expected. Some sectors left the party at that time, saying it wasn't viable. The municipality of Diadema was an exception. (It also had to do with "useful votes" for governors.)

1983: Union leaders had been trying to build a single union. Federation reformists and bureaucrats did participate in the talks but left some weeks before the foundation conference. PT union leaders decided to hold the conference and founded the CUT (Brazilian Trade Union Federation) despite the fact that it would not represent the whole labor movement. The founding conference brought together for the first time thousands of delegates both from the urban areas and the countryside. Thus, a common platform could be built, which included agrarian reform.

1984: A massive campaign for direct elections for the president of Brazil. The PT started the campaign, but large sectors of the bourgeoisie took it up and soon gained control of the campaign. The "progressive" bourgeoisie made a compromise around a candidate, a rightist, despite his opposition to the military. This candidate ran against the candidate of the military and of the far right.

There was enormous pressure on the PT to vote in parliament [for the "progressive bourgeois candidate"], despite the fact that we had only 8 votes out of a total of 600. The PT was able to resist this pressure and even avoided becoming isolated as a result. The 3 deputies who voted were expelled from the party.

The First Civilian Government

There were great expectations around this government and a large popular support for it in the beginning. The government, however, didn't initiate any important reforms. It called for a social pact at different times. This is not the same thing as the social contract, since it had more of a political meaning.

Both the PT and the CUT were opposed to the pact and put forward a list of demands that included a moratorium on paying the foreign debt, improving wages so as to guarantee basic social needs, and an agrarian reform controlled by the workers.

The number and strength of strikes grew during the '80s, as did land squatting and occupations. There were significant general strikes in 1983, '86, '87, and '89.

1987: The new parliament elected in 1986 wrote a new constitution, which represented an improvement in democratic and human rights, but very little improvement on social questions, e.g., the reduction of working hours and increases in maternity rights. Large mobilizations took place to pressure parliament but there was a large conservative majority in parliament. It became clear that the bourgeoisie wasn't ready to concede anything in the economic field despite their differences on how to relate to the PT and the workers movement and difference on the economic policy to be implemented. We denounced the new constitution as conservative and at the same time fought to implement the [positive] changes that had been voted in.

1988: The PT won elections in 36 municipalities, representing some 20 million people. This represented an important shift in the relationship of forces in Brazilian society. By the end of 1988, the first civilian government was very unpopular.

1989: This was a turning point. At the end of the decade, the bourgeoisie was divided both on their general perspective and in the electoral field. The bourgeoisie had failed to establish hegemony in society. After the first elections in 30 years there was great hope for change. There was room to initiate a national debate on the big issues, such as concentration of land and income, social inequalities, foreign debt, the role of monopolies, armed forces, TV and radio, etc.

The Focus of Our Program

Our program was focused [on the following things]:

Demilitarization of the state; civilian control of the armed forces; dismantling of the remnants of military government, e.g., the informant apparatus; prosecution for crimes committed in the name of the dictatorship; workers control in management of state-owned enterprises and public services; end of capitalist control of TV and radio; a moratorium on foreign debt payment; improvement of wages and unemployment benefits; control of monopolies and foreign capital enterprises; agrarian reform (maximum size of landed property, immediate dispossession of uneconomically used land); policies for gender and racial equality, especially in relation to health, violence, education, urban renewal, etc.

The general platform was antimonopoly, anti-imperialist, and anti-latifundio (large landed property), building links between immediate workers demands and the socialist perspective.

The implementation of the reforms would depend on workers organization and consciousness, readiness to fight and defend the [PT] government. But the government would have a decisive role in dismantling bourgeois mechanisms of rule, propelling the reforms, and stimulating workers self-organization.

The PT could be seen as an alternative because it hadn't compromised with the civilian government in power, unlike most bourgeois parties, including the most progressive ones.

Second Turn

Lula [nickname of Luis Inacio da Silva, the PT's presidential candidate and leading figure, head of the metalworkers union that began the struggle in 1978] ran against Collor (the right-wing populist candidate). Collor had no links with the strongest bourgeois parties (which allowed him to win votes from the poor), but he had the support of big business.

In the second round, the right united around Collor. Their victory was not a large one, but it was a major defeat, since the ruling class now had legitimacy to implement an economic offensive.

Of course, the popular support [for Collor] didn't last for more than a few weeks, but the votes won were enough to permit a severe attack on workers' living standards and the dismantling of both public services and state-owned enterprises.

