



## General Strike in France!

Articles by Keith Mann, José Pérez, Christian Piquet

## The Rich Really Are Different

How the Rulers Rule and How They Live

Feature Article by David Jones

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## Notice to Readers

# Building Labor Party Advocates — A 1996 Priority for the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

The founding of a labor party in the United States will be a development of major importance to the American working class movement. The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will be devoting special attention to this question — and its significance for workers everywhere — up through the founding convention organized by Labor Party Advocates in Cleveland, Ohio, June 6–9, 1996.

While focusing on this question, we intend to continue providing Marxist analysis of world events and issues of importance to our international audience, as we have since the founding of this magazine. We will continue our coverage of developments in the Black struggle, for example, such as the discussion in the present issue of the Million Man March and activities following up on it. And we will continue to pay attention to crucial international events, especially in Canada and Mexico but also in Russia, Bosnia, Haiti, Brazil, Japan, South Africa, China, wherever the class struggle is erupting.

But in the months ahead we need to particularly focus on — and explain and discuss for our readership in the U.S. and internationally — the significance of the imminent founding of a labor party here.

This is class consciousness coming out of the experience of the American labor movement itself. Some of the most significant figures in recent strike struggles, such as leaders of the Staley workers in Decatur, Illinois, and of the auto workers in Flint, Michigan, are solid and outspoken advocates of founding a labor party now.

We wish to keep our readers informed about the significance of the crucial developments in the U.S. labor movement. We can expect and be confident that a labor-oriented Marxist theoretical magazine, relying on the readers who have supported it, will in the present situation find a widening circle of new readers as well.

We want our publication to be in the middle of these important developments. And we want to expand our audience among women and men in and around the labor movement who are being radicalized and becoming class conscious and politically conscious, and who support independent working class political action.

This LPA convention will be a real union event, one with solid backing by significant elements throughout organized labor. In addition to the four unions that have endorsed LPA nationally (OCAW, UE, BMW, ILWU) there are forces in many other unions, including the Miners, Teamsters, Communications Workers, etc., that support LPA and its founding convention. A growing number of national, regional, and local unions, not ready to break with lesser-evil politics, are recognizing the need to start building an alternative independent labor political safety net.

The importance of LPA's convention will not be lessened by the possibility that its outcome may be a continuing educational campaign and a programmatic discussion rather than an attempt to start fielding candidates on a national level before a solid base has been built.

## A Spur to Class Consciousness

The main contribution of the labor party movement is that it promotes class consciousness among American workers and helps dispel the false notion of a "classless" society in the United States, where anyone "can be what they want to be" if they only work hard enough and "hold onto their dream." The message of LPA is that working people must band together in their own organizations, and their own political party, on the basis of their own program, to collectively promote their interests. As the capitalist economy declines, for every individual who "makes it," hundreds, thousands are thrown on the scrap heap. There is no individual solution. Collective working-class mass action (such as the example recently shown by the French workers) is the way forward.

There have been a number of attempts at building a third party in recent years, and there is a great deal of talk about several different alternatives to the Republicans and Democrats for the 1996 elections. Aside from the capitalist billionaire Ross Perot and the maverick Democrat, Jesse Jackson, who keeps hinting at an independent presidential candidacy, the most significant new development along these lines is that Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate and critic of Corporate America, has agreed to place his name on the ballot for the Green Party in California. But no third-party movement has succeeded in creating a nationwide, permanent, stable base.

A party based on the organized labor movement would be different. As Tony Mazzocchi, Bob Wages of OCAW, and others have regularly stressed, the unions have the resources, skills, and organization — and a membership of 13 million or more — to become the base of a solid and lasting independent political party in a way that none of the middle-class protest movements and other movements for social change can compare with.

LPA's convention will deepen the movement for a labor party. Politically labor has nowhere else to go. Among the capitalist politicians, there is no sector of any substance that has a progressive social orientation. And the ranks of labor are not going to stand still for more cutbacks, layoffs, longer hours, less pay. The example shown by the French workers on how to fight back — shut the whole country down! — has not been lost on American workers.

To the extent that LPA and the movement for a labor party in general becomes a recognized and accepted part of the work and activity of the union movement — and this is already happening; the election of two LPA leaders to the AFL-CIO Executive Council is just one indication out of many — class consciousness will grow among American workers. And they will increasingly see the relevance of the Marxist explanation of the world and the Marxist program for changing it.

In coming issues we hope to include discussion about the development of the labor party's program, articles on past experiences of the labor movement with independent political action, reprints "From the Arsenal of Marxism" with discussion of this vital question by key figures in the American revolution-

*Continued on Inside Back Cover*

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# The Public Sector Strikes and the French Labor Movement Today

by Keith Mann

For over three weeks, public sector workers in France conducted magnificent strikes against government plans to severely water down hard-won social security gains. Striking students earlier forced the government to grant significant increases in funding for university education.

Two million railworkers, teachers, employees from the state-owned telephone, electrical, and gas companies, joined by some postal workers, participated in the strikes, which began on November 24. They were the biggest that France has seen since the May-June general strike of 1968, in which as many as 10 million workers from all sectors of the economy walked out. The recent strikes included many well-attended demonstrations, several of which saw over two million workers take to the streets, including many who were not part of the public sector strike. Though the strikers returned to work shortly before Christmas without having obtained total satisfaction, they promise to continue to demand the complete withdrawal of the government's plan, and have threatened new strikes if necessary.

The strikes attracted the attention of the most varied international audiences. Politicians and financial analysts throughout the world, especially from the member countries of the European Union, watched nervously as many of France's most powerful unions refused to accept the brutal austerity measures required to prepare the way for European monetary union. Trade unionists watched with admiration as the strikers held fast and resisted government intransigence and its demagogic propaganda campaign against the strikers. Socialists welcomed the interruption of labor quiescence that has characterized the social situation in many countries since the disappearance of the USSR.

French workers themselves will certainly debate the lessons of this strike for some time to come. In this article, we will review the stakes in this strike and what the unfolding of the strike reveals about France's labor movement today and the possible directions it is heading.

The government reacted with surprise to the scale and intensity of the resistance to its plans. These plans are in fact the logical culmination of a series of other austerity measures that, as the government correctly points out, were begun under the last several Socialist Party (SP) governments formed during François Mitterrand's two seven-year terms as president. They were continued by the right-wing Balladur government, which Mitterrand appointed following the right-wing victory in the legislative elections held in the spring of 1994.

Resistance to the austerity measures that all of these governments have steadily implemented has been scattered and uneven. Why then, did these most recent plans provoke such anger? The answer lies in the nature and scope of the reforms and the context in which they were announced. The Juppé government's plan to reorganize France's social security system, especially its plan to extend the years that public sector workers must pay into the social security fund from 37½ years to 40 years, struck two nerves at once.

First of all, France's relatively solid social security system was put into place following the liberation of the country from German occupation at the end of World War II. Those gains are indissolubly bound up with the memory of struggle and sacrifice by French workers. So, part of the reason that Juppé's plan met with such opposition is that it threatens a system justifiably considered to be part of the country's patrimony. (The 1968 general strike was sparked in part, by the Jeanneney laws, which also proposed watering down the social security system.)

Second, the provisions calling for workers to remain in the workforce for 2½ more years come after several years in which the official unemployment rate of 11.5 percent (the reality is much higher) has placed the question of unemployment at the very center of the national debate. Forcing older workers to remain in the workforce longer aggravates unemployment, especially for young job seekers. This is why the same polls that showed that 90 percent of

## Editors' Note

This issue features an article by David Jones illustrating by three examples what the ruling class is in this country and how it operates. Jones's careful research into the little publicized world of the wealthy and powerful has important lessons for the working class people they exploit.

Our opening story by Keith Mann takes up the main developments and issues around the strikes in France in November-December. For more on those strikes, we refer readers to the January issue of *International Viewpoint*, monthly publication of the Fourth International, which carries a special collection of articles on the strikes, two of which we reprint here. (To get *IV*, see the subscription blank elsewhere in this issue.)

Not only in France are workers waging a militant fightback against cuts in the social wage. Canadian auto worker Joe Flexer reports on the one-day general strike in London, Ontario, and provides background on that struggle. Also from the Canadian state, Barry Weisleder reports on the recent Québec referendum.

Pursuing the question of cuts in the social wage, Bill Onasch discusses the "battle of the budget," the latest farcical Clinton-Gingrich dance that led to a partial shutdown of the federal government.

### Sweeney and Strike Settlements

Also impressed by the French strikes recently was the new president of the AFL-CIO, John Sweeney. Charles Walker gives an appraisal of Sweeney in the light of his major speech to an employers' group in New York. We have excerpted from that speech Sweeney's references to the French events.

Walker notes in particular Sweeney's appeal for "labor-management cooperation."

Since his election Sweeney has put a lot of effort into what he called "trying to solve some of the awful confrontations I inherited" — that is, militant struggles at Boeing, Caterpillar, and Staley, among others. All three of these have now been settled. (In pursuit of a settlement, Sweeney had a personal meeting in London with the head of the British firm Tate and Lyle, which owns Staley.)

In this issue articles by Frank Lovell and Steven Ashby, respectively, discuss the Caterpillar and Staley settlements. The difficulties of the workers' struggle in the Detroit newspaper strike and proposals for dealing with them are reviewed by Cheryl Peck and Lisa Schlicker.

### No U.S. Troops to Bosnia!

A measure of Sweeney's strong commitment to "labor-management cooperation" was his choice of traveling partner in Europe — Bill Clinton, the "New Democrat" of NAFTA fame, the chief executive of the American capitalist class (who also happens to be the commander-in-chief of the American war machine now moving into Bosnia). We express our opposition to the Bosnia intervention and begin to take up some of the implications of this major military move in an article by George Saunders.

From Russia, Marilyn Vogt-Downey and Geoffrey Barr report on a conference in St. Petersburg commemorating the 1905 revolution and honoring Leon Trotsky, president of the first Soviet (council) of Workers' Deputies, which arose out of that revolutionary workers movement 90 years ago. Also reporting from Russia, Aleksandr Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov assess the December elections there.

*Continued on page 4*

## U.S. Unionists Support French Strikers

*The following report was posted December 18, 1995, on the "labornews" conference of the Institute for Global Communications network.*

Textile workers held a noisy protest at the French consulate in Atlanta, Georgia, Friday [December 15] in support of the strike that has crippled France for more than three weeks.

Members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) chanted and yelled in a cramped outer office before a French official emerged and agreed to pass their message on to the French government.

The official said it was the first such demonstration in the United States since strikes began last month in France to protest the conservative government's welfare reforms.

"The French workers are fighting for what

is decent in this world. They deserve to have their demands met," Bruce Raynor, an executive vice president of UNITE, told the official.

Raynor said American workers were in solidarity with French unions because welfare reforms in France were similar to Republican-led cuts in U.S. social programs. Both countries are seeing efforts by big business to roll back the living standards of the people, he said.

UNITE said it planned protests in other cities, but a union spokeswoman did not know when the next demonstration would take place. The spokeswoman said UNITE has 355,000 members nationwide.

the inhabitants of the Parisian region were inconvenienced by the strikes also revealed that as many as 63 percent supported the aims of the strikers.

This explains then, the resistance of workers to these reforms.

### Why Government Wouldn't Budge

But why in the face of crippling strikes did the government refuse to back down? After all, governments and employers usually have enough maneuvering room to retreat when workers manage to strike important sectors of the economy for extended periods, and these strikes seriously hurt many business sectors. The answer lies in the fact that these are not the same type of austerity measures that capitalist governments normally resort to as a way of maintaining profits in a shrinking, recession-ridden economy, and/or when they feel that worker resistance has been lessened. Rather, they reflect the French bourgeoisie's felt need to complete the final stage of the Western European economic bloc's program to unite its currencies along the lines stipulated by the Maastricht treaty on European Union.

Most European capitalists agree that their common needs call for a united European Union (EU) in order to compete with the North American and Asian capitalist trading blocs. But the strongest among them, especially the German capitalists, fear that their stronger currencies will be forced to subsidize the weaker ones among the EU countries. And their economic might gives them the power to demand that the other members of the EU reduce their public debts and government spending. Most of the French bourgeoisie agree

A majority of France's bourgeois politicians are enthusiastic supporters of European Union and

are willing to risk provoking intense class battles by reducing the staggering social security debt through reducing services, attacking retirement benefits, and increasing the amount that wage earners must contribute. This is why during the strikes both President Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé repeatedly claimed that there was "no choice" but to reform the country's social security system. It also explains why 71 percent of the members of the French employers association called on Juppé to continue to refuse to annul the plan even if it meant the strikes would last through the end of December.

Likewise, workers, employers, and governments throughout Europe closely followed the events in France. In Belgium, following the French example, 60,000 public sector workers, led by the rail unions marched on December 13 to defend their pensions and other gains which are under attack. There was a widespread sentiment that the outcome of the struggles of French workers would have a big impact on the situation in Belgium. The German Party of Democratic Socialists (PDS) sent a message of support to the French left, and the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) in Italy organized a demonstration in support of the striking French workers in front of the French embassy in Rome.

### State of the French Unions

These strikes highlighted many of the strengths and weaknesses of France's trade union movement today. On the one hand, we saw the capacity of workers to carry out long strikes and hold their own in the public debate with the government-employer. On the other hand, the low membership (only 8-9 percent of the workforce in France is organized) and chronic lack of unity among the several trade union federations which compete for worker support, were pain-

fully obvious. But they also seem to have cast this latter problem in a new light.

The lack of trade union unity in action has an extremely negative effect on worker struggles in France because several competing trade unions are often represented in the same enterprise. Sectarian infighting between trade unions is largely a reflection of the conflict between the competing political affiliations of the union leaderships.<sup>1</sup>

In these strikes, the problem of trade union unity took a form slightly different from the past. There was a relatively large degree of coordination between the CGT and FO. In fact, the CGT has gone out of its way to promote trade union unity during the past year. Last spring, CGT secretary general Louis Viannet became the first leader of his union in many years to attend the CFDT national congress. Rank-and-file militants who have fought for unified struggles in the past have been astonished to hear CGT officials calling for united actions with other unions.

On the rank-and-file level, unity among workers belonging to all unions was total. This was reflected in the demonstrations in which banners listed all the participating unions. The CFDT leadership, on the other hand, did not merely fail to coordinate its actions with the other unions, or just fail to mobilize its membership energetically. It actually supported the Juppé plan and opposed the strike. This is quite a significant development. CFDT Secretary General Nicole Notat has made a qualitative leap to the right, well beyond traditional social democratic class collaboration.

### Role of Workers in Private Sector

One of the most noteworthy aspects of these strikes was the contrast between the fact that virtually 100 percent of the workers from the state-owned railroad struck, while few from the private sector walked off the job, in spite of the fact that the strike was quite popular. The high unemployment rate was a big factor in chilling the determination of private-sector workers to join the strike. But the biggest reason that these workers did not join the strike was that the CGT and FO officialdom refused to call them out.

The career bureaucrats were able to keep the movement under control through clever maneuvering. Instead of flatly refusing to call for a general strike, FO Secretary General Marc Blondel called for the "generalization" of the strike. And although at several junctures the union officials seemed ready to compromise on key issues, pressure from below prevented them from doing so. For these reasons, the trade unions bureaucrats appeared militant enough to retain a measure of confidence from the rank and file without, however, committing themselves to the type of total mobilization which

1. The CGT, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1995, has close relations with the Communist Party. The CFDT is close to the Socialist Party, even if the relations are looser. The Force Ouvrière federation (FO), for its part, insists that it is independent of all political parties, in the tradition of the turn-of-the-century revolutionary syndicalist doctrine that dominated French unions at that time. FO was founded in 1948 out of a split in the CGT. Though it was initially funded by the CIA, it is erroneous to consider it a reactionary union today. In fact, in spite of its hostility to other unions, especially the CGT, it has shown itself capable of waging militant struggles.

would have risked growing beyond their control, endangering their privileges by provoking a real showdown with the state, and in doing so, upsetting the strategies of the reformist politicians to whom many of the union bureaucrats are tied.

The railworkers in particular, fought a truly heroic battle. These strikes were the most recent in a long tradition of bitter struggles that they have fought with the state. In 1910, the left-leaning government of the former anarchist Aristide Briand called out the army to crush a major rail strike. Railworkers were in the vanguard of the post-World War I labor upsurge that took place in the spring of 1920 in an international context marked by the Russian Revolution. That strike, too, was severely repressed and tens of thousands of workers were fired and blacklisted for years.

True to their militant past, railworkers in these strikes answered the government propaganda — that they were a privileged caste in relation to private-sector workers — by asserting that they were defending the general interest. And they backed up their words by remaining on strike and demanding the withdrawal of the entire Juppé social security plan for several days after their own sectoral demands (the withdrawal of Juppé's plans for the railroads) were met. Many railworkers had accumulated considerable experience fighting not only their government-employer, but their own trade union bureaucracies in the 29-day 1986 transportation strikes. For those too young to have participated in those strikes, the recent actions were an invaluable apprenticeship.

The 1986 strikes were noteworthy for the establishment of promising independent rank-and-file "coordinations," which ran the strike independent of, and in opposition to, the union bureaucrats. The 1988 nurses' strike also saw official union leaderships bypassed by such rank-and-file committees, often led by Trotskyists. In both cases, new, democratic, militant unions were formed.

This time, however, the union officialdom of the CGT, FO, and the teachers unions largely managed to control the movement. They were able to do so not only because they adopted a relatively militant stand vis-à-vis the government, but also because the daily mass "general assemblies" of the rank and file had insufficient power to control the strike. The Revolutionary Communist League, (LCR), French section of the Fourth International, called for workers to directly control the strike through strike committees. It also called for the establishment of a national strike committee. Unfortunately, such strike committees were only formed in several localities such as the city of Rouen.

For its part, Workers' Struggle (LO), a revolutionary organization of Trotskyist origin, abandoned its traditional criticism of the CGT bureaucracy and failed to agitate for democratically controlled strike committees.

While the leaders of the CGT, FO, and FSU teachers' union will probably come out of these strikes with a good deal of their authority intact,

or even increased, the leadership of the Catholic CFTC and the pro-SP CFDT have been openly associated with strike breaking. Likewise, the CFTC took the position that the reforms were necessary, but criticized the government for failing to discuss its plans with French workers before announcing them. Nevertheless, many CFDT local unions defied their leadership and participated in the strike. Virtually all of the banners carried in the demonstrations listed all the unions, including the CFDT, and local CFDT contingents received enthusiastic applause during the demonstrations.

### Role of Socialist and Communist Parties

While the attitude of the trade union bureaucracy was a complicated mixture of craven opportunism and betrayal, on the one hand (Notat of the CFDT and the CFTC), and on the other (at least apparently), firm, relatively militant leadership (the CGT, FO, and FSU), the attitudes of the main "left" parties, the Socialists and Communists, unambiguously showed their incapacity and refusal to aggressively defend workers rights in general and to oppose "free market" liberalism in particular. Communist Party general secretary Robert Hué has disoriented CP ranks over the past few months with his attitude of "constructive opposition," in which he has sought an accommodation with Chirac. The SP made a concerted effort during the strike to avoid appearing to oppose the essence of the restructuring plan. The SP agrees that the public debt must be reduced, and has no intention of insisting that the employing class be made to assume this responsibility. The SP had to be pushed into endorsing the demonstrations and insisted that they not be "politicized" — as if large-scale strikes against the employer-government could be nonpolitical!

In spite of this, the SP won five out of seven legislative by-elections held during the strikes, including several in traditional right-wing strongholds.

The failure of the French Social Democratic and Stalinist workers' parties to take advantage of large-scale worker upsurges to demand change on the political plane is chronic. In 1936, while 2.4 million workers were occupying factories in a particularly heated national and international political and social context, CP leader Maurice Thorez admonished workers to "know when to end a strike." French employers were only too glad to see the strikes end for the relatively small price of wage concessions and union recognition. In 1968, the French Communist Party and its allies in the CGT leadership spent their energy trying to isolate striking workers from "ultraleft" students and steering the protest into the relatively safe channels of wage demands, instead of educating workers on the need — and possibility — of pushing their struggle in the direction of a fight to establish a workers government under their own control.

In 1995, the strikers were once again considerably more radical than the leaders of the traditional workers' parties. The demands raised

in the demonstrations called not only for the withdrawal of Juppé's plan, but for his resignation as well. However, the labor bureaucrats refused to insist on the latter. Viannet's statement that he saw "no alternative" to Juppé, summed up the attitude of the labor bureaucrats and the party leaderships to which they are tied.

### The Proto-Fascists and the Crisis of Working Class Leadership

The magnitude of the crisis of working class leadership in France today is reflected in the fact that the far-right National Front (NF) of Jean-Marie Le Pen is currently the party that receives the greatest number of working class votes. Le Pen ostensibly attacked both the strikers and the government. He called for the withdrawal of the Juppé plan, but also remarked that "one week of strikes is criminal, two weeks is murderous." The NF shared the reactionary sentiments of the organizers of the minuscule "passengers" counterdemonstrations held in Paris during the strikes. It refused to participate in them only because it feared being associated with the ruling Rally for the Republic (RPR). Though the FN seemed to attack the government and the strikers evenly, its support for the total liberalization of the economy and its calls to dismantle social security in favor of private health care insurance programs, underscore the true class nature of this proto-fascist party and its hostility to workers' interests. This should help dispel the illusions of the workers who have been seduced into voting for the FN on the basis of its demagogic scapegoating of immigrant workers, blaming them for all of the country's social ills.

These strikes have once again underscored the need for workers in France to find a leadership capable of responding to their needs and aspirations by not only resisting government austerity and privatization and capitalist downsizing, but actually proposing alternatives to the capitalist order. The LCR suggested the type of offensive demands through which workers could defend their interests and respond to government propaganda. These included: financing social security through a steeply graduated income tax, reduction of the work week with no cut in pay, and collective control and management of public utilities.

The open betrayal by the most reactionary trade union leaderships will most certainly provoke immediate shakeups. (Pressure is already mounting for a special CFDT congress to demand measures against the Notat leadership for its betrayal of the strikes.) This will open space for those proposing a militant class struggle program on the trade union level. Although there is still little sign that the crisis of leadership on the political plane will soon be resolved, the determination of both the French bourgeoisie and its government, on the one hand, and the determination of the workers, on the other, in this period of economic and social crisis, will certainly lead to the type of situation in which revolutionary socialists can gain a wide audience. □

# Dynamic Example of Workers Self-Organization

Interview with José Pérez

*This article will be published in the January issue of International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International. It first appeared in the December 14 issue of Rouge, newspaper of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR — Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International. José Pérez is a militant of the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail — General Confederation of Labor). He describes how, rather than follow instructions from trade union bureaucrats, railway workers in Rouen created their own strike organizing committee. SNCF are the French initials for the publicly owned rail system. By opening the strike committee meetings to representatives of other sectors in struggle, they created France's most dynamic example of worker self-organization. José Pérez was interviewed by Dominique Mezzi. The interview has been edited slightly for reasons of style.*

**Question: How was this "organizing committee" created?**

**Answer:** First, there was an appeal which we proposed at a general assembly of SNCF workers. The text put forward the demand for withdrawal of the Juppé plan as the essential axis for building a general strike. Once the general assembly had approved the text, we worked on it in a commission made up of representatives of all the trade unions present among the workers. We were unanimous in our conviction that we must spread the movement across all categories of railway workers. So we visited the SNCF repair workshops at Quatre Mares (with 800 workers, one of the region's largest workplaces). When we explained the SNCF management's plan, the workers became very agitated. All this at 5 o'clock in the morning!

Some of the Quatre Mares workers came to strengthen the central picket lines. At that day's general assembly, there was a new tension. For the first time, we had about 700 participants. The emotion and combativity were incredible. There were cheers as we voted to strike. Groups of workers left the meeting to hold demonstrations in all the region's SNCF depots. Those who marched past the post office sorting center marched straight in, and invited the postal workers to join us.

That afternoon, we found ourselves in an all-plant general assembly, with all the unions represented. The atmosphere was crazy. People were drumming, trumpeting, whistling. Nothing had been organized, except speeches by representatives of the CGT, CFDT, and FO [the three main union federations in France]. We tried to "regularize" the situation, by creating a strike committee (though we had to be very careful not to use the taboo words "organizing committee"). The initial members of the committee were the shop stewards of all the unions, and a few better-known individuals. But at that first meeting we established that the committee would be elected, with five or six representatives mandated by the general assembly of each sector, plus the regular representatives of each union.

### Mass Meetings Every Day

And so it was, from day three of the strike on! Each morning the unitary organizing committee in each sector, together with the shop stewards,

organized the general assembly. At the beginning of the afternoon, the central committee planned that afternoon's inter-professional unitary meeting. After that meeting, the committee worked on each of the initiatives approved in more detail. The afternoon meetings were held in the "ditch" — a yard of 100,000 square meters where we normally park trains waiting for repairs. The atmosphere was incredible. Of course, these weren't general assemblies in the strict sense — it's difficult to discuss things here the same way as in the base committees. These big assemblies were more like rallies. But they did represent the heart of the strike, the heart of working-class democracy. This was the place for everyone who wanted to take part.

And it was through these daily meetings that all the workplaces, and all the trade union bodies, were gradually "contaminated by" the spirit of the strike. At the beginning, you had two or three workers coming from a particular company or depot. Then they started to bring their work mates! And, for three weeks, this railway yard was the meeting place for all the sectors in struggle.

The Rouen Post Office sorting center was the first to join the SNCF strikers. Then there was Electricité de France. The Renault auto plant at Cléon decided to join us after 800 of us decided to go talk to them! We held a meeting in front of their gates. The local CGT representatives arranged for us to speak at a general assembly in the plant the following day.

**Q: Did this organizing committee become a kind of interprofessional general strike committee?**

**A:** No, you can't say that it became a general strike committee. It wasn't thought of in that way. That was not the mandate that those of us in the committee had from our sectoral general assemblies. But it certainly did represent a meeting place, and initiative forum, for all the sectors in struggle. This was the place where the demonstrations were organized.

The committee brought together workers from more than 20 different enterprises and sectors in struggle. Working people with different professional identities and backgrounds. There was a very strong presence of railway workers and secondary-school teachers. From the private sector you had Grande Paroisse (an

important local chemical factory), the CGT comrades from the Alsthom engineering plant at Petit-Quévilly, workers from a number of smaller engineering plants. Then Renault, of course, and the postal workers, and the spokespersons of the various teachers' strike committees.

