

In Defense of Marxism

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What Direction for the Women's Movement?



Toward Independent Political Action?

Article by Sarah Springer

Also in this issue:

Three Articles on Asia:

Report from Sri Lanka

A Maoist Current's View of Conditions in India

Indonesia, the Greatest Prize

Two Articles on the Staley Strike:

New England Solidarity with Decatur Workers

How Not to Help the Staley Workers: A Reply to Their Critics on the Left

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Who We Are

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

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

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

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

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

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

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Bulletin In Defense of Marxism

P.O. Box 470139 • Chicago, IL 60647

April 2, 1995

Dear Reader:

The Bulletin In Defense of Marxism is currently engaged in a campaign to win new readers to the magazine. During the spring we want to greatly expand our circulation among political activists, students and working people as well as increasing our visibility in bookstores and on newsstands. As the U.S. government increases its military intervention in other countries it is simultaneously escalating its attacks on social welfare reforms, abortion rights and the affirmative action programs won by working people during the last 50 years. In this context it becomes increasingly important to help put the tools of revolutionary Marxism into the hands of working people and the oppressed in this country and around the world.

We believe that BIDOM can provide indispensable assistance to workers and activists as a revolutionary Marxist magazine uniquely combining current political analysis with discussion of the application of Marxist theory to today's world. BIDOM not only explains the roots of the crisis of capitalism but maintains a central emphasis on working class political independence of the two capitalist parties as the next step in organizing a fightback in the U.S. That's why BIDOM continues to provide the best *analysis* in the radical movement of what it means to build a labor party in the U.S. today, with its articles, interviews and discussion with activists in Labor Party Advocates.

Indeed, what makes BIDOM unique is its combination of current events focus with theoretical and historical analysis. We seek to provide material that can aid those new to the struggle and those who wish to participate in an advanced analysis of world-wide struggle conditions and opportunities. This is a difficult balance that we continually try to maintain and improve.

We are proud that BIDOM is a public political discussion journal of an independent collective of revolutionary Marxists. BIDOM thus provides readers points of view that can reflect differences ranging from nuances of interpretation to important tactical alternatives. We believe this provides a richness of discussion especially necessary today. BIDOM also thus provides a much wider opportunity than is normally available for writers wishing to advance an understanding of Trotskyism to clarify and communicate their thinking through written discussion.

That is because BIDOM is non-exclusionary within the confines of our political tradition outlined in the "Who We Are" statement on the cover of each issue. We seek to engage in mutual clarification among activists from, or friendly to, our tradition because we believe such a process is an essential part of preparing for the future mass struggles. We see our publication as complementary to, not competitive with, other organizations and publications within our tradition. By not setting up an organizational boundary around itself, BIDOM is a magazine that is bounded only by the extent of each writer's political experience and education, and the extent of subscribers' input and support.

You can play an important role in helping to get out the ideas that are vital to the discussion activists and working class fighters are already engaging in. Help BIDOM be a part of that discussion today.

How Can You Help?

First, sell a subscription. We all know friends or fellow activists who probably haven't heard of the magazine but would find it interesting. If each reader sells one sub, we double our readership! You can use the pull-out subscription blank provided in this copy of the magazine along with the return address envelope.

Second, order a bundle and become a distributor. We will bill you \$2.00 per issue. Sell copies to fellow activists or place them on consignment at a bookstore. Bundles are sent out at the beginning of the month via U.S. Priority Mail. We recommend beginning with a bundle of five; it's the minimum size that is cost effective for the magazine.

Third, officially join the BIDOM Spring subscription campaign by pledging a goal of selling new subscriptions. Just fill out the form below with the number of subs you plan to sell. We will send you more sub blanks and an update on the subscription campaign.

Fourth, send us the address of a bookstore or news distributor in your area that you think would be interested in selling BIDOM. We will contact them about terms.

With the active participation of readers like yourself BIDOM can play a vital role in the fights ahead.

For the Editorial Board,

Jim Miles + Vera Wigglesworth
Jim Miles & Vera Wigglesworth
Sub-Drive Coordinators

Thanks for asking!

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What Direction for the Women's Movement?

Independent Political Action Is Required

by Sarah Springer

Sarah Springer is editor of The Equalizer, newsletter of the Baltimore chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Various segments of our society are currently experiencing a backlash for the simple reason that they have stood up and demanded equality and justice. As a result, many of the gains that were won during the 1960s and '70s through independent mass action and grassroots organizing are under attack. Basic social programs — including housing, food, and affordable health care — for the poor and elderly, affirmative action, gay and lesbian rights, and women's equality and reproductive freedom are all being subjected to threats not only from radio talk show pundits and crazed gunmen, but by both the Republican and Democratic parties that make up the government.

Traditionally, the women's movement in this country has had strong affiliations with the Democratic Party, despite years of betrayal and double speak. Whether this is because the leaders of the women's movement still view the Democrats as the lesser of two evils or whether they believe that eventually something will cause the Democrats to "do the right thing" is debatable. The real question is whether there is

any evidence to support the continued belief in either of these opinions. And if not, what direction should the women's movement take in terms of political action?

The Demo-publicans

A cursory look at the recent actions and positions of the two parties clearly demonstrates that the Democrats seem to be keeping up quite well with the Republicans in terms of "one-upping" each other in who to blame for the fiscal problems of the government that both have so poorly managed. The Democratic and Republican politicians are both saying that the way to reduce government spending is to cut public assistance payments to single moms with kids (whom they describe derogatorily as "welfare queens"), although such payments represent a mere fraction of the federal budget. At the same time both parties want to increase military spending. Yet over the last half century military spending is what created the "unbalanced budget" and the massive national debt in the first place.

Both parties want to roll back affirmative action programs that benefit women and people of color. (Yet according to the 1992 U.S. census, 95 percent of the best-paid managerial positions continue to be held by white males.) Both parties are responsible for policies that keep women and people of color in the position of receiving incomes that on the average are much less than what white males receive. The "lesser evil" theory is really a matter of semantics, nothing more.

Can These Parties Be Pressured?

But what about the impact that individuals or organizations can have on the Democratic Party? With help from the women's movement, wouldn't the Democratic Party be pressured to adopt positions and policies that advance the cause of women's rights? Clearly, individuals and organizations can and have had an impact — sometimes a large one — on one or both political parties. It would indeed be strange if all the pressure exerted by the women's rights movement had no impact whatsoever. How-

Editors' Note: Fighting a Destructive Social and Economic System

As the worldwide "free market" system dominated by finance capital from the chief industrial countries (the "Group of Seven") pursues its primary aim of keeping profit levels up, it is driven to impose austerity, budget cuts, and takebacks on working women and men. It uses the Gingriches, Giuliani, etc., in this country, and other dictators elsewhere.

The impact this takeback drive is having in the United States, and how to respond to it, is the theme of the lead article by Sarah Springer and of the speech by New York Communications Workers leader Arthur Cheliotis. It is also the underlying issue in our articles about the Staley struggle and other battles in the "war zone" of Decatur, Illinois, as well as in Melana Marchant's report on the Meeting the Challenge labor conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the material relating to the AFL-CIO Executive Council's February gathering in Bal Harbour, Florida.

The articles in this issue on the battle to defend Malcolm X's daughter, Qubilah Shabazz, also illustrate the wide range of tactics used by the capitalist ruling class in

its continuing offensive against working people, particularly women and people of color.

Focus on Asia

As a special feature of this issue we are printing three articles describing economic, social, and political conditions in Asia (specifically, in India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia — the latter country being engaged in a "subimperialist" war of occupation in East Timor). All three articles point to the harsh effects of the globalization of capital — producing the "New Economic Policy" in India, the free-trade "open economic system" in Sri Lanka, and the "deregulation package" accompanying APEC in Indonesia.

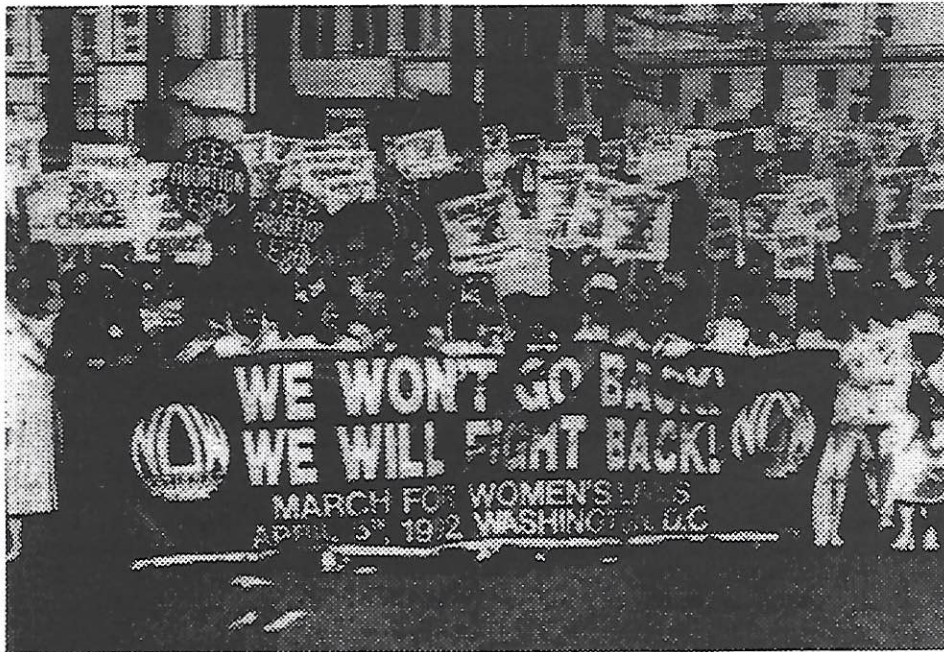
Mexico is the most glaring example of economic disaster produced by neo-liberal "free market" policies on a world scale. Our regular correspondent, Rosendo Mendoza, was unable to send in a report from Mexico for this issue. We hope to carry an update from him next month. In his stead we are reprinting a small selection from the voluminous materials about Mexico carried on the Internet, particularly an article by Cecilia Ro-

driguez, head of the U.S.-based National Commission for Democracy in Mexico.

Cuba is an outstanding example of a determined fight against the irrational capitalist system. Cuba's heroic 33-year resistance to the U.S. economic blockade, and efforts in this country to reinforce the worldwide demand that the blockade be ended, are discussed in articles by T. Archer and Sandra Levinson and an announcement from the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange.

Defend the Cincinnati Six

As we go to press word comes that on April 5 and May 1, six anti-racist demonstrators will go on trial in Cincinnati. These trials grow out of a December 17, 1994, mounted police attack on a protest organized by the Midwest Anti-Fascist Network against a cross erected by the Ku Klux Klan in Cincinnati's Fountain Square. Unarmed demonstrators are being charged with felonious assault on police in riot gear. We hope to carry a report on this in our next issue. For more information, write the Columbus Anti-Racist Action newsletter, Box 02097, Columbus, OH, or phone (614) 299-8485.



ever, that pressure came (and comes), not from within the Democratic or Republican Parties, but from independent grassroots organizing and mass action. There has been a lot of emphasis on electing more women, getting more women involved in both the Democratic and Republican parties, having women's caucuses in the two main parties, but those efforts have not altered the main direction of either party, which is to disregard women's needs and interests, despite the rhetoric.

The gains that women have achieved through grassroots organizing and mass action — like the mobilization and march called by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1992 and the April 9 rally this year — are substantial and significant, and have had and will continue to have an impact on both political parties. However, it has been painfully proven wrong to place much faith in either party to ensure that the gains we have won are protected. We, as women, deserve more than incremental and easily overturnable steps on the road to our equality. We do not need to support a political party (or parties) with which we have to constantly do battle in order to ensure that at least a tiny portion of our agenda gets implemented in such a way that cannot be easily eroded. If anyone has any doubts that this is true, just look at the history of the struggle women have had for abortion rights in this country, and especially recently.

The Right to Choose

Because an overwhelming majority of the American public support a woman's right to have a legal abortion, during the last election even sections of the Republican Party came out for the right to choose (as well as Perot and Clinton). In practice, however, both parties — Democrats included — have allowed abortion to be made virtually unavailable in large parts of this country, have cut medical expenditures that allow poor women access to the right to

choose, and continue to allow terrorism against abortion clinics. (Even though millions of Americans were horrified and outraged by the murder of abortion clinic staff members in Brookline, Massachusetts, anti-abortion terrorists have continued their activities. During February and early March this year, they carried out five acts of arson against women's health care clinics in California.)

The women's movement needs to cut its ties to the "old-boy" Democratic Party and organize independent political action — mass and electoral — exclusively around grass roots mobilization of women, by women, and for women's own needs and interests as a specially oppressed section of the population (actually a majority). Being independent, asserting the right to choose, the right of self-determination, means not relying on someone else (e.g., Bill or Hillary Clinton or some other politician, whether male or female who, while claiming to be a feminist, actually supports the policies and pursues the agenda of the corporate establishment).

The Republicans have taken out a blatantly anti-woman Contract "ON" America, but the Democrats are going right along with them. In order to fight back, to stand up for the things women need, the women's movement requires, as its very life blood, independence from the corporate establishment and its political agents. What is needed is independent self-mobilization and self-organization, including self-defense, for example, to preserve the right to choose and other reproductive rights in the face of right-wing terrorism and government complacency, if not outright complicity, in regard to such terrorism.

Women Being Asked to Pay

The existing global "market economy" (i.e., world capitalism) is running into deeper and deeper problems — the decline of the dollar relative to the Japanese yen and the German mark, the devaluation of the Mexican peso,

European currency problems, the bankruptcy of one of Britain's oldest and biggest investment banks as a result of speculative game playing involving Singapore and the Japanese stock market. We hear the repeated refrain that working people — meaning women and people of color *first* — have to accept lower living standards and work harder so that each "national economy" (read: the well-paid CEOs, the bankers, the financiers, and their paid politicians and management staffs) can remain competitive against the others in the "global market."

Women — especially the poor, the underprivileged, the immigrants, those of the "wrong" ethnic background — are the first to bear the brunt of the economic crisis that the capitalist system is facing. Corporate America, and the government it controls, wants to pay less and take away more in order to keep up their ever more threatened profit levels, which is the result of the malfunctioning of their own irrational profit system.

Anniversary of Women's Suffrage

This year, 1995, marks the 75th anniversary of women winning the right to vote in this country. What better way to commemorate that victory than by organizing politically (in the electoral arena as well as by mass mobilization in the streets) for an independent and uncompromising voice for women's rights? This is a challenge that urgently needs to be met. During 1990 and 1991, NOW held a series of meetings around the country to assess the sentiment of support for an independent third party. The support was so overwhelming that NOW actually advanced an organization, called the Twenty First Century Party, along these lines before the 1992 elections. But instead of motivating independent political action to its membership, NOW leaders gave up on the idea and threw all their weight into getting a Democrat into the White House. Clearly, if independent political action is to be meaningful, it has to be built and organized in a serious way.

Another incipient independent political organization is Labor Party Advocates, which advances the radical notion that "the capitalists have two political parties; working people should at least have one." It seems quite obvious that a political party cannot simultaneously serve both the interests of corporate America and the people who work for corporate America. Working people of this country — and most women are working women — need their own political organization that can represent their interests. Women can and will be a decisive component of a labor party in setting an agenda that meets all our diverse needs.

What a Party for Women Would Demand

A political party that truly represents women's needs and interests would demand (among a host of other things) action on these fundamental issues:

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“Follow the Money”

Who Is Responsible for the Attacks on Workers' Living Standards?

by Arthur Cheliotis

Arthur Cheliotis is president of Communications Workers of America Local 1180. He delivered the following speech at the Alternative Views public service conference in New York City.

Once read that during the early days of the Watergate scandal *Washington Post* reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward were stumped. No leads were turning up. They finally got a break when their informant “Deep Throat” told them, “Follow the money,” which is precisely what they did.

I like the idea that such simple advice could have contributed to Nixon’s downfall. And that advice — “Follow the money” — is what we need to do now to understand what these budget problems are all about. Simple advice is often best when you’re confused, in pain, or frightened.

No one in this room can deny that they have these feelings of confusion, pain, and fear. The people of our city are confronted with problems that are deeper and more punishing than *any* in recent history. Each of us knows these problems personally and intimately. In fact, we are scared because the pain of the present is compounded by our doubts about the future. Who in this room is absolutely sure that he or she will have a job in a year or two? How many paychecks is any one of us away from homelessness? 10?...6?...2?...1?

Is anyone confident we will be able to make ends meet? to provide for our children? to cope with a major accident or illness in our family? Are we confident that our children and loved ones are safe now and will be in the future? We all know it’s bad now, but we don’t know how much worse it’s going to get. We know we have to solve the problem, but it’s not clear how.

What Kind of Democracy Is This?

I think the first step is to identify the real problems. When I say the real problems, I don’t mean the problems the corporate media want to put in front of us to occupy our time and divide us. I mean the problems that impact on our standard of living and the quality of our lives. For that we must follow the money.

Who will benefit from our misery? Who will profit from our pain? Who will celebrate each time people join the ranks of the desperate? Who smiles with a sneer when we lose our services? Who calls it reality therapy when people lose their homes...put their children to bed hungry or leave a state or city college because they can’t afford the tuition? Some reality therapy.

Why in a democracy, when the overwhelming majority of people want to end poverty, does it continue to grow? When the overwhelming

majority want peace, do we still spend hundreds of billions on war? Why in a society made up of primarily poor and working people are we governed by people who are rich?

I ask, if we have a democracy, why does less than 1 percent of the population control 90 percent of the wealth? Follow the money — because, if you don’t, none of the city, state, and federal policies make any sense, and to believe that they don’t make sense is very, very dangerous.

For example, the powers that be in our city claim they want to make government more effective and efficient and more capable of serving people better. They say they want to elevate the average person’s income and create more jobs and turn the city’s economy around.

“Tough Decisions”

They say all this requires “tough decisions.” Tough on whom? How can you save a city by destroying its resources and services? How can you create jobs by laying people off? How can you save money by selling off the city’s most profitable operations to privateers? Why is our city cutting back on jobs that actually bring three state and federal dollars into our city for every one the city puts up? Why privatize the Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) when it gives the city \$600 million in health care services while the city only pays 1 percent of the corporation’s operating budget? The taxpayers would have to pay that \$600 million for these services if the HHC was privatized. It sounds stupid! And it is unless you understand what they really want to do.

Their policies have nothing to do with efficiency or cost effectiveness. They certainly have nothing to do with turning the city around or increasing jobs and saving our neighborhoods. Obviously the tough decisions aren’t meant to be tough on those who make them.

This isn’t a change in the way we manage government...it is an attempt to destroy government. The government is a public trust. It exists to protect the rights of every citizen, to represent the interests of the majority and address the needs and future of everyone. When it doesn’t do that...it fails!

How the Rich See Things

The rich have never seen it that way. For them the government is a facilitator; it exists to protect their wealth and facilitate their profits. When it doesn’t do that, they simply get rid of

it. Seen in that light, downsizing of government is really the dismantling of the city services that the rich no longer need. To them, cuts in services are saving money wasted on disposable people. Tougher laws are a way of making sure those disposable people don’t annoy the rich. Quality of life laws insulate the tourists and rich from the pain most New Yorkers are suffering. Privatization of services is giving rich corporations a revenue source with its own captive market.

We are governed by corporate takeover artists who want to chop up our government, sell off the profitable parts, and close down the rest. There is never a thought about the human lives involved. Their vision of the city would be like something out of some sci-fi movie where a few elites manipulate computers that run the whole city for their own benefit, while an army of police keep the impoverished populace in line. The only other city workers are the prisoners doing the menial work robots can’t do.

That vision is not acceptable! That’s why we who work for government have a central role to play in saving our city, restoring its responsibilities, and rebuilding it.

Finding a Solution

Now that we have followed the money and identified the problems, we must look to history to find the solution.

A few generations ago, during the Depression, people realized that they needed to organize a broad-based fight against the money and power of the bosses. They organized labor unions! Working or unemployed, skilled or unskilled, Black, white, Asian, or Native, they all fought together in the streets, at the work sites, and at the ballot box.

Unions grew spectacularly. Government programs like Social Security were born; millionaires were required to pay income tax of over 30 percent. In his State of the Union Address President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed the right of every American to a good job, to a good education, health care, and good housing.

The rich weren’t happy, and they fought back. They initiated and promoted the Red Scare, racial divisions, scapegoating of immigrants, and other ways of pitting working people against each other. They crippled many of the unions, and they returned to the driver’s seat. Does it sound familiar?

Don’t Fall for “Divide and Conquer”

The rich and powerful learn from history; we can do nothing less than the same. We must not fall into the trap they set for us. It’s very easy in these desperate times to lash out at convenient targets. It’s the old game of divide and conquer. Am I going to play it? My mother didn’t raise a fool!

I know the game...if they can demonize a victim of the welfare system like a teenage mother, am I safe? Couldn’t any one of us be next? As a white man, I refuse to rest easy as others different from me are hurt. History has shown us that if you don’t stand up and protest

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Further Revelations in the Case of Qubilah Shabazz

by Michael Livingston

As the government continues to prosecute and persecute Qubilah Shabazz, new details have come to light. (The government, as readers will recall, alleges that Shabazz was involved in a murder plot aimed at Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.)

Defense Motions

Defense attorneys successfully sought a short delay and then on February 27 filed a series of 29 motions and memoranda.¹ These include a motion to dismiss the case for outrageous government misconduct, a motion to suppress the use of taped phone conversations, a motion to suppress a statement signed by Shabazz, and a motion to move the trial to New York. In the event the trial will not be moved, the defense has requested that the jury pool be restricted to St. Paul and Minneapolis to assure a fair representation of people of color. The government's attorneys argued against the defense in their own series of motions.

Both the defense and the prosecution made use of quotes from the taped phone conversations and videotape, as well as the statement the FBI elicited from Shabazz. Because both sides may have quoted selectively and paraphrased, and because we have no access to the full transcripts at this point, it is hard to sort out the conflicting picture that emerges from the two sides' motions. The prosecution did admit that FBI agents misled Shabazz into thinking that Fitzpatrick was also a suspect.

The defense has argued that the transcripts show that Shabazz was manipulated by Fitzpatrick and entrapped by him, a "vile and evil seducer." According to the defense, the transcripts show that it was Fitzpatrick who kept pushing the idea of killing Farrakhan, and it was Fitzpatrick who took steps to make it happen. Shabazz is quoted as expressing doubts and objections, and as telling Fitzpatrick on a number of occasions not to go through with it. The government has quoted from the transcripts to argue that Shabazz was "obsessed with Farrakhan" and that she had been thinking about killing him "for years and years."

The March 8 Hearings

A hearing on the various motions was held in St. Paul before U.S. Magistrate Judge Franklin Noel on March 8.² At the hearing the judge rejected the defense's motion to move the trial to New York. The judge also quashed a defense

subpoena for the file on Fitzpatrick's most recent cocaine possession charge, which is still pending. In other developments at the March 8 hearing, the defense questioned FBI agent Daniel Lund. Lund testified he was the lead agent in the Shabazz case and that he gave Fitzpatrick a case of blank tapes in July to record phone conversations, but that sometimes Fitzpatrick used his own tapes. Under oath, Lund admitted that he monitored only one of the 40 telephone calls. Lund, who is based in St. Cloud, Minnesota (60 miles from the Twin Cities), said he had several meetings with Fitzpatrick (who lived in the Twin Cities) and that they talked by phone.

Defense attorneys argued that Fitzpatrick's phone records showed that he made at least 40 "untaped" calls to Shabazz — untaped in the sense that the prosecution has not disclosed their existence. An analysis of the tapes by the defense also showed that some of the tapes are shorter than the amount of time listed on the phone records, suggesting that the tapes were edited by either Fitzpatrick, the FBI, or the prosecution. Defense attorney William Kunstler was quoted as saying: "If he [Fitzpatrick] had a bad tape he didn't like, he threw it away."

The Disputed Transcripts

In an effort to deflect growing concern about the investigation, the prosecution offered Wednesday to place the transcripts of the taped calls into the court record. This would make the transcripts public, a move the defense opposes. By making the transcripts public, the prosecution would be making it difficult for the transcripts to be truly suppressed and would be using the media to try Shabazz. Given the likelihood that the tapes are both a biased sample (only the transcripts that are most damaging to Shabazz) of all the conversations that took place between Shabazz and Fitzpatrick, and the likelihood that this biased sample was further edited, the defense wants them completely suppressed.

The tapes are a crucial part of the prosecution's case. The *New York Times* has somehow obtained a complete copy of the transcripts and published an analysis in their Sunday, March 5 issue.³ The transcripts fill 312 pages and of the 40 calls recorded, 38 were initiated by Fitzpatrick. He did most of the talking, often "in long disjointed sentences about the always sketchy plot," according to the *Times*. It is always Fitzpatrick that pulls Shabazz back to discus-

sion of the plot when she wants to talk about something else, and it is always Shabazz who expresses doubts, hesitations, and objections. Shabazz also tells Fitzpatrick to "put the plan on hold" and in an early November phone conversation asked Fitzpatrick if he was an informant. Fitzpatrick lyingly denied it, saying "Qubilah, please. No, I'm not an informant."

The *Times* claims the tapes show that Qubilah Shabazz "feared and hated Farrakhan and had for years dreamed about having him killed, or even participating in the act." What is significant about the *Times*'s coverage, besides the factual information it contains, is that it focuses on Shabazz and her emotional difficulties. This type of news frame makes her the guilty person in the case, ignoring the fact that it is not against the law to have angry thoughts or hatred toward someone. Without Fitzpatrick, who exploited her anger and their previous relationship to manipulate Shabazz, there would have been no plot. The transcripts, biased and edited as they probably are, seem to indicate that Fitzpatrick was the driving force behind the plot. Yet the structure and tone of the *Times* article make the "troubled" Qubilah Shabazz the focus.

Judge Will Rule on Transcripts

On Thursday, March 9, Judge Noel told the defense and prosecution that he will rule March 21 on the action to subpoena Fitzpatrick to testify at a pretrial hearing.⁴ He said that he would also rule on the prosecution's motion to release the transcripts at that time. According to the prosecution, it would take Fitzpatrick, who is currently in the Federal Witness Protection Program at an unknown location, 10 days to appear in court. The judge told the prosecution that they should be ready to produce Fitzpatrick in less than 10 days after the March 21 decision.

The defense also submitted to the judge, as he had requested, questions that the defense would like to ask of Fitzpatrick. The defense submitted two sets of questions, the first set focuses on whether Fitzpatrick selectively taped conversations, edited tapes, or discarded tapes he did not want the government to hear. The second series of questions focuses on whether he taped conversations before or after he signed an FBI document saying he was going to tape the conversations. The defense maintains that Fitzpatrick started taping conversations before he got the FBI approval and that the document was backdated. It is illegal to tape phone con-

1. All information in this paragraph and the two following paragraphs is taken from: *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 28, 1995, pp. A1, A6; *New York Times*, February 28, 1995, p. A8 (national edition); *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 28, 1995, pp. 1A, 10A.