It was also a severe attack on the unions' capacity for struggle. [It meant] the permanent threat of retrenchments [cuts and layoffs] and a complete change in the unions' social base. Despite the recession and closure of many enterprises, the government's policy had the support of the strongest sectors of the bourgeoisie, which could set prices regardless of any market pressure and improve their profits with the increase of labor productivity.

The response from the unions is still being shaped at present.

Collor's Impeachment

The process of impeachment started with denunciations of corruption and an investigation both by parliament and by the police. When Collor called on the people to support him their answer was just the opposite. It was the street demonstrations that pushed parliament to vote in favor of impeachment.

The vice-president took over in what was essentially a legal solution to the crisis. There was strong pressure on the PT to join the government, but the party decided not to do so and not to help in the construction of a stable [bourgeois] government even if it did support specific measures in defense of workers interests.

That is the present situation. We are now the only party outside the government. The failure of Collor's government brought to the fore once again the debate on global alternatives. Lula's alternative is in the minds of the people.

The existence of the PT and CUT were not enough to prevent attacks on workers standards of living and workers rights, but it prevented the bourgeoisie from having any chance of stabilizing their rule and of putting the workers out of the political scene. More than that, the existence and influence of the PT in our society is a permanent threat to bourgeois rule.

The Development of the Programmatic Debate

The strong links with social movements prevented the PT from breaking with class independence. The growth of social movements other than the unions helped us to build a program that could take into account demands and needs of layers other than the workers organized in the unions.

In the beginning democratic demands weren't seen as important, since they appeared sometimes to be opposed to workers "real" demands. So the call for a constituent assembly came only after some years.

Social alliances under the hegemony of the working class were built involving the unemployed, illegal workers, the peasantry, and the petty bourgeoisie, especially during the period of the popular-democratic strategy in 1987.

The Socialist Perspective Was Reaffirmed Many Times

- 1980 — general perspective.
- 1987 — strategy.
- 1990 — after the fall of the Berlin wall/democracy and socialism/ socialism can be built only by the workers themselves.
- 1991 — attempt to revise.

Internal Democracy

The PT is at one and the same time the result of workers struggle and of the willingness of important sectors of the working class to build a party uniting all left tendencies that are prepared to defend class independence. It is not simply the result of mass spontaneity.

The PT is not a front. At the same time there is [both] permanent, lively debate and discipline regarding unity in action.

The PT is a *mass party*, deeply rooted in social movements (unions, civic [organizations], students, women, Blacks, ecology). Its members are basically recruited in the movements, but the requirements are only the acceptance of the party rules, paying a contribution of 1 percent of [one's] salary (30 percent for deputies and people in government). Decisions are taken in meetings by delegates representing

members in neighborhoods and towns on a ratio of 1:10.

Leadership bodies are plural[ist], respectful of the different positions presented in the meetings. The leadership incorporates members of the different tendencies proportional to the votes received.

Decisions are taken by vote, but only after political debate, and often combine different views. Since 1987 the right to form a tendency is formally acknowledged, despite earlier distrust of many members toward permanent groupings. The contribution of these tendencies proved to be decisive. The right to form tendencies is also a programmatic achievement, related to the strategic goal of building a democratic socialism.

The majority of members don't belong to any tendency, however, which means that people align themselves according to the issues that are being debated. In 1991, we voted in favor of a women's quota of 30 percent in the leadership.

We also have many problems, of course. Grass roots organization is much weaker than it should be for us to have a fully democratic and functioning party and a greater capacity to implement party policies. There is great unevenness in access to information and theoretical education. [There is] too much autonomy of deputies and mayors in spite of the rule agreed upon. [There are] disputes between PT members in the social movements. We fully support autonomy of unions and social movements but think PT activists shouldn't dispute against each other inside these movements. Our press is still weak in relation to our needs.

The Referendum

In regard to the forthcoming referendum on the question of presidentialism versus parliamentarism,

the issue at stake is that the bourgeoisie, knowing that Lula could win the next presidential elections, are trying to change the constitution by investing parliament with more power. In the PT, the majority favor the presidentialist option precisely because Lula does stand a chance of winning the next elections and this could have some important benefits for working class politics in Brazil. Fundamentally, though, we stand for presidentialism and the democratic reform of the parliamentary system.

The "new world order" has meant increasing misery and hunger in the Third World. There are growing inequalities between those who can benefit from capitalist achievements and those who are excluded, between the First and Third Worlds. Market dominance has proved incapable of guaranteeing minimum social needs. The bourgeoisie and imperialism have proved incapable of respecting human dignity.