### "We Blocked the Town That Day!"

Together, we drafted a leaflet, which was distributed on December 11, the day we blocked all the roads into Rouen. More than 1,000 workers from all the sectors in struggle met at the SNCF depot at 4 a.m. that morning — teachers, postal workers, Renault workers. We blocked the town that day! And on 12 December, we organized a huge "forum of enterprises in struggle," right in front of the town hall. A situation like this changes your way of thinking dramatically. How couldn't it? □

## Editors' Note

*Continued from page 1*

### Our Thanks to Contributors

We are particularly happy to have the opportunity of publishing the speech by Joanne Bell of the Communication Workers union, presented at Labor Party Advocates hearings in New Jersey last November. We are happy as well to be able to report on the case of Taslima Nasrin, the feminist poet and fighter from Bangladesh, in the form of an interview with her translator, Carolyn Wright, and a review of Nasrin's book by Joe Auciello.

Likewise, we are grateful to Eileen Gersh for sending us from England her highly readable summary of the vital issues involved in the worldwide environmental crisis and how socialists should relate to those issues (as presented in a major document of the Fourth International).

### In Mexico, Too, the Struggle Continues

Space does not allow us, in this issue, to print the full text of the "Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle," issued by the Zapatistas on the second anniversary of their uprising, and made available through the Institute for Global Communications

## Workers Upsurge Bares Flaws

# “Left Regroupment” Fails Acid Test

by Christian Piquet

*This article will be published in the January issue of International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International. It first appeared in the December 14 issue of Rouge, the newspaper of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR — Revolutionary Communist League), French section of the Fourth International. It has been edited slightly for style purposes.*

Hundreds of thousands of working class people marching in the street puts off many more politicians than it attracts. Even on the left, unfortunately.

Bernard Cholet, CGT militant, Perpignan

The second Convention for a Progressive Alternative (CAP) failed to recognize the importance of the massive social movement sweeping France. And internal democracy in the CAP has been weakened.

One year after its foundation, the *Convention pour une alternative progressiste* (CAP) met in Lyon on December 9–10, 1995, for its second national hearings. CAP was a unique kind of organization. It was made up of several distinct organizations — Citizen’s Alternative (Alternative citoyenne), ADS, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), and the dissident Communist currents Réfondations and Futurs — as well as local groups of activists, prominent personalities, and “non-organized” individual militants. They came together in the local and regional assemblies of CAP to explore and develop the Progressive Alternative. This meeting in Lyon, then, was the occasion to draw a balance sheet of our common activity, set some new perspectives, and to approve a common manifesto.

At the start of the meeting, the LCR and others argued that we should not limit ourselves to one session, because so many CAP militants were absorbed elsewhere, because of their role in the social movement. This proposition was rejected. Which created the risk that the hearings would prove to be a false representation of the reality of the regroupment project on the French left. And that we would be out of step with the political situation in the country.

### Out of Step with the Situation

Our fears were quickly confirmed. The assembly approved a declaration of general support to the social movement, but it was only after much debate, and a card vote, that we could include the demand “for a rapid reduction in the working week to 32 hours, without loss of purchasing power.”

My feeling of dislocation from the actual political situation was deepened by the incessant debate on “Europe” and “Maastricht.” All the assembly could do was condemn “the forced march” toward a single currency. But this is surely the time to denounce the convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty, which forms the heart of the Europe-wide process of “liberalization” and social regression.

### LCR’s Position

The LCR argued that “the building of CAP is very different from region to region. The organization is still only embryonic in a number of important *départements* [French administrative districts]. In this period of confusion, CAP has not been able to build significant bridges toward militant sectors of the social movement, or toward young people. The search for a re-composition on the left continues to manifest itself in a range of different organizational frameworks... For all these reasons, CAP should not at this time transfer itself into a new political formation, into which the various components would dissolve themselves. Going too fast, proclaiming a new political movement, abandoning the consensus-based decision-making process, none of this would change any of the above-mentioned problems. Such a move would be largely artificial. As a result, it would carry within itself the risk of splits, and the wasting of those advances we have already made.”

This advice was not heeded. A few minutes before the end of the assembly, an amendment to the motion on procedure fixed that, from now on, those organizations which do not dissolve themselves can only be considered as “associated” with CAP, rather than integral components. Such organizations, including, of course, the LCR, will no longer be represented on the CAP executive committee. With one stroke of a pen, the assembly has liquidated the pluralism which was a fundamental part of CAP.

You can understand the motivation of those who supported the amendment, even if you disagree. But nothing changes the hard fact that the group of people who identify with the new conception of CAP is smaller than before the meeting: ADS, Charles Fitterman and his supporters, a few personalities, and a few local groups. The LCR and Citizen’s Alternative would have preferred to keep the initial “contract,” while Futurs suspended their participation in CAP after the presidential elections, demanding clarification of CAP’s direction at this meeting.

Unfortunately, it is clear that CAP no longer represents a lever for the emergence of a new political force to the left of the Communist and Socialist parties.

### What Future for CAP?

So what does the future hold for CAP? The representative of Convergence écologie solidarité (formerly part of Génération écologie) effectively argued for a “reformist alliance for sustainable development and citizenship.” There are plenty of temptations which could pull CAP away from its original project, and transform it into just one more of the little boats accompanying the Socialist Party toward some kind of “alternative.”

The dilapidation of this unique experience of cooperation on the radical left does not disprove the absolute imperative of building a political alternative to the Socialist and Communist parties, corresponding to the needs of the social struggle. Debate and action toward such a goal can and will continue! □

computer network by the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, headed by Cecilia Rodriguez. We are printing an important part of that declaration, along with a report and protest over the brutalization of Cecilia Rodriguez in Chiapas.

This issue also includes reports on conditions in Haiti, China, and Nigeria, and on the recent “conspiracy” conviction of Sheikh Abdel Rahman and its relation to the situation in Egypt.

### More on the Black Struggle

Ron Daniels reports on some of the follow-up activity coming out of the Million Man March (MMM), particularly the National African American Leadership Summit held in Washington, D.C., in November. Continuing the discussion on the MMM begun in our last issue, we reprint articles by Shafeah M’Balía and Angaza Laughinghouse from *Justice Speaks*. We are also grateful to Muhammad Ahmad and Walter Lippmann for submitting their views on the March. (Readers will find

other valuable and interesting analysis and commentary about the MMM in the November issue of *Z* magazine [containing major excerpts from the “mission statement” of the March, which explicitly protests the corporate agenda of the ruling rich], the November-December issue of *Independent Politics*, the January-February issue of *Against the Current*, and the latest issue of *New Politics*.)

### Genora Dollinger Article Still to Come

The article about the late Genora Johnson Dollinger by Kathleen O’Nan, which we intended for this issue, still has not been received. We hope to publish it, along with reminiscences about Genora by Evelyn Sell and Jean Tussey, in our March issue (one year after our publication of Kathleen O’Nan’s interview with Genora). Readers are referred to an obituary of Genora by her husband, Sol Dollinger, in the January-February *Against the Current* and to a letter from a reader who knew her in the 1936–37 Flint sit-down strike (*Labor Notes*, January 1996).

# The Great Budget Battle

by Bill Onasch

You would have thought 1995 was a pretty good year for U.S. capitalism. There were major advances in productivity. Exports are surging. The stock markets are roaring. Yet the year closed out with the government partially shut down because of lack of funds.

This crisis was precipitated by apparent deep disagreements between the Republican-controlled Congress and the Democratic White House over the future course of fiscal policy. Despite so many indicators of economic prosperity, dire predictions are made about the imminent collapse of civilization unless drastic cuts are made in government spending.

Both sides assert their primary objective is to achieve a balanced budget. This is considered sacred and a self-evident prescription for economic health and longevity. It's really very simple: you can't spend more than you take in. You wouldn't do it with your family budget, and the government can't do it either.

But in fact there is no consensus about this holy principle among bourgeois economists. Balanced budgets — where the government takes in more than it spends — have been rare in the 20th century. And there has only been one two-year period in our history — during Andrew Jackson's term — when Washington was debt-free and turned a surplus.

The analogy of our family budgets doesn't hold water either. Few people worry about spending more than they earn in any given year. If we did exercise such restraint, we wouldn't be customers for buying houses, cars, or sending our kids to college. Debt financing has become essential to both families and government. As long as debts can be properly serviced they contribute to a profitable economy.

Certainly debts can be overextended. If they reach a point where they cannot be serviced, this leads to economic losses. Millions of individuals and thousands of businesses go bankrupt every year. While the scale of these personal misfortunes within an overall booming economy seems acceptable to most economists, there probably is some justified concern about how far the debt limits can be pushed.

But that is one of the underlying weaknesses of capitalism and is just as big a problem for the private sector, and individuals, as it is for government. However, for some reason we don't hear the same dire warnings from politicians about the need to reduce our personal debts.

The fact of the matter is that the Great Budget Battle has little to do with debt. It has a lot to do with redistributing wealth and power in this country to the benefit of the ruling class, at the expense of the working class.

The Republicans style themselves as tough-love realists who will finally put our house in order. The Democrats claim to be tough-love realists who will put our house in order with

more compassion. Despite their posturing and name-calling, their differences have never been insurmountable and continue to narrow.

The Republican Contract With America promised to eliminate the federal deficit within seven years. Clinton earlier maintained that such a goal was too reckless and offered a counter of balancing the budget within nine years. Now Clinton has accepted the principle of the seven-year plan.

Clinton ran on a pledge "to end welfare as we know it." He initially endorsed a draconian Republican welfare plan in the Senate last fall, as did 35 Democratic senators. When his own administration staffers produced a report saying this reform would add a million children to the poverty rolls, Clinton not only ignored it; he sought to suppress it. Angry staffers leaked the report to the national press. Closely following the opinion polls, as always, Clinton began to backtrack and later promised to veto the legislation. We can expect a compromise with some cosmetic changes.

The Hard Cop-Soft Cop routine of the two parties regarding health care deserves an Oscar. The Democrats have waxed indignant about GOP plans to slash Medicare by 270 billion over seven years. Of course Clinton himself proposed Medicare cuts in 1993 and 1994. So far the president wants to trim this spending on old folks by "only" \$140 billion. Many observers expect a final compromise in the \$200 billion range.

The Republicans seek a 240 billion tax reform that would simultaneously give big breaks to the rich while eliminating the Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor. Clinton is offering to accept 100 billion in tax cuts if Congress agrees to retain the tax credits for the poorest. They will probably split the difference.

The GOP may be forced to retreat more in a few areas — such as military spending. Here the partisans of parsimony not only appropriated more than Clinton asked for, they even exceeded the requests of the Pentagon. Included is a resurrection of the "Star Wars" outer-space anti-missile system. Apart from being very expensive and unproven technology, most people question its need since the demise of the Soviet Union and the subsequent elimination of most of its nuclear capability. Deployment of Star Wars would also violate disarmament treaties signed by Reagan and Bush. Star Wars will likely be one of the chips to go in the budget bargaining, and probably the B-2 bomber as well.

Are there any real differences between Clinton and the Republicans? One pundit offered the view that Clinton reflects the thinking of the Fortune 500 while Newt's House Freshmen are based on strip-mall merchants. Undoubtedly the Contract On America crowd is more ideological while Clinton and the New Democrats are more

pragmatic. Moderate Republican challengers such as Dole are being put in the hot seat.

There is growing evidence that top ruling circles are becoming disaffected from the Republican Right. A *Business Week* editorial complained: "The Republicans have stuffed their temporary spending and debt limit-extension bills with extraneous — but politically charged — measures. There is, for example, a death-row rider that limits the ability of convicts to appeal their sentences. Not much to do with budgets and deficits there." It goes on to say, "The major players — President Clinton, Speaker Gingrich, Senator Dole — profess to want to balance the budget. They are not far from a deal. It's time for politicians to start negotiating in earnest. Stop acting, and get off the stage." Shortly before this editorial the *Wall Street Journal* called Bill Clinton the best friend of business in the White House in years. Around the same time the media mercilessly portrayed Newt as a "cry baby."

The ruling class has definite practical objectives in Washington. They want to shift more of the tax burden from themselves to the working class. They seek to weaken the "safety net" to keep workers in line. They want more deregulation and privatization. And they want a stable currency and a strong bond market. They don't much care about death-row appeals, trimester abortions, or prayer in the schools.

It is of course futile to call on politicians to stop acting. The political minions of the bosses wouldn't get very far if they frankly stated their subservience to Big Business. The Comeback Kid has, in the past, occasionally stumbled over his lines but he seems to be a good bet to keep his role another season. He will probably get the nod from the show's principal financial backers. And he has already been blessed by the labor bureaucracy, who greeted him at the AFL-CIO convention with chants of "Four More Years!"

So far not a single major politician, not a single commentator in the mass media, not a single liberal lobbying group, has challenged any of the rules of engagement in the Great Budget Battle. No one asks why we must have a balanced budget, or why this must be done in exactly seven years. No one asks why the poor and the old must make the biggest sacrifices. No one asks just why the "party's over" for us but not the rich.

This is in sharp contrast to the recent events in France. Much more modest attempts at budget-balancing there were met with massive strikes and demonstrations, forcing the government to make at least a partial and temporary retreat. In France, as in most industrialized countries, the workers have mass political parties and unions based on a class perspective.

The lack of such political organization in this country means the working class doesn't even have a voice in the debates — much less a say in the decisions. The Great Budget Battle needs to be seen as part of a larger class war. Developing a working class fiscal policy should be a top priority for Labor Party Advocates as they develop a platform for the fledgling Labor Party to be launched in Cleveland this June. □



# Civil Liberties and the Trial of Sheik Abdel Rahman

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

On October 1, 1995, just days before the announcement of the verdict in the O.J. Simpson case, with much less fanfare, the decision of another jury was announced; it was not good news. After an eight-month trial, a jury in a Manhattan federal court found the blind Muslim cleric Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman and nine other defendants guilty on dozens of counts of "conspiring" to commit crimes — ranging from assassination to blowing up a whole string of New York City landmarks and public places where hundreds of people could have been killed.

The *New York Times* on October 2, when announcing the verdict, called the trial "the biggest terrorism trial in the nation's history." Actually, in its substance and duration, it was surpassed by the trial of the Panther 21 defendants in 1971. In that case, after an 8-month trial, the jury took less than an hour to acquit all the defendants of all the charges, which also involved an allegedly massive plan of terrorism and assassinations. In the case against Sheik Rahman and others, a jury of six men and six women deliberated seven days before delivering their verdict, which found the 10 defendants guilty of 48 out of 50 charges. The *Times* called this

a sweeping second victory for prosecutors in a trilogy of trials stemming from the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center...The defendants were not accused of that bombing, but prosecutors said four men convicted last year, and two to be tried next year, were co-conspirators of these convicted yesterday.

As the *Times* (October 2, 1995) described the case:

The centerpiece of the conspiracy, according to prosecutors who had no actual explosion to support their case and who relied heavily on secretly made tapes and a shady informer, was to be a cataclysmic "day of terror": five bombs that were to blow up the United Nations headquarters, the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, the George Washington Bridge and 26 Federal Plaza, the Government's main office building in New York.

### 19th-Century Law Against "Conspiracy"

The prosecution based its case on a 19th-century law that, as the *Times* explained, "has historically been employed against groups with unpopular views. It was enacted after the Civil War, intended for use against Southerners who rejected the authority of the Federal Government and amended in 1918, with Socialists and anarchists in mind." The last time the law was applied successfully, evidently, was to imprison

a group of Puerto Rican nationalists in Chicago in 1987.

The law makes it a crime to "conspire to overthrow, or put down, or destroy by force the Government of the United States." Under the law, a person can be convicted of seditious conspiracy "without the Government showing that the defendant committed any specific act to further the conspiracy." Thus, suppose one were to call for the overthrow of an oppressive government — for example, that of the United States — and suppose a terrorist (even a government-paid terrorist, as in this case) were then to set out to blow up a building in the name of opposing the government. The person who called for the government's overthrow is held responsible for the terrorist act or the planning of it without ever being involved. This law allowed the government to charge Sheik Rahman with sedition for doing nothing more than responding to a question from the provocateur as to what his opinion would be of such a "plot." Moreover, the sheik said he opposed it!

The law carries a maximum penalty of a \$250,000 fine and 20 years imprisonment. All the defendants were found guilty of "seditious conspiracy" under this law.

This verdict should be alarming for all who care about justice and political freedom and the power of the state to dispose of its critics. Some of the defendants barely had any contact with one another and one of them — El Sayyid A. Nosair — was even in prison when the alleged "conspiracy" took place. Yet he was convicted of "seditious conspiracy," which included the 1990 murder of Rabbi Meir Kahane (for which Nosair had previously been tried and acquitted), and several other counts of assault and conspiracy, including conspiring to escape from Attica prison where he was being held.

### FBI Informer Masterminded "Conspiracy"...

The prosecution's entire case was based on the testimony of an informer who — with U.S. taxpayers' money and U.S. government support — actually masterminded the "conspiracy" for which the defendants were convicted, including Nosair's alleged plan to escape from Attica. The informer, Emad A. Salem, was paid well over \$1 million by the FBI to infiltrate the cleric's circle and entrap Sheik Rahman and some of his followers. Salem is a 17-year veteran of the Egyptian military. The defense maintained that Salem was also working for Egyptian military intelligence to entrap Sheik Rahman, along with the other defendants, and imprison him to en-

sure he would not return to Egypt, where he has a wide following among anti-Mubarak Islamic militants.

The prosecution presented two secretly produced video tapes showing some of the defendants' involvement in various phases of this plot. One of the videos "showed several of the defendants in a Queens garage mixing fertilizer and diesel fuel for what prosecutors say was a bomb. The F.B.I. had set up the garage as part of the sting [operation] and installed secret cameras to catch the defendants" (*New York Times*, March 23, 1995).

### ...And Taped Conversations

The prosecution's key evidence was well over 100 hours of secretly taped conversations between the informer and Sheik Rahman. "But, in the end, only one of the taped conversations in which Mr. Abdel Rahman took part can be said to offer direct evidence that the 57-year old blind cleric crossed the line from ardent advocacy to criminal conspiracy."

In that conversation between the cleric and the informer three months after the bombing of the World Trade Center, the informer, "after emotionally pledging his allegiance" to the cleric, "says that another figure in the case has proposed that the United Nations headquarters be similarly bombed."

"We are preparing for something big, something big if God is willing, that will bring it upside down," the informer says. "So is this considered licit or illicit?"

"It is not illicit; however, will be bad for Muslims," the cleric replied. He suggests that instead the informer "find a plan" to "inflict damage on the American Army itself" (*New York Times*, September 3, 1995).

The prosecution claimed this was clear proof that Sheik Rahman was the architect of terrorist conspiracies "who was consulted about which targets were permissible" and that aside from the United Nations, the cleric and the other defendants were planning to blow up the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels and the George Washington Bridge. However, in none of the conversations is the cleric heard discussing anything of the sort.

Defense attorney Lynne F. Stewart said that this one conversation, far from showing Sheik Rahman guilty of "conspiracy," showed, on the contrary, that the cleric was trying to discourage the informer from attacking such sites and instead was suggesting the informer turn his attention toward the U.S. army in order to

*Continued on page 50*

# U.S.-NATO Out of Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR

by George Saunders

Using the pretext of regulating the conflict in Bosnia, the Western capitalist powers, with the U.S. in the lead, are intervening militarily through NATO to establish a major military presence in parts of Eastern Europe where previously capitalism had been overthrown. From U.S. bases, especially in Italy, some 20,000 U.S. troops are being sent to Bosnia, while “staging areas,” bases for massive logistical support, are established in Hungary and Croatia.

During the Cold War, the most hawkish strategists of Western finance capital, not content with the mere “containment of Communism,” also wished to *roll it back*. Now at long last (from their point of view) they can begin trying to move from “containment” to “roll-back.” They intend to promote the process of firmly (that is, *militarily*) reincorporating into the capitalist world market those parts of Eastern Europe which began the transition from capitalism to socialism. Because of the delay of socialist revolution in the advanced countries — and inadequate policies and leadership in most working class organizations worldwide — the so-called “socialist” countries were unable to get beyond a bureaucratically disfigured caricature of socialism.

Western political and military leaders must be thinking of this as a great new venture. But they are being cautious, because they realize they could stub their toes. So their action is disguised as a “peacekeeping mission.”

None of this is in the interests of working people, whether in the U.S. or Western Europe or Eastern Europe. It serves the corporate agenda, the globalization of capital and the expansion of “free market economics,” which has everywhere meant the driving down of wages and living standards for workers, and cutbacks in all sorts of social services.

It’s interesting that while the politicians in Washington claim to have no more money in the federal budget for social services, for the needs of kids, the elderly, single mothers, etc., there is no hesitation in spending the millions and millions of dollars the Bosnia operation must require — from the costs of transporting and maintaining tens of thousands of troops to building entire new military bases, not to mention “the biggest pontoon bridge since World War II.”

### Firming Up the Cold War Victory

The Western capitalist powers have found it difficult so far to make very big profits out of “winning the cold war.” They have been able to get into Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR and

make business deals on a large scale, but there is too much uncertainty and instability for their taste. The corruption and lawlessness of the former Stalinist ruling elites, often intertwined with Mafia-type criminal organizations, defy the rules of the business game as known in “the civilized West.”

Moreover, the mass of the populations in the former “socialist” countries do not take kindly to the loss of the social benefits, however meager, that were formerly provided by the Stalinist bureaucracies as a way of gaining some popular support. Market reforms and steps toward privatization of publicly owned industry have drastically driven down living standards, which under bureaucratic rule were not very high to begin with. In protest, more and more people have voted for former “Communist” political formations — in Russia, in Poland, in former East Germany, in Hungary, and elsewhere.

Many agencies of the capitalist powers, with the IMF and government advisers on “market reform” heading the pack, have been able to enter the former USSR and Eastern Europe and exert significant influence. An FBI office was even established in Moscow. And countless Western business, academic, research, religious, and other organizations are at work where “Communism” formerly reigned. Foreign policy units of the AFL-CIO continue to intervene in the Russian and other trade union movements in ways that serve the interests of the corporations, not workers.

But the ultimate reassurance for Western capitalists is to have their military machinery in place in these troubled lands. The way to be sure the goods are delivered, the terms of contracts are adhered to, the interest on loans, and bills of all sorts, are “serviced” on time, is to have enforcers present.

The capitalists have been angling to get a *military presence* into Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR ever since the crisis of bureaucratic rule opened up the area in the late 1980s. They have offered to send military units to help “stabilize” the situation and “keep the peace” in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, even Chechnya (areas where oil is a major consideration). These offers were rejected. A bizarre assassination of a CIA operative serving as a bodyguard for the Georgian chief Shevardnadze indicated a few years ago how “the West” was trying to increase its influence and the bureaucrats still in power were resisting.

Under the cover of a UN peacekeeping mission, the Western powers have of course had troops in Croatia and Bosnia for several years.

And the U.S. had already sent a small contingent of troops to Macedonia more than a year ago. But that was a fairly isolated and cramped position. They couldn’t throw their weight around much from Macedonia.

Now under the Dayton-Paris agreement of November-December 1995, the military alliance, NATO, replaces the UN façade (although the “peacekeeping” pretense is maintained). And U.S. troops enter the scene, establishing a major military presence, with unforeseeable results.

As part of this increased military intervention, there is stepped-up talk about bringing all of Eastern Europe into the NATO military alliance, focusing for now mainly on Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland.

### U.S. Troops Out of Eastern Europe!

There are a number of very peculiar things about this military operation. One small oddity is that this “peace” agreement was arranged — at an *air base* near Dayton, Ohio.

Another oddity: one of the first steps in the operation was to establish a major base, not in some part of ex-Yugoslavia (scene of the conflict supposedly being resolved). The base is set up in Hungary! It makes you wonder about the so-called Socialists governing Hungary (formerly of the ruling Stalinist party there). Why did they agree to the U.S. military presence in their country? The U.S. media were immediately filled with reports about how happy the local Hungarians were. The benefits of the U.S. military presence in Eastern Europe, it seems, is no different from the jobs and income a military base brings to a U.S. city or region. And we all know how stubbornly local politicians fight to keep a military base in their electoral district.

It’s all portrayed as an economic blessing (never mind that the mission of the military is to impose control by using the threat or the act of destruction). It’s like the GIs. They’re not there to dominate or oppress anyone. (Those weapons are just an afterthought.) They’re there to give out chewing gum and chocolate to starving kids.

### U.S. Bases — The Okinawa Lesson

What kind of “blessing” is it really to have a U.S. military base in one’s country? This can be judged from the recent incident in Okinawa in which three servicemen from a U.S. base in Okinawa kidnapped and raped a 12-year-old Okinawan girl. This rightly provoked demonstrations of tens of thousands, with demands not only from most Okinawans but also from most Japanese that the U.S. bases be closed.

## The Bosnia Experiment

### Drawing Former Soviet Allies into NATO

The December 7 *New York Times* described "a meeting between NATO foreign ministers and their colleagues from countries that have joined the Partnership for Peace, a cooperative accord between the alliance and states from the former Soviet bloc that are either interested in joining NATO or working closely with it."

Because of the Dayton peace agreement, the *Times* said, the problem of Bosnia "has been abruptly transformed into the showcase for NATO's transition to crisis manager and peacekeeper [sic], and a testing ground

for countries interested in membership." (Emphasis added.)

"Poland and the Czech Republic, two leading candidates for [NATO] membership, are among the 14 countries whose troops will complement the NATO force in Bosnia."

The *Times* reported that "a great deal of optimism over this experiment was evident during the two-day NATO meeting," but commented: "[The] fact is that the alliance and its partners are wading into the unknown." (Emphasis added.)

The era since World War II has been filled with demonstrations demanding "Yankee, go home." And for a reason. U.S. bases are not there to "help the people" or give "humanitarian aid," although it has been pointed out in the past that American imperialism more than any other has tried to wrap its military forays in the toga of "pacifism."

The U.S. military machine has engaged in many a decade of "peacekeeping missions" — from the "shores of Tripoli" when the U.S. sent its navy against "Barbary pirates" (forerunners of the "terrorist" Qaddafi) in the early 19th century to the "halls of Montezuma" when the U.S. stole all of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of other states from Mexico in 1848 (not to mention having taken Texas earlier).

#### The Lessons of Somalia and Haiti

Since the so-called "collapse of communism" we have seen new experiments in "humanitarian" U.S. military intervention. First, troops were sent to Somalia at the end of 1992. (This was allegedly to save the people from famine, but after local fighters dealt some heavy blows to the U.S. "peacekeepers" the troops were withdrawn and the media no longer express much concern about the nutritional needs of the Somalian people.)