2. Information and quotes in this paragraph and the following paragraph are taken from: *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 9, 1995, p. 1B, 4B; *New York Times*, March 9, 1995, p. A10 (national edition); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 9, 1995, p. 1A, 10A.

3. The *New York Times* article was reprinted in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* March 7, 1995, p. 4A. All information and quotes are taken from the *Star Tribune* version.

4. Information in this paragraph is taken from: *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 10, 1995, p. 3B; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 10, 1995, p. 2C.

versations without the permission of the people involved, unless you have a court order. The prosecution argues that the documents were not backdated and are sufficient evidence of consent.

Government Offers a "Deal"

In a March 2 exclusive, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported that the government and defense had been negotiating a deal during the week of February 20–24.⁵ The negotiations had lasted several days but broke down before there was an agreement. The negotiations also appear to explain why the defense sought a one-week delay in the original court date (see above). The *Star Tribune* reported that the deal would have required Shabazz to appear in court, admit her guilt, and express remorse. The government would then remove her from the court system for psychiatric care with the possibility that charges against her would eventually be dropped. The period of psychiatric care, which could last for several years, would also require her to report regularly to government authorities.

The *Star Tribune* article cited several unnamed individuals close to the case who gave different accounts of why the negotiations broke down. One source stated that Shabazz rejected the offer. "According to this version, defense attorneys told the U.S. attorney's office that they would consent to a diversion [out of the court system and into psychiatric care] only if Shabazz made no admission of guilt, a demand which prosecutors refused to accept." Another source said that defense attorneys initiated the negotiations and then talks broke down because of disagreements on the defense team. One unnamed source described as familiar with both sides stated: "It appears that everyone acknowledges that this case is not as strong as it was first thought and there will be some kind of resolution. It appears that both sides are working toward a resolution of the matter that takes into consideration the young woman who saw her dad killed when she was 4 years old."

More on the Government's Informer

The key to the government's case is long-time informer Michael Fitzpatrick (see last month's *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* for details). Additional information about Fitzpatrick has surfaced. *New York* magazine reported that he received more than \$10,000 for his role in the 1978 Jewish Defense League trial, in which he was the key informant, and that during the early 1980s Fitzpatrick infiltrated meetings of the New York CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) group.⁶ Documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act in 1988 showed that CISPES was

Protests on Qubilah Case in Twin Cities

Local activists have started organizing in defense of Qubilah Shabazz. On Thursday, February 16, approximately 40 men protested at the U.S. attorney's office in Minneapolis. They demanded that the charges against Shabazz be dropped and that all federal files pertaining to Black organizations and the assassination of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King be opened. The protest included local religious and community leaders and was organized by a group called Men Are Responsible for Cultivating Hope (MARCH). MARCH was organized to foster African American unity. The president of the St. Paul branch of the NAACP, Nathaniel Abdul Khaliq, was quoted as saying that the government has historically sought to divide Blacks, and that the government created fictional disputes between Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan. According to Khaliq, the root of the government's case against Shabazz is the U.S. government's efforts to continue those disputes. Said Khaliq, "Never again, never again, will we be divided."

After the protest members of MARCH met with Thorwald Anderson, who heads the criminal division of the U.S.

Attorney General's Office. At the meeting, which lasted only a few minutes, Anderson demonstrated his skills at bureaucratic evasiveness by stating, "We welcome your interest in law-enforcement activities.... We hope there is a time after all this is over that we can sit around a table and bat this around" (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 17, 1995, p. 5B).

On Saturday, February 18, a community forum was held that denounced the case against Shabazz and emphasized that the real crime was the government's actions against Shabazz and other African Americans, not Shabazz's alleged plot against Farrakhan. Speaking to about 60 people, Robin Magee of the Committee Seeking Justice for the Minnesota Eight said, "We want to put the heat on the government to dismiss the charges against Qubilah Shabazz" (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 19, 1995, p. 5B). According to community activist Ron Edwards, the case against Shabazz "is not a haphazard or ill-planned exercise but a campaign of well-orchestrated propaganda." A banner at the forum summed up the feeling of many: "The Real Hitmen: The Feds."

the target of a massive FBI covert operation in the early to mid-1980s.⁷ The FBI covert operation included sending informers to CISPES meetings and Central America movement events, rummaging through trash cans to get information on activists or organizations, obtaining membership lists, and destroying or undermining organizations and leaders.

In 1982, according to *New York* magazine, Fitzpatrick ran up 161 parking violations and \$8,486.03 in fines. He also bought a home in upstate New York which promptly and mysteriously burned down. Fitzpatrick received a settlement from the insurance company. In spite of the odd circumstances surrounding the fire, the case was never investigated.⁸

A History of Government Repression

The case against Shabazz must be viewed simultaneously from two perspectives: from the perspective of the historical, ongoing repression of the African American community and progressive forces, and from the perspective of the increasingly repressive "police state" nature of U.S. society. Federal, state, and local governments have been actively engaged in repressing

progressives and African Americans for more than a century. Four chief methods have been used: (1) infiltration; (2) psychological warfare; (3) harassment through the legal system; (4) extralegal force and violence. The 1960s provide us with the best known examples of this repression. Because of revelations about the COINTELPRO operations and congressional investigation of government repression, we know that 2,370 officially approved COINTELPRO actions were admitted to have taken place during the 1960s. Furthermore, we must assume that this understates the extent of government repression, as the agencies under investigation by Congress were allowed to withhold most of their files and edit the Senate report before it was made public. The government suppressed the House of Representatives report, and it is still not available to the public after 20 years.

Much of the COINTELPRO repression was directed against the African American community, especially the Black Panthers, Martin Luther King and the nonviolent civil rights movement, and the Nation of Islam. The Senate's exposure of government repression against its own citizens did not put an end to these programs.⁹

5. Information and quotes in this paragraph and the following one are taken from *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 2, 1995, pp. 1A, 13A.

6. "Snitch Trouble," *New York*, February 13, 1995, pp. 24–25.

7. *War at Home: Covert Action Against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do About It*, by Brian Glick. Boston: South End Press, 1989, p. 1.

8. *New York*, February 13, 1995, p. 26.

9. Glick, pp. 7–18.

Malcolm's Sister and Nephew Defend Qubilah

Since the indictment of Qubilah Shabazz, Malcolm X's half sister, Ella Collins, and her son, Rodnell Collins, have come forward to defend her and to offer publishers their proposed biography of Malcolm. The January 30 *New Yorker* reports that in their book the authors intend "to delve into the plot to murder Malcolm... to account not only for the role of the Black Muslims but for the involvement of the C.I.A. and the

F.B.I." (emphasis added). In regard to the charges against Malcolm's daughter, Ella and Rodnell Collins "believe that Qubilah was entrapped by the same government agencies that they think were actively involved in Malcolm's death. Rodnell says that people should look very closely at the relationship between the government's informer... and Qubilah."

A "Proto" Police State

While the government has continued to repress progressives and African Americans, the level of repression has grown markedly since the mid-1980s. This growth has three interrelated elements: the so-called war on drugs, the emergence of a prison-industrial complex, and a pervasive reliance on informers. Of these three elements, the last is perhaps the least well known. I would argue that these three elements have resulted in the emergence of a "proto" police state. "Proto" means the earliest form, and what we now have in the U.S. is the first, or earliest, form of a state that increasingly disregards the rule of law (always paying attention to the appearance of the rule of law) and relies on violence to control the population. While not the only elements of the proto-police state, the war on drugs, the prison-industrial complex, and the use of informers are all key elements.

The war on drugs has proved to be a war on the American people, sold to us as a solution to the real problems of poverty, crime, and substance abuse that are crushing many Americans. While this war has hurt all members of the working class, people of color have suffered from it disproportionately. The war on drugs has been used to justify foreign intervention in Panama, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. It has failed to lower crime or reduce substance abuse. It has undermined civil liberties and been used against workers (for example, by requiring mandatory drug tests). And it has justified a massive increase in police repression and violence directed at communities of color.¹⁰

The Prison-Industrial Complex

The United States now has the world's second largest penal system. Only the People's Republic of China has more prisoners. In all, there are over 1 million Americans in federal and state prisons and another 500,000 in local jails. The

federal and state prison population has grown 400 percent since 1970, a period of time when the total U.S. population has grown approximately 25 percent. In other words, the prison population has grown 16 times faster than the total U.S. population. As *The Nation* noted recently, we have had a prison boom in the last decade. Prisons are "the only expanding sector of public housing, the only growing public-sector employment." These overcrowded prisons "amount to a pork barrel for Republicans" because the prisons are built in rural, Republican districts, and they reinforce racism. *The Nation* points out that 54 percent of these prisoners are African American (up from 34 percent 20 years ago) and that 60 percent of federal prisoners have been sentenced for drug crimes. Federal and state prisoners are held in overcrowded facilities that are subhuman and vile.¹¹

\$1 Billion for Informers (and No Budget Cutting in Sight)

The war on drugs and the rise of the prison-industrial complex have gone hand in glove with the increasing use of informers by the government agencies. In an article in *The National Law Journal* (NLJ), a weekly newspaper for the mainstream legal community, it was reported that between 1985 and 1993, the amount paid by federal agents to informers grew from \$25 million in 1985 to nearly \$1 billion (a reported \$97 million) in 1993, the last year for which information was available.¹² Local and state agencies spend an additional dollar for every \$2 the federal government spends (or about another \$48 million in 1993). These statistics underestimate the amount of money going to informers, however. According to NLJ, under the federal government's asset forfeiture program, informers working for the federal government can get up to 25 percent of the

money and property seized in a criminal investigation, up to a maximum of \$250,000 per case.

Because of the asset forfeiture laws, the war on drugs is a financial windfall for police agencies who can and do seize millions of dollars in assets. This money then goes into their coffers or the pockets of informants. According to the NLJ report, federal prosecutors and in some states judges make the decision to award the money. Interestingly, the Justice Department keeps no statistics on how much money is awarded through this program. Informers are also paid with "buy money," the money budgeted to buy evidence in drug cases. Justice Department statistics show that between 1990 and 1993, the DEA and FBI together spent more than \$54 million from these funds.

Police agencies such as the FBI and DEA have become heavily dependent on informants. The NLJ surveyed search warrants filed in federal courts in four major U.S. cities (Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, and San Diego) in 1980, 1988, and 1993. The survey found that in 1980, 46 percent of all warrants cited an informant. In 1993 the number of warrants that cited an informant grew to 92 percent. Reliance on a single informant as the basis for a warrant has grown from 24 percent in 1980 to 71 percent in 1993.

The reliance on informants has led to numerous abuses, including the creation of fictional informants by police to justify a search warrant or raid. The NLJ cites a number of cases where these abuses have been discovered, including the conviction of seven death row inmates on the basis of informants who lied on their own or were pressured into lying by their police handlers, the firing of 30 postal workers in Cleveland based on informant testimony that was later discovered to have been fabricated by the postal inspectors' informants, and the death of a number of innocent people killed in police raids.

"Wild, Out-of-Control Informants"

The system's use of informers gives the informers enormous power. Said one veteran DEA agent, "Our rights as citizens [and] the U.S. Constitution [are] now in the hands of about 15,000 wild, out-of-control informants. If you get in their way, they will take you down, and the agents are ignorant enough or lazy enough to let them do it." Federal Judge Stephen S. Trott, the former chief of the Justice Department's Criminal Division under the Reagan administration, says that informants "are likely to say and do almost anything to get what they want, especially when what they want is to get out of trouble with the law. This willingness to do anything includes not only truthfully spilling

10. For an analysis of the racist character of the war on drugs, see *Pipe Dream Blues: Racism and the War on Drugs* by Clarence Lusane, with contributions by Dennis Desmond, Boston: South End Press, 1991.

11. *The Nation*, February 20, 1995, Vol. 250, Number 7, contains four articles of relevance to the Prison-Industrial Complex: "The Prison Boom" by the editors (pp. 223-224); "A Prison-Industrial Complex: Hell Factories in the Field" by Mike Davis (pp. 229-232, 234); "No Family Values Here: The Women Get Chains..." by Teresa Albor (pp. 234-237); and "The Kids Get Pain" by Beverly Gage (p. 237). All information on the prison boom and the prison-industrial complex is taken from these articles.

12. *The National Law Journal*, February 20, 1995, Vol. 17, Number 25, pp. A1, A28-A30. The NLJ published three related articles by reporter Mark Curriden. Information and quotes in these paragraphs are taken from these articles.

the beans on friends and relatives, but also lying, committing perjury, manufacturing evidence, soliciting others to corroborate their lies with more lies, and double-crossing anyone with whom they come into contact, including — and especially — the prosecutor.”

In addition to the money paid to informers, their sheer numbers, the system's almost total reliance on them for warrants, and their power to lie and manipulate the courts and the police, is the fact that the courts and police do virtually nothing to control them. As the NLJ discovered, “existing rules for controlling the use of informants are often flouted. In day-to-day practice, there is almost no oversight of the symbiotic relationship between agents and their highly paid snitches.” For instance, in a survey of 50 judges and magistrates in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee, the NLJ found that not one of

them ever required a law enforcement officer to produce an informant. These findings are apparently typical of almost the entire federal and state judiciary.

In the rare instances when abuses do come to light, usually as a result of an investigation into a police officer's death or the killing by police of citizens, the courts are exceptionally lenient with those who fabricate phony informants or with informants who lie.

The Real Criminals

The government's case against Qubilah Shabazz, based as it is on the testimony of long-time informant Michael Fitzpatrick, fits into the pattern of a legal system dominated and manipulated by informants. Indeed, many of the quotes from the NLJ article on informants describe Fitzpatrick and his role in the case.

From the dual perspective of the historical repression of African Americans and progressives, and of the rise of a proto-police state, we can understand the Shabazz case either as a deliberate plan by the government or as the normal functioning of a system intended to destroy and repress African Americans in particular, and all working Americans in general. Whichever is the situation in the Shabazz case, the real criminals are the government's repressive agencies and the ruling class masters they serve. And all the rest of us are their intended victims. The need and importance of a strong campaign to free Shabazz and expose the government should be clear. We must organize on her behalf, as well as our own. □

March 6, 1995

Boston Meeting Defends Qubilah Shabazz

On Sunday, February 21, 1965, Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) was assassinated — and the U.S. government's involvement in that event is still being covered up. Thirty years later, on Sunday, February 19, 1995, a meeting to protest the U.S. government's set-up and prosecution of Malcolm X's daughter, Qubilah Shabazz, was held here at Northeastern University's African-American Institute, with nearly 60 attending.

The speakers included Prof. Chris Nteta, long-time Azanian supporter of the Black Consciousness Movement; Chuck Turner, community and labor activist; Malcolm “Shorty” Jarvis, Malcolm X's close friend and associate; Sebogo Nkumah, of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party; and Rodney X, Nation of Islam minister. They denounced the government's case as an attempt to divide the Black community, in general, and to attack Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, in particular.

Chris Nteta opened the meeting by noting that reactionary forces are attacking all of the gains of Blacks and other minorities, and with the “Bell Curve” discussion, they are even resurrecting the Shockley debate on the alleged innate inferiority of the Black brain. He recalled his shock, as a South African student arriving here in the 1960s, at the racist climate that prevailed on all American campuses. He introduced Chuck Turner as one of the bright lights he recalled from that dark time.

Chuck Turner explained that given the history of the past 400 years, it is not enough to demand that the government release this innocent woman, Qubilah

Shabazz. He said this is a time when we must close ranks. And he supported Minister Farrakhan's call to open the files of the U.S. government on the harassment of African American and other religious and political groups. Turner quoted from Farrakhan's speech of January 17 (printed in *The Final Call*, February 8):

... [Since] all of our leaders throughout our history in this country have been subjected to governmental harassment and interference, I propose that we, as a people, file a Class Action Suit, charging the U.S. government with the denial of our civil rights, the denial of our human rights, and open all files, with respect to the Honorable Marcus Garvey, Noble Drew Ali, Paul Robeson, Adam Clayton Powell, the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, SCLC, the Black Panther Party ... and their number one target, the Nation of Islam. We call on the government to open the files on the murder of Malcolm X.

Malcolm “Shorty” Jarvis told about being approached by the media immediately after Qubilah's arrest. “They asked, ‘What do you think of Qubilah's involvement in this plot?’ I stopped and thought. I said to them, ‘Look, I can't fathom in my mind that a person like Qubilah, the daughter of the late Malcolm X, could ever be dragged into anything like this. In my mind it is a clear case of entrapment, a set-up.’ They did not put that statement on TV. Why?”

Shorty, who spent five and a half years in prison with Qubilah's father, said: “The poor Shabazz family has suffered enough. My heart goes out to Qubilah and her mother, Betty Shabazz. Enough is enough!”

Sebogo Nkumah of the All-African People's Revolutionary Party denounced the tricks and manipulations of this imperialist government to divide and conquer, not only in Africa but among Africans living in the United States. He warned of the tricks of the media, which treated the savage murder of 500,000 in Africa as less important than the O.J. Simpson case. “Answer divide and conquer with unity in action!”

Rodney X called for the defense of Qubilah Shabazz and unmasked the continued government dirty tricks: “The same techniques that were used to disrupt Black leadership in the '60s are being used to disrupt Black leadership in the '90s.” The FBI set-up of Qubilah, he said, is not just a set-up of Qubilah but a plot to attack the leadership of the Black community, the Nation of Islam, and to kill Farrakhan.

He raised the Nation of Islam's call for a million Black men to march on Washington on Monday, October 16, 1995. This will not be a repeat of the March in Washington of August 23, 1963, he said. This march will be accompanied by a stayaway from work, a boycott of all shopping, and a stayaway from school by Black students. Farrakhan calls this march a Day of Atonement, a day for reflection and for taking responsibility. Coming at a time when all the gains of the '60s are dwindling away, the march is sure to have a big impact on events both nationally and internationally.

The meeting was sponsored by the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, the organization led by Kwame Toure (Stokely Carmichael).

— Roger Sheppard and Joe Auciello

Building New England Solidarity with Decatur "War Zone" Workers

by Bill Almy

The author is a member of the Joint Executive Board of Local 509 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in Boston, Massachusetts.

Last summer while attending an educational summer school, I was exposed to the "Road Warriors," locked-out workers from the A.E. Staley corn-processing plant in Decatur, Illi-

nois. (They are members of Local 7837 of the United Paperworkers International Union [UPIU].) Following the video "Struggle in the Heartland," which features the now famous

"pepper gassing" by the police of a nonviolent union protest involving civil disobedience outside the Staley plant in June 1994, a number of us who were moved by this spectacle of union men, women, and children being sprayed directly in the eyes by deadly chemicals, met to discuss what we could do for the Staley workers. I pledged to do everything I could to help.

I returned to Boston and hooked up with Russ Davis, who has been involved in organizing strike solidarity tours many times during the last 15 years or more — for P-9, for the miners, for the paperworkers in Jay, Maine, and for many others. (We had worked together in the Solidarity Committee of Jobs with Justice in Massachusetts.) We got together with a member of the United Auto Workers (UAW), who wanted to bring members of the Caterpillar workers, who are also on strike in Decatur and elsewhere. We wanted to bring Staley and "Cat" workers to tell people in Boston, and New England generally, about their struggle.

Decatur Solidarity Work at Harvard

Last fall, a few days after showing a group of us the video "Struggle in the Heartland," Bill Almy called to say there would be a Boston Decatur support committee meeting. At the meeting I was struck by the variety of union workers and leftists present, and loved that we were all working together for a common cause. No one had to declare a "correct" political line on every question.

Very soon I realized that I was meeting some extraordinarily talented people — people like Russ Davis, who was instrumental in organizing three tours, involving meeting after meeting for visiting Decatur workers with a host of different unions, in getting the Massachusetts AFL-CIO to sponsor a rally, and in organizing support groups on various campuses. Other committee members also provided a wealth of wonderfully creative ideas and followed through with hard work.

Because I and another committee person work at Harvard, it was logical for us to see if we could get support from our union, Harvard University Clerical and Technical Workers Union (HUCTW), which is affiliated with AF-SCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Workers). Success was in large part thanks to support from members of HUCTW's executive board. There have been two meetings at Harvard where workers from Decatur spoke. The first was very modest, with about 25 coming to hear Dick Schable and Royal Plankenhorn, UPIU workers from Staley. Harvard's student newspaper, the *Crimson*, covered the event, as it would our next Decatur visit.

With help and inspiration from a HUCTW executive board member, we got our union to sponsor a Toys for Tots campaign before Christmas. This not only netted toys for the Decatur children but also raised \$1200. Union members learned more about Decatur at union meetings and in union mailings.

"Struggle in the Heartland" has been shown several times at different places on campus and more showings are planned. A Harvard graduate student who is a support committee member set up tables in cafeterias together with other students and got people to sign petitions urging Coke and Pepsi not to renew their contracts for sweeteners from Staley until Staley ends its lock-out.

Decatur solidarity T-shirts show up on campus. (Personally, I've seen as many as three at a time in a campus aerobics class.) Some union members and students have committed a total of \$200 a month to the Adopt-a-Family campaign for Staley workers.

At the end of February, in a joint effort, Harvard's Labor Law Project, the HUCTW, and the Trade Union Program at Harvard, which is headed by Elaine Bernard, sponsored a forum for the Decatur workers, attended by more than 60 people. Many of the trade unionists in the audience came from Harvard's Trade Union Program and represent unions in Canada, Australia, and Japan, as well as the U.S. Again UPIU's Royal Plankenhorn spoke, as did UAW's Gary Garner from Caterpillar.

Significantly, striking UPIU workers from a Canadian flour company in Quebec also attended, and their president, Claude Trembly, addressed the meeting, telling of their struggle and their solidarity with Decatur workers. He was quoted in the *Crimson* as saying, through an interpreter, that workers in Canada and the U.S. face similar problems, adding: "We will continue to develop solidarity with workers of the U.S. It gives us hope to come to you to fight to keep our dignity at work."

A small Decatur support committee continues to function at Harvard.

— Sandy Rosen

Boston Committee Formed

We formed a committee of labor activists, socialists, and others to help build this tour. The group involves people from a variety of unions and from different political tendencies who have been able to work together to maximize the participation of unions in the Boston area, and throughout the region, in support of labor solidarity tours.

Thanks largely to Russ Davis, who has a solid reputation with officers in the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and in many locals, including his own Local 201 of the International Union of Electrical Workers Union (IUE), and thanks to the hard work of everyone in the committee, we have been able so far to raise around \$35,000 for the Staley workers, had locked-out Staley workers' families adopted, and had a Toys for Tots campaign (for the children of locked-out workers during the holiday season).

We have had three successful tours for Staley, Caterpillar, and Bridgestone/Firestone workers from the "war zone" in Illinois. Also we have had tours for Ampad strikers from Indiana, Cooks Ham strikers from Kentucky, and Ogilvy Mills strikers from Quebec. And we have supported unions in local struggles like SEIU 285 at University Hospital, United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 214 at Prince Spaghetti, Typographers Local 13 at Mercury News in Malden (a Boston suburb), IBEW Local 2222 and CWA at Nynex (the telephone company), Teamsters Local 122 at Budweiser, and Teamsters Local 25 at Lechmere.

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Third Year of "Meeting the Challenge"

Twin Cities Labor Conference Inspires Hundreds

by Melana Marchant

More than 400 unionists, other workers, students, and children learned from, were inspired by, and rocked to the speeches, workshops, poetry, theatre, and music that made up the Meeting the Challenge III Conference, in St. Paul, Minnesota, on Friday and Saturday, February 3-4, 1995, on the theme "Strikes and Solidarity in the '90s."

Meeting the Challenge

The conference was organized by a group of labor activists, officials, educators, and supporters dedicated to "building solidarity in the labor movement through education, family involvement, and community action." Many of these individuals have worked together since 1985, when they were part of the Twin Cities P-9 Support Committee formed during the strike against Hormel in Austin, Minnesota.

More than two dozen union locals, progressive union caucuses, organizations, and publications, as well as the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, endorsed and helped publicize the event.

Friday Evening — Solidarity Night

Members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) turned out in large numbers to hear their international presidents speak on Friday evening. Moe Biller, president of the APWU, who led a wildcat strike against the U.S. Postal Service in 1970, reflected on the experience and discussed the components of a successful strike.

Leaders of three ongoing strikes explained how much solidarity has meant to them in their struggles. They were: Kevin Raway of OCAW, whose Local 6-662 has been on strike against CF Industries in Rosemount, Minnesota, since April 1994; Anton Hinrichsen of Teamster Local 602, whose membership (70 percent women) is still 72 percent strong after three and a half years on strike against Diamond Walnut in California; and Don Lane, one of the locked-out workers at A.E. Staley in Decatur, Illinois, who are represented by United Paperworkers International Union Local 7-837.

Jim Guyette, former president of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local P-9 in Austin, Minnesota, shared the lessons of the P-9 strike against Hormel, introduced members of the Austin United Support Group ("the real heroes"), and invited conference attendees to Austin in August 1995 for a reunion on the tenth anniversary of that strike. Now the organizing director for the Civil Service Employees Association of AFSCME in New York state,

Guyette reminded the crowd, "There's more of us than there is of them," and predicted: "Ultimately the working people in this country will turn things around."

That theme was carried further by Bob Wages, president of OCAW, who galvanized the crowd with a no-nonsense condemnation of the "mean-spirited corporate mentality that worships at the altar of profit," and of the Democratic Party, "a bunch of K-street lawyers who would sell you down the river for a nickel." He challenged those present "to quit being ashamed of who we are, what we are, and what we stand for...to stop letting everyone else define what we believe." Speaking in favor of labor taking its own initiative in the political arena and defining the political debate, he urged, "Let's be honest. We have to give people an alternative *from the bottom up*. You're the energy, the engine that drives the bus!...No single instance of human struggle succeeded without doing it en masse, in the street."

Wages's speech was featured and quoted heavily in the coverage of the conference by the *Union Advocate*, the monthly paper of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, which devoted its entire center spread to the conference.

Saturday — Strikes and Solidarity: Reports from Participants

A variety of tactics and strategies used in recent successful strikes were described by Saturday morning's panel of speakers — including Dave Yettaw, president of the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 599 in Flint, Michigan, whose bold and aggressive strike last September forced General Motors to cut mandatory overtime and create nearly 800 new jobs; and Sue Wall of the Oregon Public Employees Union, part of Service Employees International Union (SEIU), whose union in past years used the strike philosophy of "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," with creative tactics like roller-blading picket captains in an energizing "rolling" strike. Lamenting the fact that today her local is a "wannabe" organizing union, Sue said, "Looks like we're going on strike again," and rubbing her hands together, added gleefully, "I'm really disappointed about it."