Socialism is the only truly democratic perspective, for we can't talk of democracy unless we end all inequalities and exploitation of human labor. The workers are the ones who must decide their own destiny.

Socialism, however, can't be achieved unless we have an international perspective, i.e., unless we unite our forces. In recent years there has been much disillusionment with the socialist perspective. There is no doubt that bureaucratic rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has had a terrible impact on many people's dreams of a new society. And yet precisely because of the collapse of the discredited "really existing socialism" of Eastern Europe, there is an open road for those who continue to struggle for democracy and socialism. □

The Workers Unity Network and the Proposed 1995 Convention to Establish a Labor Party

Continued from page 14

a positive step forward, which is consistent with our program. Whether the 1995 convention will found a labor party or not should not be the decisive issue in determining whether WUN should help build the convention.

A failure to form a labor party at a 1995 convention should not necessarily be viewed in itself as a betrayal of the movement for independent working-class political action, which the WUN perspective views as the social basis for forging a real workers' party. Mazzocchi's proposal for mailing the Call for a labor party national convention directly to the 65,000 local unions throughout the country (if carried out) has to be viewed as a major statement by LPA challenging the current political direction and leadership of the major international unions. This will strengthen the rank-and-file movements, which currently lack a clear alternative political leadership independent of the AFL-CIO's top bureaucracy.

The WUN should view the holding of the proposed convention and the work of mobilizing workers to the convention as having the goal of establishing an independent Workers' Charter, even if the gathering is unable to establish a labor party. The letter to the 65,000 local unions

should, therefore, be more than an invitation to participate in the national convention. It should be a Call to Action.

A Workers' Charter would set forth the basic aims and goals of the working class's struggle for political power. A Workers' Charter could serve to strengthen and help unite the various campaigns and movements for independent working-class political action as they continue to develop throughout the country. This would expand the base of the movement for a workers' party.

The participation by WUN members in the work for the convention should be in areas which best influence the process in the direction of mass action-oriented activities. This would include working on key national convention planning committees. But WUN's emphasis should be among the masses inside and outside the unions, finding ways of linking their struggles to the movement for a labor party and helping to organize local activities which directly involve local union members and representatives of non-union mass working-class organizations in activities that more directly connect them to the convention delegate process.

WUN members should help to promote the campaigns and movement to organize labor in

the South within the trade unions and build the LPA national convention as key to strengthening the U.S. labor movement and for building a workers' party. This would include popularizing, building support for, and directly helping to build election campaigns and organizations for independent working-class candidates. WUN members in the South should maintain their emphasis on organizing at the base of these movements, and in helping to develop these struggles in alliance with the movement for a labor party.

Finally, the Workers Unity Network must be mindful not to allow its organizational independence, program, and work to become liquidated by the processes and still existent narrow perspectives of LPA. WUN members will understandably be active in LPA efforts to organize for the convention. However, the WUN is still very young and in need of developing further its capacity to implement its program and to expand. The WUN goal remains: to build a united front of worker activists who want to see a real workers' party which will fight consistently for the interests of working people and the oppressed, here and around the world. □

November 30, 1993

Leninist Organization and Revolutionary Leadership

by Roy Rollin

This is the first part of an article that was expanded from a talk prepared for the Solidarity summer school held in St. Louis in August 1993.

The actuality of the revolution: this is the core of Lenin's thought and his decisive link with Marx. — Georg Lukács, *Lenin*

Leninism, in its entirety is, to a great extent, an attempt to resolve the "paradox of Marxism" which was left largely unanswered by Marx and Engels: how, under conditions of capitalism and the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie, does the class consciousness of the proletariat take shape, develop, and become perfected, in concrete reality? — Ernest Mandel, "Liebman and Leninism"

For Marxists, the working class — that is, "all those wage earners economically obliged to sell their labor power in order to obtain their means of consumption," to use Ernest Mandel's definition — has historically been viewed as the vehicle for revolutionary change within capitalist society. A mass of propertyless producers, as Mandel put it, "lack[ing] access to the means of production and...not own[ing] capital," the working class has no material interest in the preservation of the bourgeois order. (See Mandel's articles "Liebman and Leninism," in *The Socialist Register 1975*; and "The Reasons for Founding the Fourth International and Why They Remain Valid Today," *International Marxist Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Autumn 1988.)

Workers do, however, have an interest in the overthrow of the system of wage slavery (capitalism) and remain the only social force potentially powerful and organized enough to play such a leading role. Thus, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, declared:

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeois today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product. (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, New York: International Publishers, 1976, p. 494.)

They also noted that

with the development of industry the working class not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. (*Ibid.*, p. 492.)