Then in September 1994 troops were landed in Haiti "for democracy," to restore the elected government of President Aristide and remove the worst offenders in the U.S.-trained Haitian police and military, the real power in that country. (The Aristide government is maintained by the U.S.-UN military presence as long as it cooperates with U.S. corporate aims; see the article on page 12 about the fruits of the "benevolent" U.S. intervention for Haitian workers.)

Can the U.S. military presence in Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia be expected to be any different? Is it really concerned to protect civilians against the rapacious and murderous armed gangs of the Bosnian Serbs (backed by the Serbian chauvinist-expansionist regime of Milosevic in Belgrade)? No. The U.S. and NATO have made a deal with the "war criminal" Milosevic regime. They are now in Eastern Europe to main-

tain order — and help expand NATO. One of their aims will be to make sure all bills of the Bosnian government (or other area governments) to Western banks and institutions be paid in full and on time.

The U.S.-NATO forces have made it clear that they will not hesitate to suppress any attempts by supporters of the Bosnian government to regain territory (and homes) stolen from them by the Serb chauvinist war criminals. The U.S.-NATO military power will enforce the 49 percent territorial award given to the Serbs under the Dayton, Ohio, agreement brokered by the U.S. government and its military machine. The Bosnian people have had their territory stolen and been subjected to mass murder, rape, bombardment, and the countless other horrors of "ethnic cleansing." But the U.S.-NATO forces will be about as quick to disarm and jail the Serb death squads and paramilitary gangs, the perpetrators of these crimes, as the U.S.-UN presence in Haiti has been to disarm and jail the terrorist police and military units in Haiti. That is, they will not be quick at all. (The *Nation* magazine dated January 8/15, 1996, reports that the Pentagon is *still* aiding and supporting the anti-Aristide terrorist group FRAPH. It indicates this group was initiated by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency [DIA]. Imagine what the DIA will be doing in ex-Yugoslavia!) □

#### The Example of Dutch Troops at Srebrenica

An object lesson for any and all who believe in the "humanitarian" purpose of the U.S.-NATO intervention can be seen in the behavior of the Dutch UN troops in Srebrenica last year. (The Dutch military of course is part of NATO.) Even though Srebrenica was declared a "safe haven" for Bosnian refugees, the Dutch soldiers displayed a sneaking sympathy for the Serb aggressors, who had the "safe haven" surrounded. Many of the Dutch soldiers viewed the Bosnian victims of Serb aggression with contempt and disdain. (An imperialist military establishment

inevitably imbues its officers and men with imperialist attitudes.) When the Serbs violated the UN "safe haven" and seized Srebrenica, they rounded up and slaughtered thousands of Bosnian Muslim men and boys (estimates range from 5,000 to 8,000, and they perpetrated the other familiar horrors of "ethnic cleansing" on the Srebrenica population. The Dutch soldiers stepped aside and did nothing to prevent this major atrocity. And yet the UN forces had supposedly been sent there to stop the endless train of atrocities that had horrified the world ever since the Serb aggression began in 1992.

Don't be surprised if "humanitarian" U.S. troops end up acting like the Dutch soldiers did in relation to the Bosnian Muslims. (The constant anti-Islamic propaganda barrage of the U.S. corporate media ever since the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 has not gone by without leaving its trace.) There are already media tales, inspired by the Pentagon and State Department, about potential unruly Muslim elements that the U.S. forces will have to look out for and possibly deal with. These are the alleged Islamic "mujahedeen" fighting on the Bosnian government's side.

The source of the warfare in ex-Yugoslavia lies in the internal national and social conflicts of that area. Those conflicts are not resolved, but are exacerbated by Western capitalist intervention (which simply means more national oppression, this time by the Western powers). A lasting solution requires an *end to foreign intervention!* That includes ending the arms embargo that has prevented the Bosnians from obtaining sufficient weaponry to defend themselves. (The Serb expansionists were freely provided with heavy arms from the former Yugoslav army by the Milosevic regime in Belgrade.) Workers organizations and grassroots organizations in all parts of the former Yugoslav federation need to cooperate in combatting and ending the Serb chauvinist terror campaign, and then to find ways of meeting human needs on a basis of full equality — that is, genuine socialist fraternal relations based on international working-class solidarity. The Western European Workers Aid movement in support of a democratic, multi-ethnic Bosnia has shown the potential that this kind of solution offers. □

January 12, 1996



# London, Ontario, Day of Action

by Joe Flexer

*The author is a longtime activist in the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW).*

Starting at 12:01 a.m. on December 11, 1995, the organized working class of London, Ontario, a city of 320,000, displayed its power.

Picket lines went up all across the city in the early morning hours, marking the onset of a one-day citywide general strike and mass mobilization.

Billed as the London Day of Action, it was called by the Ontario Federation of Labour to protest against the vicious anti-worker cutback policies being implemented by the recently elected Conservative provincial government of Premier Mike "Chainsaw" Harris.

Participating in the strike were workers from General Motors, Ford, CAMI (a joint GM-Suzuki car plant), and some 25 smaller plants. Throughout the city of London unionized workers joined the protest.

There was no beer made at Labatt's, Kellogg's ceased production, the transit and postal systems weren't operating, most of the city's high schools, and virtually all municipal and governmental services were shut down.

Picket lines were large, reaching 1,000 to 1,500 at the larger plants. Not a single case of unionized workers attempting to go to work was reported. At one plant, pickets turned back one manager who wanted to cross the picket line to "just do the payroll."

The Ford motor company got a court injunction forbidding picket lines at their St. Thomas assembly plant. Police arriving on the scene to enforce the injunction decided that discretion was the better part of valor and made no attempt to enforce the injunction.

More than 175 busloads of supporters from union locals, anti-poverty groups, and university student groups from across the province rolled into London in the early hours. Those that could not make it sent telegrams and messages of support, which lined the walls of the December 11 campaign headquarters.

An interesting feature of the day's events was the call by the organizers for a boycott of local retail business. The result was an estimated 50 percent drop in the normal level of retail sales for the day.

By mid-morning the streets were filled with people ready to fight back against the neo-conservative policies being implemented by the provincial government at the behest of its corporate masters.

As a scheduled part of the day's events there were two large marches culminating in a huge indoor rally. The tone of the rally was militant and upbeat. Music was provided by the Rank

and File Band, a group formed of militants of the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW). Two prominent Canadian singers and songwriters, Jim Keelahan and Stephen Fearing, also performed.

There were a number of speeches by union leaders and local personalities, including the mayor of London. Bob White, president of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), spoke to the crowd and pointed out that London's Day of Action was only the first of such actions, with more to come, and he would "be at all of them," he said.

The mayor's speech was not well received by the crowd, principally because her speech went on and on calling for cooperation between labor and capital in "these difficult times." At one point she had to stop speaking because of the very vocal anger of the crowd.

The mayor had been under extreme pressure to act in opposition to the Day of Protest. Instead, she issued a noncommittal statement — with the support of the majority of the city council — whose principal feature was an appeal for non-violence and social harmony.

This issue arose from the dire warnings of local business interests that the day's events would lead to violence. In fact the day went by without a single act of violence.

Organizationally the leading forces in the strike and mobilization were the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), Ontario Provincial Service Employees Union (OPSEU), and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Together with a number of smaller organizations these unions constitute a majority of the organized workers in Ontario and Canada as a whole.

But not all participants in the day's events were union members. Significantly, there was active participation by a very broad range of local social action groups and various churches in the city.

This one-day general strike is widely seen to be the first of a series of citywide actions leading up to a province-wide general strike to bring down the Harris government and force an early election.

On the level of mass working class consciousness the London action and those to follow reflect two important developments. First, they reflect the growing understanding by workers that the reactionary policies being pursued by the Harris government are being implemented at the behest of and in the interests of their employers and that the workers have the potential power to block these policies through industrial action.

The second development is the coming together in coalition of the organized trade unions with the various social movements of the particularly oppressed layers of the working class, such as women, the poor, people of color, and welfare recipients. This represents the ability and necessity of the unions to reach out to the whole working class — organized and unorganized.

### Split in Trade Union Leadership

Less active in the strike were some of the private-sector unions. These included the United Steel Workers (USW), the United Food and Commercial workers Union (UFCW), the Communications, Energy and Paper Workers (CEP), and a number of smaller organizations.

The leaderships of these three unions were in fact very lukewarm, if not actually opposed to the Day of Protest. This division in the labor leadership, nominally between left and right, is one of the key questions facing the Canadian workers movement today. Whatever the differences at the top, the shifts in consciousness at the base described earlier are also reflected in the mass base of these conservatively led unions. The USW leadership was unwilling to appear openly opposed to the Day of Action, and although there are very few USW locals in the city of London, about 500 steel workers participated in the action. The large USW local from the Hilton steel works in Hamilton, Ontario, provided hot coffee and food to the picket lines.

The UFCW and CEP leaderships, on the other hand, were actively opposed to the action and took steps to discourage their members from participating. In the case of the CEP, the Southern Ontario Newspaper Guild (SONG), a recently merged section of that union, did participate with some forces. Although the UFCW has a large membership in the city working in the retail food and food processing sectors, this union had no noticeable presence and their leadership acted vigorously to discourage any participation by their locals.

The obvious split in the leadership of the trade unions that the day's events revealed has its roots in a sharp division over the strategy to be used by labor to defeat the neo-conservative offensive. On the one hand is the coalition of unions made up principally of the CAW, in the private sector, and CUPW, OPSEU, and CUPE in the public sector. Their orientation is toward militant resistance through industrial action and mass mobilization.

On the other hand, the bulk of the private-sector unions — the USW, CEP, and UFCW — advocate a more sedate "mass public education program" and the election of the New Democratic Party (NDP) in the next provincial election in 1999.

### Policy Toward NDP

To understand the background to this division it is best to go back to 1990 when the NDP under Bob Rae got elected. The NDP is a social democratic party to which the bulk of the trade unions are affiliated. Its election in 1990 was seen by

# Québec Independence Still High on the Agenda

by Barry Weisleder

*Barry Weisleder is a union activist and a leader of Socialist Action, an organization in solidarity with the Fourth International in the Canadian state.*

**A**lthough the “No” side squeaked out a win, voters in Québec kept the fight for national sovereignty very much alive.

On both sides of the October 30 referendum on the question of whether Québec should become independent of Canada (while retaining close economic ties), millions voted for change.

A record turnout of over 90 percent gave the “No” side 50.6 percent and the “Yes” side, 49.4 percent. The difference was less than 60,000 out of the 4.7 million votes cast.

But the most telling statistic is that about 59 percent of French-speaking Québécois voted “Yes.” Most pollsters also concede that a large majority of workers and youth voted for Québec sovereignty. All three major Québec labor centrals worked for the “Yes” side.

Jean Chrétien, the Liberal prime minister of the Canadian federal government, speaking for the interests of capital in all parts of Canada, spent most of the two-month prerferendum campaign talking a tough, no-concessions-to-Québec line. Warnings of economic and political sanctions, plus threats that the boundaries of Québec might be unilaterally redrawn in the event of a “Yes” vote, were routinely hurled by capitalist politicians, including provincial premiers and leaders of the labor-based New Democratic Party. Cynical manipulation of the legitimate concerns and land claims of aboriginal peoples formed part of these efforts.

But as federalist forces saw their antidemocratic intimidation tactics backfire, and an early

10 percent lead in the polls for the “No” side evaporate, Chrétien and others started promising “real change” for Québec. That ended once the results were in.

Now the English Canadian business and political elite is divided and in disarray over how to respond.

The most right-wing forces, like the viciously anti-labor, anti-immigrant Reform Party, along with the cutbacks-crazy Conservative provincial premiers of Ontario and Alberta, argue that any new powers granted to Québec must be given to all provinces. With decentralization of spending powers, they could accelerate the onslaught against medicare, social programs, pollution and safety standards, and the public sector as a whole.

Chrétien and the more cautious federalist camp, although reneging on the promise of serious constitutional change, now speak of passing resolutions in Parliament and provincial legislatures to recognize Québec as a “distinct society” with a veto over future constitutional change.

They need not be reminded that Québec voters rejected such formulations in the Charlottetown Accord referendum across all of Canada in 1992.

Québécois workers want national sovereignty, which they see as a big step toward their social emancipation. Capitalist parties in Québec, like the Parti Québécois, which governs the province, and the Bloc Québécois, which forms

the official opposition in Ottawa, are forced to lead the sovereignty fight for fear that it otherwise might get out of control and challenge capitalist class rule.

Now that Québec Premier Parizeau has resigned, and the popular leader of the Bloc Québécois, Lucien Bouchard, is moving to fill his shoes, the standoff between Québec City and Ottawa will be entrenched. Another Québec referendum is certain, perhaps within two years.

Late November polls show a further rise in support for sovereignty in Québec since the referendum.

But as governments in both Ottawa and Québec City proceed with cutbacks and anti-worker measures, delayed simply because of the referendum contest, growing numbers of Québécois workers will see the need for a mass labor party to lead the fight for a real break with Anglo, big business domination of their culture and their lives — that is, to lead the struggle for independence and socialism.

The task facing socialists, and everyone committed to the defense of democratic rights, is to wage a campaign across English Canada and internationally, to expose the hypocrisy and antidemocratic maneuvers of capitalist politicians and governments, and to uphold Québec’s right to independence, free from intimidation and coercion. □

*December 1, 1995*

labor as a great step forward, accompanied by expectations of great things to come.

But what followed, as has been true with social democratic parties everywhere — despite some good and progressive legislation in the first year — was an initial implementation of the cutback and privatization offensive of the bosses. The NDP carried out a “soft” version of the neo-conservative agenda, based on the by now familiar bullshit about the “debt crisis.”

The ultimate betrayal came with what was called the “Social Contract” in 1993. This was a union-busting law that tore up the collective agreements of 100,000 public-sector workers. This involved roll backs of previously bargained wage increases and forced, unpaid days off.

Those public sector unions directly effected mobilized in active resistance — with the support of the CAW, which opposed the NDP government’s policies on grounds of principle.

The major aspect of this policy of opposition was to deny the traditional financial and organizational support by these unions to the NDP. In the 1995 election this coalition of unions did not call for a vote for the NDP. Furthermore the CAW, OPSEU, CUPE, and CUPW supported two independent labor candidates in opposition to NDP candidates.

The large private-sector unions, on the other hand, while opposing the Social Contract did not break their ties to the NDP and called for active support for the party in the 1995 election.

In concert with the NDP the right-wing private-sector union bureaucrats are opposed to industrial action. Unlike the NDP leaders, who express this opposition publicly, the union brass are not direct or public about their opposition. Their policy is to delay, drag their heels, and in the crunch to work behind the scenes to prevent their memberships’ participation.

## What Strategy Needed

The situation described above lays out the basic outlines of the strategy needed by the Canadian working class to defeat the neo-conservative agenda. Two key problems present themselves. First, the mass base of the large private-sector unions needs to be drawn into participation in strike action. Second, there needs to be an answer to the question, What form should independent working class political action take?

The answer currently being given by left-wing socialist militants is to employ the traditional united front tactic (both from below and from above) to draw the mass base of the private-sector unions into action and to develop a programmatically based left opposition in the NDP.

As the December 11 events in London, Ontario, showed, working people in Canada today are more than willing to respond to appeals for action. □

## Walt Disney Screws Haitian Workers

# The Joys U.S. Intervention Has Brought to Haiti's Garment Industry

The following article is reprinted from the English section of *Haiti Progrès* for January 3-9, 1996. *Haiti Progrès* is a weekly Haitian paper published in New York, mainly in French and Creole. For more information, contact the paper at (tel) 718-434-8100, (fax) 718-434-5551, or e-mail [haiticom@nyxfer.blythe.org](mailto:haiticom@nyxfer.blythe.org)

The dewy eyes and beguiling smile of Walt Disney's newest animated star, Pocahontas, may have charmed children the world over this Christmas. But in Haiti, Pocahontas symbolizes a living hell for many of the young women toiling in the country's assembly zones, according to a new report released last month.

Workers stitching clothing emblazoned with feel-good Disney characters are not even paid enough to feed themselves, let alone their families, charges the New York-based National Labor Committee Education Fund in Support of Worker and Human Rights in Central America (NLC). "Haitian contractors producing Mickey Mouse and Pocahontas pajamas for U.S. companies under license with the Walt Disney Corporation are in some cases paying workers as little as 15 gourdes (US\$1) per day — 12 cents an hour — in clear violation of Haitian law," said the NLC.

Along with starvation wages, Haitian workers making clothes for U.S. corporate giants face sexual harassment and exceedingly long hours of work. "Haiti does need economic development and Haitian workers do need jobs, but not at the price of violating workers' fundamental rights. Paying 11 cents an hour to sew dresses for K-Mart is not development. It is crime," charged the NLC.

Over the past two decades, U.S. State Department officials have consistently prescribed development of the "transformation industry" as the antidote to Haitian poverty. In the early 1980s, about 250 factories employed over 60,000 Haitian workers in Port-au-Prince. The minimum wage then was US\$2.64 a day. But many sweatshops fled Haiti after the fall of the dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986. Others left shortly after the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990, who campaigned with nationalist rhetoric. And still more left after the 1991 coup d'état.

But Haiti's miserable condition today makes it an ideal "competitor" in the world labor market, say U.S. State Department officials, and the assembly zones are again at the heart of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) for Haiti now being peddled by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Still, the recovery of the assembly zones remains weak. Only 72 assembly firms em-

ploying some 13,000 people had been re-established by September 1995, according to a Haitian government agency. International financial institutions argue that Haiti must lower the other costs of assembly production like port, telephone, and electricity fees. Hence, the World Bank is pushing for U.S. companies to take control of these key sectors through the privatization of Haiti's publicly owned industries. Meanwhile, SAP strategists argue, wages must be kept low and "competitive."

But the National Labor Committee (NLC), and Haitian workers, contend that the assembly zones in Haiti, like those in the rest of the Caribbean and Central America, are zones for slavery. "As Haitian factory owners and American corporations are profiting from the low wages, Haitian workers are struggling every day just to feed themselves and their families," noted the NLC report, entitled *How to Get Rich on 11 Cents an Hour*.

In particular, the report notes that factory owners are trying to avoid paying Haiti's new minimum wage of 36 gourdes per day (US\$2.40) and charges that more than half of the 40 textile assembly firms operating in Haiti at the time of the NLC's research in August 1995 were violating the minimum wage law.

President Aristide raised the minimum wage last May from 15 to 36 gourdes per day. Although it was the first wage hike since 1984, the NLC notes that the new minimum wage "is worth less in real terms than the old minimum wage of 15 gourdes was worth in 1990... And since Oct. 1, 1980, when dictator Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier first set the minimum wage at 13.20 gourdes, the real value of the minimum wage has declined by almost 50%."

In the 12-page report, the NLC reserves some of its sharpest criticism for giant U.S. corporations, like Sears, Wal-Mart, and Walt Disney Corp., which contract out to U.S. and Haitian firms. At a Quality Garments factory, making Mickey Mouse pajamas, employees reported that last summer they had worked 50 days straight, up to 70 hours per week, without a day off. "One worker told the NLC that she was supposed to sew seams on 204 pairs of Mickey Mouse pajamas in a day, for which she would be paid 40 gourdes (\$2.67). But she was only able to complete 144 pairs, for

which she was paid 28 gourdes (US\$1.87)," said the NLC.

The report noted that Michael Eisner, the CEO of Disney, earned \$203 million in 1993, about 325,000 times the salary of workers in Haiti. "If a typical Haitian worker worked full-time, six days a week sewing clothes for Disney, it would take her approximately 1,040 years to earn what Michael Eisner earned in one day in 1993," said the report.

Overall, the NLC found a "pattern of abuses, including low wages, so low, in fact, that a factory owner told the NLC that, 'The workers can't work effectively because they don't eat enough.'" The report calculates that a family in Port-au-Prince must spend — at the very least — 363 gourdes, or \$24.20, per week for food, shelter, and education. "But a minimum wage earner, working 8 hours a day, 6 days a week, takes home 216 gourdes per week, or less than 60% of a family's basic needs," said the report.

The NLC lays much of the blame for the deteriorating conditions of Haitian workers at the doorstep of USAID, which committed \$8 million of U.S. taxpayer money to promoting foreign investment in Haiti this past year. "The U.S. government has shown a commitment to aggressively court U.S. business to invest in Haiti, but it has shown no such commitment to the workers who produce for those U.S. companies," the NLC argues, noting that USAID has historically pressured the Haitian government to keep wages low.

Now the NLC, which is affiliated with textile unions in the United States, sees that the low wages in Haiti will be used to try to depress the wages of other workers in the Americas. "Haitian wages are extremely attractive and lower than in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, other major assembly zone operations. In other words, Haiti defines the wage floor for the entire Western Hemisphere," said the report. Haiti is presently way out in front in the race to the bottom.

[For further information, or to order copies of the report, contact: The National Labor Committee Education Fund, 15 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003-3377 Tel: 212-242-0700.] □

# Worsening Unemployment in China

by Zhang Kai

*This article, and the two accompanying ones, on the jailing of the prominent dissident Wei Jingsheng and on labor struggles in Hong Kong, were provided by October Review, a Fourth Internationalist publication produced in Hong Kong.*

Unemployment in China is worsening. In September and October, a number of articles in *Workers' Daily* discussed this problem. An article by Liu Guanxue and Lu Shihai, both from the Office of the Ministry of Labor, entitled "The Current State of Employment in China and Strategic Changes in Employment Policies," pointed out that employment in China faced pressures from three areas: (1) an annual addition [to the work force] of 3–4 million persons in urban areas; (2) a labor surplus in the countryside of 100 million persons, looking for urban employment; and (3) over 20 million "redundant" workers from state-owned factories waiting for transfer. The total 1994 figure was that 12.13 million people in cities and towns required new job arrangements.

An article by Xu Zhenghui from the Job Security Branch of the National Federation of Labor, entitled "Strategic Thinking on How to Alleviate Employment Contradictions in China," pointed out that in the coming few years, new labor in urban and rural regions will

be increasing at a rate of 10 million a year. In the period of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996–2000), the natural growth of labor and the transfer of labor from agricultural sectors will amount to 35 million; labor from redundancy and factory bankruptcy will amount to 10 million, and so the supply of labor will be 50 million. However, the estimated demand for labor in this period will be only 30 million.

## Fear of Social Instability

The worry expressed by the articles is that the existence of large numbers of unemployed will exert severe pressures on the social security system, and will cause social instability.

The situation in state-owned factories is particularly worrying. An internal study by the State Economic Restructuring Commission revealed that over 44 percent of state-owned factories are now running on a deficit. Debts among factories amount to over RMB700 billion. A survey by the State Statistical Bureau on the situation in 13 provincial capitals revealed

that redundant workers amount to 15–30 percent of all workers, and retired workers in general are equivalent to 20 percent of the total number of workers. (In some factories, retired workers equal 50 percent or even 100 percent of the workers.) This puts a great pressure on factories in terms of pensions.

In face of the financial difficulties, some state-owned factories are laying off large numbers of workers. The textile industries are a conspicuous example. In Shanghai, by the end of the Ninth Five-Year Plan productivity will be reduced from the original 2.14 million spindles to 1.8 million spindles, and the number of textile workers employed will fall from the current 0.55 million to 0.25 million. In the next five-year plan, 55 percent of Shanghai's textile workers will be made redundant, and the remaining 45 percent will carry out 85 percent of the current work. In Tianjin, already, 370,000 persons have been laid off. □

# Protest Sentencing of Wei Jingsheng

by Zhang Kai

Wei Jingsheng, a persistent dissident, has been charged by the Chinese authorities with "intriguing against and subverting the government" and sentenced to 14 years in jail. He is China's most famous dissident because of articles he wrote in 1979 demanding China's "Fifth Modernization" — democratization — and alluding to Deng Xiaoping as a potential dictator. He was sentenced to jail for a term of 15 years for voicing his views. In 1993, when China was bidding to host Olympics 2000, he was released but was rearrested after a few months, and held in unlawful custody for 18 months, totally out of the reach of his family, until finally the government brought new charges against him in November 1995.

Professor Ding Zilin from People's University, whose only son was killed by the military in the 1989 democracy movement, published an open letter on November 29 denouncing the government's arrest of Wei Jingsheng: "Wei

Jingsheng has only called for the implementation of democracy and the improvement of human rights, so can this be termed subversion of the government?" Ding Zilin also pointed out that Wei was against the setting up of clandestine organizations.

Wei Jingsheng was arrested several days after he met with a visiting U.S. deputy secretary of state. At that time, President Clinton had just "delinked" China's human rights abuses from the most favored nations clause. After being held in custody for 18 months, Wei was formally charged the day after China announced its reduction of customs tariffs by 30 percent.

## Behind Fear of Democracy, Economic Problems

China's big strides toward marketization appear to have brought rapid economic growth, but in fact, acute problems have developed: high wastage, low output, substandard quality, high infla-

tion, high unemployment, increased social differentiation, and further uneven development of different regions. With growing contradictions, grievances have also increased. This is the main reason for the rejection by the authorities of political democratization and for their suppression of criticism regarding corruption and bureaucratization.

This new wave of political repression is causing a whole series of protests from inside China and abroad. In China, 15 well-known dissidents from 4 provinces, including the dissident Wang Youcai, petitioned the National People's Congress to demand the immediate release of Wei Jingsheng. Ten other dissidents from Sichuan Province signed a letter drafted by Liu Xianbin; almost all of them were arrested and jailed after 1989. A wave of protests around the world is also building up to denounce the Chinese government for its unabashed persecution of Wei Jingsheng and other dissidents. □

# Immigrant Laborers in Hong Kong Fight Exploitation

by Wei Bo

Public attention was drawn to the exploitation of immigrant laborers in Hong Kong when in October, 800 Thai workers working on the new airport construction project in Hong Kong launched a strike to protest the withholding of their wages by the contractors. After they won their battle, workers from mainland China followed suit by sitting in outside the New China News Agency. It then became known that many workers whose monthly wages should be over HK\$10,000 received only HK\$4,500, and the rest was either given as "contributions" to the state or withheld by the employers. It was reported that some workers received as little as \$1,000 per month, but they worked 12 hours a

day without rest days. Some workers had over \$100,000 withheld by the employers. Many workers, in having their work arranged in Hong Kong, had to pay an "agency fee" of several tens of thousands of dollars (some paid \$60,000) to employment agencies in China. Similar "commissions" are paid by Filipino domestic workers to agencies, some of which amount to three months' wages. And for workers from China, the commission is sometimes even higher.