Trinia Solton, SEIU Local 1399, representing the Justice for Janitors campaign, brought the crowd to its feet with shouts of "Sí, se puede!" (Yes, we can!) after she described the strengths of organizing among a predominantly immigrant workforce in Los Angeles to win justice and dignity on the job,

and community empowerment. "Our power's always in the streets. Our power's never just at the bargaining table...The community you support will be your own."

The importance of communication with the members "*all the time*," preparation, leadership, and community outreach before and during a strike were emphasized by Sonny Shannon, international representative with the Graphic Communications International Union (GCIU). In 1992, Pittsburgh newspaper workers united more than a dozen unions to stop the presses and start a movement. Sonny cautioned, "You have to have a commitment from the membership. Make sure your workers are behind you and motivated...If you fire that last bullet [a strike], you'd better knock down your opponent."

Jerry Gordon, international representative with the UFCW, stressed the need for both U.S. labor solidarity ("The sanctity of a picket line is more important than the sanctity of a contract") and international labor solidarity. He reiterated the need for independent labor political action and encouraged people to join Labor Party Advocates, as had other speakers.

Solidarity Kids Theatre

Saturday afternoon's program began with a sometimes poignant, sometimes rousing performance of poetry, dance, and song by children ranging in age from 18 months to the late teens. A dramatization of storytelling by Lola Reed, president of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, portraying Mother Jones, illustrated the horrors of child labor as today's children held up photographs of yesterday's children working in mills, fields, and factories before unions helped outlaw child labor. A union family quiz show and tap dancing brought the crowd's spirits up.

Workshops

For the first time in its three years the conference included workshops on a range of topics. "Organizing Public Employees" and "Meeting the Challenge of Labor-Management Cooperation" both drew large crowds. Other successful workshops included "Giving the Boss an Art Attack," "Solidarity in the Transportation Industries," "Organizing in the Global Economy," and "Solidarity in Multi-Union Workplaces."

Conference Critique

A measure of the success of the conference was the willingness of dozens of participants to gather after the workshops to comment on and analyze the conference itself. Without exception people were impressed with the quality of the speakers, the opportunity for sharing ideas in the workshops, the energy and talent of the Solidarity Kids, and the hard work of the conference organizers. In addition, there was satisfaction that more than \$1,800 had been raised on Friday evening as a concrete expression of strike solidarity: one-third each went for the Staley workers, the Diamond Walnut strikers, and the OCAW local in Rosemount.

Sonny Shannon's description resonated with many when he referred to the Meeting the Challenge III Conference as "medicine for my soul." □

Whose Strategy for Organized Labor?

by Charles Walker

We can't just keep walking up and down with picket signs.

Robert Hull, 57, locked out from the Staley Works, Decatur, Illinois

When 33 presidents of unions in the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) gathered in Bal Harbour, Florida, in February, together with AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, they had some uninvited guests.

By American standards, the Decatur, Illinois, "war zone" is not all that far from the snowbirds' meeting place of the AFL-CIO Executive Council at the Sheraton seashore resort of Bal Harbour. In any event, it probably wasn't a tough sell to get 70 middle-aged men and women, some on strike, others locked out of their jobs, to grab a bus, leave the wintry picket-line treadmill, and seek to meet with the AFL-CIO's top brass at Bal Harbour. The Decatur unionists wanted to talk with these leaders of the American union movement about picket lines and strike funds, especially their years-old picket lines and their dwindling strike funds.

Who could tell how much solidarity they might receive, once they described firsthand their hardships on the picket line? "We wanted to give them the human part of our struggle," one Decatur unionist said. "We wanted all the union presidents to hear us and do something."

Maybe the strikers were surprised and disappointed when they were turned away from the heavy doors sealing them off from labor's highest body. It seems that since they were self-invited, there was a "protocol" problem. But after a time, a few members of the Decatur delegation were allowed to sit in on a single meeting and listen while the international presidents of their three respective unions spoke on their behalf. As the *New York Times* reported (February 23):

The council members, each the president of a national union, showed great sympathy. They read the leaflets the Decatur workers gave them. They promised to go to Decatur themselves and picket. Finally, the council members passed a resolution urging individual unions to contribute "desperately needed material and financial support."

The Decatur pickets are the human face of twenty years of organized labor's retreat and defeat. It's a face seamed by an eroding standard of living and quizzical over the loss of millions of union jobs. But as long as organized labor's policy makers could count on their alliance with the Democratic Party to someday deliver the goods, the leaders were prepared to bide their time. And when there was an upturn in the business cycle, accompanied by the Democrats' return to the White House, it seemed to these leaders that their own foresight and their members' patient endurance would be rewarded.

According to the February 13 *Business Week*, "Kirkland waited 12 years for a Democratic President who could save the unions, then watched as the Clinton Administration failed to deliver on labor's requests. Now that the GOP runs Congress, Kirkland seems to have no other plan for reviving the movement (emphasis added)."

So it was fitting for the AFL-CIO tops to witness the living result of their representation of more than 13 million dues payers, and timely too. For at long last a substantial minority of the council's members are uneasy about, or are questioning, labor's status quo; and a few of the union presidents are openly challenging some basics of the AFL-CIO strategy. At Bal Harbour, that questioning and challenging took the form of a discussion about whether the time has come for the federation's top spokesperson, Lane Kirkland, to retire. "The discussion of Lane Kirkland's future has really turned into a discussion of how we address the issues of the future, and that is unclear," said John Sweeney, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Bob Wages, international president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), stated: "He [Kirkland] spends an ex-

traordinary amount of time dealing with Eastern Europe while we're going to hell in a handbasket." Teamsters President Ron Carey told reporters, "We need a labor movement that has some fire in it again, and that means change at the top." Carey also said, "The AFL-CIO and its policies should be much more aggressive. There has to be much more aggressive leadership. We're not moving forward to lead the working people of this country. We need a fire, a flamethrower to get labor moving again."

Reportedly, as many as 10 major international unions, representing more than 6 million of the 13.3 million members of the AFL-CIO, stand ready to replace Kirkland, but are divided in their purposes. Some union presidents at this time are only seeking a new spokesperson, one who would be a better communicator and speech maker. They want someone who would make better use of radio and television, a charismatic personality whose speeches would draw workers' attention. One anonymous union official said, "Most of our members haven't a clue who Lane Kirkland is, *luckily for us* (emphasis added)."

Other union tops are seeking a fundamental change in organized labor's strategic agenda. Bob Wages travels the nation, speaking on be-

Elaine Bernard, Decatur, and the AFL-CIO

In regard to Bal Harbour and the struggle in Decatur, the *Boston Globe* reported February 27 that some trade unionists

acknowledge that what happens in Decatur could determine what happens to the AFL-CIO and other major labor organizations for years to come. Already, labor has seen its members drop to one in every eight persons employed in private industry — or less than half the number reported two decades ago.

The *Globe* quoted Elaine Bernard, director of the Harvard Trade Union Program: "The situation in Decatur is pivotal." She warned that it could turn into "an industrial PATCO" (referring to Ronald Reagan's smashing of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization in 1980):

If Caterpillar, a wealthy company, can do what it is doing to the United Auto Workers — the signature union of the CIO — what does that mean for working people?... And if the UAW can't win this one, what does that mean for unions in this country?"

The *Globe* also quoted Staley "road warrior" Royal Plankenhorn, who lik-

ened the Decatur struggle to the labor battles of the 1930s, the fights that "made labor strong":

All the laws are in favor of management these days [said Plankenhorn]. We're going back to the days of industrial servitude. Workers need to remember, though, that it was those fights [of the 1930s] that led to the minimum wage, the 40-hour week — things corporate America is trying to take away from us now.

The *Globe* also had an interesting sidelight on the reluctance of the Bal Harbour brass to set up a national strike fund for Decatur:

One trade unionist, who asked that his name not be used, said the AFL-CIO council voted to allow its affiliates and locals to participate in fund-raising, but declined to get involved [itself] because of the problems [?] associated with setting up a national fund. [Emphasis added.]

It would seem that one "problem" in Bal Harbour was a shortage of "bals" — and that Elaine Bernard has a clearer vision of what's at stake than most of the grizzled gents in snowbird country.

half of Labor Party Advocates (LPA), which has the endorsement of his union. LPA is not a political party, but is organizing a national discussion of how and when to establish a labor party based on unions. Ron Carey of the Teamsters is remaking his international union by ousting corrupt officers on all levels, cutting bloated salaries and eliminating multiple pensions for union officials, leading nationwide strikes, and putting together a massive freight organizing drive based on recruiting and training rank-and-file volunteer organizers.

United Mine Workers President Richard Trumka, like Ron Carey, is one of the few international union presidents directly elected by the rank and file. Trumka seems to be the choice of some insurgent presidents to replace Kirkland. Trumka's election would invite comparison with the times and leadership of the legendary United Mine Workers president, John L. Lewis, who more than any other labor official led the way out of labor's impasse during the Great Depression. Lewis dumped the prevailing craft unionist's conventional wisdom and turned toward organizing the millions of unorganized industrial workers, who made heroic history with their sit-down strikes and mass picket lines. (In this context, it's tempting for a militant critic to paraphrase John L. Lewis and observe that today's AFL-CIO really has no head, merely a neck that haired over.)

While a new AFL-CIO leadership, influenced by the likes of Trumka, Wages, and Carey (and the restive rank and file standing behind them), would be sure to move rapidly to make up lost ground for labor by plowing substantial resources into organizing the unorganized, it's not clear how far they would go toward freeing

the unions from their dependence on the Democratic Party. Unlike the Decatur strikers, Democratic Party chieftains were invited to Bal Harbour. Vice President Al Gore came with pledges that Clinton would use his veto power to stymie anti-union legislation and would issue an executive order banning large federal contractors from permanently replacing striking employees. Reportedly, Labor Secretary Robert Reich and Democratic congressional leaders promised that unions could count on the Democrats for "pro-labor policies."

But the price of believing those promises is continued political subordination to the Democratic Party (a party of the corporate bosses just as much as the Republican Party is). The *New York Times* reported February 21 that the AFL-CIO "is debating how to make the federation a scrappier, more effective organization, to regain some of organized labor's lost ground. But both Mr. Gephardt and Mr. Kennedy said that the Democratic party, not the A.F.L.-C.I.O. should lead in this endeavor, with the labor movement supporting the party." (Emphasis added.)

Clinton Tosses a Scrawny Bone

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Kirkland met with President Clinton two weeks before the AFL-CIO council gathering. And in the wake of the Bal Harbour sessions, Kirkland showed up at the White House again — this time to witness Clinton's signing of an executive order barring the federal government from doing business (that is, more than \$100,000 worth of business) with companies that hire permanent replacement workers (scabs) during strikes. Although Kirkland did not have to go in by the back door, public attention was mini-

mized by the fact that the White House barred reporters and cameras from the signing ceremony. Syndicated columnist Julianne Malveaux observed, "The president acted as if he had something to be ashamed of."

The loopholes and exceptions in the executive order should render it more symbolic than substantial. The *New York Times* (March 9) noted that the order

would not apply to companies that hire replacement workers with the intention of letting them go after a strike is over, a practice the White House has defended. It also would not apply to contracts of less than \$100,000, which means that it would affect about 10 percent of federal contracts, although these account for 90 percent of the money the Government spends on contracts.

As the *New York Times* also pointed out,

The order was not retroactive, which means that it would not affect existing contracts with Bridgestone-Firestone, which hired 2,300 replacement workers during a strike earlier this year [which is still going on in Decatur, Illinois, and other cities] and has said the hirings would be permanent.

Kirkland faces a federation election in October. It remains to be seen whether Clinton's loophole-ridden handout helps Kirkland maintain his lethal grip on the helm of the AFL-CIO. In the meantime, the Decatur strikers are back on the picket line. When the strikers set out for home they left behind a message that the AFL-CIO leaders could not ponder too often: "We can't just keep walking up and down with picket signs." □

March 13, 1995

What Direction for the Women's Movement? Independent Political Action Is Required

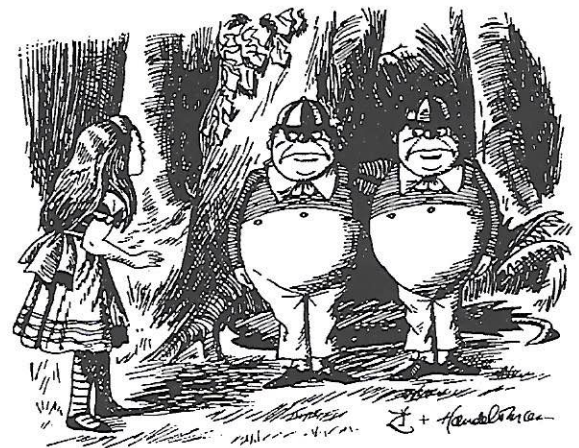
Continued from page 2

- Equal pay for equal work. Almost 30 years after the Equal Pay Act passed in Congress, there is still no guarantee that women will be paid the same wage as men doing the same or similar work. On average, women still only earn 65 cents for every dollar made by a white man (white women earn a little more; women of color earn even less).
- Defend the right to choose. Determined efforts to stop the right-wing terrorism against abortion clinics, to disarm and punish perpetrators, and use all necessary means to educate and arouse the public, mobilizing women and men to defend clinics and staff, encouraging and relying especially on women's self-organization and self-defense. To create a climate of public acceptance of the right to choose and condemnation of violence against clinics.
- Support affirmative action programs to continue to make up for the consequences of past discrimination because of gender and/or race.

- Stop violence against women in all its forms, from rape and assault to sexual harassment and verbal abuse.
- Equal rights for lesbians and gay men.
- Support publicly funded day care and maternal leave for working mothers.

Political action that has been most effective in advancing a feminist agenda came from women organizing independently of either the Republican or Democratic Parties, not working beside them or inside them. There is no reason to believe that this will change. Low voter turnout — especially by women, who voted significantly less in 1994 than in 1992, according to NOW — speaks volumes to the dissatisfaction and frustration that many working people feel when it comes to the Republican and Democratic parties. This is not going to be solved by electing a few "good" people because, no matter what their intentions, neither political party is designed to be changed in the inter-

ests of women's — or of other oppressed segments of society. We need to recognize this and get on with the business of organizing ourselves effectively (and exclusively) around independent political action, both in the electoral arena and in mass mobilizations. □



"I beg your pardon," said Alice, "but which of you is the Democrat?"

Some Truths About the Zapatistas

by Cecilia Rodriguez

The author is director of the U.S. National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, based in El Paso, Texas. The text, as posted on the Internet, has been edited slightly for reasons of style.

There are now 152 villages in Zapatista territory which have been completely taken over by the [Mexican] Federal Army. Food, water, and medicine is scarce — but the intention of the Zedillo government is abundantly evident. It is bent on destroying the social base of the Zapatistas. The white guards [private gunmen of the ranchers and other propertied elements of Chiapas] continue to act with impunity.

The dark forces which have governed Mexico for the past 65 years now want to punish the people of Mexico, especially those who are dark and indigenous, for daring to lift their heads. They want to etch a cruel and bloody lesson in history that will teach future generations to conform.

Within the next few months, I believe you will see the PRI [Institutional Revolutionary Party] change its colors, much as a chameleon does. Under the double talk of reform, and in order to please U.S. financial institutions, the PRI will do what it has never done before. It will meet with opposition parties, it will amend and re-amend the Constitution, all in the hopes of placating popular demand for a genuine democracy. Like a magician, it will perform many tricks.

The Mexican people will have to judge whether or not a change occurs in Mexico which really corrects the great injustices which caused the Zapatistas to declare war. Will there ever be a Mexican government which really belongs to its people, and not to an elite group of corrupt politicians who lie and manipulate their way into power? Will there ever be a Mexico which can respond to the needs of its people for land, jobs, health, education, food, housing, liberty, justice, democracy, and peace? Will there ever be a Mexico which treats its original inhabitants, the indigenous people, with dignity and respect?

Instead of listening without question to the lies broadcast by Televisa [the government-controlled television network], the people of Mexico must think carefully in order to judge the nature of the changes in Mexico. The powerful war of words would have all of us believe that all is well and that Mexico's problems are the fault of the Zapatistas. It is important that all of us think deeply about the purpose of these lies, because they are intended to lull us into passivity and inaction. It is for this reason that I list below a few of the major lies which are being disseminated, and I ask you to remember history, and to judge the Zapatistas by their actions and not the words of Televisa.

Answering Lie No. 1

[Lie No. 1 goes like this:] **The Zapatistas are inflexible. [Alfonso] Robledo Rincón resigned as governor of Chiapas, and still they will not come to the negotiating table.**

[Reply:] The Zapatistas, based on Article 39 of the Constitution declared war on the Mexican government on January 1, 1994. The right to rebellion, when "a government is no longer the legitimate government of the people," is a right guaranteed to all citizens. It is a right which allows for ordinary people to determine their form of government. (By the way, this right is also guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.)

It is clear that in 1988, the Mexican government stole the presidential election from Cuahémoc Cárdenas. It is also abundantly clear that electoral fraud is the principal means by which the PRI maintains its iron-fisted control. It is for this reason that the Zapatistas demanded that Robledo Rincón resign as governor of Chiapas. Robledo was a well-known crony of the [previous] despotic governor, Gonzalez Garrido, and the continuation of his influence in the government of Chiapas was a clear insult to the indigenous peoples of the state.

In demanding that electoral disputes in Tabasco and Veracruz be resolved as well, the Zapatistas were responding to aspirations for democratic elections [beyond Chiapas]. As Mexicanos we clearly understand that the PRI is one with the government, one has never been separated from the other, and therefore every election only serves to legitimize their continued power.

A basic demand of the EZLN [Zapatista National Liberation Army] has always been "a transition to democracy"; this has been clearly stated in all correspondence with the government, and in almost every communiqué. There was not even a willingness on the part of the Mexican government to allow the people of Chiapas to have a genuine election. The PRI has in fact, mocked, ignored, and degraded the Zapatistas, assigning them the status of "criminals, transgressors of the law, and professionals of violence." It was not until the PRI lost its grip on the economy, and failed to deligitimize the Zapatistas, that it allowed a state election to fall into the hands of another party — the PAN (National Action Party) in Jalisco.

This however, does not constitute a transition to democracy. It is a superficial and cosmetic change, the separation of the PRI from the government will require more than that. A transition to democracy is a basic demand of the Zapatistas. They must perceive some genuine possibility of its occurrence in order to believe that negotiations will be productive.

Answering Lie No. 2

[Lie No. 2 goes like this:] **The Zapatistas have destabilized the country and are responsible for its economic problems.**

[Reply:] During the [presidency] of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Mexico saw 40 million of its people sink into poverty, while 24 new Mexican billionaires became part of the world's wealthiest. Mexico lost a great many of its small businesses, and its middle class was severely impacted by high taxes and unaffordable living costs. Its Gross Domestic Product fell, unemployment grew, and agricultural production could no longer compete with the price of imported foodstuffs.

This economic disaster did not unfold since January 1994. It was occurring long before the Zapatistas erupted into public consciousness. Economists in the United States from prestigious universities knew almost two years ago that the peso was overvalued and that it was necessary to devalue it as soon as possible. Many Washington insiders knew this as well, and apparently so did the very wealthy in Mexico, since they began to take their money out of the country shortly before the devaluation occurred.

Salinas de Gortari, however, was more interested in his reputation in the international community than he was in the future of the country he governed. The PRI waited until NAFTA had been passed, until the August [1994] elections were completed, and until another international trade agreement was approved, the GATT, before announcing the devaluation.

Now, experts in the United States are saying that the severe recession which Mexico will suffer is the result of Mexico "living beyond its means." For the majority of the people in Mexico, the "means" have never been more than minimum survival, and now even that seems impossible.

There have been three assassinations [of highly placed public figures] in Mexico, [in addition to] 300 murders of members of the opposition party, the PRD [Party of the Democratic Revolution], and attempts on the lives of prominent opposition leaders. The Zapatistas had nothing to do with the inability of the PRI to resolve its [internal] conflicts by any means other than assassination. These are the events which have eroded Mexico's stability.

Answering Lie No. 3

[Lie No. 3 goes like this:] **Zedillo claims that Zapatista arms caches were found in Mexico City and Veracruz, and that these constituted a threat to Mexico.**

[Reply:] Once the Zapatistas declared war in January 1994, that declaration remained in force. The Mexican government follows no logic in persecuting rebels for being rebels, and an armed force for being armed. The "arms caches" found in Mexico City and Veracruz included some weapons, posters, music cassettes, and writings about the Zapatista rebellion. Most of those arrested have been severely tortured. [For example,] the two-year-old son of

Continued on page 27

Hope in Mexico

by Elliott Young

The author posted this article on the Internet from Colegio de la Frontera in Mexico City. The text has been edited slightly for reasons of style.

After reading some of the recent messages [on the Internet] I began to feel as if I was missing something. Where was all of this pessimism coming from — about the Zapatistas being doomed to failure? Was it possible that living in Mexico City, I had overlooked some major news about the imminent demise of the EZLN?

What I find incredible is that, in spite of the very real hardship that almost everyone in Mexico is feeling, I do not get the sense of hopelessness that I read on the Internet.

After several weeks of intense protesting in the streets, of caravans from Chiapas and Guerrero to Mexico City, and from the U.S. to Chiapas, the question on everybody's mind seems to be, "What's next?" While Chiapas remains major news here, the economic [austerity] plan offered by Zedillo and approved by the PRI-PAN Congress has dominated conversations on the street and in the newspapers. There have been protests in several states throughout Mexico against the plan, and particularly against the increase of the [value-added] tax from 10 to 15 percent. Last week upper middle class women joined a protest of popular classes in Monterrey to protest the tax and demand that Salinas and the rest of the gang that stole the money return to Mexico for a political trial.

Even the nearly moribund PRI-ista labor leader, Fidel Velasquez, has stated that workers must begin to struggle. So far industrial workers have not taken to the streets or organized en masse in any significant way. On the other hand, city bus drivers, students, street vendors, housewives, campesinos, indigenous groups, and other non-coopted sectors have been very active, organizing protests and demanding justice.

Protests Spread, Tabasco Heats Up

Today's *La Jornada* reported that [on Tuesday, March 21] in Tabasco, PRD supporters engaged in pitched battles with state and federal authorities when the police tried to violently dislodge protesters who had blocked a major highway. The protesters were demanding the release of a PRD leader, Carlos Wilson Gomez, who was jailed on trumped-up charges dating back over two years. After protesters blocked a major highway, the federal police descended on the group with a helicopter, attempting to dislodge them with tear gas, while other police shot at them with machine guns. Troops from the Mexican army were waiting nearby, but did not get involved.

After three hours of street fighting, the police and the army withdrew, leaving behind 9 buses from the Club Cancún Plaza line. Two of these buses had transported "anti-riot" police to the scene and the rest were apparently meant for those who were to be arrested. As well as fire-bombing these 9 buses, the angry crowd sacked nearby shops, an ice factory, and other vehicles.

In recent weeks the protests that seemed to be centralized in Mexico City have become more widespread. As people in Mexico City try to figure out how they are going to survive as gas, food, and utility prices soar, there is an anxious feeling of not knowing what will come next. I have been told by many Mexicans that people will not be able or willing to stand for these austerity measures. When I ask what they will do, I get shrugged shoulders. Something must be done, but nobody seems willing to say, or even know, what that something is.

Letter from Marcos

Today I read in *La Jornada* the very moving letter by Subcomandante Marcos "to the men and women, who in different languages and on different paths, believe in a more humane future and struggle to achieve it today." The letter written on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, speaks to the doubts about the effectiveness of "our" struggle that have been expressed. Since Marcos says it most eloquently, I will let his words respond to this hopelessness.

And therefore I write in the name of all of my compañeros y compañeras, because, like in the St. Patrick's Battalion (a battalion of Irish Americans who fought on the Mexican side during the 1846-47 U.S.-Mexican war), we see clearly that there are foreigners who love Mexico more than some nationals who today are in the government and tomorrow in jail or in exile ... And we knew that there were marches and meetings and letters and poems and songs and movies and other things so that there would not be war in Chiapas, which is the part of Mexico where we must live and die. And we knew that it happened like this and that they said "no to the war!" in Spain and in France and in Italy and in Germany and in Russia and in England and in Japan and in Korea and in Canada and in the United States and in Argentina and in Uruguay and in Chile and in Venezuela and in Brazil, and in other parts of the world they didn't say it, but they thought it. And so we saw that there are good people in many parts of the world and that these people live closer to Mexico than those who live in "Los Piños" which is what they call the house where the government of this country lives...

And we want to say thanks to everyone. And to say that if we had a flower, we would give it as a gift, and as we don't have enough flowers for each one, well one will be enough, so that you share it and each one keep a little piece and when you are old, then talk with the children and youth of your country, tell them "I struggled for Mexico at the end of the 20th century and from then on I was with them and I only know that they wanted what all human beings want — and that is, that it not be forgotten that they are human beings, and that is, democracy, liberty, and justice, and that I didn't know their face but I knew their heart and it was the same as ours."

...And now I must go because here comes another watchful plane and I have to blow out the candle, but not the hope. That...has not died.

Surely, we must not lose hope. Let us not be the first to ring the death knell for a movement that has given so much life. □

March 22, 1995

Trotsky Museum in Coyoacán Needs Help

One side effect of the economic crisis in Mexico is that the Museo Casa de Leon Trotsky (the Trotsky Museum in the Russian revolutionary leader's former home) is also facing difficulties. The museum receives a little help from the Mexican government, but much of its support comes from underfunded left groups in Mexico, for whom the financial situation has only become worse. The museum is especially in need of funds to do preservation work on quickly deteriorating documents in the fortresslike last home of Trotsky.

The home, where Trotsky was assassinated in 1940, is fully open to the public. It includes the bullet-riddled bed-

room wall from an earlier, unsuccessful attempt on Trotsky's life.

Many museum staffers are volunteers. The most urgent need is for preservation work on newspapers and other documents that are deteriorating in the soggy climate.

Donations can be sent to:

Museo Casa de Leon Trotsky
Instituto del Derecho de Asilo y las Libertades Públicas
Av. Rio Churubusco #410
Col. del Carmen, Coyoacán
CP 04100
DF, Mexico
Phone (525) 658-8732, or
Fax (525) 554-0687

Remove All False Charges Against Chinese Trotskyists

by Zhang Kai

The following article is reprinted, with minor changes for reasons of style, from the October 31, 1994, issue of *October Review*, a mostly Chinese-language Fourth Internationalist publication, produced in Hong Kong.

The article provides an interesting parallel with the materials in recent issues of *BIDOM* relating to the first-ever Moscow conference on Trotsky and the fight against the "new school of falsification."

After half a century of false allegations against the Chinese Trotskyists as "traitors" and "Japanese agents," the Chinese Communist Party has taken steps in its publications to remove such allegations in a "characteristically Chinese" way.