And they concluded:

What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own gravediggers. (*Ibid.*, p. 496.)

In other words, the working class is brought together by the gigantic forces of production that modern capitalism generates, and it is forced

to act collectively in order to defend the conditions of every worker against the employers.

But as Georg Lukács pointed out, "the proletariat [cannot] gradually evolve ideologically into the revolutionary vocation appropriate to its class," because it remains excluded from any share in the social wealth it creates, including the sources of knowledge necessary to carry out its historical task as capitalism's "gravedigger." (See Lukács, *Lenin: A Study in the Unity of His Thought*, London: New Left Books, 1970, p. 24.) In *The Poverty of Philosophy* Marx had already noted, albeit from a subjectivist concept of class, that "this mass is...already a class [in itself] as against capital, but not yet for itself" (New York: International Publishers, 1963, p. 173). Between a working class that exists as a class in itself and a working class organized as a class "for itself" there exists a world of difference.

Class in Itself or Class for Itself?

The difference lies in an unevenness of consciousness within the working class, reflecting the social conditions of its existence as a class stratified and divided by such factors as skill, trade, nationality, race, and gender — all of which are manipulated by the ruling class in order to divide one section of the oppressed from the other. There also exists a level of discontinuity and unevenness insofar as participation by the majority of workers in mass struggles is concerned. The relationship between activity and consciousness and between potentiality and reality was described by Antonio Gramsci as follows:

The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and critically absorbed...

The personality is strangely composite: it contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of a human race united the world over. (Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Note-*

books, New York: International Publishers, 1971, pp. 324 and 333.)

From the lack of homogeneity in the working class and the unevenness of consciousness and activity arises the need for a revolutionary party. While different groups of workers may organize to struggle against different aspects of their oppression, they will not yet grasp the underlying connection between those struggles and the need to overturn the entire system of oppression. Nor will they wage those struggles on an everyday basis. Only a minority understands this totality in periods of normalcy, and only this minority continues to embody a permanently high level of militancy and activity when mass activity and consciousness is on the wane. In a "Speech on the Role of the Communist Party" at the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin explained that

in the era of capitalism, when the masses of workers are subjected to constant exploitation and cannot develop their human capacities, the most characteristic feature of working-class political parties is that they can only involve a minority of their class...in the same way as the really class conscious workers...constitute a minority of all workers. We are therefore obliged to recognize that it is only this class-conscious minority that can direct and lead the broad masses of the workers. (Lenin, *Speeches at Congresses of the Communist International*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, pp. 50-51.)

The Leninist theory of organization takes as its starting point these peculiarities of the proletariat as an exploited and oppressed class. James P. Cannon pointed out that Leninism is "deep-rooted in...the weightiest realities of the twentieth century, the actuality of the workers' struggle for the conquest of power...the necessity of creating a leadership capable of carrying it through to the end...[and] the exceptionally

LENIN HAS ADVANCED
MARXIST THEORY AS A
PRACTICAL FORCE
INTO THE 20th. CENTURY.

Georg Lukacs
(1885-1971)
Hungarian Marxist philosopher
and critic



conscious character of the movement for socialism.” (See Cannon’s article “The Vanguard Party and the World Revolution,” in *Fifty Years of World Revolution*, New York: Merit, 1967, p. 349.)

Unlike previous social transformations, the socialist revolution will be carried out by the lowest social class. While it possesses the ultimate power to stop capitalism from functioning because of its ability to stop the generation of surplus value and the creation of profits, the working class remains dominated in every field. The capitalists, on the other hand, already possessed economic power before they took political power. Socialist revolution, being the first attempt in history to reshape the world according to a plan, requires the conscious participation of millions of organized and active workers. They will have to throw off the all-sided shackles that class society imposes on every aspect of their lives and, in the process of making the revolution, revolutionize themselves, or as Marx put it, “rid [themselves] of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew” (*The German Ideology*, New York: International, 1939, p. 78).

**The Essential Task:
Forming and Developing the Force**
Social liberation requires a conscious collective effort on the part of the revolutionary class. This requires a certain level of organization and awareness of that goal prior to the revolution in order to develop a strategic perspective for achieving it. As Ernest Mandel has pointed out, the proletariat

will never reach its historic objective if the necessary education, schooling and testing of a proletarian vanguard in the working out and agitational application of the revolutionary program in struggle has not taken place before the outbreak of the broadest mass struggles, which by themselves create only the possibility of the broad masses attaining revolutionary consciousness. (Mandel, “The Leninist Theory of Organization,” in *Revolution and Class Struggle*, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978, p. 92.)