Laborers from China working on the new Hong Kong airport total 2,950 persons, constituting 63 percent of all overseas workers in this project. Fewer than half of them have come out

into the public to fight for their rightful wages. Some have complained that their families back home have been threatened.

It is reported that laws in China rule that 25 percent of the wages of overseas workers will have to be collected by employment agencies to cover costs for exporting labor. This means some of this money is paid to the state. In reality, overseas workers are sometimes superexploited. A court in Australia in 1990 ruled that a Sichuan restaurant in Melbourne should pay Australian \$40,000 to three Chinese workers, which was 22 times the wages they had received. □

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## Cecilia Rodriguez Victim of Rape in Chiapas

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### U.S. Defender of Zapatistas: "I Will Not Stop My Work"

by Jenny Warburg

*The following is reprinted from the December 1995 issue of Justice Speaks, newspaper of the Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ), where it served as the regular column of the BWFJ Women's Commission "& Ain't I a Woman?" This first appeared as an article titled "Secret Weapon" in The Independent, a North Carolina newspaper. It has been edited slightly for style purposes.*

In [the University of North Carolina's] Carmichael Auditorium last month, I watched my friend Cecilia Rodriguez captivate her audience, 1,500 members of the Student Environmental Action Coalition attending their national conference. After speaking on Mexico's struggle for democracy, Cecilia, U.S. representative of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional and coordinator for the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, was cheered with a boisterous standing ovation. One person told me she had them all lined up to join the Zapatistas' fight for civil rights against the Mexican government.

Two weeks later, Cecilia received a more brutal reception. In broad daylight at the Chiapas resort Lakes of Montebello, she was gang-raped and sodomized by three armed men. As they raped, they threatened, "You know how things are in Chiapas, right? Shut up then — or you know what will happen to you."

This act of retaliation and warning was only one of many politically motivated incidents of sexual terror and intimidation in Chiapas. Three women were recently raped at a military checkpoint, and in early October three nurses were raped and almost killed in San Andrés Larrainzar, the site of recent peace talks. Cecilia told me she'd heard of about 50 other documented rapes in Chiapas over the past year.

Cecilia holds the United States government accountable for its complicity in this sexual warfare. When she filed a complaint at the U.S. Embassy, she was told, "They never prosecute here in Mexico." And despite widespread documentation of human rights violations, the United States government has continued to support the Mexican government.

"We must not let the U.S. government continue to ignore the atrocities inflicted upon those who speak out for peace and civil and human rights in Mexico," Cecilia said following the

attack. "As citizens of the U.S., we cannot abandon the indigenous communities trapped behind a military barricade."

Despite her personal suffering, Cecilia has been unrelenting in her support for the cause. "It was a mistake to spare my life," she said. "I will not shut up. I will not stop my work... as a representative of the Zapatistas. You have left me my life. From this will come the strength to continue to work."

"If my public humiliation can serve no other purpose than to expose to the general public the horror being endured in Mexico, then it will be worth it."

Cecilia and the people of Chiapas deserve... help in their struggle for democracy. No woman, wife and mother, should have to fear working for peace and justice anywhere in the world. □



# Call for Zapatista Front of National Liberation

The following text constitutes Part Two of the "Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle," issued by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) on January 1, 1996. The translation, by the El Paso-based National Committee for Democracy in Mexico (NCDM), has been edited slightly for style purposes. The NCDM may be reached at 602 N. Cotton St., A103, El Paso, TX 79902; telephone (915) 532-8382; or e-mail, moonlight@jgc.apc.org

Today, with the heart of Emiliano Zapata, and having heard the voice of all our brothers and sisters, we call upon the people of Mexico to participate in a new stage of the struggle for national liberation and the construction of a new nation, through this **FOURTH DECLARATION OF THE LACANDÓN JUNGLE**, in which we call upon all honest men and women to participate in the new national political force which is born today: the **ZAPATISTA FRONT OF NATIONAL LIBERATION**, a civic and peaceful organization, independent and democratic, Mexican and national, which will struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice in Mexico.

The Zapatista Front of National Liberation is born today and we invite the participation of the workers of the republic, the workers in the field and in the city, the indigenous people, the squatters, the teachers and students, Mexican women, the youth in all the nation, honest artists and intellectuals, religious people who are accountable, all those Mexican citizens who do not want Power but democracy, liberty, and justice for ourselves and for our children.

We invite national civic society, those without a party, the citizens' and social movements, all Mexicans to construct this new political force.

A new political force which will be national. A new political force based in the EZLN.

A new political force which forms part of a broad opposition movement, the National Liberation Movement, as a space for citizen's political action where there may be a confluence with other political forces of the independent opposition, a space where popular wills may encounter and coordinate united actions with one another.

A political force whose members do not exert or aspire to hold elective positions or government offices on any level. A political force which does not aspire to take power. A force which is not a political party.

A political force which can organize the demands and proposals of those citizens and is willing to give direction through obedience. A political force which can organize a



solution to the collective problems without the intervention of political parties and of the government. We do not need permission in order to be free. The role of government is the prerogative of society and it is its right to exert that function.

A political force which struggles against the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and against the centralization of power. A political force whose members do not have any other privilege than the satisfaction of having fulfilled their commitments.

A political force with local, state, and regional organization which grows from the base, which is its social force. A political force given birth by the civic committees of dialogue.

A political force which is called a **FRONT** because it incorporates organizational efforts which are non-partisan, and has many levels of participation and many forms of struggle.

A political force called **ZAPATISTA** because it is born with the hope and the indigenous heart which, together with the EZLN, descended again from the Mexican mountains.

A political force with a program of struggle with 13 points. Those contained in the First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle and added throughout the past two years of insurgency. A political force which struggles against the State-Party System. A political force which struggles for a new constituency and a new constitution. A political force which does not struggle to take political power but for a democracy where those who govern, govern by obeying.

We call upon all those men and women of Mexico, the indigenous and those who are not indigenous, we call upon all the peoples who form this Nation;

- those who agree to struggle for housing, land, work, bread, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty, and peace;
- those who understand that the State-Party System is the main obstacle to a transition to democracy in Mexico;
- those who know that democracy does not mean switching around those in absolute power, but government of the people,

for the people, and by the people;

- those who agree with the need to create a new Magna Carta which incorporates the principal demands of the Mexican people and which guarantees that Article 39 be complied with through plebiscites and referendums;
- those who do not aspire or pretend to exercise public privileges or elected posts;
- those who have the heart, the will, and the wisdom on the left side of their chest;
- those who want to stop being spectators and are willing to go without pay or privilege other than participation in national reconstruction;
- those who want to construct something new and good — we call upon them all to become part of the **ZAPATISTA FRONT OF NATIONAL LIBERATION**.

Those citizens without a party, those social and political organizations, those civic committees of dialogue, movements and groups, all those who do not aspire to take Power and who subscribe to this **FOURTH DECLARATION OF THE LACANDÓN JUNGLE** commit themselves to participate in a dialogue to formulate its organic structure, its plan of action, and its declaration of principles for this **ZAPATISTA FRONT OF NATIONAL LIBERATION**.

Today, this January 1 of 1996, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation signs this **FOURTH DECLARATION OF THE LACANDÓN JUNGLE**. We invite all the people of Mexico to subscribe to it. □

# Long Strike at Caterpillar

by Frank Lovell

When top officials of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in Detroit let it be known publicly at the beginning of December 1995 that the 17-month long strike against Caterpillar Inc., world's largest manufacturer of earth-moving equipment, would soon be called off, the news was greeted with little surprise. In the mass media there was hardly more than passing interest in the reasons why the union bureaucracy would abruptly end this widely publicized strike without explanation.

Major capitalist news agencies offered brief analyses of what officially ending this strike meant at that time. The *New York Times* ran a headline "Union Capitulation Shows Strike Is Now Dull Sword" (December 5, 1995). The *Los Angeles Times*, in a news article from Peoria, Illinois, datelined December 5, put it this way: "Caterpillar Strike Ends with a Whimper for Union Movement." The *Wall Street Journal*, more circumspect and more informative, ran a news story Monday morning, December 4, announcing: "UAW Calls off Walkout Even Though Members Spurn Company Offer." The *Journal* story gave details on the membership vote. "In weekend voting near Caterpillar facilities in three states, the 8,700 remaining strikers turned thumbs down on the (company) proposal," it said, "after being told that their union would send them back to work no matter which way they voted."

From union sources the *Journal* learned that the Caterpillar central bargaining committee had decided to "recess" the strike, and that the strikers "are available immediately and unconditionally for return to work." It gave background material: "This is the second time in recent years the union has called off a national strike against Caterpillar," it said. "In April 1992, the UAW ended a strike after the Peoria, Ill., maker of construction equipment and diesel engines threatened to permanently replace the strikers. The current walkout is an extension of that dispute."

In a follow-up story December 5, the *Journal* reported, "Caterpillar prepares rules for conduct, including gag order on union dispute." This headline indicated that the company was prepared to begin rehiring strikers, and intimated that continuous informal negotiations between company and union may have been a factor in the union's decision to "suspend" the strike and the company's announcement of its "rules of conduct" for returning strikers. Another factor, indicated in the *Journal* story, was the National Labor Relations Board's intervention.

## Ranks Rejected Contract, Sent Back Anyway

Still another factor was the overwhelming vote of the strikers to reject the terms of a return-to-

work contract offered by the company. The no vote averaged around 80 percent, and at one facility was as high as 94 percent.

The *Journal* reported that the Peoria, Ill., office of the NLRB had filed more than 170 complaints of unfair labor practices against Caterpillar in the four-year battle against UAW workers. The company said it was disappointed that the workers had rejected its latest offer, "a fair and reasonable offer that would have ensured that our UAW-represented employees continue to receive some of the best wages and benefits in U.S. industry." At the same time it announced that the return of strikers to their old jobs would take weeks and would vary according to plant location.

At that time the strikers were almost totally dependent on the mass media, controlled by the employing class, for information about the progress and prospects of their strike. It was widely known that the \$300 weekly strike benefit, collected by each striker, was a drain on the union strike fund to the tune of more than \$100 million. Daily papers and TV newscasts reported regularly that Caterpillar profits were soaring, that all Caterpillar plants were operating despite union picket lines, legal attacks and an aggressive public relations campaign against the company. The general impression among strikers, including the most militant, was that the UAW strategy to win the strike was not working.

## One of Three Strikes in Illinois "War Zone"

In union newspapers the long strike against Caterpillar was reported as one of several strikes, including the A. E. Staley lockout of its 750 corn processing workers and the company provoked strike at the Bridgestone/Firestone rubber plant in Decatur, Illinois, also site of a large Caterpillar plant. All these strikes in this small town were of long duration and attracted national attention. Several different unions were involved and different strategies were devised. Month after month the progress of these strikes and the adamant resistance of the employers, assisted by government agencies and police forces at all levels, were reported and strong appeals made for union solidarity. The contrasting strategies of the various unions under attack were described.

The Staley workers devised the most imaginative (and in some ways the most effective) strategy out of necessity. They were a small local of the United Paperworkers union with no strike fund. They called for help from all other unions, hired Ray Rogers to help them launch a "corporate campaign" against the British-owned international conglomerate, Tate and Lyle, owners of Staley. And then, as an essential part of their strategy, this local union organized rank-and-file strikers to crisscross the country,

speaking at union meetings and to civic and church groups, to explain their plight and appeal for financial assistance and support of their boycott against Pepsi-Cola, largest consumer of Staley's corn syrup. This insured the strikers' survival for over two years and sustained their morale. It did not immediately bring Staley management to its knees, but it has served to scandalize the corporate structure and expose its greed. And it has caught the attention of the newly aroused union movement.

The other two unions on strike in the small Decatur community were affiliates of once powerful international unions, the United Rubber Workers and the UAW. Both unions had strike funds, and both relied on these funds to tide the strikers over until the strikes could be won. But in both instances the companies were prepared to hold out longer than expected. The Rubber workers strike fund was depleted and the union merged with the United Steelworkers, which promptly called off the Bridgestone/Firestone strike, much as the UAW was later to call off the Caterpillar strike. If any official explanation was given by the Steelworkers union, it was not widely distributed nor generally discussed.

## Summer and Fall 1995: Class Struggle Erupting

Meantime the long-standing, well-organized employer offensive against the union movement gained momentum. Several industries were hit, including newspaper and aircraft. By mid-year it was clear that the big newspaper chains operating the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* had conspired to undermine and eliminate the newspaper unions in that city, and that no acceptable renewal of union contracts could be negotiated. Likewise in aircraft the Boeing company had drafted a "final offer" unacceptable to its 32,500 workers, members of the Machinists union. On July 13, 1995, 2,600 newspaper workers in Detroit struck.

And on October 5, Boeing workers in three states (the main body being in the Seattle area) brought airplane building at Boeing to a standstill. Thus the number of workers locked out or forced out on strike was increasing dramatically during the summer and early fall; worker solidarity and determination to fight back grew as the battle lines were extended. The class struggle was erupting in the U.S., provoked mainly by the employers who were encouraged by the increasingly reactionary political climate, a by-product of the two-party political system which is a ruling class monopoly. This situation had repercussions throughout the organized labor movement. The union bureaucracy was alarmed and shaken.

By the time of the AFL-CIO biennial national convention, October 23-26, delegates from local unions under siege and strikers from the picket lines demonstrated their support of a more active and militant policy by the top leadership of organized labor. The convention elected a new leadership pledged to fight the anti-union employers and "make them pay a

# Interview with Decatur Caterpillar Worker

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*For a better appreciation of the shifting labor scene at Caterpillar and in strike-bound Decatur, Illinois, we interviewed by phone one of the Caterpillar workers there. His name is Kenneth (Moose) Brackett, of UAW Local 751, a millwright. He has worked 15 years for Caterpillar. This interview was held December 16, 1995.*

**Q: When did you return to work?**

**A:** We were called back last Monday, December 11. I have now worked one week.

**Q: How do the new shop rules affect your work and how are they enforced?**

**A:** The shop rules are the same as before the strike. But in the past the company was lax in the enforcement of them. Now the company wants us to abide strictly by the rules and the supervisors keep watch over us to remind us of the rules. There are no restrictions on union emblems. The UAW logo can be worn on our jacket or shirt and nothing is said about that. But they don't want us to wear signs that show up management or put labels on the big bosses. We are not supposed to get in arguments with the scabs that are still in the shop, or call them scabs. There is a good deal of tension.

**Q: How is this tension resolved? What happens if fights start between scabs and union members? Does management pretend impartiality and discipline the scabs as well as union members when fights start?**

**A:** They will sometimes go after the scabs. We have had nine union members fired this first week back at work. These firings will be appealed. One scab has been fired.

There are different reasons for them to fire a worker. One of our forklift drivers was fired

because he refused to deliver material to a scab.

Another member was fired for some flimsy reason. He has been here a long time, with 30-years seniority. I understand he has been reinstated. But he will now retire. That was part of the deal. His retirement pay and benefits come under the terms of the old contract that was in effect when the strike started, not this latest offer.

**Q: Where do these scabs come from? Are they mostly locals who gave up on the strike and crossed the picket lines or are they hired strike breakers brought in from other states?**

**A:** A lot are from out of town, working for a scab company with offices in Colorado and California. Caterpillar seems to want to get rid of these "temps" now that we are back at work.

**Q: How do you account for the fact that the company is now hiring back all strikers? Is this because the company has had a change of heart? And if so, what has brought this about?**

**A:** I don't know if they have had a change of heart. But it does seem as if the general attitude on the part of the employers has changed. We are told that negotiations at Staley will begin

soon. Also the rubber workers will probably all get their jobs back.

**Q: Do you think this has anything to do with intervention by the NLRB against unfair labor practices by these companies?**

**A:** I don't know what the NLRB has done or is doing. But we never got much help from them in the past. So I don't count on them doing much now to help us.

**Q: What do you think the eventual outcome will be?**

**A:** We can't know that. Too much depends on the economy and what the politicians in Washington do. All we can do now is try and hold our union together and prepare for any attacks that may come. We have "information meetings" every Monday at the UAW hall and these are well attended. I go in the morning because I work the afternoon shift, but each shift has its own meeting. This way we know what goes on in the shop, and we get reports on negotiations too.

**Q: Thank you for granting this interview. Will you grant a follow-up in the near future as this situation develops?**

**A:** You are welcome. Sure, I tell everybody what I see happening around here. □

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price every bit as dear as that which they seek to impose on their workers."

### Echo at AFL-CIO Convention

This convention and decisions taken there were not all sound and fury. The newly elected AFL-CIO leadership team, consisting of President John Sweeney, Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, and Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, visited all major strike areas and pledged full support to all strikers at mass rallies of union solidarity. They explained their determination to revitalize the union movement and to restore the influence of organized labor in the political structure of this country.

These developments inspired new expressions of militancy in union ranks and caught the attention of some employers who began to wonder if they may have overreached the limits of worker endurance in their drive to destroy the unions, and drive down the standard of living in this country.

Against this background of recent labor developments, and given the political direction of rising union militancy, how can the unheralded decision of the UAW leadership to abruptly end the Caterpillar strike be explained? And what was in the nature of this decision that made it acceptable to the Caterpillar strikers even though they are unhappy with the conditions under which they are now returning to work?

### Politics and Problems in the Unions

Answers to these questions can be found in the problems and politics within the unions, in this instance inside the UAW. At the UAW constitutional convention in Anaheim, California, in June 1995, Stephen Yokich, the indicated successor to retiring president Owen Beiber, was elected UAW president. Before the convention adjourned Yokich called together a closed meeting of Caterpillar representatives (delegates and others di-

rectly involved in the Caterpillar strike) and told them that the strike would be ended by the union in the near future. He is reported to have said that the strike could not continue along the course it was traveling at the time, but did not suggest a different course. What was said then did not long remain secret. Although it did not become common knowledge on the picket lines at Caterpillar plants, a sense developed that the strike was coming to some sort of prearranged conclusion, that the strikers would be called back to work.

After the strike was ended a grievance committeeman at the large UAW local 974 in the Peoria area put a descriptive message of the situation there on a computer network, from which we quote following excerpts:

Our local turned CAT's Proposal Number Six down by a 97 percent NO vote. We could not accept the overwhelming poison it contained. More importantly we could not allow CAT to hold the illegally discharged hostage and not

*Continued on page 50*

# The Class War Against Workers: Sweeney Speaks Out

by Charles Walker

I believe leaders of the business community, with few exceptions, have chosen to wage a one-sided class war in this country — a war against working people...

*UAW President Douglas Fraser, July 1978*

Six weeks after his election as president of the AFL-CIO, John J. Sweeney presented his outlook for American labor peace and economic prosperity to 400 business executives and civic leaders at a December 6 gathering of the Association for a Better New York. Sweeney said he was making business a “carrot and stick” offer. The so-called stick is to “renew and rebuild our labor movement by pouring vast resources into organizing... We’re going to be stronger and we are going to ‘take it to’ greedy employers who’ve been picking our pockets...”

As for Sweeney’s carrot: “We are going to challenge American business to use our brains as well as our backs, to let workers and their unions contribute to your decision-making process, to let us help you make the hard choices that affect our family budgets as well as your bottom lines... together we can build a path to a new shared prosperity for American business and American workers.”

## Emphasis on Cooperation with Management

Sweeney longs to convince capital that the way to compete in the global economy is not by driving down labor costs, as they have been doing, but rather by “innovation... Yankee ingenuity... [and] labor-management cooperation.” (Emphasis added.)

“For American business,” said Sweeney, “this is our message: If you choose to join us in building a bridge between management and labor, then together we can build a path to a new shared prosperity for American business and American workers.” But when “employers and other powerful people refuse to listen to the working families we represent, then, sometimes, we have to dramatize their plight, with tactics such as blocking bridges.”

## Yearning for Good Old “Social Compact”

Sweeney yearns to reconstruct an American economic and social compact along the lines of the arrangement between government, business, and organized labor that prevailed from the time of the Roosevelt administration until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Europe’s and Japan’s war-damaged industrial and commercial structures were rebuilt and began again to rival American corporate dominance in the world.

In the United States, this renewed commercial rivalry resulted in an upward redistribution of wealth and income away from workers to compensate business owners for a falling rate of profit. By 1978, the union tops, who were never allowed to be more than junior partners in the tripartite social compact, suffered a galling demotion, which prompted UAW President Douglas Fraser to angrily charge: “The leaders of industry, commerce, and finance in the United States have broken and discarded the fragile, unwritten compact previously existing during a period of growth and progress.”

[For an account of how the bosses ended the “unwritten compact” in 1978, dissolving the semi-official Labor-Management Group and provoking Fraser’s outburst, see Frank Lovell’s article “The Capitalist Crisis of the 1990s, U.S. Labor, and the Labor Party Movement,” in *BIDOM*, July-August 1995, pp. 28–29.]

## No Break from Business Unionism

While there will be positive outcomes, including openings for democratic unionists and militants, as a result of the dumping of the old Kirkland-Donahue leadership from atop the AFL-CIO and an increased union organizing drive (if it happens), Sweeney’s speech is unmistakable evidence that the AFL-CIO convention delegates did not turn their backs on business unionism.

There can be no doubt that the union hierarchy has no intention of dumping its fundamental strategic aim of collaboration with the employing class and its political institutions. Sweeney’s plan is to adopt “adversarialism” as no more than a tactic to try and nudge the bosses into making room for the labor bureaucrats at the bosses’ table. Above all, Sweeney’s “adversarialism” is not a class-struggle strategy to gain dominance over the employers.

## Sweeney to Bosses: “We’re Bound Together”

Sweeney told his New York audience: “... I feel we’re bound together by the values we share — the sense of mutual responsibility that defines this city and this nation at their best.” Sweeney gave as evidence of the values he shares with his business audience an account of how in the 1970s New York unions went to the state capital and “used our political clout in Albany to pass legislation *allowing the city to abrogate our own contracts*. And we poured our pensions into bonds to keep the city afloat.” (Emphasis added.)

*Continued on page 33*

## Sweeney’s Remarks on the Strikes in France and Conditions in the U.S.

*The following excerpts from Sweeney’s December 6 speech to the Association for a Better New York were posted by “labornews” on the “labr.global” conference of the Institute for Global Communications computer network.*

Since 1979, all of the income growth in our country has gone to the top 40 percent of households — and nearly all of that went to the top 20 percent...

Think of the fellow who used to do America’s heavy lifting, the working man whose formal education ended with his high school diploma. Over the last 20 years, his real income dropped by 30 percent. And now, it takes two and three wage earners to support a family.

Meanwhile, corporate profits are up, up, up. In fact, according to *Business Week*, they’re at a 45-year high.

The stock market is up. Productivity is up — it has been since the late 1970s — and it’s way out in front of compensation.

This past year, workers’ wages and benefits increased only 2.8 percent — the lowest since 1981 — while productivity was up 3.4 percent.

Twenty years of declining wages and disappearing benefits are taking their toll on American life.

*There’s a free-floating anger among hard-working people for whom the American dream is turning into a handful of ashes.* [Emphasis added.]

For a growing number of American workers, blocking bridges seems like the very mildest form of protest. And that’s not what their union leaders are telling them — that’s what their daily lives are telling them.

I was in Europe last week, *traveling with President Clinton* [emphasis added], and I couldn’t help but be impressed with what is going on in France.

In this country, when we’re faced with cuts in vital services that benefit workers and the poor, we shut down a few parts of the government.

In France, the workers shut down the country — even though only 8 percent of the work force is organized!

I hope it never comes to that here in America. But, increasingly, American workers are down on their government, down on their employers, and down on their future.

# Detroit Newspaper Struggle Continues

by Cheryl Peck and Lisa Schlicker

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The white lawn signs planted last July when 2,500 workers at *The Detroit News* and *The Detroit Free Press* first went on strike are a little hard to see now that Michigan lawns are blanketed under winter snows, but the signs' red and white lettering still boldly communicates the sentiments of the striking workers and thousands of their supporters: "NO SCAB PAPERS!"

The Detroit newspaper strike is one of the largest and most significant struggles by U.S. workers defending their living standards and job security against corporate greed. If Detroit's newspaper workers can be defeated, so the bosses' thinking goes, then unionized newspaper workers anywhere are fair game. If Detroit's combined labor strength cannot defeat publishing conglomerates Gannett and Knight-Ridder, owners of the papers, then unionized workers everywhere are at risk.

Six unions are on strike at the Detroit newspapers: Newspaper Guild of Detroit Local 22 (reporters, copy editors, photographers, designers, graphic artists, editorial assistants, some assistant editors, and about 100 maintenance workers — 455 members); Teamsters Local 372 (circulation managers, truck drivers, and customer service workers — 1,150 members); Teamsters Local 2040 (mailers — 305 members); Graphic Communications International Union Locals 13N (printers — 300 members) and 289M (engravers — 22 members); and Detroit Typographical Union Local 18, affiliated to the CWA (composing room staff — 110 members).

The leaderships of the six unions work jointly through the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions (the Council) in dealing with the Detroit Newspaper Agency (DNA), the entity formed in 1989 by a joint operating agreement (JOA) between Gannett and Knight-Ridder. The Council's strategy has been to hurt the newspapers' profits through three principal tactics: (1) withholding labor (the strike itself); (2) an advertiser boycott, where newspaper advertisers are leafleted in an attempt to get them to pull their advertising from the scab papers; and (3) a subscription boycott, where newspaper subscribers are asked to cancel their newspaper subscriptions.

In spite of these efforts, the growing realization in the labor movement in Detroit and nationally is that the strike is being lost. The DNA continues to stall negotiations and refuses to back down on its demands for concessions. As recently as December 22, in defiance of a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) complaint, DNA executives continued to assert that striking workers have been "permanently re-

placed" by scabs. In October they turned down an offer from the Council for a \$15 million "labor cost savings" and binding arbitration.

The Council and the AFL-CIO locally and nationally, in spite of some leaders' angry speeches, have been unwilling to confront the anti-labor laws and injunctions used against the strike and mount a militant campaign to win the strike. And militant rank-and-file strikers, despite their courage, have been unable to garner the forces needed to overcome the refusal of their leadership to fight.

### The Current Situation

The Detroit newspaper strike is at a critical stage. As the strike enters its seventh month, the decision by the union leadership to obey the injunction at the Sterling Heights North Plant, the main site of newspaper production, has effectively ended mass picketing there, and now the leadership has also killed the Saturday night pickets at the newspaper distribution centers, which regularly brought out 300–400 strikers and supporters. [See "Detroit Newspaper Strike," *BIDOM* October–November 1995.] There is no sign of a settlement anytime soon.