The first move was taken on September 20, 1981, when the *People's Daily* [organ of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)] deleted the following line in its reprint of Mao Zedong's speech at the memorial meeting on the anniversary of Lu Xun's death:

It is by now obvious that the Trotskyists have become a traitor organization and are directly receiving subsidies from Japanese secret agents.

Mao said this on October 10, 1937, and the speech was published in No. 3 of the 1938 issue of *July*. The fact that this line was deleted by the *People's Daily* five years after Mao's death must have been [the result of] a decision by the top CCP leadership.

Quiet Correction of False Charges

The CCP's quiet correction of the false allegations is more obviously seen in *The Collected Works of Mao Zedong*, 2d edition, 1991, Vol. 2, p. 516, footnote 6:

During the resistance war against Japan, the Trotskyists advocated resistance in their propaganda work, though they attacked the Chinese Communist Party for its united front policy of resistance. [The CCP under Mao actually pursued a class collaborationist "popular front" policy of alliance with the bourgeois reactionary Kuomintang, not just a united front of worker, peasant, and anti-imperialist groups. — *BIDOM Eds.*] The charge that the Trotskyists were traitors was a result of the wrong assertion at the time in the Comintern alleging that the Chinese Trotskyists were connected with the secret agents of the Japanese imperialists.

The above footnote was a positive statement in regard to the following admissions: (1) that during the war against Japan, the Trotskyists advocated resistance; (2) that it was a "wrong assertion" on the part of the CCP to allege that the Trotskyists were "bandits and traitors" serving Japanese secret agents; (3) that such a mistaken charge "was a result of" the position of the Comintern (then dominated by Joseph Stalin), and was not based on any evidence; and

(4) that it was slander against political opponents, applying Stalin's slander against Trotsky and Trotskyists to China. (Many years earlier the Soviet Union had announced that there was no evidence supporting the Moscow trials. [They had all been based on forced "confessions."] It would be difficult for the CCP to hang on to these false allegations.

Charges First Made in 1937–38

According to the CCP, the first ones to allege that the Trotskyists were "bandits and traitors" were Kang Sheng and Chen Shaoyu (Wang Ming), who returned from Moscow. The "earliest" published allegation appeared in Kang Sheng's article in *Liberation Weekly* on January 28 and February 8, 1938. The article, entitled "Eliminate Trotskyist Bandits Who Are Japanese Spies and the Public Enemy of the Chinese People," alleged that

Japanese agents in Shanghai, through the introduction of the pro-Japanese Tang Youren, conducted cooperation negotiations with the Trotskyist bandit "party central" composed of Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzhi, Luo Han, and others... The outcome of the negotiation was: The Trotskyist bandits "would not stand in the way of Japanese invasion of China," and Japan would give the "Trotskyist party central" 300 dollars every month as subsidy... The Japanese subsidy was collected by Luo Han, Head of Organization of Chen Duxiu's Trotskyist party central. [Note: These are exactly the kind of bizarre charges Soviet Communists were tortured into "confessing" to in the purges accompanying the Moscow Trials of 1936–38. — *BIDOM Eds.*]

Kang Sheng was at that time an important figure in the CCP central leadership, and from then on, the label of "traitor" was added to the names of Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzhi, and the Chinese Trotskyists in general.

Objections to the Charges

The allegation aroused objection from many people at the time, including Fu Xinian, Wang Xinggong, and Chen Junru, who said that people should not arbitrarily be called names. Chen Duxiu and others also wrote open letters demanding concrete evidence from Kang Sheng to support the allegations. The CCP publications replied by saying that Chen Duxiu should come up with evidence to disprove the allegation.

In the CCP Political Bureau meeting of December 1937, Wang Ming said, "Even if Chen Duxiu is not a Japanese agent, he should be portrayed as a Japanese agent." (See *Research Materials on CCP History*, compiled by the Party History Research Center of the Museum on the Chinese Revolution, Volume 2, pp. 167–171.)

That such unfounded allegations were widely propagated in the CCP and throughout China for so many years is a responsibility of the entire CCP leadership, though now the responsibility is loaded onto Kang Sheng and Wang Ming.

Decades of Lies

From then on, the CCP used this allegation to assault Trotskyists and their resistance organizations. Both the CCP and the Kuomintang targeted the Trotskyists as "traitors" and eliminated Trotskyist-led armed forces. Many people sacrificed their lives and more suffered infamy. The lies were sustained for several decades.

Since 1978, various pressures have come to bear on the CCP to rehabilitate many of its victims. Today the allegation of "traitor" has been removed by the CCP. However, the "counterrevolutionary" allegation has not been completely removed. In *The Collected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1 (1952, 1st ed.), p. 152, the footnote said:

The Trotskyist clique was initially an anti-Leninist current in the Russian workers' movement, and later degraded to a totally counterrevolutionary bandit gang... It is "a gang of unprincipled, unthinking assassins, saboteurs, spies, murderers, a bandit gang employed by foreign agents and is the deadly enemy of the working class"... In China there are also a handful of Trotskyists, and they formed a small counterrevolutionary clique in 1929, spreading counterrevolutionary propaganda, and it is entirely a dirty instrument of the imperialist and Kuomintang, working against the people...

In the 1947 edition of *Ci Hai* (The Great Dictionary), published by the China Bookstore, the explanation of "Trotsky" is "an agent bought up by the imperialists, treacherous in betraying the interest of the state of the USSR" (p. 560).

In the third year after the CCP seized state power, all Trotskyists in China were arrested on the charge of "counterrevolution." Sympathizers of Trotskyism were also arrested. Some were jailed for over a quarter of a century.

Jailed Trotskyists Released — But Charges Still Stand

Now the last batch of Trotskyists held in jail have been released, yet the charge of "counterrevolution" has not been officially removed. However, the most flagrantly unfounded charges against Trotskyists are disappearing from official publications. For example, in the 1979 edition of *Ci Hai*, published by the Shanghai Ci Hai Press, the "counterrevolutionary" charges against Trotsky are dropped, and only the milder slanders that Trotsky was against Lenin and had bad ideas remain. (See pp. 665–666.)

Continued on page 22

Defense of the Cuban Revolution: An Analysis and Conclusions

by T. Archer

Thirty-five years ago, the Cuban masses threw off the oppressive yoke of neocolonialism, claiming their island's natural resources and national wealth for themselves. They replaced a chaotic and haphazard market economy with a nationally planned economy. The social wealth of Cuba was then utilized to create a system of free medical care for all and free education through the university level, as well as to eliminate unemployment, hunger, and homelessness. The Cuban workers and peasants embarked on the creation of a society that puts human needs and solidarity before profits.

The oppressed masses throughout the world have looked to the Cuban revolution as a symbol of hope and an example to emulate.

The U.S. government has used every coercive means imaginable in attempting to overturn the Cuban revolution. Numerous botched assassination attempts, armed invasion, industrial sabotage, and from 1962 to the present an incessant propaganda campaign coupled with an economic blockade, were aimed at demoralizing the population of this tiny island nation. This deliberate brutal assault on the Cuban people is driven by the need of the multinational corporations to have free reign throughout the world, and more specifically the need of U.S. big business to dominate the economies of countries in the Western hemisphere.

1962–1989

In spite of the U.S.-imposed economic blockade, the Cuban economy grew from 1962 to 1989. The Cubans were able to trade with the former Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc countries. While this commerce reduced the immediate threat to the revolution posed by the economic blockade, it forced the Cubans to accept aspects of the Soviet governmental and industrial model. The resulting bureaucratization and centralization of decision making was also a threat to the revolution, but of a different type. In 1985, the Cuban leadership recognized some of the dangers posed by the Soviet model and began a discussion and a process of moving back toward workers democracy.

During this period, the U.S. capitalists' fear of the military power of the former Soviet Union and the obvious willingness of the Cuban masses to defend their new society kept the jackals of U.S. capitalism at bay, reducing any real threat to the island's autonomy. At the same time, there were numerous left groups in the U.S. that supported and defended the Cuban revolution. This primarily took the form of organized contingents of U.S. radicals traveling to Cuba for cultural exchange and to take part in different work projects, such as harvesting

sugar cane and doing construction work. Additionally, the press of much of the U.S. left printed speeches of Cuban leaders and revealed the details of Cuban society in an attempt to counter the widely accepted lies printed in the establishment press.

1989 to Mid-1994

The collapse of the bureaucratized Communist Party governments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, from 1989 through 1991, had a devastating effect on the Cuban economy. By early 1994, the Cuban GNP had dropped by 70 percent. There were shortages of virtually all commodities and many foodstuffs, as well as pharmaceutical and medical supplies.

Reduction in oil imports caused the curtailment of the production of electricity. This, in turn, caused the closure of some factories and reduced operating hours at others. The shortage of fuel severely effected public transport in the cities. The lack of pesticides, spare parts, and fuel resulted in smaller harvests than had been seen in many years.

These general conditions and shortages led to the increased development of a black market. Trading in dollars became quite common. Black market prices were 10–20 times higher than in the state-run enterprises, if not more. The Cuban government pursued international investment in tourism and other joint venture projects to alleviate some of these conditions. Throughout this time of economic hardship, known in Cuba as the "special period," the process of political change begun in 1985 continued and grew. Neighborhood and workplace councils were formed to discuss the political and economic issues. The Cuban people became more involved in the decision-making process in their country than at any other time in the last 30 years.

Two things happened in the U.S. with regard to Cuba during this same period. First, there was a movement to the right in the policy of the U.S. government toward Cuba. The Torricelli bill, which tightened the blockade, was passed by a Democratic Congress and a Republican administration in hopes that the Cuban government would crumble under this pressure. Second, there was also a small but vocal grass roots movement supporting the right of the Cuban people to choose their own form of government and opposing U.S. government policy toward Cuba. While there were a number of groups working in support of Cuba, the most effective on a national level was Pastors for Peace.

Pastors for Peace

Through acts of civil disobedience and hunger strikes coupled with humanitarian aid caravans,

Pastors for Peace attempted to change U.S. policy toward Cuba by appealing to morality, which is in short supply among the capitalist politicians in Washington, but not so rare among the American people. The Friendship caravans have provided 525 tons of humanitarian aid to the people of Cuba. More importantly, the organizing of these caravans has sparked an incipient mass movement in opposition to U.S. policy toward Cuba. Caravan organizing took place in 150 cities across the U.S. In many of these cities, ongoing coalitions formed. Participating in these coalitions, were a new layer of labor, Black, Hispanic, women, student, and religious activists, as well as many members of left organizations and radicals from the '60s and '70s. In many cities the coalitions went beyond the building of the caravans. Teach-ins, conferences, and demonstrations against U.S. policy toward Cuba were organized.

During this same period, a handful of organizations opposed to U.S. Cuba policy saw the need to begin sharing information and experiences and supporting each other's campaigns where possible. This prompted the formation of the National Network on Cuba. The Network functioned for a number of years as primarily a clearing house for the exchange of information. By mid-1994, the Network had grown to include 60 member organizations in the U.S.

Mid-1994 to the Present

The pressure the economic hardships have put on the Cuban people was evidenced last July when thousands took to the seas in rafts, hoping to come to the U.S., which they imagined to be "the land of milk and honey." Thousands of Cubans had fallen prey to the seductive propaganda broadcast by the U.S. government. Under the pressure of an illegal and inhumane blockade, tightened after the fall of the Soviet Union, many felt that leaving Cuba would improve their economic condition. The Clinton administration recognized that this new wave of potential immigrants consisted not so much of political as of economic refugees. It had them intercepted and held in concentration camps at Guantánamo and in Panama.

The U.S. government also used the pretext of this "immigration crisis" to tighten the blockade. The already severe restrictions on travel to Cuba were increased — for example, Cubans living in the U.S. were no longer allowed to send money to their relatives in Cuba.

In spite of the intensified economic pressure applied by Washington, there were signs in the last half of 1994 that the plummeting Cuban economy was beginning to stabilize. The food shortages in the cities were not as severe. The introduction of the agricultural free markets increased the availability of fresh produce in the cities. While the prices were still higher than in the state stores, the exorbitant black market food prices had been eliminated. By the end of 1994, Cuba had attracted \$1.5 billion in joint venture capital from overseas. Many U.S. capitalists began to openly question the policy of blockade, their hate for Cuba being outweighed by

Gallup Poll In Cuba

First Independent Poll in More than 30 Years

This article is reprinted from *Cuba Update*, February-March 1995.

CID-Gallup, a Costa Rican firm associated with The Gallup Organization, sent 14 poll-takers to Cuba in November to take the first independent and scientific poll known to have been done in Cuba in more than 30 years. They asked 46 questions of 1,002 adults. Although the survey design called for 1,200 respondents, the survey team assigned to the eastern third of Cuba was barred by officials from carrying out its work, according to *The Miami Herald*, which commissioned the poll. Thus the results of the interviews represent the opinions of Cubans in the western two-thirds of Cuba, 75% of the total population. The results of this kind of poll should be within plus or minus 3 percentage points of the results that would be obtained by interviewing all adults in the regions covered.

According to the poll, 26% of the respondents had attended university. Seventy-six percent of those interviewed were white, 22% black. In terms of work, 16% identified themselves as professionals, 16% as laborers, 13% as housewives, 9% each as retired or skilled workers, 8% as office workers, 5% each as students or retail/tourism work, 2% farmers, 1% military. Twelve percent were either not working or looking for work. A whopping 78% of the respondents own their own homes. Only 11% described themselves as Communists, 10% as Socialists, but 48% as Revolutionary; 24% said they were not integrated into the revolution.

Twenty percent had attended church in the previous month; 36% had attended a political meeting. And 36% answered "every week" when asked how frequently "you and your neighbors gather to dance, listen to music or chat"; 18% said "at least once a month." Sixty percent said that they believe that in general "the well-being of the Cuban people will improve in 1995," and 18% believe it will worsen.

Among the most interesting questions and answers were the following:

In your opinion, what is the most serious problem facing Cuba? The U.S. embargo, 31%. Lack of food, 25%. Economy in general, 17%. Energy crisis, 8%. Lack of medicines, 3%. Political situation, 3%.

Speaking of economic reforms which you have seen in this country in the past year, which is the most important? Farmer/agricultural markets, 51%. Self-employment, 16%. Dollarization, 14%. Farming cooperatives, 7%. New taxes, 3%.

The government is allowing certain foreigners to set up enterprises in this country. Do you agree with that action? A great

deal, 61%. Somewhat, 20%. Not at all, 9%. Little, 4%.

If the Cuban government authorized Cuban citizens to set up their own businesses, how interested would you be in setting one up? A great deal, 38%. Not at all, 34%. Somewhat, 15%. Little, 7%.

Today, here in Cuba, do you believe that your needs have been met in regard to:

Food? Fully met, 27%. Somewhat met, 27%. Just a little, 25%. Not at all, 21%.

Health? Fully, 50%. Somewhat, 25%. Little, 13%. Not at all, 10%.

Education? Fully, 72%. Somewhat, 17%. Little, 4%. Not at all, 4%.

When you take into account the achievements and failures of the revolution, do you believe that, on balance, there are more failures or more achievements? More achievements, 58%. More failures, 31%.

When you think about the Cuban Revolution, what do you think has been the revolution's major achievement for you and your family? Education, 29%. Health services, 14%. Freedom, 12%. Equality, 9%. Political system, the revolution, 6%.

When asked about "the principal failure of the Cuban Revolution," 46% didn't know or didn't respond, and there was little agreement among the rest, who mentioned "having depended on socialist countries like Russia which betrayed us" (12%), "poor economy" (7%), "government" (3%), "no rights" (3%), "no liberty" (3%), "no food" (3%), "the embargo" (3%), "everything" (3%), and various other failures in smaller percentages.

On the question of race, 90% do not believe that "in Cuba, a person's race or color affects his/her opportunities and treatment" and more than 90% "believe that persons of color have the same access as whites to a good education [94%], a good job [90%], a position in society [91%]."

When *The Miami Herald* published the results of the poll, the vociferous Cuban exiles on the right shouted "foul!" insisting that it was impossible to imagine that 58% of Cubans would think the revolution had more achievements than failures, or that 69% would identify themselves closely with the revolution. In an ironic twist, the final results were probably skewed "against" the revolution, if anything, since the eastern third of Cuba, where the pollsters were barred, includes Cuba's second largest city, Santiago de Cuba, known as "the cradle of the revolution," and the former Oriente Province, known for its revolutionary fervor.

— Sandra Levinson

their thirst for profits and concern about competition. Several bourgeois newspapers, including the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* and *Time* magazine (February 20), have run editorials calling for an end to the blockade. For the first time in five years, the 1994 economic report did not show a shrinking in the Cuban economy. In fact, a growth rate of 0.7 percent was realized in 1994.

The response of the U.S. left to the "immigration crisis" and the resulting tightening of the blockade was significant. During July and August, local protest meetings and demonstrations were held in cities throughout the country. Pastors for Peace and a dozen or so other organizations met in late August and began planning a national protest demonstration to take place in Washington, D.C., on November 12. The demonstration was scheduled to coincide with the arrival in Washington of over 200 vehicles that were part of the fourth Friendship Caravan. In September there was a scheduled meeting of the National Network in Detroit. As we have said, the Network had grown to include 60 member organizations by the time of this meeting. Much of the discussion at the meeting in Detroit centered around the building of the November 12 demonstration. There was also discussion of establishing an ongoing mass movement which could force the U.S. government to end the economic blockade of Cuba.

That same weekend in Windsor, Ontario, a trade union conference in solidarity with Cuba took place. The conference was organized by the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and Worker to Worker (a Cuba solidarity organization in the Canadian labor movement). The conference was attended by hundreds of trade unionists and activists from Canada, the U.S., and Cuba. Again, the November 12 demonstration was a major point of discussion. On November 12, approximately 5,000 people marched in Washington to support the Cuban people's right to choose their own form of government without U.S. interference, demanding the U.S. government end the 32-year economic blockade.

In Havana, the week of November 20-27, a conference of international solidarity with Cuba was attended by more than 3,000 delegates from 5 continents. The U.S. delegation numbered more than 300. The conference condemned U.S. policy toward Cuba. Among the resolutions passed was one calling for a "World Day of Solidarity with Cuba" on October 14, 1995. The conference also called for a "Support for Cuba Day" on May 19, 1995, the centennial of the death of José Martí.

The National Network on Cuba met again in New York February 11-12, 1995. Nine more organizations were accepted into membership, raising the total to 69. The resolutions from the Havana conference were discussed, as well as many other issues. In concert with the resolutions passed in Havana, the Network issued a call for regional demonstrations to take place on October 14, 1995. Demanding an end to the blockade, demonstrations will be built in New York, Chicago, and either San Francisco or Los

Angeles. Also, there may be a demonstration in an important Southern city. In addition, the Network voted to designate the period from April 7 through May 19 as a month to "tell the truth about Cuba." Local organizing for teach-ins, forums, travel to Cuba, and other activities is already under way. Much of the discussion around these activities dealt with how best to build the October 14 demonstration. The Network organizations will also be supporting and building the fifth Friendship Caravan in June of 1995.

A Turning Point

The February meeting of the Network marked a turning point in the development of a mass movement to end the blockade against Cuba. In the past the Network had primarily been a clearing house for the exchange of information, or has been in the position of endorsing events called by member organizations and ad hoc coalitions. This has had the affect of keeping many of the activities somewhat narrow. This weakness was discussed by the participants in the February meeting. Subsequently, the Network, as the most authoritative voice in the Cuba solidarity movement in the U.S., has

called for a series of activities for 1995 culminating in regional mass actions in October.

The growth and evolution of the National Network on Cuba has been driven primarily by the worsening conditions in Cuba. The economic crisis in Cuba over the last 5 years has prodded ever broader forces into working together in a united front to defend the Cuban people against the attacks of the U.S. government. Revolutionary socialists, and others in the Network, have been explaining and arguing for the need for building a broad-based movement independent of both capitalist parties and their politicians. A movement that advances slogans that can reach the largest numbers of people and not compromise on the position that the U.S. has no right to interfere in the affairs of the Cuban nation.

Cuba is not doomed to the fate of the former Soviet Union, but neither is the continued existence of the gains of the revolution guaranteed. Nowhere in the international class struggle today are the lines more clearly drawn. And nowhere are the immediate dangers to the working class and its allies more grave. The U.S. imperialists have clearly set as their goal the overthrow of the Cuban workers' state and a return

to the days of the domination of Cuba by foreign capital. The Cuban workers and peasants are valiantly defending the gains of their revolution against the brutal attacks of the U.S. What is needed now is a mass movement, both in the U.S. and internationally, demanding the U.S. government keep its hands off Cuba.

Defense of the Cuban revolution is no longer a theoretical question to be debated, but is now one of the burning issues of the international class struggle. Revolutionary socialists should be leading the fight to defend the Cuban workers state by actively participating in local coalitions and the National Network on Cuba. We can advance a political program that is capable of leading the movement to victory. This means following a strategy and tactics that will not only maintain the movement's independence from the capitalist political structure but will also help shape the class consciousness of the participants.

**U.S. Hands off Cuba!
End the U.S. Economic Blockade of Cuba!
Build the National Network on Cuba!
Build the October 14 Demonstrations! □**

U.S. Labor Delegation to Cuba, April-May

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange is sponsoring a labor delegation to Cuba to participate in a labor seminar on HIV/AIDS infection and treatment in Cuba, to be held in Havana from April 29 to May 7, 1995. The seminar will be hosted by the confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC). The delegation is cosponsored by the Indiana-Iowa District of 1199 Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, SEIU, AFL-CIO.

The seminar includes such topics as "Epidemiology of HIV infection," "Living with HIV/AIDS — psychological issues," "The role of nurses in the care of people with HIV/AIDS," "Care of women living with HIV," and "Herbal medicine in the treatment of HIV/AIDS in Cuba."

Effects of Blockade

A flyer from the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange states that the seminar will provide an opportunity for participants "to learn about the effects of the U.S. blockade on Cuban workers."

[You] will witness...how the Cubans have been working hard to preserve the gains they have made in health care and education, which have been praised by international

organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization... [You will] see first hand how Cuba is caring for patients with HIV/AIDS and how it is researching cures despite the intense blockade by the U.S.

For further information write U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange at P.O. Box 39188, Redford, MI 48239, phone (313) 836-3752, or fax (313) 836-3752.

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange is an organization of U.S. trade unionists and workers which was founded in mid-1991 with the aim of ending the blockade of Cuba, free exchanges between workers in the U.S. and Cuba, respecting the sovereignty of Cuba, and working with others to build a broad Cuba solidarity movement.

Since its beginning the Labor Exchange has organized 9 successful labor delegations to Cuba, all hosted by the CTC. The Exchange organizes 2 labor delegations to Cuba each year, with the purpose of giving American workers the opportunity to see the reality of Cuba first hand.

In addition to leading trade union delegations to Cuba, the Labor Exchange has organized two conferences with Cuban trade

unionists, one in Ontario in 1993 and a recent one in Windsor, Canada (adjacent to Detroit). Both conferences were originally scheduled to be held in the United States, but the State Department refused to grant visas to the Cuban unionists.

Union Resolutions Against the Blockade

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange has also been leading the campaign to pass union resolutions against the blockade of Cuba and supporting the normalization of relations with Cuba. Since the start, major resolutions have been passed by labor organizations in the U.S., including AFSCME International, SEIU International, Newspaper Guild International, ILWU International, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), United Electrical Workers (UE) International, Minnesota State AFL-CIO, Indiana State AFL-CIO, central bodies such as the San Francisco Labor Council of Santa Clara and South Bay Counties (California), the South Central Federation of Labor (Wisconsin), and many union districts and locals, such as 1199 Hospital Workers (Indiana-Iowa District) and United Auto Workers Local 2320.

Sri Lanka, Economic Development, and Grass-Roots Struggle

by D.A. Jayawardana

The following is the text of a presentation given at the University of Pittsburgh, February 2, 1995.

I am very happy to be able to speak about my native country, Sri Lanka. It is a very beautiful island in the Indian Ocean, consisting of more than 25,000 square miles, with a population of 18 million. Some people have called it the pearl of the Indian Ocean. The people of my country are being threatened by the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). There is a struggle against these policies in my country that I want to tell you about. World Bank and IMF policies have, since the 1970s, brought terrible disasters to Sri Lanka — and also to many other parts of the world. My hope in speaking to you is to help build understanding about the need for a worldwide campaign against these destructive policies. First, however, I want to give you a little more information about my country.

There are different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese-speaking population is the majority. Tamils and Muslims are minorities. From 1815 to 1948, Sri Lanka was a British colony. The economy of Sri Lanka is predominantly agricultural. About 70 percent of the population are farmers, mostly subsistence farmers, who grow food for their own consumption. The major cash crops in the past were tea, coconuts, and rubber. Many non-agricultural workers were engaged in processing these agricultural products.

Since 1977 major economic changes have been introduced; the entire country has been turned into a free trade zone. This has resulted in the introduction of new cash crops that are profitable for multinational corporations, such as tobacco, eggplants, and small cucumbers for gherkin pickles. It has also turned more and more people into poorly-paid factory workers in new industries. About 15 percent of the labor force (mostly women) are engaged in producing such things as garments, shoes, and plastics, as well as working in assembly plants that put together many different things, including men's razors, ballpoint pens, batteries, and automobiles.

Political Parties

Since independence the form of government has been a parliamentary system. There are a number of political parties in Sri Lanka. The two biggest parties are the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) — both of which embrace capitalist economic development. The UNP is a right-wing party, and the SLFP has a history of favoring social reforms. About the same size as each of these two parties are the two parties of the left, which consist of three or four organizations. One is the

Communist Party (CP). Another is the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP): the words mean "Lanka Equality Party." This was once a revolutionary socialist party following the ideas of Leon Trotsky. In the 1960s and '70s it became a more moderate, reformist party. There is also the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP — the New Equality Party), which formed in 1977 to carry on the revolutionary tradition, and which I will tell you more about in a few moments. Finally there is the Jamatha Vimukthi Peramuna (the JVP — People's Liberation Front), which is different from the others because it has used violence against other left-wing parties. Started by militant young people in the 1960s, it first engaged in guerrilla warfare, but since the late '80s it has participated in elections.

In addition to all of these parties, there are three other political groups that are important. One is the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP — People's United Federation), which is a Sinhalese Buddhist organization that favors racist policies against the Tamil and Muslim minorities. Another is the Muslim Congress, which wants to establish a Muslim government on the east coast of Sri Lanka, where there are high concentrations of Muslims. The last group I want to mention is the Tamil Tigers. This group does not participate in elections but engages in guerrilla warfare and terrorist activities for the purpose of creating a separate government for the Tamil minority.

My own party is the NSSP. We are socialists, which means we are for the majority of people taking hold of the economy for the benefit of those who labor — the workers, farmers, and poor. We follow the ideas of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky. The NSSP is an offspring of the old Lanka Sama Samaja Party. We organized it in opposition to the LSSP's coalition tactics. The LSSP joined with the capitalist parties at the expense of revolutionary principles. The NSSP has about 3,000 members, mostly laborers. Peasants, youth, women, and students are also among its members. Several union leaders and leaders of mass social movements are also in my party. In 1980 we organized a general strike because of the sharply rising cost of living. At that time the UNP government rejected the demands for wage and salary increases, and thousands of workers were fired from their jobs. Some workers committed suicide because they could not feed their families.