While political class consciousness can develop fully only during the struggle itself, this is contingent upon its already having begun to develop before the struggle breaks out. The vanguard organization must make and maintain that connection, insuring that in periods of rising workers struggle, the minority which makes up the vanguard party will be able to grow in size and influence, as more members of the working class become aware, through their own experiences interacting with the interventions of the vanguard, where their real interests lie.

Thus, “the possibility of the broad masses attaining revolutionary consciousness” can become a reality, provided that the vanguard has been active in the movement long enough, effectively enough, and on a wide enough scale to have made its influence felt. It then becomes possible for it to serve as the memory of the class, by preserving the acquired experience of the class in the form of a program. Thus, the

class as a whole does not have to start from square one whenever a new round of battles breaks out. The program should be based upon an understanding of the lessons of the past as well as the experiences of the present, so that the working class does not repeat the same mistakes in the future. Above all else, it must be a method of analysis and a guide to action, a combination of what the vanguard does as well as what it says, embodying a strategic and tactical outlook that accurately reflects reality as it is and not some preconceived conception of what it should be.

A working class vanguard united around a revolutionary program thus prepares for future struggles and greatly assists the changes in the ideas and activity of the masses of working people which are required by the abrupt changes in the objective situation itself. Based upon the struggles of the Italian workers during the “red years” following World War I, Gramsci drew the following conclusion, in his prison notebooks:

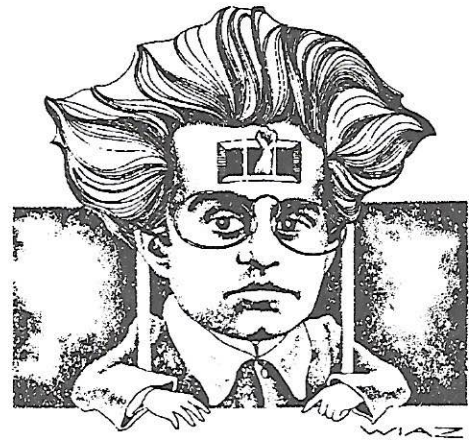
The decisive element in every situation is the force, permanently organized and pre-ordered over a long period, which can be advanced when one judges that the situation is favorable (and it is favorable only to the extent to which such a force exists and is full of fighting ardor); therefore, the essential task is that of paying systematic and patient attention to forming and developing this force, rendering it ever more homogeneous, compact, conscious of itself.

Centralization: Organizational in Form, Political in Content

The need for a “force” embracing the class-conscious vanguard of the working class, rather than the entire class, is predicated upon the reality of working class existence under capitalism and the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie. “This force” must bring together and centralize in theory and practice the experience of all the struggles of the exploited and oppressed in a comprehensive world view; involvement in one area of struggle alone, or in any one country alone, cannot and will not produce such a global perspective. Centralization is more a political than a formal organizational function, since the vanguard aspires to transform what Lenin called “trade union” consciousness into political class consciousness by means of an all-sided political activity that addresses all questions and endeavors to translate the general aims of socialism into concrete practical activities and to link every immediate struggle to the ultimate goal. That is why an organization is required on both the national and the international levels.

The gap that exists between partial and global consciousness is behind Lenin’s famous formula that the latter has to be brought to the working class from without.

Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere



Antonio Gramsci

of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes. (Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969, p. 78.)

Here, “within” and “without” clearly refer to the partial and global. In other words, socialist consciousness is not generated automatically out of any single struggle. Lenin goes on to say that “the basic error...[is the] conviction that it is possible to develop the political class consciousness of the workers from within...from their economic struggle...” Or as Lukács summed up the point, “Proletarian class-consciousness [is not] a mechanical product of its class situation...[The] attitude of the proletariat...its determination and degree of class-consciousness, by no means develops with fatalistic inevitability from its economic situation” (Lukács, *Lenin*, p. 31).

Left to their own devices, the majority of workers will not go beyond the most elementary level of understanding: “trade union” consciousness. “The spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism,” says Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*, “and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.” Why? Because trade unionism is based upon altering the relationship between labor and capital, not upon its overthrow. It is precisely that relationship, the wage contract, that provides the basis for “all the notions of justice...all the mystifications...[and] all capitalism’s illusions about freedom...” that workers still accept as good coin. Thus Rosa Luxemburg (in her classic work *Social Reform or Revolution?*) could describe trade unionism as a “labor of Sisyphus.”