The shutdown of mass picketing by the union leadership has broken the strike's initial momentum, which peaked in early September around the militant Labor Day demonstrations. The holiday season, a peak time for advertising and the quarter of the year in which the newspapers make most of their profits, is over. The advertising campaign has become difficult to sustain. The subscription boycott also peaked early in the strike, with an estimated 20 percent of subscribers canceling their subscriptions. Even before the holidays the Council was finding it difficult to motivate strikers and strike supporters to continue to work on the two boycott activities, as more and more came to see them as an ineffective diversion from what really needed to be done to win: stop production and distribution of the newspapers.

The most positive development in the strike since early September is the formation in mid-October of the Unity Victory Caucus (UVC), "a rank-and-file strikers' initiative to escalate efforts to win the strike," as its first flyer explained. The UVC Steering Committee consists of two members of each striking union, including Bargaining Committee members. The UVC's first leaflet called for: (1) resuming mass picketing at Sterling Heights, (2) organizing a Sunday strike paper, (3) leafleting plant gates to get support from other unions, (4) building for a one-day general strike, and (5) mass demon-

strations with the civil rights marches of the 1950s and 1960s as a model.

Hundreds of strikers signed a UVC petition for mass picketing in October. Since then, support for the caucus has grown slowly in the face of Council actions to try to marginalize the UVC leaders. The "old guard" Hoffa supporters who run the Teamsters locals and dominate the Council have been especially bad in their bureaucratic exclusions, red-baiting, and charges of "inciting violence," although the UVC includes a number of elected union officials and few, if any, members of left organizations and does not advocate violence.

Along with the recent defeats at Firestone, Caterpillar, and Staley, the Detroit newspaper strike is a stark reminder of the difficulties facing organized labor in this period. Fortunately, these experiences are leading growing numbers of union militants to conclude that the problem is not, as a December 5 *New York Times* headline proclaimed, that the strike tactic is a "dull sword" but that it is dull because it has been used to dig a ditch to lie down in, rather than to fight.

### How to Win?

The Detroit strike is likely to be a long one, and currently it is losing. The DNA has not yet budged on its demands. Supported by the resources of its two parent conglomerates, the DNA's spending to hire scabs, goons, and cops is sustainable in light of what it hopes to win. Clearly Gannett and Knight-Ridder are in this for the long haul, because breaking the Detroit newspaper unions would be extremely profitable for the companies in the future. They weigh their financial losses in Detroit not only against their corporate bottom line but also against the benefits of the message sent to their unionized and non-unionized employees nationwide.

In this context, targeting advertisers, the main tactic of the striking union leaderships, is ineffective. Several of these advertisers, such as the Dayton-Hudson company, are fiercely anti-union and are not likely to ever pull out. Also, the target of the protest is too far removed. A winning strategy would require the strikers to stop production or at least slow it enough on Sundays so that the paper would be an unreliable or undesirable advertising tool.

### Mass Picketing

For several months, members of the UVC and others have been distributing the pamphlet "How to Win Strikes: Lessons from the 1934 Minneapolis Truckers Strike" by Harry De-

Boer. DeBoer, a leader in the Minneapolis strike, writes: "A strike means all work must stop. It means that supervisors cannot be permitted to keep things going. It means scabs must be prevented from taking over the workers' jobs. Today, a strike cannot be won with a handful of pickets. It requires mass action in the street, led by the striking union."

Most active strikers and supporters understand this, a significant advance in consciousness from the three Decatur strikes. Membership meetings of four of the six striking unions have passed resolutions calling for a return to mass picketing at Sterling Heights.

A central problem in the Detroit newspaper strike, as in many other strikes, however, is that the leadership of the striking unions is not willing to lead mass action. The militant strikers naturally would like to take the matter into their own hands and call mass pickets over the heads of their leaders. But the frustrating truth is that without the support of the leadership of the striking unions and the AFL-CIO locally and nationally, mass picketing cannot be implemented now.

In Detroit today, in spite of membership support for militant resolutions, none of the six striking unions is organized enough to override or replace its leadership, nor is the Detroit working class overall organized enough to support such actions were they to occur. In order, for example, for mass picketing to successfully stop production, Detroit workers must be ready to back up the pickets with broad-based mass mobilizations and general strikes when the National Guard is called in. That moment still lies somewhere in the future.

The task faced by militants in Detroit today is to organize within the striking unions and the broader union movement against the paralysis imposed on the union by the leadership. The Unity Victory Caucus is the most important vehicle to carry out this work within the striking newspaper unions.

### **Fight the Bosses' Racism**

An important step needed in the strike includes more outreach to and involvement of the Black community and Black labor organizations. Since the beginning of the strike the DNA has used racism to pit Detroit workers against each other and to undermine support for the workers among Detroit Black small-business owners. No struggle can be won in Detroit without unity of Black and white workers in support of the strike. The unions have not done enough to counter the DNA's propaganda.

The morning of September 2, 1995, the first "Solidarity Saturday" mass picket, an ad on Detroit's WWJ radio advertised scab newspaper jobs for \$15 an hour, ending with the statement: "We are an equal opportunity employer, and we value a diverse workforce." As can be seen by its stance in negotiations, however, the only equal opportunity provided by the newspapers is the opportunity to suffer equally and the only workforce the newspaper values is a workforce on its knees. Their ad was a thinly

veiled attempt to pit Black Detroit against the mostly white and skilled strikers.

On October 2, radio ads for the *Detroit News* announced growing support for Louis Farrakhan and the "Million Man March" and the importance of reading about this in the *Detroit News*. It was extremely crude and hypocritical for the *News* suddenly to pretend sympathetic interest in the "Million Man March." There have been years of *Detroit News* stories and editorials which could have been written by Jesse Helms or Mark Fuhrman. These and other articles have provided multiple opportunities for the unions to reply and point out the racism of these hypocritical statements. The unions' leadership has not adequately responded.

Unfortunately, the strikers' own newspaper, the *Detroit Sunday Journal* has not been free of racism. It should retract articles sympathetic to the racist white police who were involved in the murder of black Detroiters Malice Green (a case which in Detroit has something of the significance of the Rodney King case in Los Angeles).

The unions need to acknowledge that while the racism of the DNA is the root problem, they are not without blame for the hiring practices of the company. One way or another they could have promoted affirmative action in hiring and in training for skilled job promotions. The newspaper unions are a largely skilled and largely white workforce which needs support from the Black community to win this strike. The UVC needs to be pressuring the unions to respond to the racism in the DNA's articles and editorials and in its hiring and promotion practices.

### **Fight the Bosses' Parties**

The Detroit newspaper strike provides an excellent opportunity for raising the idea of independent labor candidates and beginning to reduce the reliance of workers on Democrat Party politicians. If this line could be more clearly drawn in Detroit, large numbers of the workers who are being radicalized by the struggle would take a giant step toward understanding that they have no friends among the Democrats and that the working class needs its own advocates.

Labor Party Advocates (LPA) members are active in the strike. Some have raised the idea of running independent labor candidates, although none has come forward to run in local elections (as happened in the Pittston strike and with Dave Watts in the Staley struggle). An independent labor-oriented candidate, even (as is likely) one with only semi-supportable positions and no chance of winning, could introduce an entirely new focus into the struggle — a focus which will be needed for future victories.

Time and again strikers have seen their needs put on hold "just until the election is over" or "until a Democrat sympathetic to labor can be elected." Running a newspaper striker independently for Michigan Senator or some other public office would provide many opportunities to counterpose what the parties of the bosses are doing to what workers really need. The Detroit

LPA chapter and the UVC would be good places to start such a campaign, especially with the LPA convention coming up in June.

### **Promote the General Strike**

Having faced hundreds of heavily armed police, the strikers are well aware of the need for broad labor solidarity to block government intervention. For the first time in forty years, workers in Detroit are seriously discussing general strikes "like the French." UAW Local 2334 initiated a resolution saying "The Delegate Body [of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO] should call for a referendum vote in all local unions in the tri-county area to authorize this action. This will require special meetings and literature to explain to every worker why a general strike is needed to win the newspaper strike and why it will benefit all workers."

On September 14, the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition voted to endorse this resolution. Leaflets calling on the AFL-CIO to organize this action and petitions "for a Tri-County General Strike to Help the Newspaper Workers" have been widely circulated. Four of the six striking unions have passed similar resolutions calling for preparation of a general strike.

### **For Union Democracy**

Only two all-striker meetings have been held since the strike began last July. During the strike more frequent meetings are needed — weekly mass meetings and daily open updates. The Typographical union holds weekly membership meetings, but the largest Teamsters local holds them only monthly, and these are tightly controlled by the leadership.

Militant strikers also need to be organizing and coordinating participation in their union meetings in order to raise their issues. This is particularly important in the largest of the striking unions, Teamsters Local 372. Four of the six striking unions have passed a resolution at recent membership meetings calling for frequent all-striker meetings.

### **Detroit Labor Militants**

The officers of the striking newspaper unions have failed to provide the leadership the strike needs, and the national leadership of the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO has stayed away since early September. But the 300-500 militants who are the active core of the strike have shown that a nascent leadership exists in the Detroit-area labor movement which understands the basic steps needed to win future battles.

The militants will continue agitating the ranks of the striking unions to force the leadership to call for a national march on Detroit, mass picketing defying the Sterling Heights injunction, and a one-day general strike. Most importantly, the Unity Victory Caucus will try to improve its outreach to other strikers and organize them to take on their leadership at union meetings. The Labor/Community/Religious Coalition will continue to provide strike support and to promote the strategy in its letter to the

union leaderships, published in the December issue of *BIDOM*.

As *BIDOM* goes to press, it appears that the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions may be laying the groundwork for shutting

down the strike or possibly for converting it into a very long-term, low-level holding action as at Diamond Walnut. Militant strikers and strike supporters are being purged from strike headquarters and strike support work. At this point,

only the members of the newspaper and other unions, making demands on their leadership, can save the strike. □

January 13, 1996

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## Bitter News from Decatur

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# Staley Workers Majority Votes to Accept Union-Busting Contract

by Steven Ashby

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*The following notice was posted on the "labor.newswire" conference (labr.newswire@igc.apc.org). It has been edited somewhat for style purposes.*

**S**ad, bitter news from our friends in Decatur. The Staley workers' fight for justice is over for now. By a vote of 286 to 226, the workers voted today (Friday, December 22) to accept A.E. Staley/Tate & Lyle's union-busting contract.

The fight comes to an end, a few days shy of two-and-a-half years since the lockout began.

As you will recall, only last July, with nearly 600 of the original 762 locked-out workers voting (many retired or moved away to find work after the June 27, 1993, lockout), the Staley workers had rejected a similar union-busting contract by a 56 to 44 percent margin.

After a national campaign forced Miller Beer to stop purchasing scab Staley corn sweetener late last year, solidarity efforts were switched to Pepsi-Cola and its subsidiaries. For a year the Staley workers and solidarity committees have pushed Pepsi hard to stop buying scab Staley product.

Evidence was that Pepsi was feeling the pressure, and pretty much ordered A.E. Staley to offer the workers another contract, or they wouldn't renew their contract (about 1/3 of Staley sales) at the end of this month.

But the contract offer that came was garbage again: subcontracting out most jobs, with only around 220 or so union jobs left in the plant; dangerous health and safety conditions; 12-hour rotating shifts (though now — a change from July — back to the original demand for rotation every 30 days); no amnesty for fired workers, including well-known road warriors Dan Lane and Mike Griffin; union workers with decades of experience to be "retrained" on the job by the scabs, and subject to immediate firing should they speak their mind to the scabs; and so on.

### Dave Watts Slate Recently Defeated

No doubt the company was optimistic the workers would accept, given that Jim Shinall and his slate had defeated Dave Watts and his slate of union activists, winning the presidency of the Staley local by a 249 to 201 vote on December 12. [The Staley local is Local 7837 of the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU).]

The Bargaining Committee of UPIU Local 7837 rejected the company's latest offer. But the Paperworkers International in Nashville, "led" by Wayne Glenn, ordered Local 7837 to take the garbage contract to the membership for a vote. Exhausted and struggling to make ends meet, a majority voted to accept.

Most Local 7837 activists will probably not return to the plant. And if they do, most will likely risk being fired, as is happening even now to so many Caterpillar UAW militants.

Meanwhile, defeated only three days before Christmas, the Staley workers' children, at least, will not also endure a toyless Christmas. On Tuesday, December 19, a Solidarity Holiday Caravan brought many hundreds of toys and boxes of food to the workers. St. Louis had come in the week before with its own caravan, and on December 19, about 35 supporters from Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago, Gary, South Bend, Terre Haute, and other towns brought Holiday cheer to Decatur.

All together, over \$70,000 was donated, and both a semi-trailer of toys and one of food were filled. The workers welcomed us with a wonderful dinner, and with many hugs and tears of appreciation.

### Staley Workers Helped Transform Labor

Now is not the time for writing an analysis of the defeat. Nor is it time to speak inspiring words about the historic impact of this fight, whether it's the fact that the Staley workers were the catalyst that started the ball rolling to bring down Lane Kirkland, or the fact that the Staley road warriors touched the hearts and opened up the minds of hundreds of thousands of workers from one end of the country to the other.

All who have met them, have been inspired by them. All of us have been changed through this experience. And we are all the better for it. The process of transforming the labor movement, of literally turning it inside out, has begun.

The Chicago-area Staley Workers Solidarity Committee (SWCW) will call a steering committee meeting, then a general membership meeting, in January. We've built something wonderful here over the last 30 months of struggle: a vibrant, fighting, workers' solidarity organization. Many of us, perhaps after some time to rest and reflect, will want to keep it going in some form to help other workers fight for justice. Perhaps other solidarity committees across the country will also want to stay together in some new form, and keep our network alive. I think that's what the Staley workers would hope that we do.

But for now...the cheering turns to sorrow...and it's time to grieve.

Yours in Solidarity,  
Steven Ashby,  
Coordinator, Chicago-area SWCW □

December 22, 1995

# Majority Oppose Yeltsin's "Reforms" — Moral Defeat for Pro-Capitalist Right Wing

by Alexander Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov

For most analysts, including the authors of this brief study, the Russian parliamentary elections of December 1995 brought few surprises. The success of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (Russian initials, KPRF), headed by Gennady Zyuganov, was expected. Analysts had also anticipated that the "center-left" (more precisely, the social-chauvinist center) would receive about 40 percent of the total vote when the results in single-member territorial electorates were taken into account, and that an unstable equilibrium would come to exist in the Duma. And so it turned out.

What was surprising was the scale of the defeat suffered by the parties of the right and center in the party-list elections. The bloc Our Home is Russia (Russian initials, NDR), headed by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, received fewer than 10 percent of the vote, while Russia's Democratic Choice (DVR), led by Yegor Gaidar, the favorite of the Western media, attracted fewer than 5 percent. This represented a powerful moral defeat for the rightists, with their policies first of "shock without therapy" (Gaidar), and then of war in Chechnya and "depressive stabilization" (Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin). The majority of Russian citizens came out in clear opposition to such "reforms."

For the present, however, this is only a moral defeat. The forces of the political right are still powerful even in the present Duma, where if so-called "independent deputies" from single-member electorates are taken into account, the rightists will have about a third of the seats. (This was written on December 20, when the authors still did not have final figures available.) Among the forces of the right we include the Yabloko bloc, headed by Grigory Yavlinsky. We stress that the differences between the real policies of this bloc and the policies of the present authorities amount only to nuances within a shared pro-capitalist strategy. Yavlinsky's current radicalism is mainly the result of his wish to present himself as an oppositionist.

### Near Chaos in Duma

In the Duma as in Russia as a whole, a situation close to chaos and collapse has emerged as the presidential election approaches. The rightists have already ceased to exercise direct control over the situation, even though they do retain administrative and political power and control over property. The left remains far from a real victory.

Circling above this "scene after a battle" is the right-wing social-populist Zhirinovskiy, who has the ability to shift the relationship of forces in the Duma decisively in one direction or the other.

### 1. The Socio-Economic Context of the Elections

The political equilibrium (naturally, very unstable) which has come to exist in the present Duma reflects in many ways the wider social and economic relations within Russia. It is important to note that since the winter of 1993-1994 the model of nomenklatura-corporatist capitalism that arose in our country during the process of "reform" has begun gradually to change. From the speculative pursuit of a pro-Western course, the Russian authorities have begun a gradual turn to a chauvinist-paternalist orientation. This turn has proceeded slowly and in contradictory fashion, but its causes are profound. Now it has yielded its first results.

So what is happening? By 1995 noticeable changes were appearing. They were called forth by the fundamental rejection by the Russian economy and the people of the attempts to implement the program of "shock therapy"; by the concentration and monopolization of private capital, processes hastened by violence and corruption; and by the regrouping and partial adaptation to the bureaucratized and corrupt market of a significant sector of the "old" monopolies (primarily in the fuel and raw materials sector).

### Emergence of "Corporate Clans"

Partly through the rapid grouping together at the local level of numerous small speculative firms, large corporate clans have arisen, not only in the sphere of material production but also of trade and finance. Within these clans, property rights and real power are distributed among various groups of the clan elite. These groups include corrupt elements of the federal and municipal authorities that support a particular clan; the banks that serve and control a given clan; managers of enterprises that are part of the clan; and various private individuals. In most cases these clans bind "their" workers and the residents of "their" cities tightly to the clan structures, using ties of patronage and fear. It is significant that in the elections virtually all the present provincial governors were re-elected irrespective of their political orientation.

As the clans consolidate themselves (and the process of their formation is not yet complete)

they enter into fierce struggles over the division of property rights and economic power. Naturally, in this struggle (and it is proceeding, we should remember, in a country with a state-bureaucratic capitalism in which a great deal depends on official structures) it is extremely important for the clans to make the breakthrough to political power. As a result, each of the clans has placed, is placing, or will place its stake on one or several political forces, which are called upon to lobby for the clan's interests. The abundance of clans (and if we take into account the republican and regional elites, they number many dozens), and their wish to diversify their representation, provides one of the reasons for the multiplicity of electoral blocs with extremely similar political programs.

### Two Poles of Attraction

Meanwhile, in the course of 1995 two poles of attraction for these corporate structures began gradually to emerge.

One, close to the present authorities and linked to the paternalist-minded bureaucracy, is oriented toward a compromise with the workers (hence the social populism of the programs) and toward the maintaining of national production through state support, limitations on foreign competition, cheap credits, and so forth. On the basis of personal ties and of sectoral and regional affiliations the clan-corporations of this type placed their bets on one of the social-chauvinist blocs (for the most part, the KPRF or KRO — the Congress of Russian Communities).

There are also clans of a second type — capitalist corporations that have already adapted to the market through the monopolization of exports of raw materials and energy sources, through intermingling with the current authorities, and through strengthening their position in the financial and banking sphere as a result of the concentration and monopolization of capital. These clans supported Our Home Is Russia, Russia's Democratic Choice, and other right-wing blocs, competing not only with the paternalist (social-chauvinist) structures but also with one another.

### Workers Becoming Decisive Factor

Nevertheless, it is impossible to understand either the results of the elections or the prospects for Russia's future if we "forget" the position of the working people who make up the bulk of the population.



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It should be recalled that 1995, despite the official optimism of the authorities, was a period of continuing economic decline. Over the first eleven months of the year the fall in GDP amounted "only" to 4 percent, while the real wages of workers, following a temporary stabilization in 1994, began dropping sharply (by 15 percent). The government's successes in the fight against inflation were truly memorable — prices in 1995 rose by "only" 120 percent! Already, the majority of workers were simply exhausted by the unceasing crisis.

Apart from that, more than a quarter of the population were below the poverty line, which the Russian authorities defined in very simple fashion: people were considered poor if they lacked the minimum of low-quality foodstuffs needed for survival "over a certain period of time".

There is no doubt that the Russian population today remains atomized and indeed enslaved by clan paternalism. Yes, the workers of Russia, as before, show little capacity for self-organization, while the economic crisis and the need to work at two or three jobs for twelve to fourteen hours a day strengthen tendencies toward conformism and passivity. Yes, our country has already seen the formation of a "workers aristocracy," consisting of employees of a number of raw materials branches and of the banking and finance sector who receive from five to ten times the pay of workers in machine-building, education, or science. All this is true.

However, the workers of Russia are already beginning, even if only passively, to protest against such policies, to protest against such an economy and against such ruling authorities. One sign of this is the fact that in the parliamentary elections as many as 70 percent of the voters cast ballots in the so-called "less favored" regions. Another sign is the massive support that was given to the KPRF as almost

the only party possessing mass grass-roots structures and working (above all in the case of its regional organizations) with ordinary people (for the present, mainly with pensioners, but all the same...). Parties of the same political stripe which lacked such structures failed in the elections, as was shown by the example of the KRO.

Even if passively, the working people who make up the majority of the Russian population are thus becoming the decisive factor in the political struggle. The workers are not yet capable of joining forces independently in order to defend their own interests (the KPRF is a party of mass passive support for the "good" bureaucrats — that is, the paternalist nomenklatura). But the support, rejection, or indifference shown by workers is becoming a decisive factor in the struggles of the corporative elites.

### 2. Disposition of Forces in the Duma

In order to understand the results of the 1995 parliamentary elections, one needs to keep in mind the bases of the political system that came into being as a result of the coup d'etat of September-October 1993. This political system is based on the combining in the hands of the executive power (the president and government) of the prerogatives enjoyed by the ruling authorities in both parliamentary and presidential republics. The rights of the parliament (the Duma) have been curtailed not only compared to parliamentary systems of rule, but even compared to presidential ones. The Duma is restricted even in its legislative functions. In order to overcome a veto by the upper house, the Council of the Federation, a two-thirds majority is required; a presidential veto can be overcome only by a two-thirds vote in both houses.

The Duma can scarcely be regarded as a force equal in standing to the executive power. The only substantial functions it possesses are the

rights to adopt the budget and to confirm in office three key officials nominated by the president — the prime minister, the chairperson of the Central Bank, and the prosecutor general.

Meanwhile, a refusal by the Duma to pass the budget or an expression of no confidence in the prime minister may provide grounds for early dissolution of the Duma.

### Dress Rehearsal for Presidential Election

Even though the number of Duma seats held by various political forces is of great importance to the ruling elite, in these circumstances the disposition of forces in the Duma clearly lacks decisive significance. It is no accident that during the election campaign the observation was often heard that the Duma elections were merely a full dress rehearsal for the presidential election of June 1996.

The Duma elections were held on the basis of relatively democratic legislation. A mixed electoral system was used. Half the positions (225) were to be filled by proportional representation according to party lists, while the remaining 225 would be filled by candidates who had run for election in a particular electoral district and had received a simple majority of votes. The party lists were divided into a general federal list (consisting of only 12 candidates) and regional lists. This was done in order to prevent an undue concentration of Moscow politicians in the Duma.

The electoral procedures were also relatively democratic, and appear generally to have been adhered to, at least in regions where conditions were more or less "normal." (Journalists, however, reported numerous and glaring violations in the Chechen Republic, where the elections took place under wartime conditions. Press reports also suggested major shortcomings in the election practices used on military bases elsewhere in Russia.) The main source of disquiet was the question of the fairness or otherwise of the vote counting, since there was almost no possibility of independent control over this aspect of the electoral procedure.

### KPRF's Strong Showing

According to figures released on December 20, the KPRF gained first place in most regions, attracting 21.4 per cent of the party-list votes. It is expected that together with at least 57 deputies elected in local constituencies, the KPRF will have about 130 Duma seats — close to a third of the total, and almost twice as many as in the previous Duma. [Translator's note: the final tally for the KPRF was 157 seats]. Second place in the elections was taken by Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) with 10.9 percent of the votes, half as many as before. Because the LDPR had only an insignificant number of candidates elected in local constituencies (despite having run more candidates than any other party), its parliamentary fraction will make up fewer than 10 percent of the total number of deputies. The pro-government Our Home Is Russia (NDR) came in third with almost 10 percent of the vote, but won

only ten territorial seats. Yavlinsky's Yabloko bloc received 7.6 percent of the vote and had 14 deputies elected from local constituencies. The other electoral blocs failed to make it over the 5 percent barrier.

Most experts were surprised not only by the KPRF's level of success but also by the extent of the NDR's failure. The vote for the LDPR was expected to be considerably smaller. Also mistaken were the near-unanimous predictions that the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO), the Agrarian Party (AP), Gaidar's DVR, and the Women of Russia group would surmount the 5 percent barrier. On the whole, however, the trend of the voting was predicted correctly. All the forecasters put the KPRF in first place, predicted a substantial gap between the KPRF and NDR, and pointed to a significant drift of voters away from the LDPR, DVR and AP.

The only major, fundamental error made by the experts was their exaggeration of the political strength of the KRO. It was predicted that this organization would rank among the leading factions in the future Duma. But as in the previous elections, a political organization resting on industrialists and declaring its moderate, centrist character (at that time this role was played by the Civic Union) saw its hopes dashed. It is interesting to note that in 1993 the majority of experts also failed to predict the failure of the Civic Union.

### The Mood of the Voters

What conclusions do the election results allow one to draw about the mood of the voters?

In the first place, there was an unmistakable rejection of the government's course. This was despite an extremely powerful propaganda campaign waged by NDR, openly supported by state television, and despite real signs that the economic decline was slowing.

Second, the right-wing parties which overcame the 5 percent barrier received only 29.1 percent of the party-list vote compared with 52.7 percent in the 1993 elections. An unstable right-wing majority (unstable because of discord among its elements) was replaced by the absence of a clear majority for any political current. We include in the category of right-wing parties not only Yavlinsky's bloc but also the nationalist LDPR, since the LDPR gives its firm support to Russia's capitalist path. Also, despite spouting anti-government rhetoric and voting with the KPRF on some questions, the LDPR has supported the government on all of the most important issues (the budget, confidence in the prime minister, etc.).

Unlike the situation in 1993, the organizations Women of Russia and PRES, which have basically supported the government, did not pass the 5 percent barrier.

### Faith in "Market" Gone Up in Smoke

The defeat suffered by Gaidar's DVR was particularly crushing. After having gained 15.4 percent of the party-list votes in 1993, it attracted only 4.4 percent in the 1995 elections. Confidence in the miracle-working powers of

the free market has dissipated like smoke. Even Yabloko, which made a show of opposition to the government, managed only to keep its losses to a minimum, recording 7.3 percent compared with 7.8 percent in 1993.