In 1983 our party was suppressed by the government, and we were forced to work underground. For nearly two years we worked like that. We had to work against the UNP govern-

ment since we started the party. The UNP was in power from 1977 until November 1994. In that period it carried out what is called "the open economic policy." (I will discuss that policy in a few minutes.) In 1988, because of a change in the country's constitution, seven provincial councils were established, and we formed an election front — the United Socialist Alliance — with the LSSP, the CP, and the SLMP (a left-wing split-off from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, which abstained from the elections). The Alliance, headed by former President Chandrika Bandaranayaka Kumarathunga, became the primary opposition to the UNP government. The JVP and Tamil Tigers assassinated provincial council candidates and supporters, including members of my party, but five NSSP members were elected, including myself.

No to Government Terrorism

I want to add something that I hope will give you a sense of the kind of party the NSSP is. During this election campaign, the government offered us weapons to use against those who were trying to kill us. They hoped that we would become involved, along with the police and the army, in helping to kill these rebellious young people who were driven to violent tactics. While we took measures to protect our comrades, we refused to participate in the government's campaign. The kinds of young people who are drawn to the JVP will be important to the future of our country, and we want to relate to them. Instead of trying to kill them, we worked to save their lives from the government forces. Not only JVP militants, but also innocent people, were victimized by the government. We worked with Amnesty International and others to stop human rights abuses, which included the disappearance of 60,000 young people. We also organized the Organization of Parents and Family Members of the Disappeared.

The "Open Economic System"

But now I want to focus more closely on the government's "open economic system" and the policies of the World Bank and the IMF. As you know, the World Bank and the IMF are financial institutions established after the Second World War to regulate the process of borrowing and lending on an international scale. Established to prevent any repeat of the financial collapse that resulted in the Great Depression, both the World Bank and the IMF have consistently acted to promote the interests of the major corporations from the advanced industrial countries. In recent years this has involved the imposition of

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A Maoist Current's Changing View of Conditions in India

“Revolutionary Movements Must Take Root in Their Own Countries, Instead of Relying on an Outside Force”

Interview with B. Sivaranan

In 1967 a peasant uprising in the district of Naxalbari in West Bengal sparked agrarian struggles throughout India and gave the name “Naxalite” to a host of armed groups which under the banner of “Mao Zedong Thought” aimed to replicate the strategy of revolution in China under Indian conditions. Around 60 such groups developed, and they engaged in attacks against each other’s cadres as vigorously as they did against the private armies of landlords and the police.

More recently there has been a process of recomposition and regroupment within the “Marxist-Leninist” component of the Indian Communist movement. One of the five main groups, and the one that has evolved in a healthy direction, is the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation), which is sometimes associated with the name of its central leader Vinod Aishra.

BIDOM supporter B. Skanthakumar interviewed a member of the Political Bureau of this party, Comrade B. Sivaranan. The interview was conducted in London on May 13 of last year. The text sent us by Comrade Skanthakumar has been edited somewhat for reasons of style and length.

Q.: Can you explain why there has been an upsurge in worker militancy in India?

A.: All over India, going beyond trade union limits, direct political action by the working class has been on the upswing. For instance, in the last two years we have had three general strikes and on May 12 [1994], there was a massive strike by bank employees. On April 5 more than 200,000 workers laid siege to the Indian Parliament, and 69 workers were seriously injured. This was in opposition to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). The earlier general strikes were directed against the New Economic Policy (NEP), which the Congress government has been following.

Q.: Why was the New Economic Policy introduced and what are its implications?

A.: We are in the fourth year of a structural adjustment program dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 1989–90 there was an acute economic crisis. There was a crisis on the balance of payments front and also runaway inflation, which reached 18.3 percent, very high by Indian standards. Against this backdrop the administration of Narasimha Rao went in for a drastic overhaul of industrial and economic policies and came up with this “NEP.”

Throughout the 1980s we had an average of 8 percent industrial growth and 6 percent growth in the GDP (gross domestic product), which was quite high compared to the previous three decades. But this growth was fueled by massive external and internal borrowing. By 1989–90 external borrowing had reached approximately U.S.\$33 billion, and this has now almost doubled. They built up a bubble and the bubble burst. So the crisis was partly structural and partly cyclical.

Economy Opened to Foreign Capital

In the name of tackling this crisis they opened up the economy completely for foreign investment and called for liberalization of the economy and privatization of banks and other public sector units, for the closure of money-losing public sector units, and most importantly for a policy of “hire and fire.” In India we used to have relative job security: employees couldn’t be fired arbitrarily. The government doesn’t want even this minimal job security for workers, and they call this the “exit” policy. Because of this opening up to the globalization of capital, a process of restructuring, rationalization, and “flexibilization” is under way in Indian industry. So this is the background against which the upsurge in worker militancy is taking place.

On the one hand, you come across massive all-India strikes by sections of the working class which have a national character, like service sector workers. For example, bank employees have had four strikes in the past year. There was a postal strike and a strike by railway workers and other central government employees for an increase in wages. Apart from banks, there was a strike by insurance workers, and they are continuing their agitation.

On the other hand, you come across different types of struggles in “sunset” industries, like textiles, jute, etc., where technology is outmoded and employers are suddenly shifting over to new areas of production and trying to close down these industries, intending to sell them off as real estate assets.

So here new forms of struggle are developing, like factory occupations. There have been the Victoria and Kanoria jute workers struggles, and many solidarity actions in support of them. These issues become political, and the workers try to sustain them for prolonged periods in various ingenious forms. Between these two extremes you come across large numbers of smaller struggles, small brushfires in factories

and the engineering sector on a whole range of demands related to the restructuring under the NEP.

Q.: As you mentioned earlier, there have been massive protests against GATT. What will its impact on India be?

A.: GATT will cause major disruptions. Apart from the general crisis associated with “Green Revolution” techniques, we have not had a serious agrarian crisis since the late 1960s. We could have a very explosive situation with GATT. More than 250 million Indians come under the category of small and medium farmers, tilling between 1 and 3 hectares of land. In this category there is going to be a sharp polarization because of the open market. The differentiation of the peasantry in India, which was very, very slow — unlike in the West — is now going to happen rapidly. This will be a painful process.

There will be free movement of food grains from one state to another. So, for example, in the event of free movement of rice from Andhra Pradesh state to Kerala, this will totally ravage cultivation in the latter state, where wage levels are almost 50 percent higher than in the former state. Last year the government allowed free export of cotton, and cotton prices went up by 30 percent, yarn prices went up by 30–40 percent, and millions of hand loom weavers couldn’t afford to buy yarn. There were deaths by starvation among hand weavers in Andhra Pradesh state. Our party related this to GATT, and the weavers understood this immediately. In another example, two years ago coconut prices crashed from 6 rupees to 2 in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and other places.

Q.: Only 35 percent of the Indian working class is organized, and the trade union movement is fragmented along party political, craft, and factory-based lines. What

steps have been taken for joint action by left trade unions?

A.: The left trade unions have come together to form a "Sponsoring Committee of Left Trade Unions" on the national level. We are a part of that. The two main trade unions there are the Centre of Indian Trades Unions (CITU) and the All India Trades Union Congress (AITUC). These are the trade unions, respectively, of the [pro-Moscow] Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M). Some other small unions linked with left parties also participate.

There is a lot of fervor from below, and militant action undertaken by rank-and-file workers. One weakness is that the AITUC and the CITU ceased to be revolutionary trade unions a long time back and have become huge bureaucratic apparatuses steeped in the spirit of social democracy. The only experience they have had is to organize wage struggles in a very simplistic way — militant economism.

A single union may not necessarily mean fighting unity of the workers, and a multiplicity of unions may not always mean a division of the workers. As a point of principle our party does stand for the broadest possible unity and, in the long run, for a single left trade union. However, through forming our own trade union, the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICTU), we have been able to push forward this idea of unity. Most of the workers under our leadership are organized in small and medium-sized industries, and in large industries we still work as a radical current within the large trade union federations. The traditional trade unions have not been able to cope with the new challenges in the wake of structural adjustment.

People think that the working class in India is on the defensive. That is not true. Workers fight their way every inch and have resisted employers' plans successfully. On the whole, compared to the 1980s, there is a new upsurge in the Indian working class, and it is trying to assert itself as an independent political force and as an important actor among the various social classes which are on the move.

Q.: Hindu communalism and its electoral arm, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has been identified by the Indian left as a major campaigning target, particularly after the destruction of a mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992 and the wave of anti-Muslim riots after that. What should the left be doing?

A.: Communal forces are temporarily down, but not out. They were defeated in several state legislature elections in 1993, including three of the four states they were previously governing. But they have managed to retain about 33 percent of the popular vote in some of these states, and they can bounce back at any time. From our point of view, the rise of the right-wing fascist communal forces is related to the economic crisis I mentioned earlier. As the crisis deepens these forces get a new lease on life.

At one level this electoral defeat is due to a social backlash, in which lower castes rallied in a populist reactionary formation against upper caste forces in the BJP. So social polarization turned out to be crucial, but as we have seen, reactionary populist forces are going to give a stiff fight in the long run. This social mobilization is important for us as well, but what is more important is to engage in class mobilization and win over middle peasants from the influence of these communalist forces. What is needed is a powerful ideological and political offensive with an emphasis on mobilization of certain social classes. Along the way we have scored some notable successes.

Compared to other sectors of the left, we have been so aggressive that 7,000 of our comrades were arrested in Uttar Pradesh state, the BJP fortress. Also we defeated their student organization at three universities in that state, as well as at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Here our main differences with the CPI (M) and the CPI is that in their struggle they try to go behind bourgeois centrist forces, they lionize bourgeois centrist leaders, saying that left forces are too weak to take on communal fascist forces. Ultimately the logic boils down to saying, "We are weak and hence must resort to this approach" — but it is an approach that is only going to make the left weaker. So it is going to be a vicious circle.

Q.: What is your assessment of the mainstream Communist parties of India?

A.: The Communist Party of India (CPI) is the former pro-Moscow outfit and after the Soviet Union's collapse this party is facing a very serious internal crisis. Important sections of this party are going over to the bourgeois camp. In Uttar Pradesh, the CPI state leader has joined a bourgeois centrist reactionary party. At the CPI's last congress they shifted to social democratic positions, abandoning Marxism as a theoretical basis, even formally. They have declared their mass organizations autonomous from the party, and they have merged their trade union with the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HKS), a union led by social democrats. This is a steady march toward self-destruction, because in India social democracy can't work. It is a crisis of survival for this party, and they are fast fading into insignificance.

This leaves only the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) as the two main poles in the Communist movement. The CPI (M) is well known for having run a state government in West Bengal for the past 15 years, and earlier in the state of Kerala. This tactic of running a government within the existing power structure has become the main bone of contention within the Indian left, and this is going to be the main issue dividing the Indian left in the years to come.

For the sake of political unity the CPI (M) says that we should give up the right to independent mass mobilization against the government, which as revolutionary Communists we can never accept. In fact this "left" government

is engaging in anti-people measures. Their main base in rural areas is shifting to rich peasants and middle peasants, and there is large-scale alienation from them among agricultural laborers, who are coming over to our party. In Bardwan district in West Bengal in a panchayat (village council) election we won more than 320 seats, mainly former CPI (M) supporters. So the CPI (M) unleashed a reign of terror against us in a village called Karanda, killing five of our comrades and burning about 80 houses belonging to agricultural laborers. This was something consciously initiated by the CPI (M) leadership at district level.

Communist Party State Governments

We are not against the tactic of Communists forming governments for temporary periods at the state level, but we visualize that through revolutionary reforms these governments will come into violent conflict with the central authority and, if dismissed or otherwise, will become centers of insurrection. Apart from this, there are also important differences of political tactics. The CPI (M) has never formed a government outside of West Bengal and Kerala state since 1967. They have always tail-ended this or that bourgeois party and shun the revolutionary left, because we question this tactic.

Of course, we don't rule out electoral adjustments with sections of the bourgeois opposition in order to avoid three-cornered fights in some constituencies and to concentrate on the main political enemy. However, electoral tactics must be distinguished from programmatic unity with the bourgeois opposition. On the whole the CPI (M) is a party of social democracy under Communist garb. There is an increasing contradiction between the Communist facade and the social democratic essence, and they are facing serious internal crises in their strongholds of Kerala and West Bengal.

Q.: The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) came out from underground after its Fifth Congress in 1992. What made you change your strategy? What is your current strength?

A.: Our party was born in the course of a struggle against modern revisionism, represented by Khrushchev and in the course of the great debate between Mao Zedong and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), amid a worldwide upsurge in radical movement and an acute revolutionary crisis in India, which took the form of an armed peasant struggle in Naxalbari.

Many things have changed since then. Those who did not want to change and remained dogmatists have disintegrated and vanished or are fast losing any influence. Those who changed too far degenerated into social democracy. We have retained essential Marxist-Leninist principles while systematically step by step adapting to the new situation. We made important changes to our tactic of armed struggle. We began putting more emphasis on mass struggles.

We entered the political mainstream, involving ourselves in concrete political struggles, and discarded many of the abstractions and generalizations of the past. We don't want to make a fetish of armed struggle, as some other Marxist-Leninist groups do, in India and elsewhere. Presently we are subordinating our armed actions to the needs of mass political struggles. In our experience, however, there are more comrades with arms today than before, because we stress the formation of militia, arming the people and enabling them to acquire more arms.

India Not Like China

India today is not like the China of the 1920s and 1930s. When we study Indian conditions we see that there are possibilities for worker insurrections. Even in rural areas there are flash points producing armed outbreaks which die down after a week or two. Through these struggles we try to accumulate our armed strength. The final outcome of the Indian revolution will be decided through an armed [insurrection], but in our program we have referred to the possibility, under an exceptional international and national situation, of the central power changing to the hands of revolutionary forces in a *relatively* peaceful manner.

Our party's membership is about 50,000. The combined membership of our peasant associations is about 750,000, out of which in Bihar state there are 450,000. In some places we organize agricultural laborers independently of peasant associations. Our trade union, the AIC-CTU, organizes 160,000 workers. Our student wing, the All India Student Association (IASA), has 60,000 members. In March [1994] we combined our women's organizations to form the All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA), which has 40,000 members. There are two approaches. Among women garment workers and agricultural laborers we emphasize economic issues. And among urban women there are different initiatives on gender-related issues. There is lively dialogue and debate going on among women comrades regarding the emphasis, our priorities, and interaction with other shades of radical feminism.

A Radical Muslim Organization

Amid much apprehension in left circles and within our party we floated a radical Muslim organization, the Inqilabi Muslim Conference. This is a highly unconventional step, one perhaps not known before in the history of the Communist movement. The rise of Hindu communalist forces has seen a powerful onslaught against the Muslim community, and they are facing a serious crisis of survival in India, not just of their cultural identity but of personal survival. In this situation there is a deep-seated sense of insecurity among Muslims. Muslim fundamentalist forces and obscurantists are trying to strengthen their grip on the Muslim masses. Also bourgeois centrist forces are trying to win Muslims over, and to some extent they have succeeded.

In this situation, the CPI (ML) (Liberation), which has a good presence among Muslim artisans, smallholder peasants, and unorganized workers, wanted to respond to this special situation using special forms wherein we try to defend Muslims' cultural identity.

We feel the Muslims should be organized as an oppressed religious community. These experiences are always very complicated, very risky. At the first conference of the Inqilabi Muslim Conference, there were 700 delegates. They debated all these questions, whether the priority should be defending their cultural identity or economic issues or class-related issues. These are healthy debates and there is no point in putting a lid on them. They should go on in a live and highly democratic movement. This particular experiment is being very keenly watched. We will always learn from our mistakes — that we are confident of!

As regards our priorities, at present we are engaged in a national campaign against GATT. We have had a series of political initiatives at the state level, e.g., a rally of 200,000 at Patna. In April [1994] there was a huge rally of agricultural laborers in West Bengal, focusing on the atrocities against them. Also, more than 10,000 people attended a rally in Madras in the southern state of Tamil Nadu to protest the anti-people pressures of the state government. We plan further rallies in other states, taking up local issues. We will also continue to oppose Hindu communalism.

Q.: While the CPI (ML) (Liberation) was underground, party work was conducted through the Indian People's Front (IPF). Necessarily of late there has been a restructuring. What role do you see the IPF playing in the future?

A.: The Indian People's Front (IPF) served a dual purpose. Partly it was a platform to unite with a whole range of democratic forces, various kinds of new social movements, and so on. It was also an open political platform for our party. So this dichotomy was always there. To maintain the ideological and political independence of a Marxist-Leninist party and at the same time to work with all kinds of petty-bourgeois democrats is highly complicated. In the midst of this experiment in the late 1980s some forces within our party came up with the position that it is better to dissolve the party and keep the IPF. We characterized this as a liquidationist course and defeated this tendency. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Marxism-Leninism was coming under attack, we felt that it was time to come out openly with a Marxist-Leninist banner and declare that we are here and strong and growing.

Within the IPF, in addition to our party, there is the Lal Nishan Party (Leninist), which is strong in Maharashtra state, and the Rajasthan Kisan Sangathan (Peasant League), which is based in Rajasthan state. There are three organizations of national minorities — autonomy movements of regionalist character — the Karbis, Jharkandis, and Utrakhand. There is the

Dalit Mahasabha, an organization of oppressed castes. There are individuals and small groups active in the radical health movement and environmental groups. Medha Patkar, leader of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Campaign), against a dam-building scheme, is a member of the Advisory Council of the IPF. We are presently holding discussions about joining the IPF with Professor Najundaswamy of the Karnataka Farmers Movement, which held a rally of 500,000 against seed patenting under GATT last year.

We believe the IPF could be reconstituted as a federated structure of different organizations with a minimum common program of action, where the constituents can operate as independent entities, including in the electoral arena. It would be a united front against imperialism, particularly GATT, and against the communalist threat [i.e., fanatical loyalty to one's own ethnic and/or religious community and hostility to other such communal entities, so numerous in India]. We are even prepared to consider changing the name of the Front to get more forces involved. The CPI (ML) sees the Front not only as a platform for left unity in action but also unity with left-oriented democratic organizations, single-issue campaigns, and new movements for social change. We need to have interaction with these forces, and this cooperation has a strategic character in India.

Q.: How does your party view national struggles, bearing in mind that the traditional Communist parties proclaim their belief in the inviolability of the national borders of India and take positions little different from those of the bourgeois parties?

A.: In our program we recognize the right to self-determination, including the right to secede. This is part of the package of the expropriation of the big bourgeoisie, thoroughgoing land reform, restructuring of the Indian state, new center-state relations, a federal India with maximum possible autonomy for nationalities. We weigh each struggle on its own merits. [For example,] we have never supported the Khalistani struggle in Punjab to set up a theocratic Sikh state.

Only in the case of Kashmir do we support the right to independence. A military victory by the Kashmiri militant groups over the Indian state is unrealistic. Only by integrating their struggles more closely with the struggles of the Indian people can they win their freedom. The only other possibility is the victory of the Indian revolution. At the same time, we don't tell them to wait for the revolution. It is tragic that there is total insularity between the Kashmiri struggle and other struggles in India. We are the only political party that has had high-level exchanges with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front. Through our front, eight of our leaders went to Kashmir and stayed for a couple of weeks, and held extensive discussions with their leaders.

As a long-term perspective we have raised the slogan "For a Democratic Confederation of

the Peoples of South Asia.” [Not for a Socialist United States of South Asia?] This is the real framework for genuine peace, stability, and development in the region without the interference of imperialism.

Q.: Maoism and the Chinese model of revolution have for long exerted a powerful influence on sections of the Indian left and have been central in its debates. How does your party view the economic reforms undertaken by the Chinese bureaucracy since 1979?

A.: We welcome the general direction of these reforms in all socialist countries. We feel that at this historical juncture no socialist country, whatever its distortions or degenerations, could continue in the old way. Almost all of them had to incorporate some reforms and take foreign capital and technology and introduce marketization [sic]. The idea of socialism has also undergone many changes in the sense of ownership and coexistence of a private sector based on institutionalized market relations. This is a new feature. In principle we are not against these reforms. But it is not a case of supporting specific Chinese, Cuban, or Vietnamese reforms. Here we differed from many progressives in Europe and take a Third World point of view. In China, rapid industrialization is one the agenda.

Our primary point of departure is to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. We don't rely on economic analysis alone, holding that one reform is correct and another is wrong. We go by the political balance of forces. These reforms are pregnant with two possibilities. They can lead to complete restoration of capitalism, as happened in the Soviet Union under

Gorbachev, or they can strengthen the material basis for socialism. We do not consider the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to be a bureaucracy. While there are some bureaucratic distortions in all “actually existing socialist countries,” under Marxist-Leninist leadership these things can be resolved. Perhaps humanity will never see the day when the transition to socialism will take place without an iota of bureaucracy or bureaucratic distortion. That is too idealistic a position as far as history has demonstrated.

Our main criticism of the CCP is that there is no ideological-political initiative to mobilize people to safeguard socialism and prevent the danger of restoration of capitalism. Perhaps such an initiative from below existed in the Cultural Revolution. Secondly, we feel that the role of the masses and their organizations in wielding power is very important, and here we have lots of reservations about the CCP. Within the framework of bilateral relations, we have expressed these criticisms wherever possible. We do not start from the point of some abstract democracy. What is crucial at this point is to reassert the principle of dictatorship of the proletariat. This is central not only in the period of the transition from socialism to communism but also during these risky and central reforms. If a more principled current with greater links with the glorious tradition of Comrade Mao Zedong emerged within the CCP, we would welcome such a development.

Q.: You have mentioned the reverberations of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the mainstream Communist parties of India. How has this affected your party and its understanding of socialism?

A.: The restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union has not had a serious impact on our movement because we belong to that tradition which has all along been critical of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union has objectively undermined the basis of a powerful opportunist current within the Indian Communist movement. It was not just the [pro-Soviet] Communist Party of India but also the Communist Party of India (Marxist) that gradually went over to Khrushchev's thesis and started supporting the Indian bourgeoisie ostensibly on anti-imperialist grounds.

In certain cases the Communist Party of the Soviet Union made some other Communist parties dependent on them, [consequently] undermining national liberation struggles. We feel that in the present world situation the contradiction between imperialism and the Third World is the principal one. We continue to stick to this thesis. *Instead of relying on some external force, revolutionary movements must take root in their own countries and stand on their own feet.* [Emphasis added.] This is the good thing within the bad thing in the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union.

One important lesson we have incorporated into our program is that under the dictatorship of the proletariat we may have a multiparty system. [This means] the broadest possible democracy, with freedom of the press and separation of the party from the state, including internal democracy within the Communist Party in the Leninist tradition, etc. Perhaps if conditions permit, the Chinese Communist Party too will move in that direction. □

Remove All False Charges Against Chinese Trotskyists

Continued from page 14

Another example is the Chinese historian Gao Fang's article on reappraisal of the history of the Bolsheviks, in which he pointed out all the forgeries and lies in the history written by Stalin. (See *October Review's* reprint of the article in No. 90/91.) There is also more recognition that the Trotskyists are a current in the international communist movement, though such adjectives as “opportunist” or “ultraleft” are still applied to Trotskyism. (For example, Yen Zhimin recently wrote a book entitled *The Trotskyist Fourth International — The Ultra-Left in Contemporary World Socialism*, published by Gansu People's Press, 1985.)

In the 1991 edition of *The Collected Works of Mao Zedong*, 2nd ed., Vol. 1, the footnote with all the slanderous charges against the Trotskyists has been deleted, and is replaced by the following:

The Chinese Trotskyists believed that the Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution had ended, and the Chinese proletariat had to wait till later in the future to wage a socialist revolution, so for the time being, a legal movement centered on the call for a “national assembly” should be waged [p. 168, footnote 33].

Although Trotskyist ideas were not well explicated in this footnote, it was a new evaluation of the Trotskyist current, referring to it not as a counterrevolutionary organization, but as a dis-

sident current in the workers and communist movement. (The actual ideas of the Trotskyists at that time were that after the bloody crushing of the Second Revolution by the Kuomintang in 1927, the revolution had suffered a defeat and White Terror dominated all the cities and the countryside, so the Trotskyists objected to the CCP's adventurist uprisings, and advocated instead a democratic struggle centered around the call for a constituent assembly to counter the Kuomintang dictatorship.)

Since the CCP is now quietly removing its previous false allegations against the Trotskyists in many publications, it should also officially retract the counterrevolutionary charges against the Trotskyists. □

Indonesia: the Greatest Prize

by Michael Livingston

The U.S. presence [in South Vietnam] has provided tangible and highly visible proof that communism is not necessarily the wave of Asia's future. This was a vital factor in the turnaround in Indonesia, where a tendency toward fatalism is a national characteristic. It provided a shield behind which the anti-communist forces found the courage and the capacity to stage their counter-coup and, at the final moment, to rescue their country from the Chinese orbit. And, with its 100 million people, its 3,000-mile arc of islands containing the region's richest hoard of natural resources, Indonesia constitutes by far the greatest prize in the Southeast Asian area.¹

Richard M. Nixon

For a brief moment in mid-November 1994, the U.S. media spotlight shone on Indonesia, site of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. As is typical of the capitalist media, the coverage obscured more than it revealed. While the media covered some limited aspects of the human rights "problem" in East Timor, the extent of political oppression in both Indonesia and the occupied state of East Timor was never mentioned. Nor was there any discussion of the role of the U.S. and Japan in that oppression or the significance of Indonesia to the core capitalist countries. By looking at what the media left out, we will come to see the importance of Indonesia, "by far the greatest prize in the Southeast Asian area." We will also see the ugly face of capitalism.

Indonesia's population of 197 million makes it the fourth most populous country in the world, exceeded only by China, India, and the United States. About 87 percent of Indonesians are Muslims, making Indonesia the largest Islamic country in the world. It is a major producer of oil and the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. Indonesia also has large reserves of coal, tin, nickel, copper, gold, and bauxite. It has large forests (most of which are being destroyed by lumber companies) and exports sugar, coffee, peanuts, soybeans, rubber, oil palm, and coconuts.² Indonesia's "middle class" makes up about 10 percent of its population, or roughly 20 million people. This group, larger than the entire population of Australia, is an important market for Japanese and U.S. goods.³

Indonesia occupies a strategic location for world trade, straddling several important sea lanes. These sea lanes are considered some of the world's most important "choke points." For

example, approximately 60 percent of Australia's exports pass through the Indonesian archipelago. Indonesia's strategic location has been heightened recently by the November 14 ratification of the Law of the Sea Convention, which extends Indonesia's territorial waters by 3 million square kilometers of ocean and grants Indonesia jurisdiction over an additional 3 million square kilometers of "economic exclusion zone."⁴

The importance of its natural resources, internal market, and strategic location is now being augmented by its vast potential as a major site for the production of consumer goods by transnational corporations based in Japan and other core capitalist countries.