If Lenin focused upon “trade unionism” in *What Is To Be Done?*, this was because his main target was “Economism,” a trend within the Russian labor movement that emphasized the day-to-day trade union struggles of the workers as opposed to the need for broad revolutionary socialist propaganda. While Lenin emphasized the limitations of trade unionism, what he was saying holds true for all struggles for reform within capitalist society. Participation in these struggles is a vital necessity, but

there is no automatic “dynamic” which leads from trade unionism, let alone nationalism, feminism, or pacifism, to revolutionary consciousness and socialism. As far as Lenin was concerned, it was the duty of the revolutionary party to support all struggles against oppression, since the working class, by liberating itself, will liberate all of the exploited and oppressed. He stated:

Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected — unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from [a revolutionary Marxist] point of view and no other... (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, p. 56.)

The revolutionary party was to be the crucial instrument for forging unity among all of the oppressed; it was to be “the tribune of the people...react[ing] to every manifestation of... oppression.” And it was through the revolutionary party that all demands and movements against “every manifestation of... oppression” would be politically centralized into a single flow toward socialist revolution.

Reforms, Reformists, and Revolutionaries

Divorced from the mass movement, a revolutionary can become a sectarian. But divorced from the program of revolutionary Marxism, cadres buried in the mass movements succumb to opportunism. This contradiction can be overcome by arguing within these movements that the only force capable of maintaining any struggle to the point of victory is the working class, and by continually emphasizing the point that all forms of oppression have their roots in exploitative economic relations, have an impact on every section of the working class, and will only be overcome by socialist revolution. Or, as Rosa Luxemburg put it, “the practical daily struggle for reforms...offers...the only means of engaging in the proletarian class struggle and working in the direction of the final goal: the conquest of political power...” (*Social Reform or Revolution?* London: Bookmarks, 1990). Inverting the credo of the “revisionist” Eduard Bernstein, perhaps the first “movementista,” Rosa Luxemburg declared, “The movement as

an end in itself is nothing...; the final goal is everything.” Echoing Luxemburg, Lenin pointed out:

When objective conditions prevail which retard the growth of political consciousness and class independence of the proletarian masses, one must be able to patiently and persistently work hand in hand with them, making no concessions to them in principle, but not refraining from carrying on activities right in the heart of the proletarian masses. (Lenin, *British Labour and British Imperialism*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969, p. 97.)

This approach was at the heart of Bolshevik practice up to and through the revolution of 1917. It remained so for the Leninist Comintern, whose Second Congress in 1920 stressed that “the most important task of a genuine Communist Party is to keep always in closest touch with the broadest masses of the proletariat. Communists consider it their most important task to carry on the work of organization and instruction in a systematic fashion within... wider workers’ organizations” (Grigory Zinoviev, “The Role of the Communist Party in Proletarian Revolution,” in *Theses, Resolutions, and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, London: Ink Links, p. 71).

For their part, Marx and Engels had already argued in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 497.)

It took the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky to translate this into reality by “tackl[ing] this problem at its theoretical roots and...at its decisive, practical point: that of organization” (Lukács, *Lenin*). For what Marx and Engels had failed to grasp was the possibility of reformism taking a serious hold on the labor movement from within the working class itself and constituting a major obstacle in the way of revolutionary struggle — that is, “that

opportunism is the class enemy of the proletariat within its own camp,” as Lukács put it. For most of Marx and Engels’s lives, the main problem was seen as overcoming the conspiratorial, utopian socialist, and reformist traditions inherited from the French Revolution and the petty-bourgeois and artisan milieu out of which the working class and its organizations had emerged.

The political independence of the working class was seen as rising in proportion to the development of capitalism and the destruction of the material basis of this petty-bourgeois reformism, along with the necessary socialist propaganda and agitation. The development of the class struggle would eventually ensure the triumph of Marxism within the workers movement. Only in England did Marx and Engels encounter a reformism based on a labor bureaucracy that had fallen under bourgeois influence. They attributed this to British capitalism’s then uncontested domination of the world market and thought that when this was challenged by rising rivals like the U.S. and Germany the largely unorganized masses of the proletariat would begin to stir and “then there will be socialism again in England” (Marx and Engels, *Articles on Britain*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p. 374).

This kind of view continued to prevail among the leaders of the Second International after Marx and Engels were gone. When the “revisionist” controversy arose in the Social Democratic movement in the late 1890s and after, with Eduard Bernstein and others seeking to revise Marxism into a doctrine of the gradual reform of capitalism rather than its revolutionary overthrow, at no time did the “orthodox” Marxist leader Karl Kautsky aim to purge the Social Democracy of the reformists, since the “laws which determine the necessary transformation of society” would ensure their demise. In the meantime, it was seen as “necessary” that in every country there exist...only one socialist party, as there exists only one proletariat” (Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, Chicago: Samuel A. Bloch, 1909, p. 50).