Third, not a single centrist party (whether left-centrist in the style of the social democrats, the Ivan Rybkin bloc, and "Power to the People," or right-centrist like the KRO) has managed to get past the 5 percent barrier. This means that for the Russian voter the question is not one of choosing between economic tactics for market reform. The question is one of overall socio-economic strategy. Once again, the question on the agenda is that of where Russia should be heading.

A very significant part of the population is certain that the government is taking Russia in the wrong direction, and that mere adjustments to the reform process are no longer sufficient. In order to be successful, the Russian social democrats need to study the example of Salvador Allende, not of Mitterand.

Fourth, the failure of the LDPR, KRO, and a series of smaller blocs using nationalist slogans has shown that the concept of great-power chauvinism, at least in itself, is not now attracting significant sympathy from voters. Nor was there significant support for those blocs (the same ones plus a number of small formations of a straightforward right-wing character) whose leaders called for the use of authoritarian political methods. This is a very encouraging sign.

### Effect on "the Left"

The effect of the elections on the disposition of forces within the left is a particularly complex question. All of the relatively small — or minuscule — left and left-centrist groups failed to surmount the 5 percent barrier, though three of them, the Agrarian Party, Svyatoslav Fyodorov's Party of Workers Self-Management, and the bloc "Communists — Toiling Russia for the Soviet Union," each received more than 4 percent of the vote. It is clear that a united left bloc could have received from 45 to 50 percent of the vote.

The elections confirmed the undoubted fact that the KPRF overshadows all the other left parties and groups taken together. Orthodox Communists and supporters of various versions of democratic socialism have only a very weak influence on the masses. At the same time, supporters of "small" orthodox Communist and left parties and groups outside the KPRF — people who in many cases did not vote because "their" (democratic socialist) party was not running — could have contributed some 5 to 7 percent. Together with the social democrats, this might well have provided the vital 10 to 12 percent of additional votes which the KPRF needed for victory [i.e., a Duma majority].

### 3. Prospects for Political Struggle in Russia

What are the prospects for political struggle in Russia? Above all, analysts are now thinking about the possible course of the presidential election campaign, and the likely results.

The present scenarios are very obscure. It is not known whether Yeltsin, after the failure of the bloc led by the "Yeltsinite" Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, will decide to hold these elections. If not, will the opposition and the elites that are dissatisfied with Yeltsin have enough strength to force the elections to be held despite the resistance of the "party of power"? For the moment, it seems very likely that the presidential elections will go ahead. There are too many clans anxious to force the present minority away from the presidential feeding trough, and most importantly, the majority of working people reject the current course. In addition, the presidential team is riven by contradictions, and Yeltsin himself is not in the best of shape.

In the event that a more or less democratic model is employed for the presidential elections (at least while the election process is under way), the opportunity will arise for leftists, social democrats, and the more moderate social-chauvinist forces (from Toiling Russia through the democratic left to the KPRF as the main force of the coalition, and beyond to the Agrarians, various social democrats, and "pink" chauvinists of the type of Nikolai Ryzhkov's bloc, etc.) to establish a powerful coalition. This will be possible if there is good organization, if various disagreements are overcome, and if compromises are reached between the clans supporting the political groups. On the path to this objective there will be numerous obstacles, both the "old" ones that prevented such a coalition from being formed and achieving victory in the parliamentary elections, and also new ones linked to pressure exerted on the KPRF by the authorities and the centrists. Both these forces will try to "buy" the leaders of the KPRF with official positions and with the promise of compromises. It can only be hoped that this effort is not successful.

For the present, it is unclear around whom the rightists will rally, or whether they will unite their forces at all. In any case, this process will probably exclude Zhirinovskiy, who at least in the first round will probably make his own effort to finish ahead of the pack. The ferment and vacillation in the right-wing camp, and the lack of an obvious favorite, are among the symptoms of the overall crisis of right-wing politics in the past few years. Nevertheless, the "party of power," as in the past, concentrates in its hands the support of the bulk of corporative and speculative capital, of officialdom, of the "middle class" (in Russia this consists of employees of commercial firms, of the majority of the "elite" intelligentsia, and of workers in some privileged sectors) and of a minority (though a substantial one) of workers.

As a result the possibility is not excluded that in the presidential elections a more or less even balance will arise between right and left, and that Zhirinovskiy with his 10 percent will play the role of arbiter. If this is to be prevented, we repeat, a democratically organized left-centrist coalition is necessary.

Working toward this goal is the main task of leftists today. □

# A Comment on the Article by Buzgalin and Kolganov

by George Saunders

*This comment applies to the article by Aleksandr Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov reprinted here from a December 23 posting on the "labr.cis" conference of the Institute for Global Communications, which gave "austgreen" (the Australian Green Left Weekly?) as its source. The article has been edited slightly for reasons of style and in some cases to clarify content. Also, a table on election results has been omitted, and some subheads have been added. Although a translator's note appears in the text, the translator of the article (possibly Renfrey Clarke) was not identified.*

We think readers will find the accompanying article by Aleksandr Buzgalin and Andrei Kolganov of interest for two reasons. One, it contains much first-hand information on the current situation in Russia not readily available elsewhere in English (including socio-economic analysis of "corporate clan" formations that have arisen in Russia; similar discussion by a State Department author in a Russian newspaper in December caused a big stir and strained relations between the U.S. and Russian governments).

Two, the article by Buzgalin and Kolganov illustrates the confused thinking all too prevalent among some socialists, the tendency to lump together all sorts of disparate groups (including extreme Russian chauvinists and Stalinists) under the rubric "left."

I would question whether it is realistic to regard as the "main task of leftists today" to work toward the formation of a "democratically organized 'left-centrist' coalition." It is not clear to me what the "centrist" part of that coalition would be, and whether such a coalition might not end up subordinating advocates of socialist democracy to advocates of "moderate" capitalist restoration, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

I would argue that the main goal genuine socialists need to work toward is organizing a united front of working class groups and/or a party of the working class, independent of employers and owners, to oppose capitalist restoration in general and privatization in particular, to fight for public ownership of the major means of production under democratic control by the workers, to speak out for workers' interests in all areas and act as a "tribune of the people" defending all those in need, all who suffer oppression. That kind of organization needs to be built, or work toward that end needs to be done, regardless of the outcome of the presidential elections next year in Russia (or in America, for that matter). Without that kind of organization, nothing lasting can be built, in my opinion, nothing that will move society toward replacing the capitalist private profit system with a more humane and rational system run by the associated producers — that is, socialism.

The special difficulties encountered in Russia today by those trying to achieve a labor party based on the unions, or any kind of independent political representation for working class inter-

ests, are well described in recent articles posted by Boris Kagarlitsky, Renfrey Clarke ("Choices for Workers in the Russian Elections"), and Igor Gotlib on the "labr.cis" conference of the Institute for Global Communications network.

## What Is the "Communist Party of the Russian Federation"?

This question is partially answered by the following excerpts from an article written from Moscow in October by Renfrey Clarke for the *Australian Green Left Weekly*.

While pro-government ideologues in Russia are dismayed by the thought of a Communist-dominated Duma (parliament), they are not panicking. There is even an inclination among right-wing analysts to view KPRF hegemony over an expanded opposition as the least unsatisfactory of the outcomes likely to emerge from the political struggles of the next few months.

This view becomes less puzzling when the nature of the KPRF leaders is taken into account. With a claimed membership of 600,000 and cells in almost every town and village of Russia, the KPRF includes large numbers of people involved directly in production and anxious to defend workers' rights and interests. The party leadership responds to pressures from these layers with pronouncements reflecting various long-time positions of Russian Marxism.

For example, KPRF leader Gennady Zyuganov declared in September at a meeting in the city of Irkutsk: "I am absolutely convinced that the public, collective form of property is the most effective in Russia." The party's electoral program includes calls for halting the privatization of industry; for state price controls on basic goods to be reimposed; for guaranteed jobs and housing; and for restoring the constitutional right to free health care and education.

It is curious, however, to observe how little faith Zyuganov and other KPRF leaders have that championing demands like these is the way to win votes. Strangely for "Communists," the KPRF leaders assume that the key to increasing their electoral impact lies not in educating, mobilizing, and inspiring workers — who make up the great majority of Russia's voting population — but in trying to annex political territory traditionally considered far to the right of the labor movement.

During July, the Moscow daily *Izvestia* remarked that Zyuganov in his speeches was making "endless references to pravoslavie [Russian religious orthodoxy] and national might." Political scientist Sergei Markov of the U.S.-funded Carnegie Center noted during August: "...the KPRF, and especially...Zyuganov, can

only be considered left-wing in a very conditional sense, because most of the party's postulates and programmatic priorities are traditionally right-wing rather than leftist."

Of course, under Stalin and his successors official Soviet ideology also stressed "military-patriotic" values and orthodoxy (Stalinist orthodoxy, that is — which was not so different from the Byzantine and obscurantist dogmas and practices of official Russian Orthodoxy).

## KPRF Alliance with Lebed?

Renfrey Clarke continued with a question about the kind of alliances the KPRF is seeking:

When Zyuganov has not been championing the values of patriarchalist absolutism, he has devoted himself to seeking political alliances of a type that would inevitably require the sacrifice of the pro-worker elements in the KPRF's program. The party's projections include a call for the formation of a "government of national salvation" in which the Congress of Russian Communities (Russian initials, KRO) would clearly be a major participant. The KRO's central organizational figure, Yuri Skokov, headed Yeltsin's powerful Security Council during much of the initial phase of "reform," and the group's most salable leader, the charismatic General Alexander Lebed, at one point mortified his sympathizers by expressing admiration for former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

It may make sense at times, under special circumstances, for leftists in the Russian Duma to form temporary blocs with right-wing opponents of the government. However, to pretend that people like Skokov and Lebed are in themselves anything but repugnant can only aid the decay and demobilization of the working-class political forces that are central to the left's survival.

It should be noted that in late December, after the Duma elections, General Lebed, this notorious "man on a white horse" (see the discussion of him in last month's *BIDOM*, "No Choice for Working Class Voters in Russia" by Alexei Gusev), announced his candidacy for the presidential elections next June and proposed that the KPRF should support him! A measure of the character of the KPRF leaders is that they were considering this offer from a man who aspires to follow, if not the Pinochet model, perhaps the more "native" way of Kornilov, in restoring capitalism to Russia. Any political organization that genuinely spoke for the working class would have rejected such an offer out of hand. □

# The Rich Really Are Different (How the Rulers Rule and How They Live)

by David Jones

## SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM LIFE

I grew up in a small town located on a large lake a few miles north of St. Paul, Minnesota. F. Scott Fitzgerald called it Black Bear Lake in a story he wrote in 1922, "Winter Dreams."

The lake and the surrounding property had been developed, beginning in the 19th century, as a summer resort area. The south side of the lake, where I lived, had originally been tiny cottages for those of the St. Paul middle and working classes who had accumulated enough above subsistence to afford a modest summer retreat. Over time many of the cottages had been winterized, and became year-round homes. Our next door neighbors didn't get indoor plumbing until the early 1950s. My father, who was a printer, commuted to his St. Paul job on the streetcar until National City Lines came in after the Korean war and tore up the tracks.

Across the lake, on the north side, the merchants and capitalists of St. Paul had built opulent summer homes; imposing mansions, really, many located on an island and peninsula accessible only by private roads. We could get glimpses of the houses from the beach on our side, which was really just a county road dead-ending at the water, the only public access on the entire lake. We went to the beach on the Fourth of July to watch the fireworks launched from the Yacht Club across the lake.

### "The Houses of the Rich Loomed Up"

Occasionally, when I was over in the village business area on the east side of the lake, I would see a rich person, making some purchase. They did look different, and they dressed differently. Not ostentatiously — but in what I later learned were tennis and sailing clothes — white, khaki, and other neutral-colored cotton cloth, for the most part. They had nice, even, unostentatious tans. They didn't look rich to me at the time, just different. Only later I learned that that was what the rich usually looked like.

Once, when we were thirteen or fourteen, a friend and I rode our bikes over the bridge, which usually had a guard on it, and onto the private road into the island, Fitzgerald's "Sherry Island" in "Winter Dreams." It was like going back in time, I later decided — like that movie where Christopher Reeve goes to the Victorian-era resort hotel on Mackinac Island in Lake Michigan and travels back in time to around 1914. The island, as we had deduced from looking at it from the other side of the lake, was full of huge houses, tennis courts, canopies of large shade trees: very peaceful and quiet. "The houses of the rich loomed up," Fitzgerald said, "somnolent, gorgeous...strong walls...breadth and beam and pomp." He was right. We were discovered by one of the guards, patrolling in his truck. We had to load our bikes in the back of the truck and were escorted off the island, and told not to come back.

Still, I never thought very much about all this. It was only later, when I became an active socialist, that I realized this was *prima facie* evidence of the existence of the ruling class. I knew that a few of the wealthy families lived year-round in their lake homes, but none of their children ever went to our public high school. They went, as I learned, to elite schools like Phillips-Exeter,

Groton, and Choate, if they were male: to "the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers," Fitzgerald said, and then on to Yale and Harvard.

### "Just Waiting to Die"

"The rich," Fitzgerald said, "are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early... They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves... They are different." (See Fitzgerald's 1926 story "The Rich Boy.") When Fitzgerald made his observation about the rich being different, Ernest Hemingway is supposed to have replied, "Yes, they have more money." They have more money, and over generations, they become different. One outstanding characteristic, when you start to notice it, is that they live longer, and, as far as can be discerned at a distance, better.

This first occurred to me on reading in the newspaper about a stockbroker, whose name I have forgotten, obviously of inherited wealth, who died at age 98 after putting in a day at the office and completing a game of tennis. This was not like the people I knew. My brother and I worked in a downtown Minneapolis liquor store for a time, making deliveries. Most of the customers were workers living on pensions or disability payments in nearby rooming houses. My brother went up one time, as he did a couple of times a week, to deliver a bottle to a retired laborer named Swanson. He was sitting in his third floor walkup, two rooms, in stifling heat, with a small fan blowing. "What are you doing, Swanny?" my brother asked. "Just waiting to die, son." It was said matter-of-factly, and of course it was true. No tennis for him.

## 1. EDGAR SCOTT (1899–1995)

The *New York Times* recently reported the death, at age 96, of Edgar Scott, whom the *Times* identified as a "prominent Philadelphia banker and Main Line socialite." (*New York Times*, May 30, 1995.)

Among Scott's attributes and accomplishments were listed his former governorship of the New York and Philadelphia-Baltimore Stock Exchanges, where his career began in 1928 when he purchased, for \$300,000, a seat on the New York Exchange, and his creation in 1929, along with his father-in-law, of a prominent and still extant Philadelphia investment firm, Janney Montgomery Scott. He was also past president of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and in his youth dabbled in play writing and journalism before buckling down to the investment business. Film buffs might find of interest the fact that Ardrossan, the family farm on which Scott died, was the setting for the play "Philadelphia Story," written by Scott's friend and Harvard classmate Phillip Barry. Scott's wife of 70 years, Helen Hope Montgomery, was reputedly the inspiration for Tracy Lord, the character portrayed in the play and the 1940 Academy Award-winning film by Katharine Hepburn. (Hepburn herself is related through her mother to the wealthy Houghton family, owners of Corning Glass Works.)

Perhaps not surprisingly, considering the social background of the author, it has been said that

## Three Case Studies of the Ruling Rich

Frank Lovell writes in "The Capitalist Crisis of the 1990s" (*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, July-August 1995):

Back in 1967 William Domhoff, a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz, wrote a book titled *Who Rules America?* It is a very good book, explaining that there is a ruling class in this country consisting of a few very rich families and their retainers, who own industry and banking and control major channels of mass information and levers of popular government. In some respects this is a sequel to Ferdinand Lundberg's *America's Sixty Families*, more popularly presented.

It's too bad radicals haven't made better use of Domhoff's book (as pre-World War II radicals did the Lundberg book) to argue convincingly that an established ruling class lives and breathes (not always in this country, but somewhere in their private estates around the world) and controls the politics of this country. It's all right to say that the employing class runs the country and that there is no essential difference between the Democratic and Republican parties, but it is better to be able to argue convincingly with facts on hand that this is the case and has been for generations.

It is in this spirit that the accompanying article has been researched and written. The truth, as we know, is concrete. The general category "ruling class" is composed of living, breathing human beings. They have names. They have faces. Although not always well advertised, they have, as we see in this article, homes. Plural.

### The Real Rulers

Who, and where, is the enemy? It is not possible to build a successful movement for

the liberation of the working people, of the majority, without knowing this. The rich, with their continuity and experience extending over generations and centuries, are highly attuned to this truth, and constantly seek to deny and obscure the existence of themselves as a distinct ruling class. A movement of the oppressed that does not know the identity of its enemy, of its oppressor, will stumble, falter, and turn in upon itself.

In this country there is a well-founded suspicion on the part of the great majority that the benefits and privileges of society are unevenly, and unfairly distributed. But who are the beneficiaries? That is not so clear. There are many demagogues who seek to offer an answer. The Arabs? The Jews? African Americans receiving unearned benefits from affirmative action? Highly paid trade unionists? Farmers on subsidies? Professional ballplayers?

The rich used to live in the same cities as the rest of us. A friend of mine who was a child in the 1940s remembers his father taking him down Summit Avenue in St. Paul and showing him the mansions of the Hills, the Weyerhaeusers, and others. "This is where the swells live," his father explained. But who are the rich and famous today? Sports figures, entertainers, the "celebrities," as Gore Vidal says.

The real rulers, a thousand times more conscious of the immense potential power of the majority than the working class is, exercise great discretion. They do not, as the social historian Stephen Birmingham says, "talk about the upper class, or any other class, for that matter" (*America's Secret Aristocracy*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1987).

"In a constitutionally classless society where an upper class has managed to emerge anyway," Birmingham says, "...if one were to go about boasting about being upper class, who knows what sort of mob from below might rise up and challenge the precious barricades?"

This article focuses on three authentic, hereditary members of the U.S. ruling class who died recently and whose obituaries appeared in the *New York Times*. All lived well into their nineties and were healthy, active, and free of most of the infirmities of old age until just before their deaths. Although the three came from wealthy families well known in their respective cities of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, none had any especially prominent national reputation.

While there are many useful books, some cited in this article, that provide extensive information on the lives, fortunes, and histories of the ruling class, this subject cannot be simply left to historians and journalists. Marx himself devoted considerable space in *Capital* to recounting, with great indignation and repugnance, the specific methods through which the Duchess of Sutherland dispossessed the inhabitants of her estates and enriched herself at their expense.

It is probably the case that most readers of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* do not need to be convinced of the existence of a hereditary ruling class in this country. But for this knowledge to become a factor in political and social struggle, others must be convinced, not by reiteration of mere assertions, but, as Frank Lovell says, "with facts on hand." What I have attempted here is to provide an example of how this can be done.

one of the morals of the piece, and actually its chief theme, is a defense of just the sort of rather unambitious, taken-for-granted gentryism on which Philadelphia does pride itself.

The heroine, a haughty heiress...winds up by marrying again her first husband, a rather worthless but extremely amiable sportsman, whom she divorced precisely because of his lack of ambition, instead of the stuffy but ambitious rags-to-riches Horatio Alger coal millionaire to whom she is engaged, or the unworldly reporter... The play is, in other words, despite its humorous and graceful persiflage, a fairly strong plea in terms of character, for the virtues of the Arrivé, as opposed to the Arriviste. [Nathaniel Burt, *Perennial Philadelphians*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1963.]

Scott does not seem to have accumulated the extra \$300,000 which he forked over at age 29 for a Stock Exchange seat through the device of thriftily setting aside each week a modest sum garnered from the fruits of honest toil, as is often recommended to the lower orders as the pathway to success. It seems more probable that he was then among those whom the *Times* said were "partying, dining and perhaps enjoying a late-night dip in the pool at the 'big house' at Ardrossan," along with Main Line society's other gilded youth, as so zestfully portrayed in "The Philadelphia Story." Perhaps the characters depicted in "The Philadelphia Story" were more witty and attractive than the people on whose lives the play was modeled, but still, it appears, to say the least, that Scott and his wife, who died on January 9 at age 90, had longer, healthier, and more secure lives than the average person. As

Fitzgerald, who lived on the periphery of this class and recorded some of its social life in fictional form, said, "They are different from you and me."

### A Wedding Present

The magazine *Architectural Digest* ran an article, "A Philadelphia Story," about Ardrossan Farms, the Scott's country estate, in its June 1989 issue, complete with interviews with the happy Scotts. The estate contains one of the world's largest and finest herds of Ayrshire cattle, descended from stock that Mrs. Scott's father, Col. Robert Montgomery, brought from Ardrossan, in Ayrshire County, Scotland. The Scotts' home is a sprawling fieldstone farmhouse furnished with English and American antiques inherited from their families and other amenities. "After a horseback ride on a cold winter's day, we are grateful for the warmth from the large walk-in fireplace in the living room," Hope Scott says.

The house is filled with paintings by Degas, Manet, Corot, and Mary Cassat bought on trips to Paris by Edgar Scott's grandmother. The 750-acre farm and dairy, established in 1720, is only one of the Scott's homes. (During a tour of the house, Mrs. Scott points with pride to a Millington-Drake painting of another one of their favorite homes, "Glitter Bay," a Palladian beach house in the Barbados, hanging next to an original Toulouse-Lautrec print.) But the Scott's are, naturally, quite fond of Ardrossan — after all, it was a wedding present from Col. Montgomery in 1923.

## Grandfather Scott, the 1877 Strike, and the End of Reconstruction

Scott was the grandson of Thomas Scott, the former president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose arbitrary wage cut of 10 percent, on top of several previous cuts imposed on the railroad's workers, fueled the great 1877 railroad strike, still the greatest labor insurrection in U.S. history. Tom Scott engineered the political deal that put Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in the White House instead of Samuel Tilden, who actually received more popular votes in the 1876 election. The deal was contingent on the support of Southern Democrats, in exchange for an end to Reconstruction, and the reestablishment of absolute white rule in the South. In July of 1877 President Hayes pulled out the federal troops on occupation duty in the South and used them to crush the railroad strike.

Underwriting the carefree frolics of "Philadelphia Story" and its real life models were great fortunes acquired through great social crimes: oppression, violence, and betrayal. It is interesting that we find the ruling class depicted in the midst of the great social struggles of the 1930s as a harmless group of madcap millionaires. Up to that time, the rich flaunted their wealth in conspicuous excess, with newspaper "society pages" devoted to their frivolities and social functions. Apparently the stunning labor upsurge of the '30s induced them to prudently lower their profile, and essentially they have not been heard from since.

## Where Have All the "Nobles" Gone?

The author Gore Vidal, a delinquent member of the upper class who often tells tales out of school about them, writes that

since the Depression, the owners of the Great Republic prefer not to be known to the public at large. Celebrities...fill the newspapers, while the great personages are seldom, if ever, mentioned; they are also rarely to be seen in those places where the public and the celebrities go to mingle.

"Where," I asked the oldest of my waiter-acquaintances at the Plaza (we've known each other for forty years) "have the nobles gone?" He looked sad. "I'm told they have their own islands now. Things," he was vague, "like that." [Gore Vidal, "Dawn Powell, the American Writer," *New York Review of Books*, November 5, 1987.]

As Vidal says, for the most part they have dropped from sight, a largely invisible ruling class, their existence detectable only by determined students of social power, and those few of the lowborn who happen to come in direct contact with them.

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## 2. GOODHUE LIVINGSTON (1897-1994)

"Goodhue Livingston, Jr., an independent investor and a former member of the New York City Planning Commission, died on Sunday at his home in Wainscott, Long Island. He was 97 and was active until shortly before his death" (reported by the *New York Times*, August 31, 1994).

Livingston was a member of the old and wealthy Livingston family of New York state, which includes: Phillip Livingston, a signer of the Declaration of Independence; John Jay, the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, who married into the Livingston family; and the founding father, Robert Livingston, described by the *Times* as "immigrating to New York in 1673 and becoming a crucial advisor to the colony's governors."

## Roots: 17th-Century Piracy and Primitive Accumulation

A book issued by the socialist publisher Charles Kerr in 1912 says,

Robert Livingston curried favor with one official after another, changing his politics when ever his self-interest demanded it, and held lucrative official posts for half a century, generally filling several offices at the same time...He...became an army contractor and the saying that was current of him was that he made a fortune "by pinching the bellies of the soldiers."

Livingston was reported to have been in collusion with the sea pirate Captain Kidd and loaned money at ten percent.

By grace of the royal governors, and by means of his own practices, Livingston, before his death...had managed to become the lord of a manorial estate sixteen miles long and twenty-four miles wide. On this estate he built flour and saw mills, a bakery and a brewery, and exercised feudal jurisdiction. [Gustavus Myers, *History of the Supreme Court*, Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1912, pp. 33-34.]

In 1787, the New York Legislature had passed an act giving John Fitch the sole right of navigating craft propelled by steam in the waters of New York.

Ten years later, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston [grandson of Robert the First — D.J.] came forward with the claim that he was the possessor of a mode of propelling boats by steam. Starting with the remarkable assumption that Fitch was dead, although there was no legal proof to that effect, the New York Legislature, on March 27, 1798, passed an act repealing the exclusive powers given to Fitch and confirming similar powers, for a term of twenty years, on Robert R. Livingston. [Myers, *History of the Supreme Court*, p. 212.]

The term of the monopoly was later extended further, "forbidding all persons to navigate any steamboat or vessel without securing a special license from the firm of Livingston and (Robert) Fulton." In 1806, Robert Fulton had married Harriet Livingston, a niece of Chancellor Livingston. "Their descendants are among the richest families of New York," Myers said (p. 214).

## The Hudson — "Livingston Valley"

None of the foregoing information was discussed in the *Times* obituary.

Thirty Livingston houses still stand on the east bank of the Hudson River, or, as some called it, "Livingston Valley." Seven are still occupied by direct descendants of the original builders. "Clermont," the great estate which is the historic center of the clan, was sold to New York state in 1962 as an "historic site," but the Livingstons still hold family reunions there. (See Clare Brandt, *The Livingstons, An American Aristocracy*, New York: Doubleday, 1986.)

In the old days, the Livingston family forcibly collected rents from their tenants, or, failing that, burned them out and drove off their cattle. After a rent strike in 1751, tenant Robert Nobles wrote: "Our houses have been torn down around our Ears, burnt before our Eyes, our Fences torn down, our Corn Fields laid waste."