Suharto and the New Order

Suharto, the current president of Indonesia, has ruled since the establishment of "the New Order" in 1967. This New Order, referred to as the "turnaround" by Nixon, was established by a military coup against Sukarno, the nationalist leader of Indonesia who had served as its president since 1945.⁵ Sukarno had become a Bonapartist dictator by 1957, when he declared martial law. In 1959 Sukarno announced the establishment of "Guided Democracy." While Sukarno had widespread popular appeal, his power rested on the support of two powerful but antagonistic institutions: the Indonesian military and the PKI, the Communist Party of Indonesia. Sukarno tried to balance the two institutions against each other while at the same time he demonized external enemies, especially U.S. imperialism, as a way to generate popular support. On September 30, junior military officers loyal to Sukarno kidnapped and killed six generals whom they accused of collaboration with the U.S. CIA and of disloyalty to Sukarno. While proof of covert operations is always difficult to come by, there is strong evidence that the CIA waged an 8-year campaign against Sukarno, culminating in the 1965 military takeover.⁶

According to the Indonesian military, the coup attempt was Communist-inspired. It provided a pretext for a counter-coup that brought the military to power, led by Gen. Suharto, and marked the decline of Sukarno's political power. By March 1966, Sukarno had transferred power to Suharto, the PKI was formally

banned, and a massacre of between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Indonesians, most of whom were PKI members, was taking place. As Amnesty International notes:

The mass killings were not a spontaneous reaction to the supposed treachery of the PKI, as the government and military have always claimed; they were encouraged, organized, and carried out by the Indonesian army and by vigilante groups acting with military support or acquiescence.⁷

The New Order established by the military under Suharto in 1965-66 has dominated Indonesia to this day. The military controls all aspects of the political system and dominates much of the economy. And in exercising their domination over the peoples of Indonesia, the Indonesian military has had the strong support of the core capitalist countries, especially Japan and the United States.

The military dominates society through a variety of mechanisms. First and foremost is the military itself, which is organized to deal with domestic political unrest, not external threats. Also of importance is the highly centralized state bureaucracy, which carries out the decisions of the president and his inner circle, and the military's domination of party politics through its own party, known as Golkar, and through the undermining and limitations placed on other parties, the press, and the main parliamentary body. Finally, control is exercised through ideological indoctrination and compulsory allegiance to the state ideology, Pancasila.

The New Order has been bad for the people of Indonesia but good for capitalism. The Indonesian people have lacked most basic human rights since the establishment of the New Order, including freedom of religion, speech, assembly, press, and due process under law. Further, the military government has been responsible for an almost unimaginable violence against the peoples of Indonesia. As Amnesty International notes:

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been killed, their mutilated corpses sometimes left in public places to rot; prisoners, both political and criminal, have been routinely tortured and ill-treated, some so severely that they died or suffered permanent injury; thousands of people have been imprisoned following show trials solely for their peaceful political or religious views; scores of prisoners have been shot by

1. Richard M. Nixon, "Asia after Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 1 ((October 1967), p. 111.

2. These statistics are taken from William H. Frederick and Robert L. Worden (eds.), *Indonesia: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1993.

3. Andrew Pollack, "Companies Rediscovering Indonesia," *New York Times*, December 6, 1994, pp. C1, C15.

4. John McBeth, "Troubled Waters: Proposed sea lanes spark concern," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 29, 1994, and January 5, 1995, pp. 18-19.

5. While Indonesia declared independence on August 17, 1945, from the Netherlands, independence was not recognized internationally until 1949.

6. See William Blum, *The CIA: A Forgotten History*, London: Zed Books, 1986, pp. 108-112.

7. Amnesty International (1994). *Power and Impunity: Human Rights Under the New Order*. New York: Amnesty International, p. 16.

firing squad, some after more than two decades on death row.⁸

Not surprisingly, the repressive nature of the New Order has generated substantial opposition from labor, students, and oppressed nationalities, including the emergence of armed opposition movements in Aceh and in Irian Jaya, where the free Papua Movement has advocated independence from Indonesia. But it is in the Indonesian invasion and continuing oppression of East Timor that we see most starkly the character of the New Order.

East Timor

In December 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor, a former colony of Portugal that had, after a brief struggle, declared independence in November 1975.⁹

Since the invasion, the East Timorese have steadily resisted Indonesia's efforts to conquer them, just as they resisted the Portuguese for 350 years and the Japanese during World War II.¹⁰

The Indonesian military began planning the takeover of East Timor even before its independence from Portugal. Plans for the incorporation of East Timor were finalized in 1974 and consisted of covert operations and manipulation of East Timorese political parties. The success of Fretilin (Frente Revolucionaria do Timor Leste Independente; in English, the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor) derailed Indonesian plans, and Fretilin declared independence, with overwhelming support from the East Timorese people, in November of 1975. The Indonesian military then moved to directly invade East Timor in December.

The invasion and subsequent attempt to control East Timor has been extremely violent. An estimated 200,000 of East Timor's 700,000 people were killed. In spite of being massively overpowered, Fretilin was able to resist and survive the near destruction of its forces on three occasions. The military resistance has diminished since 1992, when Xanana Gusmão, one of the few Fretilin leaders to have survived, was captured.

Genocide

In the course of conquering East Timor, the Indonesian military killed numerous unarmed civilians, destroyed villages and towns, forced much of the population into strategic hamlets or concentration camps, and subjected much of the population to mass starvation. More recently, the East Timorese have been forced to attend schools that use Bahasa Indonesia (a language few East Timorese know) and emphasize memorization of the Pancasila. In addition, the Indonesian government has sterilized countless

Resources on East Timor

If you are interested in learning more about East Timor, I would recommend the following books:

Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor, by John G. Taylor (London and New Jersey: Zed Press), 1991. This book is available from the East Timor Action Network (see below).

Power and Impunity: Human Rights Under the New Order, by Amnesty International (New York: Amnesty International), 1994. Available from Amnesty International U.S.A., National Office, Publications, 322 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10001, for \$8.00. This report contains extensive information on human rights abuses within Indonesia, including abuses of labor activists.

You can get additional information and learn about ongoing organizing by joining the East Timor Action Network, a decentralized national coalition. Their address is ETAN/US, P.O. Box 1182, White Plains, NY 10602. Telephone: (914) 428-7299. Fax: (914) 428-7383. E-mail: cscheiner@igc.apc.org. In addition to the U.S. coalition, there are groups in England, Canada, Australia, Japan, Portugal, and other countries working in solidarity with the people of East Timor. Interested readers outside the U.S. can contact the author through *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* or contact ETAN for the names and addresses of groups in their respective countries.

Timorese women and encouraged "transmigration," both programs supported by the World Bank. Transmigration is a program that encourages migration from densely populated areas of Indonesia to "underpopulated" areas by providing economic incentives to resettlement. Together the ideological indoctrination in the schools and the transmigration program are instruments of cultural genocide. The forced sterilization of East Timorese women and the slaughter of the Timorese people during the invasion constitute genocide pure and simple.

While at present Fretilin's ability to engage in military struggle appears to be destroyed, the political struggle of the East Timorese continues. During the mid-1980s Fretilin built a network of strong support among Timorese in Indonesian-controlled areas and among Timorese students studying at Indonesian universities.¹¹ And in the late 1980s Fretilin joined with other groups to form a broad coalition — the Maubere council of National Resistance (known as CNRM, its Portuguese initials). The CNRM includes the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) and other pro-independence groups.¹² In addition, the Catholic Church in East Timor has become a center of opposition to the Indonesian occupation.

During the 1990s, the East Timorese have continued to resist Indonesian rule. In November 1991 a peaceful march to the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili (the capital of East Timor) was organized by the CNRM. The Indonesian military responded to the peaceful protest by massacring 270 people and "disappearing" 200 others. General Try Sutrisno, at that time com-

mander of the armed forces and presently the vice president of Indonesia, said that people in the march had "spread chaos" and "shouted unacceptable things." According to the general, "In the end, they had to be shot. These ill-bred people have to be shot...and we will shoot them."

1994 Protests

On June 28, 1994, Indonesian soldiers allegedly trampled on religious items during a service at a Roman Catholic church in East Timor. The incident provoked a series of street demonstrations and protests, culminating in a demonstration of over 300 students on July 14, which was broken up by the military. Several months after the demonstrations, Major General Adang Ruchiata remarked in an interview that it would take another two generations before the people of East Timor accepted Indonesian rule.¹³ Given the East Timorese track record, the general probably underestimated the time by several hundred years.

The continuing resistance of the East Timorese received brief coverage during the mid-November 1994 APEC meeting in Jakarta. At dawn on November 12, East Timorese students pulled up to the American Embassy in Jakarta and scaled the embassy fence. All but one of the students made it safely over the fence. Several foreign TV crews, having been alerted by supporters of the students, were on hand to record the event. In Dili, demonstrations took place on both November 12 and November 13. The demonstration on November 13 had to be broken up

8. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

9. The island of Timor lies approximately 400 miles north of Australia and 1,300 miles east of Jakarta. The western half of the island is part of Indonesia.

10. My account of the Indonesian invasion and East Timorese resistance is taken from John G. Taylor's *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*, London and New Jersey: Zed Press, 1991. Additional material on the invasion, including copies of Indonesian military documents, can be found in Carmel Budiardjo and Liem Soei Liong's *The War Against East Timor*, London: Zed Press, 1984.

11. Carmel Budiardjo, "Invasion and Resistance in East Timor," *The Nonviolent Activist*, September 1991, p. 11.

12. Amnesty International (1994). *Power and Impunity: Human Rights under the New Order*. New York: Amnesty International, p. 30.

13. John McBeth, "Generation Gap: Undisciplined soldiers anger Timorese," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 28, 1994, p. 16.

by troops using tear gas. Police detained at least 70 people.¹⁴

The 29 students who scaled the embassy fence were later given asylum in Portugal. The whereabouts of over 40 other students who were to have participated in the protest is still unknown. These students were arrested before the protest. Indonesian authorities claim they have been released. While gaining significant media attention for their struggle, the students failed to influence U.S. policy toward Indonesia. Students had demanded to meet with Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, both of whom refused to meet with the East Timorese. While Clinton was reported by Warren Christopher to be "firm and forceful" in addressing human rights issues in a private meeting with Suharto, Clinton on two occasions (at a press conference and in a speech to American business people and members of Suharto's cabinet) made this statement: "We remain convinced that strengthening the ties of trade among nations can help to break down the chains of repression."¹⁵ People will still be subordinated to profits under Clinton's administration.

Bipartisan Policy of Exploitation Continues

The Clinton policy represents a continuation of the policy that has been pursued by the U.S. government since the late 1950s. That policy, which consists of financial and political support to the Indonesian military, and capitalist exploitation of Indonesia's natural resources and population, has been followed by both Democrats and Republicans. The facts about U.S. military aid to Indonesia during the invasion of East Timor are especially telling.

According to the State Department, U.S. companies supplied some 90 percent of the weapons used by ABRI [the Indonesian Armed Forces] during the invasion. When it looked as if Jakarta were actually running out of military equipment in late 1977 due to its activities in East Timor, the Carter "human rights" administration responded by authorizing \$U.S. 112 million in commercial arms sales for fiscal 1978 to Jakarta, up from U.S. \$5.8 million the previous year (almost a 2,000 percent increase). U.S. arms sales peaked during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, exceeding U.S. \$1 billion from 1982-84.

As in the case of arms sales, military assistance also increased. In the year following the invasion, the Ford Administration more than doubled its military assistance (to U.S. \$146 million) to Jakarta. Similarly, U.S. military aid

increased during the Carter and Reagan administrations, during which the bulk of the killings were taking place in East Timor. Since the invasion, over 2,600 Indonesian military officers have received military training in the U.S. under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program.¹⁶

Under Clinton, the U.S. government gives lip service to human rights while aggressively continuing to promote the exploitation of Indonesia. U.S. policy remains, in the words of the Talking Heads, same as it ever was.

APEC and Indonesia's Place in the Capitalist System

The focus of the U.S. media attention in mid-November 1994 was the APEC meeting at which the 18 members of the APEC forum agreed to achieve free trade for the already industrialized countries by 2010 and free trade for all countries by 2020. The agreement is above all also a statement of intention. It is not legally binding on any country, leaves undefined what free trade means, and contains no details for implementation.¹⁷

APEC is not the European Economic Community or NAFTA. It has an annual budget of only \$2 million and is mostly consultative.¹⁸ APEC's importance flows from the centrality of the 18 member states in the world (and U.S.) economy. APEC countries account for half of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) and include many of the fastest growing economies on the planet. Together the U.S. and Japan account for 34 percent of the world's GDP; the other APEC countries account for another 16 percent.¹⁹

Asia has also become the key trading region for the U.S. By the year 2000, U.S. trade with the Asia-Pacific region is expected to be double that of U.S. trade with Europe.²⁰ Furthermore, the U.S. is running a significant trade deficit with two of the APEC countries: Japan and China. In 1992 for instance, the trade deficit with Japan was over \$50 billion; the trade deficit with China was over \$15 billion.²¹ As a consequence of their economic strength and dynamism, and as a consequence of their centrality to the U.S. economy, the policies of the APEC countries carry considerable weight in the world capitalist system.

The mid-November meeting was also significant because of the deals made between the U.S. and Indonesia outside of the APEC forum. Clinton and Suharto signed commercial agreements worth over \$40 billion. The largest single

deal was the multibillion-dollar agreement between Exxon and Petramina (the Indonesian state oil company) to develop an offshore natural gas field.²²

The business deals signed by Clinton and Suharto are themselves the product of a significant shift in Indonesian government policy. On June 2, 1994, the government passed a sweeping deregulation package that significantly opened the economy to transnational corporations. As a result of the deregulation package and other changes in government policy prior to June, investment by transnationals has exploded.²³ While most of that investment comes from Japan and other Asian countries, U.S. investment has increased as well.²⁴

Indonesia's tariffs are among the highest in the region (along with China's). Suharto appears determined to lower these trade barriers. The combination of deregulation (and privatization) of industry within Indonesia and lowered tariff barriers, as well as its large, superexploited population and abundant natural resources, will make Indonesia a key manufacturing platform for transnational corporations and could launch the economy toward NIC (Newly Industrializing Country) status. For the capitalist class, Nixon's assessment will be truer than ever: Indonesia will be their "greatest prize" in Southeast Asia. For the peoples of Indonesia, it will mean more long years of living hell.

What We Can Do

What can we do to support the peoples of Indonesia and East Timor? In the short term we can reinforce efforts to win human rights in Indonesia and East Timor by supporting such groups as Amnesty International and the East Timor Action Network (see box). But these efforts by themselves are only a beginning. More direct support and contact between Indonesian groups and groups in the core capitalist countries (especially labor unions, environmental groups, women's organizations, and human rights groups) is needed. While ultimately only a world revolutionary party with sections in all countries can bring about the liberation of the peoples of Indonesia and East Timor, much can be done starting here, starting now. Because capitalism has tied together the fate of each and every human being on the earth, the fate of the peoples of Indonesia and East Timor is our fate as well. An injury to one is an injury to all. □

January 5, 1995

14. V.G. Kulkarni and Margo Cohen, "Pandora's Box: Protesters take advantage of Indonesian openness," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 24, 1994, p. 16.

15. John McBeth, "Some Things Linger: Timor protest outlasts Apec summit," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 1, 1994, p. 16.

16. Mathew Jardine, "APEC, the United States & East Timor," *Z* magazine, p. 36.

17. Paul Blustein, "Trade Pact May Signal Opening of Asia: Capitalism has new backers," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 15, 1994, p. 1A, 15A.

18. Frank B. Gibney, "Creating a Pacific Community: A Time to Bolster Economic Institutions," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (November/December, 1993), p. 21.

19. Andrew Pollack, "Asian Nations Wary on Pacific Trade Zone," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1994, p. A6.

20. Robert B. Oxnham, "Asia/Pacific Challenges," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (1993), p. 58.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

22. "U.S. Warns Suharto on Human Rights: But \$40 billion in business deals signed," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, p. 2A; also, *New York Times*, November 17, 1994.

23. John McBeth, "The Year of Doing Business," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 1, 1994, pp. 70-74.

24. Andrew Pollack, "U.S. firms being drawn to Indonesia," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 3, 1995, p. 8B.

Ethel Victoria Weiss, 1920–1995

by David Weiss



A few of the many messages sent:

"We shall always remember her winning personality, dedication and devotion to the socialist movement, and especially her honesty, integrity, and delightful sense of humor."



"Our memories of Ethel [Victoria] in Philadelphia are of a wonderfully intelligent, active comrade who gave so much of herself in helping to build the movement."



"She was a very special aunt to me. Although we didn't see each other often, each time we met was memorable. My conservative background gave me a narrow view of how I thought the world should act. Ethel could always motivate me to question my outlook and redefine my perception of reality."



"No matter how or when the bell tolls, it can never erase the fond memories of Victoria in her active years and the contributions she was able to make."



"We always enjoyed her when we got together in the summers on the farm. We had a good time playing cards and laughing. We will always remember those days when we think of her."

Victoria, as she preferred to be known, was born on a farm in Aurora, Wisconsin, on March 14, 1920, the youngest of three daughters, and with a brother still younger.

Her parents, Arthur and Vera Peterson, were children of Swedish immigrants. Her father, in pioneer fashion, started out hauling lumber, built a log cabin, fought off the wolves at night, and went on to build a wooden barn to house his first cow. This was the beginning of what became a dairy business with a brick barn, a nice house, and a silo for storing the corn which he grew in his fields as feed for the cows and food on the table.

Victoria, began her day at sunrise, milking the cows and making flapjacks for the family and farmhands. Later her father installed milking machines, an ice-house, and extended his dairy business throughout Florence County, where he became the chairman of the Republican Party, which belonged to the progressive La Follette wing.

Her mother, besides being fully occupied with the many chores of raising the four children, but also with songs and stories, took care of the household, did the cooking for six people three times a day, prepared the milk in the ice-house for the market, and helped in the fields.

Late at night, from the top of the stairs, Victoria used to secretly listen to the arguments

between her father and a neighboring socialist farmer. This was her first introduction to socialism. Years later, she was the only one of the children to be sent away from the farm, to study at Teachers College in Milwaukee. There she had to work as a domestic servant for food and lodging.

On campus she soon joined the Young People's Socialist League, where together with a few of her comrades she accidentally came across and read Leon Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*. This book directed her for the rest of her life as a revolutionary Marxist.

Her first political act was assisting in the formation of the Milwaukee branch of the Socialist Workers Party.

In Milwaukee she met and married an African American worker, which caused her father to forbid anyone in the family to even correspond with her for a number of years. This grieved her deeply until some years later a reconciliation took place.

Her husband never joined the party, although for a long time she hoped he would. For much of the time she lived with him in poverty in the Black community, where Black women often had to sell themselves to put bread on the table. Victoria also tried to do this but could not bring herself to go through with it.

Some time after she and her first husband parted, she met David Weiss, whom she married

and with whom she spent over forty years of love and warm comradeship in joint revolutionary activity to the end of her life.

Not only was she an activist, she also read deeply in Marxist theory. Among the books which she brought to the shelves of their home, inscribed with her previous party name, Ethel Phillips, were such classics as Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I of *Capital*, *Anti-Dühring* by Frederick Engels and many others. She even at times taught sessions of party classes on *Capital*.

She pursued such studies as a party member and a worker all her life. After her early life on the farm, this farmer's daughter experienced life in many sections of the working class, beginning with her job at college as a domestic servant. She was also a factory worker, an employee in a telephone company, a waitress in a slew of restaurants, an office clerical worker, and finally a self-taught, topnotch, full-charge bookkeeper.

The following are some highlights of her activities in the movement:

Early on, in New York City, before the formation of the Young Socialist Alliance, she was for a time the organizer of the youth section of the Socialist Workers Party. Later she had to abandon this task as the result of a severe bicy-

cle accident, which left her disabled for a long time. During her convalescence she began to draw. Her husband, recognizing her talent, encouraged her. Later she was awarded a scholarship in painting at the art school of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Examples of her work will be shown at a forthcoming memorial gathering. Few comrades were aware of this side of her life.

After her full recovery she was put in charge of the campaign to get the Socialist Workers Party on the ballot in New York state. This entailed sending out teams to fifty counties throughout the state in order to obtain one hundred absolutely valid signatures in each, mobilizing cars, arranging for gasoline, food, hotel reservations, and dealing with the police and various government officials. Because of the hurdles thrown by the bourgeoisie in our path, the Socialist Workers Party's participation in the much vaunted "democratic process" entailed managing a vast amount of officially required paperwork and other logistical details. And the SWP got on the ballot! She managed this task

so successfully that later in Philadelphia she was asked to return to New York in the next state elections to again head the campaign to put the party on the ballot. Again she succeeded.

Then in Philadelphia, she herself ran as a candidate for the United States Senate from Pennsylvania in 1960. She campaigned at indoor meetings, on radio and television, and at street corner rallies.

The following is of some interest as an example of her character. At a meeting in a large auditorium in Philadelphia on the subject of peace addressed by pacifists, reformists, and a Stalinist, Victoria made herself heard during the discussion period from high up in the balcony. Although unrecognized by the chair at that distance she raised her voice denouncing the Stalinist speaker and declared that only the defeat of imperialism could end wars. "Lenin would turn over in his grave if he could hear you," she hurled at the so-called Communist.

A young man studying accounting at Temple University, Arthur Felberbaum, who was attending such a meeting for the first time, feeling

that she was the only one at the meeting who made any sense to him, sought her out as the crowd was leaving. Victoria brought him to a party gathering that evening where he incredulously asked, "Do you people mean to say that socialist revolution will turn everything upside down?" "Yes," she said. "But that's insane!" he replied. Victoria patiently explained the meaning of revolution and that it was the system we live under that is insane. Years later, Arthur Felberbaum went on to found the New York Marxist School.

* * *

On February 22, 1995, after a very long battle with Parkinson's disease, Victoria died.

This memorial article is written with the full understanding that although she was not one of the outstanding leaders of a party, Ethel Victoria Peterson Weiss was one of the many unsung heroes of our movement. □

Some Truths About the Zapatistas

Continued from page 12

Maria Gloria Benavidez was threatened with death. All arrests were conducted without any due process, and the Mexican government has issued at least 2,000 warrants for suspected Zapatista collaborators; including journalists, human rights workers, academics, and lay religious leaders.

Without due process, it is difficult to discern what "threat" there was to Mexico, how much evidence has been concocted and manipulated. (Where was the "expertise" and concern for "national security" when Luis Donald Colosio and José Francisco Ruiz Massieu were assassinated?) The Zapatistas have always stated they constitute a national force. They have never said they are limited to the state of Chiapas. In addition, they clearly asked to be recognized as a "belligerent force" under the definition of the Geneva Convention, which prevents the opposing force from going after the leadership. In branding them terrorists, the PRI government denies them any legitimate status within international criteria.

Why can't the Zapatistas be satisfied with what they have been offered — why do they want a national change?

The landholders in Chiapas are a crude remnant of a colonial system which virtually enslaves the indigenous people. In its conception and manipulation of power the PRI has found this system useful for its purposes. It maintains the patronage system in the state of Chiapas [which in turn supports the PRI nationally].

In order for any genuine change to occur in Chiapas, the power of these landholders must be altered. Comparable to the system of apartheid in South Africa, and Jim Crow in the American South, this will require a national demand for change. Chiapas is a state wealthy

in natural resources, yet suffers the highest rates of poverty and marginalization. As long as the power of the landholders remains unaltered, it will be impossible for the indigenous people to improve their quality of life.

It is also true that Mexico is Chiapas. In every state in Mexico, the indigenous people suffer the same brutal policies of exclusion and enslavement — the poor grow in numbers and the natural wealth benefits the pockets of a few. Chiapas is controversial for the PRI government because its fate is shared by the rest of Mexico.

Answering Lie No. 4

[Lie No. 4 goes like this:] **All the Zapatistas want is to take power.**

[Reply:] The Zapatistas took over several major towns in January 1994. As a result of their presence, no citizens were assaulted, no banks or stores were broken into and sacked. The Zapatistas took food and medicine and freed prisoners from the jails. Over the 14 months of the truce which was in place, the Zapatistas did not disappear into the mountains to prepare war. They wrote constantly to the Mexican people. They received hundreds of people from all over Mexico and the world, and spoke with them to explain their cause and ask for their support.

They called for and built a place for a Democratic National Convention, and invested enormous amounts of time and energy encouraging the people of Mexico to demand a peaceful transition to democracy. They have not once stated they want power for themselves; they have not once stated the kind of government they would want, or insisted that they be a part of one.

They have instead asked the people of Mexico to "defeat the need for armed force, to struggle tirelessly for a peaceful transition to

democracy." They have been offered bribes, secret negotiations, personal favors, but they have never been a party to collusion with the forces in power in Mexico. They have stated clearly that their major strength is the broad base of popular support they enjoy from the indigenous communities of the Lacandon rain forest. They have also said this is their major weakness — because within the construct of armed conflict these communities will be [and have been] the first victims.

They do not have the numbers or military firepower to constitute themselves as primarily a military force. Their conduct has been guided and determined by their political program. This program is in the hands of the people of Mexico, they say; it will be a product of their struggle, of their vision, of their tenacity against the PRI government.

At this writing the troops of Zedillo are not only starving, torturing, and persecuting the Zapatistas; they are attempting to destroy any hope the Mexican people may have had to free themselves of the parasite which is the PRI. Zedillo has not only betrayed the Zapatistas, he has betrayed the history of Mexico, and the people of Mexico. His name will be burned into history along with other despotic figures.

Please take action to help the Zapatistas. Inform yourself, work with others, learn how to pressure the Mexican government, and to denounce any support the government of the United States may give to perpetuate the rule of the PRI. Do not allow Zedillo to destroy the hope that was burning in the hearts of the people of Mexico. □

March 22, 1995

How Not to Help the Staley Workers: A Reply to Their Critics on the Left

by David Jones

This article is in reply to the discussion article by Ron Lare, "Evaluation of the A.E. Staley Struggle," which appeared in our February 1995 issue.

Some 760 workers at the Decatur, Illinois, plant of A.E. Staley Co., a corn-processing operation owned by a multinational conglomerate, British-based Tate and Lyle, have been locked out since June 1993, now more than 20 months. Concurrently, Decatur workers at Caterpillar (a heavy equipment manufacturer) and Bridgestone-Firestone (a Japanese-owned tire maker) have struck their employers. Decatur is an older city of about 90,000 located in central Illinois about midway between Chicago and St. Louis. (Abraham Lincoln received his first endorsement for president by a party convention there in 1860.) Decatur remains relatively industrialized and an Illinois rail hub even in the 1990s, and with these three labor battles under way the city is now a focus and symbol of determined resistance to corporate union busting and takebacks.