[Next month: **Breaking with Social Democracy: From the “Logic” of Hegel to the Communist International**]

OFL-NDP Rift Puts Pressure on Rae to Repeal Bill 48

Continued from page 13

Such an altered political stance would be welcome, provided that it is more than just a smoke screen for the status quo. We must wonder.

Immediately following the OFL convention, in preparation for the weekend Ontario NDP Provincial Council meeting, an NDP Labour Caucus meeting was held. It was dominated by private-sector union delegates straight from the OFL.

The majority was opposed to any demand for an Ontario NDP convention earlier than the one already scheduled for November 1994 (a mere six months prior to when the next provincial election is expected). Most expressed opposition to any challenge to the Rae leadership or to incumbent NDP MPPs.

Is this how to force repeal of Bill 48? Is this how to “retake the party” from the pink neo-conservatives? And what if this view prevails within the party?

In fact, the following day the meeting of the full ONDP Provincial Council voted by a three-to-one margin to stick to the later date for the next provincial NDP convention, virtually ensuring that Bob Rae, his political team, and his sorry record will take the NDP all the way to a devastating defeat in the 1995 provincial elections.

But for those who believe in a mass working-class socialist alternative in the political arena, is there any choice left but to begin the process of building a new labor party? □

The December Elections in Russia, and the Working Class

Continued from page 5

and economic transformation...But this can only be translated into support for Mr. Yeltsin personally to the extent that he continues to act as the agent of that transformation."

More precisely, according to the paper, Yeltsin has to open the country to international capital, privatize the economy and secure private property, cut social spending, and let Russia's neighbors join NATO.

What then are the perspectives for the Yeltsin regime? It should be clear that the apparent consolidation of its power after the crushing of parliament was an illusion. The elections results make that obvious. The elections, contrary to Yeltsin's hopes, merely brought out more clearly the unpopularity of his policies and of his own person. He now has two main choices, neither of which has much chance of saving his regime. In the first choice, he goes ahead with the reforms, along such lines as the *Financial Times* urges. This will allow him to retain the support of international capital. However, he cannot count on enough aid from that ally to seriously cushion the consequences of those reforms for the population. Therefore, he will have to introduce a much more repressive dictatorship to carry those changes through. Yeltsin's new military doctrine, incidentally, provides for the use of the army in domestic crises.

If he chooses this option, he will finally alienate Western public opinion — there are, after all, limits to the power of press manipulation. Much more importantly, he will be courting the very same social explosion that practically all observers have been predicting since Yeltsin's reforms began in late 1991. This is because, despite the absolute impoverishment of the great majority of the population up to now, even worse would follow. Moreover, the coup against parliament has let the genie of political violence and contempt for law out of the bottle — something, ironically, that Gorbachev never dared to do in Russia itself. Yeltsin's coup brought new clarity into the tragedy that Russia is living through: his propaganda machine can no longer veil the fact that he and his liberal pals alone hold state power now and bear responsibility for the country's fate. It is their dictatorship. And historically, social discontent under dictatorship has favored popular mobilization and radicalization.

Yeltsin's other choice is to slow down the pace of reform and limit those aspects that arouse popular opposition the most. But that choice is scarcely more attractive for him: it risks alienating international capital and, in the not too distant future, provoking massive social unrest as well, since, in my view, contemporary Russian and world conditions do not realistically allow for a "capitalism with a human

face." The economic crisis would merely deepen. In any case, Yeltsin already rejected that alternative when he crushed parliament.

There is a third option — a democratic socialist option, which would emphasize public and collective ownership and social regulation of the economy, under workers' control, with only a subordinate role for the market and private enterprise. That is the only choice compatible with democracy in the present conditions. Such a policy would give genuine expression to popular sentiment and bring real improvements in the lives of the vast majority of the population. But Yeltsin burned that bridge long ago.

The third option depends first and foremost on popular mobilization — not only in Russia but, ultimately, in the rest of the world as well. If such mobilization does not materialize, then I would say that fascism in Russia may indeed have a future.

That is as far as I will go with predictions. I noted earlier that despite the relative wealth of information now available — though it is never enough — our understanding of Russia seems to have declined. But I *can* say with confidence that Russia can look forward to a period of major social and political instability and upheaval. Now more than ever the choice that faces Russia, and the world, is socialism or barbarism. □

The Case of Vladimir Klebanov

Continued from page 6

these former republics are now "independent" countries, unlikely to welcome another activist intent on labor organizing.)