"Bloodshed and death were common in these disputes...and the borderland township of Ancram was said until recently to be haunted by ghosts called the Ancram screechers" ("The Iron, the Charcoal, the Woods," *New Yorker*, August 10, 1963). Ancram was a small community of cottages housing workers at Phillip Livingston's iron forge, constructed in 1740. The tenants were "worse than northern savages," Livingston wrote. "Our people are hoggish and brutish. They must be humbled." (Brandt, *The Livingstons...*, p. 81.)

## An "Independent Investor"

Goodhue Livingston led a relatively low-profile public life as an apparently secondary New York City official for 22 years. He

served as executive secretary to Mayor Fiorello La Guardia in 1944 and 1945, and as a member of the New York Planning Commission from 1945 to 1960. Most people with these modest accomplishments don't rate a major *New York Times* obituary. What was it that distinguished Goodhue Livingston from the other toilers in the vast city bureaucracy?

Livingston was, the *Times* says, an "independent investor." So what? Weren't your Uncle Bill and Aunt Tillie, who had 25 shares of AT&T, "independent investors"? They didn't get into the *Times*. Curiously, considering that he is described before anything else as an "independent investor," there is no description of what constituted Livingston's activities as an "investor," or what he invested in. As is perhaps evident, this is a code word. An "independent" investor has no need to accumulate money with which to invest (i.e., *work*, even as a big shot corporate or banking executive), because it is already there — that is, he is a beneficiary of inherited wealth.

An "investor," by the implicit exclusion of any other remunerative activity, is someone who receives his or her primary income, not from any individual pursuit, but from dividends generated by great wealth — what the Internal Revenue Service appropriately calls "unearned income." (In reading these items over the years, I have never seen a woman of inherited wealth described as an "investor." She is usually identified as a "philanthropist." Brooke Astor, who has personally controlled a major part of the great Astor fortune since 1959, was described on her 90th birthday as a "doyenne of philanthropy" by the *New York Times* of March 6, 1992.)

The discreet formulation, "independent investor," therefore signals the fact that Goodhue Livingston was one of the "nobles," in Gore Vidal's phrase: part of the "American Aristocracy," the *ruling class*. Livingston is in the *Times*, not because of what he accomplished, which doesn't, at least on the surface, appear to be very much, but because *The Times* knows he was a significant and politically active member of the ruling class, and a representative of the interests of a weighty sector of this class — the large and extended Livingston family.

Although this class tries to mask its existence from the average citizen, there must be someplace where its significance is publicly recorded, even if obliquely, as it is here. Livingston's father, Goodhue Livingston, Sr., on his death in 1951 in Southampton, Long Island, was identified by the *New York Times* simply as an "architect," albeit one descended from the great Livingston family. Among his contributions to society was the design of the Riker's Island prison in New York City.

The *Times* in fact recognized that Goodhue, Jr., was a person of some status, "one of the nobles," as early as 1919, when it reported on Livingston's wedding, at age 22, describing him, as though he were already a significant public figure, as a "New York banker."

### Knickerbocker Aristocracy

Livingston's second marriage, in 1932, at the "summer estate" of his bride's family, was given the full treatment by the *Times*, although this time he was not described as a "banker" but simply as "a member of an old and socially prominent family." The guest list at the wedding was a cross section of the New York Knickerbocker aristocracy: Stuyvesants, Morrisises, Roosevelts, Schermerhorns, Voorheeses, and others. Until almost up to the Civil War, many of these families had held the tenants on their great manorial estates in feudal bondage, as described above in the case of the Livingstons.

In 1839 the tenants on the Van Rensselaer, Livingston, and other estates rose in revolt. Only after the great Anti-Renter struggles of the 1840s "threw the whole state into a vortex of radical discussion" (Myers, p. 99), calling into question the Livingstons' title to their estate, did the New York state legislature prohibit feudal tenures.

### Suction and Strong Air

Perhaps today these aristocrats indeed "have their own islands," but only a few years ago they didn't vacation too far from the base of their fortunes. Southampton, one of the great ruling class resorts, less than 100 miles from New York City geographically, but a million miles away socially, was chronicled by the author Cleveland Amory, another ruling class tattletale, in the book *The Great Resorts* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1948).

At Southampton, today in season perhaps the most crowded of all the old time resorts, Mrs. Goodhue Livingston [Sr.] put the matter of numbers [of newcomers] in strong terms. "We are going down, down, down," she said. "Why, I don't even use the word *nouveau riche* any more." The last of Southampton's so-called "Dreadnoughts" — a group of ladies who received that name because they were, according to oldtimers, the mistresses of the social seas — Mrs. Livingston had summered at Southampton since 1887. In 1941, for the first time, she had let all her footmen go.

Mrs. Livingston recognized moderation. Indignant that Southampton should be lumped together with a more pretentious resort like Newport, simply because some of the "Grande dames" like Mrs. Henry F. du Pont still had footmen, Mrs. Livingston explained, "Southampton has footmen, but we've never had footmen in knee breeches."

But even if claims of simplicity were hard to sustain, Amory says, "resorters always maintained that their retreats were, if not simple, at least healthy." Today this point of pride is still challengingly echoed. "Southampton has the strongest air in the world," Mrs. Livingston used to say. "It's the suction, you know. You feel it the minute you leave Westhampton."

### Fending Off the Citizens

What was Goodhue Livingston doing as Mayor La Guardia's secretary in 1944–45? Not taking shorthand, presumably. As La Guardia's executive secretary, the *Times* reported in an admiring biography on the occasion of his retirement from public office in 1961, Livingston "had to fend off many citizens who wanted to tell La Guardia how to run the city" (*New York Times*, January 1, 1961). In other words, this hereditary aristocrat was the gatekeeper to "the people's mayor."

The *New York Times*'s flip remark is typical of how bourgeois journalism trivializes and deflects the reality of social struggle, and social control. How fortunate that a stable and responsible person of wealth and education was on hand to protect the mayor from interfering busybodies and obnoxious ranters from the city parks!

There is not, of course, so much as a hint that there could be any question about the propriety of Goodhue Livingston's being the arbiter of access to the mayor — or of how he got to be in that position. Livingston of course was never elected to any public office and never had to worry a day in his life about whether he or his family would have adequate housing, medical care, or education, not to mention vacations — he clearly didn't need a job. Obviously, *some* of the citizens who wanted to tell La Guardia how to run the city had more access to "the people's mayor" than others.

It is self-evident that Livingston was in the front ranks of those with such access, and it is reasonable to assume that his views on running the city of New York were accorded due weight by La Guardia. After all, one of Livingston's ancestors, Edward Livingston, had been mayor of New York at the beginning of the 19th century, in 1801.

### Branch Office: Livingstons in Louisiana

Edward Livingston, who was simultaneously holding the office of federal district attorney in New York, was described by a contem-

porary, John Randolph of Virginia, as “a man of many abilities, but utterly corrupt. He shines and stinks like a rotten mackerel by moonlight.” Livingston fled New York for Louisiana in 1803, owing nearly \$100,000 to the federal government, including a \$50,000 embezzlement from the attorney’s office, which family history blames on Livingston’s clerk. On arriving in Louisiana, Livingston worked with private landowners in seizing title to a large section of the New Orleans riverfront known as the Batture. Protesting citizens were dispersed by federal troops. The land helped form the basis for another branch of the Livingston family fortunes.

Edward Livingston later represented the state of Louisiana in the House of Representatives and the Senate, was appointed secretary of state under Andrew Jackson, and later minister to France, where he exacted reparations for American property losses during the French revolution.

The current chairman of the House Appropriations Committee is Robert Linlithgow Livingston, Jr., of Louisiana, who, as a leader of the House Republican Caucus, presided over the recent shutdown of the federal government. Linlithgow is the ancestral estate of the Livingstons in Scotland.

## Secretaries and Guardians

It is probably the case that Goodhue Livingston’s presence in La Guardia’s office was intended to be an assurance and guarantee to the ruling class that there was nothing to be feared from the reformist La Guardia administration, elected to a third four-year term in 1941 with the support of the Communist Party and the popular-frontist American Labor Party. La Guardia’s former law partner, in fact, was Vito Marcantonio, congressman from Harlem, and a CP fellow-traveler. The CP itself had several members on the City Council during this period and probably had some 50,000 members in New York City alone in 1945. The rulers kept a close eye on the La Guardia administration — David Rockefeller himself served as La Guardia’s “secretary” in 1940, shortly after publishing, at age 25, his doctoral dissertation, *Unused Resources and Economic Waste*.

The suggestion is often made that members of the social elite who participate modestly in politics and government in the manner of Goodhue Livingston are simply the more constructive members of their class, desiring to give back to society through selfless public service some of the benefits to which they are heir. This is part of the seamless and universal ideological indoctrination which teaches that while there are certainly some members of society who are better off than others (due to the industry and perseverance of their worthy ancestors), there is no such thing as a “ruling class” in our democratic country.

But this only appears plausible if each case is considered in isolation from all the others, and reduced to a question of individual preference. The reality is that members of the ruling class are salted throughout government, as they are in all other dominant social institutions: corporate, financial, educational, media, “philanthropic,” political, and so on. They normally don’t seek the top positions — that only attracts unwanted attention to themselves. Their influence is derived, not from some formal position, but from the fact that they are, indeed, the rulers.

## Who Rules America?

William Domhoff, in *Who Rules America?* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1967), explains this phenomenon in the corporate world in the following way:

When Gulf [Oil] executives speak reverently of “the board,” they are normally referring to a single man, diffident Richard King Mellon, senior member of one of the world’s richest families. The

only Mellon on Gulf’s board, Dick Mellon looks after his family’s \$2 billion (in 1964), 32 per cent interest in Gulf — though he rarely concerns himself with its day-to-day operations. [*Who Rules America*, p. 49.]

Although there is a virtual academic industry devoted to establishing that there is no such thing as a ruling class in the U.S., over the years a number of social analysts, some radicals and some not, have demonstrated empirically, using information in the public domain, that there is, as Domhoff says, “a social upper class which owns a disproportionate amount of the country’s wealth, receives a disproportionate amount of the country’s yearly income and contributes a disproportionate number of members to positions of leadership.” [*Who Rules America*, p. 9.]

Domhoff’s book, in fact, is subdivided into chapters describing successively how this social upper class dominates the corporate economy, public opinion, the federal government, the military, the CIA, the FBI, and state and local governments. Domhoff builds on and updates earlier books such as Gustavus Myers’s *History of Great American Fortunes*; Ferdinand Lundberg’s *America’s Sixty Families and The Rich and The Super Rich*; E. Digby Baltzell’s *An American Business Aristocracy*, and others, demonstrating that there is a socially, financially, and politically cohesive upper class.

While the point probably does not require a vigorous defense in this magazine, it is logically impossible to reach any other conclusion, based on the cumulative evidence, than that the various upper class individuals, such as Goodhue Livingston, occupying outposts beyond the perimeters of their great estates (or perhaps islands now, as Vidal’s waiter suggested), are part of the overall administration of society by a ruling class. Such individuals are in their posts to guard and preserve, not only the general interests of the class, but the specific interests of the great families and their fortunes.

It would be an underestimation of Goodhue Livingston’s position in La Guardia’s office to take it merely as an unfair advantage accorded a wealthy individual. The ruling class does not require parliamentary majorities (or even formal positions) on civic bodies in order to rule, any more than the Mellons needed a majority on the board of directors to control Gulf Oil. The Mellons owned 32 percent of the stock of Gulf outright, enough to retain absolute control. Richard Mellon’s presence on the board was simply a direct personification of this control. What percentage of New York City did the Livingstons “own”? Such an investigation is beyond the scope of this article, but Domhoff and others describe in detail the formal and informal mechanisms by which the ruling class itself allocates such proportions of influence among its own ranks.

## Taken to the Mountaintop

Those of plebeian origin who attain high positions in government and politics do not get there unless they adjust gracefully to these realities. There is an interesting example of this in *The Rockefellers: An American Business Dynasty* by Peter Collier and David Horowitz. Arthur Goldberg, who had been chief counsel for the CIO in the 1950s, and secretary of labor in the Kennedy cabinet, ran for governor of New York in 1970 against Nelson Rockefeller. Goldberg, who had resigned not long before from his position as a Supreme Court justice, had the endorsement of the Democratic Party. Presumably he had some experience with the realities of power. But the authors quote one of Goldberg’s campaign staff as saying:

I frankly think the campaign was over when Arthur was invited up to Pocantico (the six-square mile estate in upstate New York where the Rockefeller family mansions are located) late in the primary. The note [of invitation] came after it was pretty clear he was going to be the Democratic nominee. It was cordial and handwritten, and Arthur accepted. He came back from the meeting terribly shaken.



It was not, as some of us assumed at first, because of threats or anything like that, but just because for the first time in his political life he had seen what *real* power was, what it could buy, how it lived. Really, I don't think he was ever the same afterwards. [*The Rockefellers*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1976, p. 461.]

Rockefeller was endorsed by, among others, the New York State AFL-CIO, and won easily.

### Livingston, Moses, and the New York Planning Commission

The major portion of Goodhue Livingston's career in government was spent, not as La Guardia's secretary, but as a member of the New York City Planning Commission from 1945 to 1960. This body was dominated for decades by the so-called "master builder," Robert Moses, under whose direction immense public works were conceived and constructed, including parks, highways, bridges, housing projects — the United Nations Plaza (built on land donated by the Rockefellers), Lincoln Center, Shea Stadium, the Triborough Bridge, and many others, the major beneficiary of which was the Rockefeller family. These vast projects not only enhanced the value of the Rockefeller-owned real estate, but generated billions in public bonds for the Rockefeller banks to sell. Moses directed the private placement of bonds for the Triborough Bridge project through the Chase Manhattan Bank, headed by David Rockefeller, which organized a bond-purchasing syndicate, raking off huge fees in the process.

Goodhue Livingston came into frequent conflict with Moses over Planning Commission policy, signifying that the barons of New York did not always find complete agreement on how the public treasury should be expended for their benefit. Franklin Roosevelt himself, like Livingston a member of the Knickerbocker aristocracy, was a bitter opponent of Robert Moses, and tried for several years to get La Guardia to remove Moses from the Triborough Bridge Commission. Reviewing Livingston's disputes with Moses, it might be said that Livingston tended to take the longer view, befitting a representative of a family which had ruled for centuries, unlike the Rockefellers, only three generations removed from the common folk. Livingston seems to have advocated more rational, and less directly profitable projects. For example, he counterposed mass transit to highways, persistently advocating the formation of what came to be the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Of course, it may be that the Livingstons' (and the Roosevelts') financial interests were in conflict with the Rockefellers'. One explanation does not exclude the other. (Roosevelt's wife, Eleanor, was a Livingston on her mother's side and a cousin of Goodhue's.)

It might be recalled that the two Knickerbocker aristocrats, Roosevelt and Livingston, were members of different political parties, Democratic and Republican, respectively. Each party had its populist and semi-vaudevillian front man — Democrat Al Smith and Republican La Guardia, who, Livingston explained to his fellow Republicans in 1937, had "placed the Republican party in a favorable light with the masses" (*New York Times*, March 31, 1937).

Yet in Robert Caro's massive biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker* (New York: Knopf, 1974), Livingston is only mentioned twice, and then identified simply as a "liberal," not as a representative of a great hereditary fortune.

### Bases of the Livingston Fortunes

The present bases of Livingston family fortunes are not readily apparent. Even Lundberg barely mentions the family. It is a good guess that much of the family's wealth is based on centuries-old ownership and control of New York real estate and banking. It is

known, for example, that the family was strongly represented in the Chase Bank of New York, a majority interest in which was acquired by the Rockefellers in the 1930s. Robert Livingston Clarkson was president of Chase Securities Co. at the time of the acquisition. As a result of the New Deal banking reform, Chase Bank was required to divest itself of Chase Securities Co. Chase Securities then converted itself into Amerex Holding Company, which held 99 percent of the stock of American Express. Robert L. Clarkson remained chairman of the board of Amerex from 1935 until 1960.

American Express, a giant financial credit institution, was founded in 1850 by cousins Johnston Livingston and William A. Livingston. Its associated company, Wells Fargo of San Francisco, was incorporated in 1867, with Johnston Livingston, an ancestor of Clarkson's, on the original board of directors. Wells Fargo was descended from two earlier corporations, Livingston Wells & Co., founded in 1841 by Crawford Livingston, and Livingston Fargo & Co., created with the participation of William A. Livingston. Wells Fargo, with assets of \$51 billion, is the second largest bank in California and the 17th largest in the nation. Wells Fargo International Trust is the biggest institutional shareholder in General Electric.

### 3. THOMAS CABOT (1897–1995)

"Thomas Cabot, 98, Capitalist and Philanthropist, Is Dead," reads the headline in the *New York Times* (June 10, 1995). Cabot stayed in shape, the *Times* said, by sawing his own wood, canoeing, skiing and boating: "As recently as a year ago, he and his wife, who recently celebrated their 75th anniversary, were tramping the mountains of Colorado."

Cabot was an authentic member of the centuries-old Boston-based Yankee aristocracy that has ruled New England, and much of Central America, for many generations, descended from both Cabots and Lowells. As it was said, in Boston "the Lowells speak only to Cabots, and the Cabots speak only to God." Cabot was a seventh generation descendant of John Cabot, who came to Boston in 1700 and founded a line of seagoing merchants who traded in opium and slaves.

Thomas Cabot was a director of many corporations and banks, including the First National Bank of Boston and the United Fruit Company (serving as its president in 1948–49), Cabot Shops (a Texas-based heavy equipment manufacturer), Cabot Gas Company, and the Cabot Carbon Company.

Cabot's father, Godfrey Cabot (who lived to age 101 and walked two miles a day until nearly 100), founded the Cabot Carbon Company in 1882, now a multinational giant valued at \$1.5 billion. Cabot Carbon alone holds 35 percent of the world market in carbon black, a substance used widely in making ink, paint, tires, and other products. According to *Fortune* magazine (December 5, 1988), the company returned a total of 25 percent to investors in one year, racking up a \$60.2 million profit in 1988.

Although *Fortune* classified Godfrey Cabot as one of the "new-wealthy" on the basis of this achievement, Lundberg reminds us that ever since the early 1700s

the [Cabot] family has been distinguished by propertied business and professional men, diplomats and political figures. It and the allied Lowell and various other Boston families have been "in the money" all along, some from earlier than Paul Revere's ride. [*Rich and Super Rich*, p. 138.]

"Cabot, in short, was a moneyed investor-entrepreneur," Lundberg says, "and clearly classifies as an inheritor, albeit personally more creative than most. All the extant Cabots are inheritors."

## The Cabots and Imperialism in Latin America

According to Victor Perlo, the Boston group constitutes

the oldest group of traditional aristocrats in the United States. . . . The Boston patricians were "pioneers" in overseas expansion from the colonial days when the merchants handled the African slave trade and dealt in West Indian commerce.

They led in the formulation of the aggressive policy which justified the Spanish American War, the conquest of the Philippines and the "Big Stick" policy towards Latin America. The First National Bank of Boston established branches in South America and Cuba, and the Bostonians acquired control of the economies through their trading company, now known as United Fruit. [See Perlo, *The Empire of High Finance* (New York: International Publishers, 1957), p. 204.]

No Latin American country has been more totally dominated by United Fruit Company than Guatemala. Starting in 1898, according to John Gerassi, Guatemala "developed a secret police to track down critics, and kept Indians in peonage by allowing the United Fruit Company, which was granted huge concessions, to use private armies as pacifiers." [See Gerassi, *The Great Fear in Latin America*, 1963, p. 180.]

Absolute rule by United Fruit and its corporate successors, with the backing of the U.S. government's money and military force has continued ever since, with the partial exception of a ten-year period beginning in 1944 when reformist governments tried to alter the situation, and carry out a mild land reform to "trim the claws of the United Fruit Company of the Boston group," in the words of Juan Jose Arevalo, Guatemalan president from 1945 to 1950. (See Arevalo's book *The Shark and the Sardines*, published by Lyle Stuart in 1961.)

## Land Reform and Genocide in Guatemala

In 1952 the Guatemalan government, under President Jacobo Arbenz, expropriated some unused United Fruit Company land (400,000 acres of United Fruit Company land was not under cultivation), for which the company was paid the assessed valuation which United Fruit had provided to the government for tax purposes. The land reform accelerated the determination of United Fruit and the U.S. government to eliminate the reformers. But even before this, the company had resolved to rid itself of the reformers in Guatemala and replace them with a military dictatorship. In 1947 the company had protested the enactment of the Guatemalan Labor Code, which for the first time permitted banana workers to join trade unions, and the U.S. government filed a protest on behalf of the company. U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, a United Fruit Company stockholder, denounced the Labor Code on the Senate floor in 1949 for discriminating against the company and forcing a "serious economic breakdown." Thomas Cabot, then president of the company, responded by proposing that United Fruit move its banana operations from Central America to Ecuador.

In the early 1950s, Thomas Cabot served as director of International Security Affairs in the State Department, supervising the disbursement of \$6 billion dollars in foreign and military aid. John Moors Cabot, brother of Thomas Cabot, was assistant secretary of state for Inter-American Affairs, or, as Arevalo said, "Minister of Colonies. . . with well known and deep roots in the Bank of Boston."

Henry Cabot Lodge was then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. (At the same time, Eisenhower's personal secretary was married to the United Fruit Company's public relations director). In late 1953 Moors Cabot went to Under Secretary of State Bedell Smith, who was seeking an executive job with United Fruit, and demanded a CIA-sponsored coup. (See Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: the Untold Story of the American*

*Coup In Guatemala*, New York: Doubleday, 1990.) In 1954 the Guatemalan government was overthrown by "Operation Success," a coup organized by CIA chief Allen Dulles, a former United Fruit Company director. The expropriated land was returned to the company. Plantation owners cut wages 30 percent, and there began an unrelenting reign of terror against workers, peasants, and political opponents, which continues to this day, with over 100,000 killed by police, death squads, and the Guatemalan army's genocidal slaughter of Guatemalan Indian people.

## For Every Great Fortune, a Great Crime

It is said that "behind every great fortune there is a great crime." So there is. It is evident that the great fortunes from which Scott, Livingston, and Cabot benefited were perpetuated and extended by continuous and uninterrupted great crimes against humanity. While this is perhaps most apparent here in the description of events in Guatemala, that should not be taken as an exception. It is just easier to trace. The fingerprints of the Scotts and Livingstons are somewhat more obscured than those of the Cabots by the fact that these fortunes are subsumed in the relative anonymity of banking and investment concerns, as are many hereditary fortunes. But this only means that they are part of the larger fabric of American capitalism. The great crimes of American imperialism in Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Central America, Iran, Iraq, with their millions of deaths, to consider just some in the post-World War II era, are simply the expression in more generalized fashion of the great crimes behind the great fortunes of the American ruling class as a whole.

The juxtaposition here of Scott, Livingston, and Cabot has no particular significance, except for the coincidence that their deaths were all recorded in the same journal, that they were all descended from hereditary fortunes, and that they all lived extremely long lives, full of apparently gratifying and rewarding activity right up to the end. I started out to write about them because of the striking fact that these inheritors of great wealth enjoyed life spans some 20-25 years longer than the norm, undiminished by the infirmities of age in the way most old people are. On top of all the other disproportionate benefits afforded them, they get this too. It seemed so unfair. But as I learned more about them, the very randomness of their juxtaposition seemed to acquire some significance.

Scott, Livingston, and Cabot, although influential figures with undisguised public lives extending over decades, are almost invisible to published history. They appear to hardly exist, even in exhaustive reviews by assiduous researchers and sociologists like Lundberg and Domhoff. Goodhue Livingston, almost entirely overlooked by a masterful historian like Robert Caro, and barely mentioned, or not at all, in the numerous biographies of Fiorello La Guardia, only exists as a public figure of any significance in the files of the *New York Times*. Even Clare Brandt's *American Aristocracy*, packed with Livingston disinformation, which purports to be a chronicle of the family, fails to mention Goodhue Livingston.

## From a Prince to a King

Likewise, Scott and Cabot were not mere coupon-clippers and remittance men — they fulfilled significant social, political, and economic functions affecting the lives of many. They were not just members of the upper class — they were *rulers*. No popular vote gave them their status — they acceded to their positions as surely as a prince becomes a king. Twenty-five year old David Rockefeller, F.D.R.'s Interior Secretary Harold Ickes recorded in his diary in 1939, came into his office one day.

He looks very much like his mother and is a nice boy. He made up his mind to go into politics and wanted to ask my advice. He has an

offer of some sort to start under Mayor La Guardia and his mind is undecided between that offer or possibly coming to Washington. [The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes, New York, 1954.]

## “THE OLDEST OLD”

Have the rich discovered some secret gene for extending the human life span? Something that Scott, Livingston, and Cabot had? Probably not. That would be an oversimplification. A recent study found that people in their late nineties or older are often healthier and more robust than those 20 years younger, with a relatively short period of infirmity before death, often only a few weeks. (See Thomas T. Perls, “The Oldest Old,” *Scientific American*, January 1995.) “The centenarians I have met with have, with few exceptions, reported that their nineties were essentially problem free. As nonagenarians, many were actively employed, sexually active and enjoyed the outdoors and the arts. They basically carried on as if age were not an issue,” reports the author, an instructor at Harvard Medical School.

“What, we wondered, could explain their good condition? We suspect that the answer to this riddle is that, for whatever reason, some people are particularly resistant to acquiring the disorders that disable and kill most people before age 90,” Perls says. “Because of this resistance, they not only outlive others, they do so relatively free of infirmities.”

Whatever genetic factors might enter into this in part, it is obvious that the very rich not only get the best diet, exercise, medical care, breathe the cleanest air, and drink the purest water, but that their lives are free of much of the unrelenting stress imposed on those who work for wages under the capitalist system. Except in a general historic sense, the richest rich do not have any need to worry about being dispossessed of their riches, and if there is any worrying to be done, for the most part they employ other people to worry for them.

While Scott, Livingston, and Cabot all seem to fit the profile of the “oldest old” Perls described, apparently free of most of the usual infirmities of old age and active until just before their deaths, they are, of course, not a scientific sample. On the other hand, it is clear that Perls’s study did not account for class, and it is

doubtful that he was aware of, much less able to carry out, such a study of the “oldest old” of the super rich. It seems entirely reasonable to assume that if such a study were carried out it would show that they disproportionately enjoy the benefits of the phenomenon explored in the article. Certainly the lives of Scott, Livingston, and Cabot seem to suggest that they do. But the super rich enjoy the benefits of their benign environment as the fruits of a system that forces billions to suffer and prematurely die from malnutrition, preventable disease, wanton pollution, and all the violence of class society.