Historical Background

Many medium-sized Midwestern cities like Decatur (Peoria and Rockford, Illinois; Anderson, Fort Wayne, and Muncie, Indiana; Akron, Canton, and Toledo, Ohio) have long contained satellite industries furnishing materials to giant mass production plants located in major cities like Detroit and Cleveland, especially in the automobile industry. Many of these smaller industries were owned independently, and the workers were somewhat removed from the dynamics of the giant auto corporations and their workers. In 1939 a conservative split from the United Auto Workers (UAW), which was affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), created the UAW-AFL (affiliated with the American Federation of Labor). UAW-AFL later became the Allied Industrial Workers Union, based primarily on local unions in these ancillary industries. In the mid-1980s the Detroit-based UAW had around 1,000,000 members, while the AIW, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, had about 40,000. The Staley workers' Decatur local, which was affiliated with the AIW, in 1994 became part of a merger between the AIW and the somewhat larger United Paperworkers International Union, emerging as UPIU Local 7837.

Unlike the strikes in Decatur by Bridgestone-Firestone workers and Caterpillar workers, which are part of wider struggles conducted by the United Rubber Workers (URW) and the UAW, respectively, the Staley conflict is con-

finned to one city. Yet the Staley fight has become most widely known and representative of labor's resistance today.

Historically, this area of Illinois was primarily associated with labor struggles conducted by the United Mine Workers union in the south-central Illinois coal fields. The headquarters of UMW District 12, for many decades the union's largest, was located in nearby Springfield, the state capital. The notorious "Herrin massacre," when over 20 strikebreakers and company gunmen were killed by enraged strikers, occurred in 1922 in Herrin, Illinois. Mother Jones, the heroic union organizer best known for her connection with the coal miners, is buried in the mineworkers' cemetery in Mount Olive, created when miners killed in an 1898 strike struggle in Virden, Illinois, were refused burial in the town cemetery. Recent strikes by miners in southern Illinois, coupled with the three-cornered struggle in Decatur, have led to the designation of this area as a "war zone" by the striking workers.

Role of Ray Rogers

A major factor contributing to the wide awareness and sympathy for the Staley workers struggle has been its collaboration with veteran labor organizer Ray Rogers. Rogers, working through what he calls "Corporate Campaign, Inc.," has contracted his services as a publicist and organizer over the years to various unions engaged in struggle. He is best known for his work with Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union in Austin, Minnesota, in the mid-1980s, when he and local president Jim Guyette led the long struggle against the George A. Hormel meatpacking company.

Rogers has the idea that widespread publicity exposing the heartlessness and injustice of a labor-hating corporation coupled with consumer boycotts of associated products can engender enough pressure from public opinion that it will register on the stockholders of the corporation, which often include other corporations, and out of self-interest, if nothing else, force a change in corporate policy. Rogers's most valuable contribution has been his ability to help bring a large part of a union's members and families into active participation in the struggle, and to reach out aggressively to the rank and file of the labor movement for support.

In the Staley struggle, Rogers has targeted various brand name varieties of sugar produced by Tate and Lyle, the parent corporation, and has gone after State Farm Insurance Company, a major investor in Staley, and Miller Beer, a major consumer of Staley-produced corn sweeteners. Some of this has apparently had an impact, as Miller has reportedly agreed to find another supplier. But some 400 scabs are in the plant.

The "Left" Perspective

Ron Lare's "Evaluation of the A.E. Staley Struggle," published in the February 1994 *BIDOM*, offers some proposals on its conduct. In my opinion the implementation of his perspective would be a disservice to the struggle. Moreover, his perspective is not consistent with the political traditions with which he identifies himself.

Lare finds that "Rogers and Corporate Campaign are the strategists of the A.E. Staley struggle. Local 7837 President Dave Watts follows their leadership."

Although the campaign at Staley, which Rogers (and UAW New Directions leader Jerry Tucker) helped organize, has included "work-to-rule" and "other inside tactics," and mobilized "broad community forces around labor issues," as well as organizing union meetings "involving almost the entire membership," which Lare concedes is "something rare in the U.S. even during intense contract disputes," Lare reminds us that "Corporate Campaign also helped lead the defeated Hormel strike in Minnesota in 1985-86." It becomes clearer as Lare develops his analysis that what he actually means is that Rogers helped lead the Hormel strike to defeat, and, further, he says, "Rogers and Corporate Campaign, along with the top UPIU officers, are leading the Staley struggle to defeat." Lare's objective is to say why this is, and what ought to be done about it.

What's wrong, in Lare's opinion, is that the "Corporate Campaign strategy is to appeal for moral sympathy from 'the public' rather than to use mass picketing to stop the scabs and other militant action against the company."

He focuses on a demonstration on June 25 of last year at the plant gate, which drew about 4,000, including from other Midwest cities. Demonstrators who sat down in front of the plant gates were teargassed and arrested by

police. Others drifted away as the demonstration dissipated. The scabs were not present because Staley management had rescheduled shift changes to avoid a confrontation. Lare feels that this event, and others like it, were failures in spite of the numbers who came and that the primary reason is that the Rogers and Watts leadership wants nonviolent, symbolic protest and shrinks from confrontation.

There were some who opposed this, he explains: "Over a bullhorn, Rogers demanded a strictly nonviolent response to the cops' violent attack. The most significant outcry came from militant unionists in the leadership of the Chicago Staley Workers Solidarity Committee (CSWSC). The CSWSC is a broad coalition mobilizing support for the Staley workers and has a real base among Staley workers. Apart from other major unions on strike in Decatur, the CSWSC is the Staley workers' single most important ally."

"Staley workers have not been able to organize truly mass mobilizations. Mass mobilizations sufficient to win the Staley struggle would need the full support of most of the labor movement, including the UAW, Teamsters, rail workers, and other big unions," Lare says.

That might even include, he suggests, something like the nationwide 6-minute work stoppage which the UAW called at the beginning of the 1980s "to write Congress," or, better, Teamsters and railworkers refusing to handle Staley products.

Lare's 3-Point "Action Proposal"

In Lare's view, "correct calls for mass picketing to stop scabs, national solidarity strikes, a regional general strike" by a "coalition urging more militant action" could have been "made real through creative intervention into the actual struggle" for example by persuading demonstrators at Staley to

- (1) go to the Staley Gate and set up a picket line announcing "Our march has stopped the scabs today, and we will be back to do it again when the shift is not canceled," (2) to go to the Cat and Bridgestone-Firestone gates to put out the message that scabs must be stopped and that future demonstrations would return to do just that, and (3) to truly "tie up traffic" on its way

to the confrontation points, as proposed by CSWSC militants.

Such a "militant coalition" would have to include, Lare points out, "Staley workers and their families, as well as activists in other unions." Rogers and the union officers who have been leading the struggle in Decatur must be included in such a coalition, he says, however unlikely they are to accept united-front proposals by the left. "If they take up the proposals, this will advance the struggle. If they refuse, this will lay the basis for their replacement by elected strike committees and more militant leaders."

"The Staley struggle must be considered defeated if the Rogers and Watts leadership is not replaced by a leadership that tells its members and the world: to win, scabs must be stopped by mass picketing and solidarity strikes must be organized," Lare says.

These opinions are not unique to the author. As he says, they are shared by others in the Chicago support group to which he refers several times. They are also expressed in the press of various small leftist groups, and by some union activists, often those with political origins in the radical movement. Lare maintains that many Staley workers are sympathetic to such a perspective.

There are several ideas embedded in this general thesis:

1. The strike is clearly not succeeding in keeping scabs out of the plant and therefore is not curtailing Staley's production enough to force the company to negotiate a fair agreement with the workers.
2. The failure to use "mass picketing" and "other militant action" to stop the scabs is leading the strike to defeat.
3. Ray Rogers and the local union leadership are an obstacle to implementing this militant policy and should be removed and replaced "by elected strike committees and more militant leaders."
4. Solidarity actions, such as transportation workers refusing to handle Staley products, mass demonstrations in Decatur built by the UAW, the Rubber Workers, and other unions, or a brief national work stoppage,

should be advocated and could strengthen the strike.

5. "Militant workers" who "know a better set of tactics" should intervene in actions called by the local union to shift them in the direction of militant confrontation.

Is this a coherent strategy? If so, to whom is it directed and how should it be carried out?

Obviously, the motivating thought here is that if workers mass at the gate(s) to the plant, determined to deny entry by the scabs and willing to fight to hold their position, the company's production will be drastically curtailed, the flow of profits will be shut off, and an agreement acceptable to the workers will be reached. Failure to do so means "the strike will be defeated."

What Is the Relationship of Forces?

Lare is presumably realistic and knowledgeable enough to foresee that even if such a tactic succeeds on the first day, the police will be present on the second, ready to disperse the strikers, unless the political climate is such that the local authorities are constrained not to act, or the mass picket line is so massive that the police are swamped.

Even if the strikers can overwhelm the local cops, there is a strong probability that state police, National Guard troops, and similar forces will be deployed, capable of dispersing unarmed strikers, unless the labor movement is mobilized on such a scale that military intervention of that scope and force is withheld, or limited, and the employers are compelled to concede. Is this possible under the existing conditions in Decatur, Illinois, in 1995?

It is undeniable that there have been occasions in U.S. labor history where something like the above has happened. Flint, Minneapolis, Toledo, and San Francisco in the 1930s all come to mind.

Of course, those struggles involved thousands of workers, in a period when a significant part of the working class was in motion, while there are only 760 Staley workers, and Lare tells us that "there is a substantial back to work movement," perhaps 25 percent of the strikers, although virtually none have crossed the picket line. But there are other workers on strike in Decatur, at Bridgestone-Firestone and Caterpillar, whose participation could be sought, and perhaps those in the back-to-work movement can be inspired by a determined struggle.

Besides, there is no way out but struggle, and it has to begin somewhere, Lare might say. Fair enough. Sometimes strikes are settled because of the fierce determination of the workers, even when the relationship of forces is not especially favorable.

Replace the Current Leadership?

There is another problem to be addressed. The strikers' leadership is against the use of the tactics Lare and some in the CSWSC propose. In fact, "the Staley struggle must be considered defeated if the Rogers and Watts leadership is not replaced by a leadership that tells its mem-

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bers and the world: to win, scabs must be stopped by mass picketing” and, again: “the Staley struggle is going down to defeat because of the false strategy of its leadership,” and “the UPIU/AIW leadership is looking for a way to sell out.”

Lare doesn't say why the Rogers-Watts leadership has this “false strategy” — but in what is essentially the same article printed in *Workers Struggle — Supplement No. 1*, a publication of the “Trotskyist League,” distributed to strikers and their supporters, Ray Rogers is identified as a “labor lieutenant of capital,” although he and Dave Watts are also identified as “leading class struggle.” Lare does indicate that they should be given one more chance. “Rogers and the UPIU officials have been leading the struggle in Decatur and must be included in united-front proposals by the left.” If they refuse, “this will lay the basis for their replacement by elected strike committees and more militant leadership.”

What are these united front proposals? There are three: (1) “Mass picketing to stop scabs,” (2) “national solidarity strikes,” including refusals by rail workers and Teamsters to handle Staley products, and (3) “a regional general strike.”

Distinguishing Agitation from Propaganda

It is elementary to any coherent strategy to distinguish between agitation and propaganda. Failure to do so is a basic part of the incoherence of what Lare presents. Boycotts of Staley products by transportation workers and regional general strikes would be mighty weapons indeed in support of Staley workers. Nothing like that has happened in the U.S. labor movement for a long, long time. There is no evidence that it is going to happen now. No force whatsoever of any scope within the labor movement is prepared to undertake such action, and no such action is under discussion within any broad labor body. These perspectives are, therefore, ideas which must be confined for the present to the arena of propaganda — that is, patient and pedagogical explanation.

It is true that the leaders of the Staley workers are not, so far as I know, arguing for such action. A group of some 70 workers from the three Decatur strikes went to the meeting of the AFL-CIO executive council in Bal Harbour, Florida, on February 22 to seek help from the federation. They did not ask for a general strike, but asked for the creation of a “solidarity bank” — that is, a national strike fund for workers like themselves. Although they were reportedly received sympathetically, unlike the Homel workers who traveled to Bal Harbour a decade ago, their proposal was regrettably rejected by the mandarins of the labor movement as “logistically impossible.”

Even if the leaders of the Staley strike were committed to campaigning vigorously for hot cargoing and a regional general strike, they could only advocate such action, and are in no position to initiate it. Presumably Lare does not

think that they are leading the struggle to defeat and should be removed simply because of a difference on propaganda slogans.

Lare's Main Focus: Mass Picketing

In any case, it is clear from the context of the article that “mass picketing to stop the scabs,” not these wider proposals, is the main focus. Various scenarios are advanced to accomplish this, taking into account the opposition of the local leadership to such action. “The real challenge is to build an activist coalition to intervene on the ground,” Lare says. It is clear that the axis of this formation is intended to be a group of people referred to as “CSWSC militants,” “militant unionists in the leadership of the Chicago Staley Workers Solidarity Committee,” and “the left,” which, as noted above, is the source of “united front proposals by the left.” Lare does concede that such a coalition would “have to include Staley workers and their families, as well as activists in other unions.”

Lare explains “intervening on the ground” by giving the following example, quoted earlier:

A coalition urging more militant action could have made the October 15 (1994) demonstration more effective by persuading the march (1) to go to the Staley Gate and set up a picket line announcing, “Our march stopped the scabs today, and we will be back to do it again when the shift is not canceled,” (2) to go to the Cat[erpillar] and Bridgestone-Firestone gates to put out the message that scabs must be stopped, and (3) to truly “tie up traffic” on its way to the confrontation points, as proposed by CSWSC militants.

Lare refers to the demonstration on June 25:

Rogers demanded a strictly nonviolent response to the cops' violent attack. This drew some vocal opposition. The most significant outcry came from militant unionists in the leadership of the Chicago Staley Workers Solidarity Committee (CSWSC)... The street debate over tactics could not settle anything, since by then there were not enough demonstrators to carry out an alternative action.

What does this all mean? How many demonstrators are necessary? One hundred? One thousand? Without “mass picketing to stop the scabs,” we are told, the strike “must be considered to be defeated.” The leaders of the strike will not carry out such action. The rank and file have not been able to overcome this obstacle on their own: “There was a time when mobilized workers knew immediately either to oust such a ‘leader’ or to dissolve his or her influence in a much larger and more militant elected strike committee determined to stop the scabs,” Lare says. But evidently that time is not now, since the workers did not do so, even after their local president prevented a confrontation at the plant gate. Although, Lare says, “many Staley workers and their families expressed shock and anger,” he adds that “the workers may not have the confidence to remove their current leaders and take these measures.”

No evidence is presented that there is any organized rank-and-file opposition to the local leadership's policies. The most significant op-

position comes from “militant unionists” from outside Decatur in the CSWSC.

A Proposal for Diversion

The central thrust of Lare's article is, therefore, a proposal that a small group which agrees with the perspective he presents should seek to divert a demonstration called by the union into a physical confrontation with scabs and police, contrary to the objectives for which it was called. It is inherent in this proposal and the motivations which Lare presents for it that such action should take place without waiting for the Staley workers to formally adopt such a policy or for them to replace their leaders with others who support such a policy. It is, in fact, quite evident that the necessity for such action derives from the failure of the Staley workers to do so.

Lare devotes the concluding passages of his article to explaining that this proposal is “essentially Trotskyist.” This is a fundamental misunderstanding. The perspectives outlined by Lare are not consistent with either Trotsky's views or with the history and practice of American Trotskyism. The right name for the perspective he has presented is “ultraleftism,” that is, the substitution of the action of a small group for that of the masses, who have not yet been convinced of the correctness of the views advanced by the minority.

Is This “Telling the Truth”?

Lare says that “the Trotskyist tradition is to tell the workers the truth.” Yet the action he is proposing, diverting a mass march into a physical confrontation, could only be carried out by the de facto imposition of a different character on the march than the one under which it had been called — that is, the participants could not know in advance what was going to happen. This does not sound like telling the workers the truth. Perhaps he would respond by suggesting the distribution of a leaflet calling for alternative action at the rally itself — then, presumably only those who understand the consequences of confrontation would participate.

I cannot believe Lare has thought this through, either morally or tactically. Leading workers into an action with concealed objectives for tactical reasons of surprise might be justified if it was called by a leadership in whom the workers reposed a confidence and trust won in action and tempered with experience. The “militant coalition” clearly is not such an entity, unless Lare thinks a coalition with such attributes can be improvised on the spot at some designated street corner in Decatur.

A physical confrontation with police and scabs with no prior notice, organization, psychological preparation, or plan of action communicated to the workers, without any political preparation of the union's supporters, precipitated by a small group in disagreement with the policy of the strikers' leadership is irresponsible adventurism. It is disloyal to workers and their families who do not come prepared for a physical fight, and a violation of the right of the union to conduct its actions in a disciplined way, based

on its own plan. Such a confrontation could only lead to a rout and unnecessary victimization. If the leaders of the union led the workers into a trap such as this, they would be rightly condemned by their own members for their dishonesty and incompetence.

If Lare's "militant coalition" did succeed in provoking the confrontation which it seeks, and, as he says, "at least salvaging headlines reading 'traffic tied up for hours,'" it would have usurped the democratic right of the union to decide for itself when and under what circumstances it will conduct its struggle. There is no evidence presented in Lare's article that the membership of the local union has not freely selected its leadership through the duly constituted procedures, or that it disagrees with the strategy with which the leadership is conducting the strike, other than one or two anecdotal impressions, and those by an outsider visiting the strike for a day or two.

In fact, given the impressive tenacity and determination exhibited by the strikers and the broad participation of workers in all activities of the union, there is every reason to believe that the workers understand what the union's strategy is and that they support it.

The Principle of Unity in Action

Perhaps Lare would argue that he would not advocate the militant coalition "persuading the march" to undertake the actions he proposes unless it had the participation of some significant component of Staley workers — after all, he does say that "a militant coalition would have to include Staley workers and their families, as well as activists in other unions." Even if such a grouping is realizable, and could be formed spontaneously in the midst of a demonstration, which I profoundly doubt, it is not any better. What he is really advocating, whether he realizes it or not, is *splitting* the demonstration, and violating the fundamental proletarian (and "Trotskyist," if you will) principle of *unity in action*. It is inconceivable that "persuading the march" to diverge from the union leadership's plan of action could be done in a unified manner, unless this is an elaboration of some fantasy of massive divisions of labor, crystallized around the ineluctable logic of the "militant coalition's" program, wheeling on their flanks with military discipline and precision and moving with crushing force toward the cowering scabs and police.

Sending some component of the demonstration, surely a minority, off into a scuffle with the police in violation of the union's discipline, would not strengthen the struggle; on the contrary, the overwhelming probability is that it would weaken it, sowing division and recrimination among the union's members and supporters, and strengthening the hand of the police, the courts, and the employers.

Lare says that the Staley workers "have not been able to organize truly mass mobilizations." I'm not exactly sure what he means by this. They have organized demonstrations of up to 4-5,000, as he reports. Perhaps he is postu-

lating a threshold for initiating the type of action he proposes. But he also speculates on how the October 15 demonstration, which was about that size, could have been "persuaded" to engage in his 3-point program of action. His observation at least has the merit of raising the consideration of what "mass" is.

Not an Abstract Principle

"Mass" is, of course, a relative term. At least I would hope there would be agreement on this. Tactical wisdom begins, to use Trotsky's terminology, with an estimate of the correlation of forces and a plan of action. It follows that the utility of a mass picket line in the overall struggle cannot be established simply as an *a priori* principle, without reference to the actual situation. The characteristics of "mass" picket lines capable of shutting the Staley plant can only be deduced by determining the forces available to the workers, the police, the political climate in Decatur, and in Illinois, the political line-up of the broader labor movement, both within the state and especially within the international union with which the Staley workers are affiliated, as well as the unions at Caterpillar and Bridgestone-Firestone, the mood of the workers, the logistics of the plant site, what kind of reinforcements are likely to be dispatched to the aid of the company, and so on.

Lare's article does not contain much information of this nature, but based on what is generally known, it is reasonable to suppose that mass picket lines capable of effectively shutting the plant and swamping the police with sheer numbers would have to be in the thousands. The history of the strike indicates that the only time numbers of that magnitude have been mobilized is when outside reinforcements have been brought in, in response to appeals for solidarity demonstrations. What would it take to organize a mass mobilization of similar size for the express purpose of shutting the plant?

Only the local leadership, which has the support and confidence of the workers, could set this goal as its objective and actually carry it out, convincing, mobilizing, and preparing the membership, and appealing for aid from the entire labor movement. It is not something that could be accomplished on one weekend day, with control of access to the plant relinquished to the company on Monday. A sustained mobilization over, at least, several days would be required at a minimum with the concerted assistance of the workers from Caterpillar and Bridgestone-Firestone, as well as other workers in Decatur and from surrounding cities. It is difficult for me, at least, to see how the political climate for a sustained mobilization like this could be created without some overt commitment of support from wider segments of the union movement. Is this possible? Certainly not without such a position being adopted and campaigned for by the leadership of the local union, or at least by some authoritative faction within the union. As we have seen, there is no evidence that any such formation or tendency exists.

United Front Strategy

It is suggested by Lare that action along the lines he proposes is an example of the application of the united front. This is a further misunderstanding. The fundamental principle from which the united front strategy is derived is "unity in action." This has sometimes been described as "march separately, strike together." It might be said that what Lare is proposing amounts to "march together, strike separately."

The necessity of the united front derives from the existence, based on all prior development, of a working class which is not united, either organizationally or politically. It is inevitable that the dominant leadership in times of normal capitalist development is reformist and class collaborationist. For all sorts of historical and political reasons, workers, who are not prepared at any given moment to break with their traditional leaderships, see no contradiction between that and practical agreements with other organizations for united struggle.

Trotsky, whom Lare seeks to invoke in support of his views, explained the united front this way:

The policy of the united front is one of the means of liberating the workers from reformist influence and even, in the last analysis, of moving towards the genuine unity of the working class. We must constantly explain this Marxian truth to the advanced workers. *But a historical perspective, even the most correct one, cannot replace the living experience of the masses.* ["The Question of Trade Union Unity," (written May 15, 1931), in *Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions* (Pathfinder, 1969), p. 48.]

As elaborated by Lenin and Trotsky in the period of the formation of the Communist International, the united front strategy specifically provided a method for approaching the millions of workers who belonged to the traditionally moderate unions and Social Democratic parties with proposals for joint action, without making the *a priori* demand that they reject their leadership as a condition of unity. It was also necessary to convince some revolutionaries that this perspective was not, in itself, an unprincipled accommodation to the reformists. Lenin's famous polemic against ultraleftism, "*Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, published in 1920, was directed in part toward convincing new and youthful revolutionaries that "the whole task of Communists is to be able to convince the backward elements, to be able to work among them, and not to fence themselves off from them by artificial and childish 'left-wing' slogans."

Cannon on the Doctrinaire Left

James P. Cannon recalled, in relation to his own experience:

[The] left wing of American socialism had been traditionally rigid and doctrinaire on all questions — revolution versus reform, direct action versus parliamentary action, new unions versus the old craft unions, etc...The publication of Lenin's pamphlet on left communism marked the beginning of their comprehension that realistic tactics could flexibly combine activities in

Labor Political Action in Decatur

Working people in Decatur, Illinois, are campaigning "to end anti-worker, anti-union control of our city government," reports Dan Kashefska of the United Rubber Workers (URW), chairman of Friends of Labor and campaign manager of "Watts for City Council."

Dave Watts, president of the locked-out UPIU local at Staley, came in fourth in the primary, and Mike Carrigan, business agent with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 146, came in third.

Kashefska says these results were reported by "our anti-labor newspaper the *Herald and Review*," which also reported that this

was the first time in city history that labor has successfully put two labor-backed candidates on the ballot. They went on to say that this was the highest percentage of voter turnout in any city election since records have been kept: 30% (the norm being 12%)!

Kashefska's account continues:

The only anti-labor and industry-backed mayoral candidate on the ballot stated, "Boy, Labor did its job in getting out the vote." This "puppet of profit" won the primary by unleashing an unprecedented budget on his campaign. He won by only seven percent against a field of four opponents much more friendly to our cause. We did not back any candidate for mayor in the primary and our vote was divided. When we

unite with the [one] more labor-friendly candidate we will win this battle also!

Only through funds solicited from other locals and union solidarity did we overcome the first obstacle in our quest for recognition and representation. Labor is not dead but on the road to recovery in Decatur, Illinois.

Kashefska also points out that this campaign "will not only mean a greater voice for labor in the governing of our city, but will also help resolve other important issues affecting the lives of all the working class citizens of Decatur." And he adds: "Hopefully this endeavor is only the start of labor becoming a greater force not only in our governing process in Decatur, Illinois, but as well throughout our great nation. (Emphasis added.)"

Kashefska concludes:

We need your support, both morally and financially, in continuing our campaign against anti-labor forces in our city. Our success or failure depends on your continued support.

Send campaign contributions to: Friends of Labor, 2645 N. 22nd St., Decatur IL 62526.

Note that financial donations are still needed for the Staley workers and for their local's Adopt-A-Family program. Funds sent to the UPIU Local 7837 Emergency Food and Assistance Fund (address: 2882 N. Dinneen, Decatur 62526) are not used for the election campaign.

these fields without departing from basic revolutionary principles. [Cannon, *First Ten Years of American Communism*, pp. 58-60.]

The "left" to which Lare refers is today in no position to make "united front" proposals to anyone, unless it is in the sense of this marginal aggregation of individuals declaring to the leaders of the Staley struggle that only if their proposals for "mass struggle" are adopted by these local leaders, will they, the "left," agree to support them. It is only necessary to say this to see what a caricature of the real and historic united front is being presented.

Trotsky once described how an early Bolshevik, Bogdanov, convinced the St. Petersburg Bureau of the party to

pass a resolution in October, 1905: to submit before the Petrograd Soviet a demand that it recognize the leadership of the party; and in the event of refusal — to walk out of the Soviet. Krassikov, a young lawyer, in those days a member of the CEC (Bolsheviks), read this ultimatum at the plenary session of the Soviet. The worker deputies, among them Bolsheviks also, exchanged surprised looks and then passed on to the business on the order of the day. Not a man walked out of the Soviet. Shortly after that

Lenin arrived from abroad and he raked the ultimatumists over the coals mercilessly. "You can't," he lectured them, "nor can anyone else by means of ultimatums force the masses to skip the necessary phases of their development." [Trotsky, "What Next?" in *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (Pathfinder, 1971), p. 167.]

What Lare describes as a united front approach to the Staley workers is, in its actual application, a form of ultimatum.