Novoye Russkoye Slovo, a Russian-language émigré paper printed in New York, not normally known for defending victims of police repression, did, however, feature an article on December 14 by its Moscow correspondent which described how Klebanov was treated: "The MVD [Interior Ministry] agents began to openly jeer at Klebanov, declaring that the Communists had already had their turn at putting Klebanov in prison and that all Communists are Yids. And since Klebanov is a Jew, his identity papers describing him as a participant in the constitutional conference were invalid! Anyway, in accordance with Yeltsin's decree, all laws in Russia were allegedly abolished and so was the constitutional conference and the parliamentary deputies had been dispersed because they were all Yids too! You are all in one big Israeli association and should all be deported to Tel Aviv!" the article reported.

After that the agents began to beat Klebanov. "According to Klebanov, he had never been treated that badly, even in the most terrible Soviet camps."

Klebanov was then thrown into a holding cell with 20 other prisoners that was so crowded there was no room to sit down. At midnight, he was transferred to another holding area that was

crammed to overflowing with detainees. En route, Klebanov was forced up against an open window of the militia bus, where the ventilation could get rid of, as the MVD agents put it, Klebanov's "Jewish smell."

At the new location he was photographed and fingerprinted and then placed in a cell with everybody whose appearance in any way fitted the description of the mythical "Caucasian nationality," including people from Afghanistan and India. This included anyone who had dark hair and eyes and a face that was non-Russian looking, according to the report.

All of Klebanov's efforts to establish his identity were met with contempt by all officials who referred to him as a "cunning Yid who thought he could 'worm his way' out by showing some papers."

After officials held a series of long telephone conversations, Klebanov was later released, but with warnings that he might as well get ready for prison life again, as he must surely be looking for it.

All this points to some obvious facts of tremendous importance to understanding the new situation in Russia:

Under the Yeltsin administration, the old Stalinist machine of repression is still in place. The treatment Klebanov received was like that described by Mikhail Baitalsky and other prisoners in Stalin's camps from the 1930s through the mid-'50s, as well as by other democratic dissi-

dents in the period following Stalin's death, when anti-Semitic guards, police, and prison officials frequently humiliated and abused Jewish prisoners.

The corporate media are intent on presenting the roughly 23 percent vote for chauvinist demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskiy as symbolic of a "fascist" threat hanging over Russia. They do this in the hope of making Yeltsin and Gaidar look "democratic" by comparison. However, since only about 55 percent of the registered voters turned out, the 23 percent that voted for Zhirinovskiy represents only a small percentage — roughly 13 percent — of all registered voters. This is a small danger compared to the one presented by those who are actually in power. It is clear that the local governments loyal to Yeltsin — like that of Moscow Mayor Luzhkov — and Yeltsin's government itself, are already vigorously implementing openly racist and Russian chauvinist measures. These are only an indication of the totalitarian rule they have shown they are prepared to try to implement to silence worker opposition to their procapitalist and proimperialist policies.

Defenders of workers' rights need to publicize the facts in cases such as Klebanov's and be ready to help defend such worker activists as Klebanov who are sure to need our support in the months ahead. □



The Manifesto of the Fourth International

Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an original draft proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

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the volume in a larger historical perspective.

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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.

Volume Three:

Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages (1990) — \$9.00

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.

Announcement of Bulletin in Defense of Marxism Active Supporters Conference

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* proposes to hold a conference of its active supporters on Memorial Day weekend in 1994 at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The purpose of the conference will be to assess the work of the magazine since it was reorganized on a new basis in September 1992, to lay out perspectives for the further work of the magazine, and to raise funds and involve more supporters, so that the magazine can continue to meet the need for the kind of revolutionary Marxist, Fourth Internationalist journal that *BIDOM* has been since it began publication in 1984, carrying on the best traditions of the American Trotskyist movement.

The conference will also elect a new Editorial Board on the basis of a preconference discussion period that begins this month (February 1994) and that is open to all active supporters of the magazine. Active supporters are those who have a full one-year subscription to *BIDOM* (\$24), have made an additional supporter's contribution (minimum, \$20), and are committed to the aims expressed in *BIDOM*'s "Who We Are" statement of purposes. Active supporters have the right to participate in the preconference discussion and in the election of the new Editorial Board. The last day by which one can be registered as an active supporter for purposes of participation in the conference and preconference discussion is April 15, 1994.

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