Lare is correct in that *in general* it is the reformism and class collaborationism of the union bureaucracy which prevents the mobilization of the power of the labor movement in defense of the Staley workers. But this is a universal, or near universal condition, not one that manifests itself only in Decatur. The united front policy, as discussed above, was elaborated by those who had won masses of workers to support of revolutionary policies and organization. The critics of the policy of the Staley leadership have no followers — in terms of the mass labor movement. They have only an alternative policy, whatever its merits. They have not even reached the threshold of the problem presented to those leading an authentic and mass

revolutionary minority of the working class who seek a "means of liberating the workers from reformist influence and...moving towards genuine unity of the working class."

The advocates of the "militant coalition," whatever their intentions, reduce this general, historical political problem to the level of a tactical difference which can be solved by creating, through a *fait accompli*, a confrontation of a different character from the one organized by the local union leadership. In so doing, they not only exaggerate the significance of their own proposals but grossly underestimate what is necessary to overcome the bureaucratic misleadership of the American working class.

A mass picket line, like any other tactic, has no independent significance. To elevate it to the level of a principle is, to use Cannon's term, "doctrinaire." It is a misunderstanding both of mass picket lines themselves, and of the reciprocal relationship between strategy and tactics.

It cannot be an abstraction, to be simply substituted for another abstraction, "nonviolent civil disobedience," "moral appeals to the public for sympathy," and so on. It can only be evaluated *concretely*, in relation to strategic objectives — whether it advances or retards a given strategy or method of struggle. As Trotsky said, "Once we divorce the subjective aspect from the objective, such a philosophy becomes sheer revolutionary adventurism." [Summary speech, June 24, 1921.]

"Labor Lieutenants of Capital"?

The essential point of departure of Lare's article is that the local leaders have not been convinced to carry out the perspective he proposes. Is this because they are "labor lieutenants of capitalism"? Although Lare suggests this, he offers no evidence other than the leadership's failure to adopt the tactical proposals of the "militant coalition." Perhaps their failure to endorse those proposals is simply because they do not feel them to be in the best interests of the struggle.

It is possible that they have thought through their approach with sober realism and due consideration of all the factors indicated above, and more. They are, after all, people who have shown an ability to lead a strike against a giant multinational corporation over many months, against great odds, with the active support and participation of their membership. It is difficult to conclude, based on their record, that they are merely looking for the earliest possible opportunity to liquidate the struggle, and those who know them best, the members of the union and their families, appear to stand behind them.

In any case, in the last analysis what matters is that the advocates of the alternatives Lare presents have not convinced the workers to adopt them, or to reject their leaders if they fail to do so. And it is absolutely clear from the tone and content of Lare's article that the implementation of this perspective is considered so urgent that it cannot wait until the majority of workers are convinced.

The Philosophy of "the Offensive"

Given the refusal of the Staley leaders to proceed along the lines proposed in the name of the "militant coalition," it is excluded that any concerted, organized, and sustained offensive of that character can be carried out. The only other purpose of the proposal can be the hope that an episodic confrontation conforming to Lare's scenario could spark a spontaneous response among broader sections of labor so strong that a powerful mobilization would arise and descend on Decatur, overwhelming the fears and hesitations of the local leaders, and compelling them and other union officials to do their duty, or, as Lare says, be replaced by rank and file strike committees.

In 1921 Trotsky, along with Lenin, placing himself demonstratively in the "right wing" of the Communist International at its Third Congress, characterized such views in the following manner:

This famous philosophy of the offensive, absolutely non-Marxist, has arisen from the following propositions: "A wall of passivity is gradually rising; this is a misfortune. The movement is stagnating. Therefore, forward march! Let us break through this wall!" ["Speech on the Italian Question, Third Congress of the Communist International" (June 29, 1921).]

Again, in a later speech, Trotsky said:

But if one reasons purely abstractly, and insists always on moving forward, if one refuses to rack his brain over strategy on the assumption that everything can be superseded by an added exertion of revolutionary will, what result does one then get? ["Report on the Balance Sheet of the Third Congress of the Communist International" (July 14, 1921).]¹

This is precisely what is involved in Lare's perspective of the "militant coalition" — that is, the substitution of the "revolutionary will" of "the left" for the mobilization of the masses, with the hope that exemplary action will stimulate them to "break through the wall." This is, again, the method of ultraleftism. (For another example of ultraleftism, see the box "Lesson from Minneapolis Strikes," next page.)

Is the Analogy Unfair?

Perhaps Lare will object that the analogy is inapposite, and unfair. The leaders of the Staley struggle are not equivalent to the Minneapolis strike leaders. He is not proposing a revolutionary offensive irrespective of objective conditions, only a mass picket line. But this is not the point.

Tactics are real, immediate, and concrete. For better or worse they must be a function of the existing leadership. To think that the skilled insertion of the appropriate tactic by a dedicated team of political surgeons can set in motion a process which will transform the leadership of the Staley strike is illusory.

What Distinguishes the Staley Strike

The Staley strike, or lockout, unfolded as a specific expression of the relentless offensive of the employers against the unions, as did the strikes at Caterpillar, and Bridgestone-Firestone, and of course, many others over the last fifteen years — Hormel, Greyhound, and almost innumerable others, and the determination of workers to resist. What differentiates the leaders of the Staley struggle is not that they are "labor lieutenants of capitalism" but that they have been able to sustain a difficult struggle over many months, to make their struggle a cause of the broader labor movement, to hold together the workers and their families, and to remain intransigent in the face of the company's demands, as Lare himself concedes.

The exemplary mobilization of workers in the Staley and Hormel struggles, their resolute democracy and independence, and their willingness to appeal to the rank and file of the American labor movement over the heads of the union bureaucrats (in which Ray Rogers was an utterly indispensable ingredient) more than any other development in the last fifteen years shows the way forward. It is, further, the Staley workers, in collaboration with others in the Decatur labor movement, who have given one of the first tangible expressions to the developing national movement for independent labor political action by running a slate of labor candidates, including local president Dave Watts, for City Council under the auspices of a union-based organization, Friends of Labor (see box, page 32).

The question is therefore posed: why is the focus of such fervent criticism and denunciation almost entirely against the local leadership — exemplified in Lare's article by Dave Watts and Ray Rogers — and not, for example, the bureaucratic leadership of the Allied Industrial Workers and Paperworkers international unions, or even the local Decatur leaderships of the UAW at Caterpillar and the rubber workers at Bridgestone-Firestone? Surely they are only distinguished from the leaders of the Staley workers in being less bold, determined, and unrelenting in pressing their struggle and mobilizing their membership. This is an obvious inconsistency for someone whose premise is wider and more militant struggle.

Lare's Strategy Not Coherent

As should be apparent, I do not believe Lare is proposing a coherent strategy. It is, rather, the projection of frustration and adaptation to the moods of a radical milieu onto the screen of the struggle in Decatur, and consequently, necessarily lacking in coherence. It mixes up valid generalizations about the importance of broad labor support and suggestions for some possible forms this could take, which are clearly confined to the realm of propaganda, with explicit calls for minority action in violation of the

union's discipline. It talks about strategy but puts forward tactical proposals as though they could alter the political composition or character of the union's leadership.

It seems quite evident, to me at least, that this material is directed fundamentally, not toward the Staley workers, or the unions, but to a small aggregation of radicals who appear to make up some part of the Chicago Staley Workers Support Committee. Who else is supposed to respond to such calls as "The Need for a Left Opposition Within the Staley Workers' Support Group"? Who else needs to be convinced that "Rogers and the UPIU officials... must be included in the united front proposals by the left"? It is obvious that the intention is for "the militant confrontation," ("intervening on the ground"), to be initiated by this group, with the hope that it will be emulated spontaneously by other participants in a union demonstration.

Although this grouping is described variously as "a broad coalition... with a real base among the Staley workers" (how about the Chicago workers?), and "not a marginal leftist presence," this is dissimulating. As Farrell Dobbs used to say, we are not greenhorns. They are unmistakably, by their actions as related by Lare, and by the language with which he addresses them, a marginal (ultra)leftist presence.

In the "Worker's Supplement" article referred to earlier, the author says:

After the cop attack, a smaller, angrier crowd — including leftists criticizing Rogers's strategy and calling for militant action — remained at the gate. Rogers responded by preaching strict non-violence over the bullhorn. One of the leaders of the Chicago Staley Workers Solidarity Committee began loudly criticizing Rogers's speech. The Chicago committee leader asked Rogers whether he was obeying directives from the police. [Enough said? — DJ]

This Is Ultraleftism, Not "Trotskyism"

For a small group of outsiders to publicly call for the removal of local union leadership, with dire warnings that the struggle is doomed if this advice is not followed, and with only an abstraction to replace them, is irresponsible. Anybody can see that. How anyone could expect that such behavior will create a more favorable environment among the workers for this small group's ideas is incomprehensible. It seems probable to me that the real source of all this is that Lare and his co-thinkers are fundamentally focused on their relationship with and ability to influence a small radical milieu, mostly outside the unions, who share their frustration with the current course of events in the labor movement, who express a sectarian hostility (see above) to the leadership of the Staley workers struggle, and who are susceptible to ultraleftist solutions, if not actually advocating them in a more extreme form than Lare. By describing these proposals, which undoubtedly echo moods among this mi-

1. The three 1921 quotations from Trotsky are in his two-volume collection *First Five Years of the Communist International*.

lieu, as compatible with "Trotskyism" they perhaps hope to gain some recruits to their organization. If this is the case, their attention is focused fundamentally in the wrong direction.

In the long struggle of the industrial labor movement, situations like those at Staley, Caterpillar, and Bridgestone-Firestone in Decatur are more common than the implied alternative.

Utilizing Lare's above criteria, most of them might as well have been terminated after it became apparent that they could not succeed in totally shutting down production, sealing the workplace off from strikebreakers, and neutralizing the employer's access to the repressive forces of the state. Indeed, many of them were. But this of course creates an arbitrary standard,

and artificially separates each struggle from the whole. While this is surely not Lare's intention, this is the inner logic (and historical record) of ultraleftism, whose subjectivism and solipsism cause it to oscillate between urgent calls for militant struggle independent of the movement of the masses and pessimistic passivity.

At the same time that Lare's article is an urgent call for an escalation of confrontation on the Staley picket line, he expresses grave doubts that the workers are capable of understanding what is needed and taking the necessary steps to remove the obstacles to carrying out the action he advocates. Underlying his urgency is an implication that the struggle is essentially defeated. He says at various times:

If the Staley workers realized that the situation is this bad, they might well decide to go back to work or accept severance pay as a settlement...

The workers may not have the confidence to remove their current leaders and take these measures....

If Staley workers believe they cannot escalate the struggle, they would do better to vote to go back in all together, to fight another day with a better leadership and a better strategy, than to bleed to death, losing jobs and the union....

But the possibility of Staley workers' drawing this conclusion should not be an excuse for telling less than the truth about the odds they face....

Lesson from Minneapolis Strikes

During the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes, the leadership of Local 574 came under vitriolic attack by the American Communist Party, then immersed in the ultra-left "Third Period" proclaimed by the Stalinized Comintern. The CP poured out leaflets denouncing the strike leaders as reformists and sell-outs, so much so that, according to Bill Brown, the local's president, "They discredited the mimeograph."

The strike settlement, the CP said, in a leaflet issued in late August,

was a shameful defeat and surrender — And this is the agreement which the leadership of No. 574 recommended to the drivers as a victory!

No. 574 should have undertaken to spread the strike over the heads of the AFL bureaucrats, appealing directly to the rank and file of the trade union movement," the CP said, "but the strike leadership were more interested in peace with the AFL bureaucrats than in organizing militant action to win the strike.

[Governor] Olson took from the strikers their main weapon by prohibiting picketing... Only the program of the Communist party — to organize picketing in spite of martial law, to broaden the strike by calling out all the No. 574 men instead of letting them go back to work in small groups, and by appealing to the rank and file of the trade union movement over the heads of the AFL leaders — only by such a program could the rights of picketing be re-established and the possibility of victory assured.

The workers must learn the great lesson of this strike, to assure them victory in the future battles; that only communists, fearless workers and militant fighters against the capitalist class can give loyal leadership in their struggles for their immediate demands and for the final victory of the workers."

This can only be done by building a militant opposition movement to the treacherous leadership of the AFL and their Trotskyite followers, the Dunnes.

By early August 1934, the majority of the workers in the Minneapolis trucking industry were back at work. The National Guard had issued over 5,000 military permits for operation. It is true, as the leaflet says, the leaders of the strike

did not organize mass picketing in the face of military occupation. They did organize what were essentially guerrilla actions, intercepting scab trucks where possible. This was a tactical choice based on consideration of all factors involved, and the overall relationship of forces. One of the primary considerations was to avoid a futile confrontation with overwhelmingly superior forces, producing unnecessary victimizations and leading to the isolation of the union.

Related considerations, which the leaflet alludes to in a distorted form ("more interested in peace with the AFL bureaucrats than in organizing militant action to win the strike"), included their concern to prevent any open split in the local labor movement, even though they were well aware of treachery among some of the local labor leaders, and though their call for a general strike had not been heeded. What was essential was their decision to continue the struggle, and their eventual victory was founded more on that determination than any specific tactical choices.

When the representation vote was conducted by the Labor Board, Local 574 only received about 52%, and actually lost in 68 firms, while winning in 62. It is apparent that at the point the CP was raising its objections to the conduct of the strike, the outcome was not a foregone conclusion. It is not excluded that the CP, which had in its ranks numerous working class militants, might have been able to make one or another tactical proposal which would have had some merit. But clearly, their approach to the strikers, publicly attacking their leadership, and counterposing their tactical proposals to that of the union, guaranteed they could not get a hearing from the rank and file. In fact, the strike leaders had to frequently intervene to prevent physical attacks on CP leafleters by infuriated strikers. *The Organizer*, the union's paper, once said in discouraging such attacks: "That's wrong. Such serious treatment should be reserved for serious opponents. They are not stool pigeons — at least not conscious ones; they're just a little bit nutty..."

An Irrepressible Conflict with Unavoidable Costs

Struggles like those at Staley (and Hormel) represent a vanguard of the working class declaring its existence, its unwillingness to accept the status quo, and its determination to resist. The strike, socially and historically, originates in the irrepressible conflict between workers and the employing class, not the strategic or tactical conceptions of any individual or political current. The strike expresses both the strength and weakness of the working class, and defines its present limits. Perhaps there are better ways to advance the emancipation of the working class. Many have said so, both from the left and the right. But the working class has chosen to utilize the strike as a primary means of struggle and will continue to do so, under favorable and unfavorable circumstances, with victories and defeats.

History has carved out a deep channel here. It does no good to deplore the cost of the struggle, which is really what underlies Lare's arguments. One might as well wish for the wind without the storm, as Frederick Douglass said. Each strike necessarily tests the relationship of forces between the two great classes, and takes a measure of its leadership, and no experience is lost, if it is properly measured. This is plainly what Lare is trying to do, but his method is wrong, and a misunderstanding of the history, traditions, and practice of the movement with which he identifies.

Mobilize Maximum Material Aid

The proper application of the transitional method at this juncture is to find the point where

the power and resources of the mass labor movement can begin to be mobilized, and to seek to do so on the widest possible basis, through solidarity speaking tours and rallies, food caravans, boycotts — that is, mobilization of maximum material aid and participation in solidarity actions requested by the Staley workers themselves consistent with the character which they, through their organizations, have determined.

It is only through these methods that wide sympathy and support from the broadest working masses can be generated, which is *the precondition* for the kind of struggle Lare

envisions. The leftists who refuse to participate unreservedly in this essential preparation simply remain a negative factor, permanently condemned to the sidelines, a position which is, after all, the negation of the intent and purpose of the transitional method. Their dire warnings about defeat only serve to prevent them from gaining any real influence with the workers, and demoralize those few who may be influenced by them.

The Staley struggle, which has held the great majority of the workers together for so many months, and which clearly could not continue for so long without their profound commitment,

should be a source of inspiration, not a cause for dismay. They have chosen their course with their eyes open. Let us not condescend to our brothers and sisters. They know about the defeats, the same as we, but they have chosen to carry on, because their cause is just, and solidarity makes them strong. These are not slogans, just the simple truth, and in this is revealed once more the capacity for workers to unite, to sacrifice and to struggle, and to build a better world. As long as the Staley workers are resolved to carry on, our obligation is to march with them. □

March 9, 1995

Sri Lanka, Economic Development, and Grass-Roots Struggle

Continued from page 18

requirements generally known as “structural adjustment policies” as a condition for Third World countries getting loans. These policies mean severe cutbacks in public spending for health, education, welfare, and other social services. They also require privatization of what were public or nationally-controlled sectors of the economy. In addition, they involve opening national borders to penetration by foreign products and companies, and the establishment of a favorable investment climate for foreign corporations, including lowering wages and controlling the local work force. The UNP government, from the very start, embraced these conditions under the name of an “open economic system.”

Because of the government policies, a lot of state-owned properties have been given to the private sector and private companies at bargain prices. State-owned corporations involving such things as steel, tires, graphite, and lead are now in private hands. Before 1977, people had many social benefits. But these have more and more been pushed back by the new policies. Thanks to cuts in government funding to education, our schools have declined, not enough teachers are trained and hired, and children — especially in rural areas — are denied a decent education. Because of cuts in funds for health, there has been a decline of our government health service. There has been a growth in private doctors and hospitals. This means that many people can no longer afford health care and medicines. With our public transportation system we have seen deep cuts in service and the deterioration of equipment.

The government has also cut subsidies to rice farmers, because rice cultivation in Sri Lanka does not fit in with the plans of multinational corporations. Instead, rice (our major source of food) is being imported, and farmers are being pressured to grow new cash crops that can be sold to multinational corporations for export. These companies sell to the farmers — on credit — seeds and fertilizer, as well as insecticides and herbicides. This harms the environment and destroys the soil. The farmers sell their crops to these corporations, but after a while, with the

accumulation of debts and the depletion of the soil — which means lower crop yields — their situation becomes desperate. In Polonnaruwa District, for example, there are 22 farmers who committed suicide because of their terrible debts.

The government talked about how its policies were designed to create economic development, but what kind of development have we seen? Income differences have widened. Unemployment has gone up. Per capita income has been falling, and the cost of living has gone up. According to the Central Bank report, 60 percent of children between one and fifteen years are undernourished. Ten percent of our babies don't weigh enough, and their mothers are anemic. Malaria is increasing in rural areas. Many infants in my own district of Durumegala — and in other districts, too — suffer from thelechemia, a blood disorder that can be traced to the undernourishment of the parents. If education is the key to progress, then the future doesn't look good. Out of every hundred children entering their first year of school, only one will enter the university.

People's Memorandum

Because of these disasters, we have demanded of the government that they give up their “open economy” system, and we have organized the people against these government policies. We have prepared a People's Memorandum, criticizing the problems that I have been talking about here. We asked people to sign its call for an end to these policies. About 200,000 signatures were collected among the farmers. We have helped to build a big organization called the Movement of the National Lands and Agriculture Reform, a mass peasant organization. On January 17, we had a demonstration with thousands of people in our capital city of Colombo, and on January 19 we handed over the People's Memorandum to the new President Chandrika Bandaranayaka Kumarathunga.

President Chandrika — who returned to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and led it to victory in last November's elections — represents a new government which favors capitalist economic

development but is not as right-wing as the UNP government that ruled for 17 years. The coalition that supported her is called the People's Alliance, which includes the CP, LSSP, and SLMP. Because during her presidential campaign she promised to maintain the “open economic system,” my own party refused to support Chandrika and the People's Alliance. But we believe that this government may be more sensitive to pressures from progressive forces.

We hope the present government will offer a solution to the problem of the disappeared, and we think this government will take some legal measures against the police and army people involved in human rights abuses. We hope for international pressure on this, and we are trying to educate public opinion, as much as we can, to help create such pressure. We have worked with the British Broadcasting Corporation in making a documentary on this problem, and we have made our own documentary also.

In addition, we intend to mobilize popular pressure against the World Bank mandate. People must be mobilized against the World Bank policies. For that we intend to draw together trade unions, farmers' organizations, mass organizations, and other organizations in support of this struggle. The World Bank and IMF have impoverished Third World people. We are going to arrange a big campaign in the Third World countries. More than this, we hope to get support from other people outside the Third World — including people such as yourselves. We must get support from people throughout the world in this confrontation with the World Bank. I hope to arrange a mobile exhibition for the education of the people about the impact of the World Bank policies and the need to fight against them. It is important for workers and farmers, for young people, and women in my country to understand these things. But it is also important for people here to understand such things. I hope that you will join with me, and with many others, in helping to create such an awareness. □

Who Is Responsible for the Attacks on Workers' Living Standards?

Continued from page 3

when they come for a Black woman and her children this morning...there will be no one to stand up for you when they come for you and your children tonight. As a union leader, I refuse to be quiet as the members of other unions lose their jobs...my members are next. As a citizen and public figure, I will not accept that the interests of city workers are anything but the same as the interests of all New Yorkers. We are

the people who make New York work for all New Yorkers. If we go...the city collapses...the neighborhood stores close...the landlords go broke...and the taxes we now pay stop.

We need a movement that brings together labor and the community, people of all races...struggling together around every issue. And we who work for the city are in a prime position to help organize that movement, and we can start today...this afternoon. *The only way to stop*

the pain is to make those tough decisions tough on those who make them. The only way to turn this city around is to take back what is ours before they run it into the ground. And the only way to assure a future for our children is for us to take control of the present. □

March 4, 1995

Building New England Solidarity with Decatur "War Zone" Workers

Continued from page 8

Exposure to Thousands of Workers

The tours have exposed the "Road Warriors" to over 50 union meetings and conventions and shown the video to thousands of workers in New England. Reports from the "War Zone" have been featured on the campuses of Brown, Clark, Harvard, Smith, and the University of Massachusetts at Boston and Amherst. Ongoing support committees have been established at Brown, Clark, and Harvard. These campus meetings have reached hundred of students. "Road Warriors" have also met with Noam Chomsky and spoken at the Harvard Trade Union Program along with its director, Elaine Bernard.

Staley and Caterpillar workers have been interviewed on National Public Radio, on a talk show of a major Boston rock station, in the *Boston Globe*, and in many community newspapers. They held a press conference in western Massachusetts and were written up in the *Springfield Union-News*. In every one of the six states in New England they have had a public meeting or a commitment for a meeting.

Their tours have been endorsed or worked on by almost every state AFL-CIO in New England. The Massachusetts AFL-CIO sponsored and built a rally that raised \$1,000 each for Staley, Bridgestone, Caterpillar, Cooks Hams, and Ampad workers.

The building trades in some Boston locals have been showing their apprentices the "Struggle in the Heartland" video, and the Staley workers' message has started to reach community and church groups.

Overwhelming Support

The outpouring of support and solidarity by New England trade unionists and students has been overwhelming. In every meeting, "War Zone" veterans make clear the message that their struggle in Decatur is happening everywhere in this country. Their sincere style and their determination is viewed as inspirational by union members in all sectors. They have brought together many rank and filers from local labor disputes and community organizers.

I, personally, have been able to travel around New England and meet with hundreds of union members previously unknown to me. These tours have bridged the gap between workers in Boston and western Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Quebec.

These tours have also provided a real opportunity for people on the left to work together in a nonsectarian way. Excellent work has been done by former and current members of Freedom Road Socialist Organization, International Socialist Organization (ISO), Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party, Labor Militant, Socialist Action, Solidarity, and independents. The ISO has been especially helpful in organizing events at Brown, Harvard, and Clark campuses, making New England one of the few places where "Road Warriors" have spoken to large numbers of young people.

Meetings at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and Amherst were mostly organized from the Boston committee with help from former and current members of the ISO and Solidarity. In all instances these campus meetings were organized by and included unions, both campus unions and off-campus ones. At Smith, students were invited to meet the "Road Warriors" at the local Northampton Labor Council.

A Unique Experience of Working Together

These tours have allowed workers, students, and left activists to work together in a way that has been unheard of in other movement work. Our committee has taken careful consideration not to pose itself as a threat to anyone — we did not adopt a formal structure and have no affiliation or goal other than to build solidarity with the Decatur "War Zone" workers. This policy enabled us to keep a clear focus on raising money and building support for the locked-out and striking workers. With the authority of the union movement, which we have been able to work with solidly, we have been able to achieve our goals.

Our committee's loose structure has allowed its many participants to develop their skills, confidence, and initiative. Men and women in the committee are taking on a variety of tasks in their unions and throughout the region, which they never thought to do before. For the committee, there is no such thing as failure by a participant, because all efforts to build solidarity are respected and encouraged. Because of the nature of solidarity work, the response to those doing it is overwhelmingly positive, which reinforces the positive atmosphere for participants.

This has been especially noticeable among women participants, who have done things they never thought possible in their workplaces and on their campuses. (See box by Sandy Rosen.)

Growing Awareness of the War on Workers

Since last summer this work has dominated most of my time. It has given me a firm grasp of the severity of capitalism's war on the union movement. The brutality of the bosses' fight against Decatur workers is told in graphic detail at each tour meeting. Inevitably there is a similar story told at the local level. At one of our recent solidarity events, a worker from the Prince Spaghetti plant in Boston, where UE has recently conducted an organizing drive and where the workforce is multicultural and multilingual, explained in broken English how the workers at her plant now speak with one voice, the union, and how they look to the workers in Decatur for inspiration.

The discussions at tour meetings touch on the similarities between the struggles in every part of this country. They have raised the issue of the war on the poor, on women, on African Americans, on Hispanics, etc., and the "Road Warriors" have clearly been radicalized by these experiences. Discussion of the need for a labor party is now a routine thing, and socialists are viewed, at least by Staley workers, in a very favorable light.

Hatred of Democrats, Need for a Labor Party

The resentment and hatred of the Democratic Party is surfacing more and more. Any real or perceived progressive properties attributed to the Democrats are overshadowed by the tremendous sense of betrayal expressed by these and other union members around New England. Some of the most conservative labor leaders now routinely bash the Democrats at these meetings.

I have witnessed on these tours that there is definitely a mood developing in favor of labor engaging in independent political action. Hopefully Labor Party Advocates can capitalize on this. LPA supporters have been present at many of these solidarity tour meetings.

With the increased attacks on workers and the poor since the Republican victories in November there is a heightened sense of urgency around solidarity for Decatur and union workers in general. This ensures the continued work of our committee and many future solidarity tours. For anyone in the region interested in getting involved, please call Russ Davis at (617) 391-8279 or Bill Almy (617) 641-3389. □

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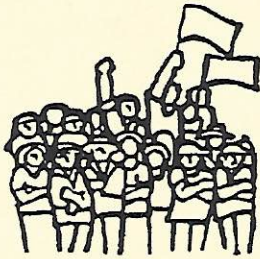
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The Manifesto of the Fourth International

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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ground information and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

Volume Two:

Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 412 pages (1992) — \$12.00

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.