## “When I, the People, Learn to Remember”

We know that the immense productive forces of global society can be reorganized, in harmony with the ecology of the planet, in such a way that the vast majority of humanity can enjoy, like the super rich, the maximum biologically possible human life span, whatever that may be, and, as Marx said, “under conditions most favorable and worthy of their human nature” (*Capital*, Vol. 3).

But this powerful and arrogant class stands in the way. Considering the immense misery and destruction they have heaped on humanity and the world’s ecology, it would seem that simply as a matter of elementary self-defense on the part of global life, they should be removed and supplanted by a better system. But for millions they are invisible.

At least the Livingston tenants knew who their oppressors were. For those of us who believe in the capacity of the masses of working humanity to construct a new society of peace, abundance, and human solidarity, telling the truth about who the rulers are and how they live and rule is an indispensable factor in educating new generations of the working class who can carry out this transformation.

“When I, the People, learn to remember,” the poet Carl Sandburg wrote, “when I, the People, use the lessons of yesterday and no longer forget who robbed me last year, who played me for a fool — then there will be no speaker in all the world say the name: ‘The People,’ with any fleck of sneer in his voice or any far-off smile of derision. The mob — the crowd — the mass — will arrive then.” □

## The Class War Against Workers: Sweeney Speaks Out

*Continued from page 16*

What Sweeney shamelessly admitted to was the policy of virtually the entire labor officialdom — that is, concession bargaining to protect *their* employers from real or alleged competition. “We did it,” Sweeney recalled, “because we had some unwritten rules — a social compact — that we lived by.” Sweeney regretfully added: “Unfortunately, those days are gone.”

### Threat of Worker Discontent

Along with his self-styled “stick” of new organizing initiatives and growing unions, Sweeney spoke as if he had hopes that the threat of worker discontent might help him persuade corporate America to invite the labor tops in from the cold. “If I come here with a warning,” he said, “rest assured that it’s a friendly warning — a call to action from one friend to another, so that together we can avoid a danger that threat-

ens us all.” That danger to both bosses and bureaucrats lies in the fact that, “For a growing number of American workers, blocking bridges seems like the very mildest form of protest. And that’s not what their union leaders are telling them — that’s what their daily lives are telling them.”

Sweeney pointed to the November-December strike in France, where as he put it, the workers didn’t just block bridges — they shut the country down. But he reassured his listeners: “I hope it never comes to that here in America.” He just wanted to give them a “friendly warning” that “increasingly, American workers are down on their government, down on their employers, and down on their future.”

If there were a discernible upsurge among organized or unorganized workers in the United States, as distinct from France, Sweeney would indeed have a strong card to play.

### Not a “New Voice”

Recent events, such as Sweeney’s own election, suggest rank-and-file pressure on labor officials to do more to protect wages, benefits, and conditions. But corporate America has not suffered any serious setbacks at the hands of its work force that would incline it to moderate its aggressive stance, let alone invite the labor tops in to add their two cents to corporate policy.

Sweeney’s unimaginative rehash of a policy of collaboration that was preached and practiced by Gompers, Meany, Reuther, and Kirkland, among others, is a far cry from being “A New Voice for American Workers,” his election campaign slogan. This comes as no surprise to union militants who, while pleased at Kirkland’s ouster, have no illusions about the reigning representatives of the hierarchical labor officialdoms that daily knead and shape unions into their own bureaucratic self-image. □

December 21, 1995

# Conference on Trotsky Held in St. Petersburg

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

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A conference commemorating the 90th anniversary of the 1905 St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies was held in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), Russia's "second capital," on December 4, 1995.

The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, of which Leon Trotsky was a president and key political leader, was established on October 13, 1905, as a product of massive worker rebellions. It survived for 50 days, a council of workers' delegates and an incipient organ of workers' government, before it was suppressed by the tsarist police.

The idea for this conference originated with the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy (CSLTL), which was founded at the first conference on Trotsky in Russia, held in November 1994 in Moscow. The conference was jointly sponsored by the CSLTL, the History Department of St. Petersburg University — which hosted the conference — and Scholars for Democracy and Socialism.

### 1905 and the Theory of Permanent Revolution

This second conference, commemorating the 1905 Russian revolution but titled "An International Symposium on 'The Fate of Soviet Democracy,'" was intended to have a special focus on the possibilities today for the rebirth of such councils of workers' rule with a special focus on Trotsky's enormous contribution in connection with these events, particularly the theory of the permanent revolution. After all, as Trotsky himself said, "It was precisely in the interval between January 9 and the October strike of 1905 that those views which came to be called the theory of 'permanent revolution' were formed in the author's mind." (Leon Trotsky, *1905*, New York: Random House, 1971, p. iv.)

Again in Trotsky's words:

The perspective of the permanent revolution may be summed up in these words: The complete victory of the democratic revolution in Russia is inconceivable otherwise than in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat basing itself on the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which will inescapably place on the order of the day not only democratic but also socialist tasks, will at the same time provide a mighty impulse to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West will shield Russia from bourgeois restoration and secure for her the possibility of bringing the socialist construction to its conclusion. [See "Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution," *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939–40)*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977, p. 72.]

Trotsky's conception of the character of the Russian revolution and its future paths of development was confirmed by the Russian revolution of 1917 and by subsequent experiences up to the present day in the former Soviet Union, and in all the colonial and neocolonial countries. Workers councils like those that emerged in the course of the 1905 Russian revolution play a key role in this process.

### Speakers at the Conference

Addressing the conference were professors and political activists from Russia and abroad. V.V. Kalashnikov, a professor at St. Petersburg University and co-chairperson of the Socialist Party of Working People — one of several parties to have emerged from the ruins of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union — made the opening remarks. He discussed the rise of workers democracy from 1905 through the Russian revolution of 1917 and its immediate aftermath and the subsequent repression of workers democracy to the present time.

It is noteworthy that Kalashnikov managed to cover this history without once mentioning Leon Trotsky, either for his role in the 1905 or October 1917 revolutions or his struggle in defense of workers democracy from 1923 as leader of the Left Opposition until his assassination by Stalin's agent in 1940. It is precisely such selective, really falsified versions of history that have characterized the Stalin and post-Stalin periods in the Soviet Union and Russia that the CSLTL was established to correct.

For the morning session of the conference, Kalashnikov was followed by S.I. Patolov, professor of history and department chair at the Russian Academy of Sciences, speaking on "The Revolution of 1905 and the First Soviets in Russia"; N.V. Mikhailov, also a professor of history at the Russian Academy of Sciences, speaking on "The Petersburg Workers and the Organization of Workers Councils, 1905–1907"; N.N. Smirnov, a professor of history at St. Petersburg University, on "Soviets and the Crisis of Power in 1993"; sociologist M.P. Rubinchuk on "Culture and the Soviets"; and history professor Geoff Barr of the University of Exeter in England on "An Old Story, Trotsky and Democracy: Soviets versus Parliaments."

The speakers were asked to confine their remarks to roughly ten minutes. Most did, and many — but not all — of the reports were translated into either Russian or English. Serving as indispensable translators were Nikolai Preobrazhensky, a Marxist historian of the workers movement who lives in St. Petersburg;

Rob Jones, a member of the Militant Labor Party who lives in Moscow; and Alexei Gusev, who also addressed the meeting. The morning session was meant to focus on historical aspects of the theme, with the afternoon session devoted more to the relevance of the lessons of the 1905 revolution today.

Nearly 90 people attended the morning session, most of them young students in the history department. Unfortunately, the audience shrank considerably, to about 25, after the lunch break. Afternoon speakers included Alexei Gusev, candidate of historical sciences at Moscow State University and an international coordinator of the CSLTL, who spoke on "Trotsky, the Trotskyists, and the Problem of Soviet Democracy: 1923–1940"; Hillel Ticktin, a reader at the University of Glasgow and editor of *Critique* magazine, on "The Permanent Revolution of Leon Trotsky and Soviet Democracy"; Alexander Buzgalin, professor of economics at Moscow State University, on "The Fate of Democracy on the Eve of the Twentieth Century"; Geoffrey Caveney, a young political activist and student of Russian revolutionary history from Chicago, on "Trotsky, Youth, and the Call for 'Stability'"; and Boris Tamarkin, a young St. Petersburg student of Trotsky's writings, on "Trotsky the Polemicist." The latter speaker appeared at the conference, unexpected, with a very large collection of notes on works of Trotsky's he had just recently read while preparing his report.

The symposium was chaired throughout by Professor Mikhail Voyerikov, economics professor at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, who is a key organizer of the CSLTL in Moscow. After the reports, time was allowed for discussion.

Immediately following the conference the Russians attending and those involved in the conference from both St. Petersburg and Moscow, along with their international guests, met to review ways of furthering the work of the CSLTL. Local working committees need to be formed not only in Moscow and St. Petersburg but in the United Kingdom, France, Greece, and elsewhere. Most of those attending seemed ready to do this.

### History Still Kept Behind Closed Doors

Just how much work remains to be done to revive the buried history and Trotsky's role in it was apparent the next day when some of those who attended the conference, led by Professor Voyerikov, set out to tour some of the historic

sites of the 1905 revolution. The tourists arrived at the Technological Institute, where, on December 3, 1905, the plenary of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies was about to meet — its executive committee, whose president was Trotsky, was already meeting — when the building was surrounded by the tsar's police and all present were arrested. This signaled the defeat of the workers rebellion of 1905. What the tourists found at this site was disappointing.

The only museum there — closed for renovations — is devoted to scientific achievements by scholars such as Mendeleyev, who also worked in that building at one time.

Although there was a wall that held pictures of apparently political importance, that wall was covered over, also because of renovations. No one at the Institute seemed to know which was the room the Executive Committee and Trotsky were meeting in when the police arrested them. The allegedly learned woman in charge claimed not to know who the presidents of the 1905 soviet were and would not credit Trotsky with

any role in it. She finally assigned one of her lower-ranking assistants to guide the tourists in their search. They think that they managed to find the historic room but it was closed, unmarked, and also under renovation. History in the former Soviet Union is still buried deeply, behind closed doors.

### Next Conference: On "Revolution Betrayed"

The Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, whose working committee met in St. Petersburg in conjunction with the conference, voted to continue its efforts and will sponsor its next conference in Moscow November 22–24, 1996, on the subject "The Revolution Betrayed, 60 Years Later," focusing on the book written by Trotsky in exile and published in 1936. In *Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky examines the causes and consequences of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and of Stalinism. The book remains one of the most important Marxist works of the twentieth century, indispensable to

understanding the evolution of the class struggle in our epoch, particularly in the former Soviet Union. Although the manuscript was soon translated and published in a number of foreign languages, it was not reproduced in Russian until 1971 in France. There are three editions of the work available in Russian in Russia today, none of them in very large numbers.

For more information, contact:

Professor Mikhail Voyeikov, Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, ulitsa Krasikova, 27, 117218 Moscow, Russia; Tel: 095-332-4525 (w) or 095-326-3497 (h);

or

Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009; tel: 718-636-5446 or e-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org or fax: 212-807-1832. □

January 3, 1996

## Midday In Leningrad

by Geoff Barr

Leningrad airport is a remarkable place. Having left the plane, the passenger enters a vast concourse in which clocks display the time in the world's main cities. Remarkably they are all enjoying the midday sun at once. The airport is symbolic of the new Russia. New but not really working. The airport has the capacity of a major center and the number of flights of a smallish British regional airport.

My point in traveling to Russia was to attend the second conference of the International Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy. It met in St. Petersburg. The occasion was the 90th anniversary of the 1905 revolution. This was probably the first conference in the "home city" of the great Russian revolutions to discuss seriously the work and ideas of Trotsky since the 1920s. It took place at the History Department of St Petersburg University on December 4.

About 60 people gathered as the conference was opened by local academics. The dean of the History Department welcomed the conference to his university and wished it every success. He was followed by Professor Kalashnikov, also of the History Department. He outlined the revolutionary nature of the Soviets and went on to discuss some of the difficulties that the revolutionary regime faced in taking its program forward.

After a careful and critical outline of the problems faced by revolutionary Russia in the 1920s he offered some useful remarks about more recent Russian history. In particular he dealt with the problems of an historic tendency for Russia to try to catch up with the West by

the use of a strong state. Such a state undermines the possibilities for democracy.

Professor Buzgalin of Moscow State University argued that the key question was workers' self-management. He pointed out that under both the New Economic Policy of the 1920s and under Gorbachev's perestroika there were struggles by workers to manage their own factories.

Hillel Ticktin of Glasgow University spoke of the rigor and persistence of Trotsky. He sharply outlined the theory of permanent revolution and related it to Marx's ideas. The backwardness of the Soviet Union meant that a cultural revolution was needed before the kind of workers' democracy envisaged by the Russian revolutionaries could work. Ticktin pointed especially to the international aspects of permanent revolution and argued that the Soviet revolution was unsustainable without revolutions in the West.

Alexei Gusev raised some interesting questions about the policies of the Trotskyist opposition from the early 1920s through to 1933. He pointed to the evolution of the opposition's thinking under the pressure of events. Gusev argued that while Trotsky favored party democracy, he did not favor Soviet democracy in the period of the Left Opposition (1923–25). He suggested that the Trotskyists favored full Soviet democracy only after 1933.

This contribution led to vigorous debate. Some argued that Trotsky's position was far more democratic than Gusev had suggested. Others thought that Gusev was accurate in his

assessment and that there was no basis in the 1920s for Soviet democracy.

Perhaps these brief comments on some of the speakers give a flavor of the event. The conference was the second in a series. The first took place just over a year before in Moscow, and the shift to St. Petersburg was important. It marked an important anniversary and it put the name of Trotsky before many students in this city of over 5 million people.

### Plans

The International Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy also met to take its work forward. It agreed that next year it will return to Moscow for a larger conference. This will meet November 22–24, 1996. Its theme will be of considerable importance to academics and workers in Russia and the wider world. In 1936 Trotsky published *The Revolution Betrayed*. Sixty years later this classic will be assessed against the passage of time. It will provide an opportunity for us to examine the historic importance of Trotsky's work, and it will be a time to look at where the countries of the ex-Soviet Union are going now.

The Committee will make a point of expanding its work among academics in Russia and in the wider world. Time was given to discuss the program of publications. The main focus will remain on publishing Trotsky's work in Russian. The publication of *The Case of Leon Trotsky* in Russian is the next major project. The key papers of the 1994 Conference are also being prepared for publication in Russian. After some discussion it was also agreed to start a program of publication of Trotsky's writings in Ukrainian.

Those interested in the work of the Committee should contact the international coordinators. (Help with funding for the publications program is especially welcome.) □

# A Feminist Poet from Bangladesh

Taslina Nasrin, *The Game in Reverse*, translated by Carolyn Wright (New York: Braziller, 1995), \$14.95 (paperback).

Reviewed by Joe Auciello

In J.M. Coetzee's allegorical novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the unnamed narrator, a regional administrator of an unnamed Empire, comes to a disturbing, unsettling realization: in their struggle against the barbarians, the "civilized" guardians of empire have become more cruel, corrupt, and debased than their supposed barbaric enemies. The narrator has reluctantly achieved a level of social awareness that carries with it personal responsibility and political obligations. He must act. As he wryly comments, "I know somewhat too much; and from this knowledge, once one has been infected, there seems to be no recovering."

Creating a similar effect in her readers, prodding their conscience and awakening their consciousness to act, is the purpose of Taslima Nasrin's poems, and, indeed, all her writing. She wants her readers to "know somewhat too much" and with that knowledge never again accept or perpetuate the social and religious traditions that exploit and degrade women.

Although hers are intensely personal poems, sometimes even cryptic, they all refer to a larger cultural context — contemporary life in Bangladesh. To read the poems well, one must keep in mind the social relations of her country which form an essential feature of her work. Nasrin is often the immediate subject of her poems, but not as a woman removed from place and time. Bangladesh itself is her deeper subject; the lives of people there, especially the lives of women, is the focus of her anger, impatience, and sorrow.

While she had been writing and publishing for several years and was already an important figure in her country, Nasrin first came to the attention of Western readers in 1993. A novel, *Lajja* (Shame), that highlighted Muslim intolerance against Hindus in Bangladesh, coupled with statements about the need to revise the Koran, resulted in a *fatwa* — a death sentence — and demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of aggrieved Muslims who burned her books and demanded her death.

As a concession to the fundamentalist Muslims, the government brought Nasrin to trial on the grounds of offending religious sensibilities, allowed her bail, and arranged for her to leave the country in voluntary exile. She found refuge in Sweden and won the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought. Currently she resides in Germany.

*The Game in Reverse*, Nasrin's first volume of poetry in English, is a compilation from five of her books published in Bangla-

desh. Nasrin's style is not what would usually be termed "poetic"; she takes little delight in the play of words and makes little use of descriptive or elevated language. She uses few poetic techniques: juxtaposition, irony, occasional parallelism, sometimes an extended metaphor. Instead, her poems are written in plain language and are structured around blunt statements. Since her poems explore and protest the plight of women in Bangladesh, her style is well matched to her content.

For American readers, Nasrin's work will be reminiscent of feminist poetry of the early 1970s; her simplicity and directness will remind some readers of Langston Hughes or the recent political poetry of Allen Ginsberg.

Consider for instance, the opening lines of the poem that gives the book its title:

The other day in Ramna Park I saw a boy buy a girl.

I'd really like to buy a boy for five or ten taka,  
a clean-shaven boy, with a fresh shirt,  
combed and  
parted hair...

I'd like to grab the boy by his collar  
and pull him up into a rickshaw —  
tickling his neck and belly, I'd make him giggle;  
bringing him home, I'd give him a sound thrashing  
with high-heeled shoes, and then throw him out —  
"Get lost, bastard!"

The strength of the poem lies in the calm, matter-of-fact assumption that it is entirely fitting for women to treat men as men treat women. In writing this poem Nasrin has presumed, has seized, equality of the sexes, jarring the thinking of both her male and female readers.

Nasrin's writing can project a cold, detached tone. At times her poems sound like clinical reports, befitting her work as a physician for a government clinic. However, beneath the veneer of objectivity are angry injunctions and implicit accusations: "Look at this! See what happens!" Left unsaid but sharply felt are a set of questions for a reader: "Do you approve of what you see? Do you accept it? What will you do, now that you know?"

At least one poem makes such connections explicit: "They're throwing stones at Noorjahan, those stones are striking my body. ... from out of the quiver of their cruel eyes, arrows speed to pierce her body, my body also. / Are these arrows not piercing your body?"

Many of Nasrin's poems delve into relations between the sexes where bitter experience produces a bleak vision. Men in these poems are referred to as "bad dreams," or "monsters," and are compared to dogs and vultures. Little in

the way of sensual pleasure, emotional warmth, hope, or joy is to be found here. Yet, loneliness and longing drive the women toward men who are inherently unappreciative and unworthy of gifts received. In Nasrin's poems, sexual relations become a debasing act, a sign of weakness, like an addiction:

Everyone knows about your lechery,  
but even so it's the fault of loneliness I go  
knocking again at your door.  
People mistakenly think this is love.

In the poem, "Body Theory," "Man's touch" enables the narrator to "wake up," so that "in my sea a sudden high tide begins." Nonetheless, in this instance, too, sexual harmony is not established, not even for a brief moment. The desire for touch is no conscious choice, freely entered: "it's Nature only that plays me, I am the sitar of its whims." These poems reveal a scenario of women compelled to couple with shallow or brutal men who provide little physical pleasure and no emotional sustenance.

Not surprisingly, marriage is perceived as a trap, a dungeon, or a kind of prostitution in which women exchange their freedom for food and trinkets. "Even the mangy cur of the house barks now and then, / but over the mouths of women cheaply had, / there's a lock, / a golden lock." Worse still, in marriage women give over their minds: "My sister used to sing wonderful Tagore songs, / She used to love reading Simone de Beauvoir," but now "...she's a smart shopper, bringing home / porcelain dinnerware, fresh carp, and expensive-looking bed sheets."

Conversely, an image of freedom that appears in several poems involves a woman stepping past the threshold, going beyond the home and out into the world.

In these poems, even the most personal ones, Nasrin is writing of a larger social reality, rather than the particular problems of individual men and women. Personal feelings, the desire for intimacy and love — these are all shaped by the broader culture of her country. Conflicts with men may certainly exist on a personal level, but these are a microcosm of the conflicts which pervade society as a whole. In this sense, the poems articulate a feminist critique and protest.

As a spokeswoman, Nasrin is sometimes at her weakest as a poet. The poems too frequently include vague references to the oppression women suffer from "society." Her writing is far more effective when exploitation is precise and personal, when everyday cruelty wears a human face. For instance, the poem "At the Back of Progress" tells of a lowly clerk who is humble at his job but who is master over his wife at home. Faulting "society" in general terms is more suitable

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## Taslina Nasrin and Her Battle Against Women's Oppression — Not Only in Bangladesh

*Carolyn Wright, translator of **The Game in Reverse**, is a visiting research scholar at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. She has been an Associate of Harvard University's Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies. In 1993-94 she won an Award for Outstanding Translation from the American Literary Translators' Association. She is currently at work on a book of translations of Bengali women's writing from India and Bangladesh. The interview was conducted and transcribed by Joe Auciello.*

**Question: What are your personal impressions of Taslima Nasrin?**

**Answer:** She was raised in a conservative family. As soon as she reached puberty, she had to stay in the house, had to cover her head even in the house. She had to cover herself so that nothing immodest or female showed. It made her seethe with resentment, and you see that resentment in the poetry and in the columns she wrote.

Actually, I have found her to be very reserved, very quiet. Even though she was soft-spoken, she was also very direct. When she would call me on the telephone there would be no pleasantries; she got right to the point, whether it was to arrange a meeting or say what was on her mind. That quality is also in her writing.

I remember we did a live interview on Bengali television — it may have been her first television interview. Before the broadcast she was talking and joking with the crew, sashaying around. She seemed very confident, but it may have been nervous bravado. Then, when it was time to go on, she became quiet, even solemn. Her entire manner was totally changed; she seemed hesitant and subdued. When the interview was over and the cameras were turned off, she came to me and asked, "Carolyn, was I terrible?" I told her not to worry, that she was fine, that there would be other interviews. Little did I know how prophetic my words were.

**Q.: Do Nasrin's poems present any particular problems for an English language translator?**

**A.:** Her work is much less "literary" and much more hard-hitting and outspoken than most other poets I have translated in Bangladesh and India.

Her poems remind me very much, as you said in your review, of work that had been written within the women's movement in the late 1960s and early '70s.

It was easier to translate because of that. It didn't have a lot of literary subtlety — like rhyme or meter — the kind of style that is difficult to translate. Bengali has certain metrical forms which are much like Romance language syllabics. Bengali is a rhyme-rich language like Italian, so almost everything rhymes with everything else. That's very difficult to replicate in English, but those prob-

lems did not present themselves in Taslima's work. All of her poems that I translated, except one, are in free verse.

The poems in English are very close to the original Bengali in their tone, level of diction, and vocabulary. I think they are about as close as a translation can get. The only instance where the original lines posed some challenge is when she used terms that don't really have English equivalents.

Taslina sometimes uses a word that has a particular connotation for Bengali readers that doesn't exist in English. Or she might refer to something — a plant or vegetable — that isn't known here. In those cases I worked with Taslima and Bengali collaborators to find a solution.

**Q.: A review of *The Game in Reverse* that appeared in *Publisher's Weekly* referred to the didactic nature of the poems and suggested that this aspect of the work was the result of the translation. Was the reviewer's hypothesis accurate?**

**A.:** No. The didactic tone was right there in the poems. The translator's job is to translate as faithfully and accurately as possible and have it work as a poem in English. Whatever the poem says in Bengali, it has to say in English as close to the original tone, using the same kind of vocabulary in English as is used in Bengali. So, if Taslima says in her poem, I think it's "The Wheel," "Women are sold, sold in the marketplace" — this is a rough paraphrase now — then I have to say it the same way. If possible, I use the same punctuation. Bengali actually leaves out a lot of punctuation, so I had to add it to make the poem look normal in English and not draw attention to the lack of punctuation.

Bengali has an interesting verb structure; they use a lot of compound verbs. They'll say "put up - keep," which means "to store" somewhere, like on a shelf. There's great variety in the verbs, but there aren't a lot of really active and colorful verbs as we have in English. We can say to walk, trudge, march, stroll, amble, gallow, meander, promenade, and so on. We have a lot of words because English has borrowed vocabulary from so many different languages. In Bengali there are a few words like this, but not nearly so many. So, if in the context of the poem it looked like the person was meandering, I had them meander, rather than sim-

ply walk. In other cases where it seemed that the person was weighted down with cares and troubles and was walking, they could trudge. But that was as close as I ever got to making the language more than it was. I did not make the poems more "literary." If Taslima used the word for house five times in a poem, then I did, too. If she suddenly used a different word for house, then I would use a different word in English. I am very conventional and conservative in my translations. The poems are accurate.

**Q.: From your experience in Bangladesh, do Nasrin's poems exaggerate the oppression of women, or are the poems more or less realistic?**

**A.:** I think to some degree they do exaggerate. Clearly, a poem like "Happy Marriage" is full of bitter hyperbole: "if he wishes he can chop off my hand, my fingers. / If he wishes he can sprinkle salt in the open wound." Well, yes, it's true, but it is exaggerated. Some terribly gruesome things are reported in the Bengali newspapers on occasion, but it isn't the reality for everybody. We accept hyperbole in poetry; it's the "willing suspension of disbelief." So, yes, Taslima definitely exercises her poetic license to exaggerate at times. But she generalizes based on her own experience, as writers do. She picks particular incidents and highlights them.

It wouldn't be Taslima's work if she used the qualifying clause at the beginning of the sentence. "Although most Bangladeshi men are good and faithful husbands who treat their wives and children well, there are some men who are very abusive toward their family." That kind of writing puts people to sleep. That would not be a Taslima Nasrin sentence. Taslima's sentence would say: "Bangladeshi men abuse their wives. Bangladeshi men beat their wives. And even if they don't, they can. No one is going to stop them." That would be more like what she would write. Taslima makes sharp, incisive, biting sentences. Her critics would say that she is one-sided and unnuanced.

**Q.: In 1994 Nasrin gave an interview to a Calcutta newspaper in which she was quoted as saying that "the Koran should be revised thoroughly." She says she was misquoted, but the original interview and**

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# Labor's Greatest Challenge

by Joanne Bell

*The following are keynote remarks presented to the New Jersey Labor Party Advocates platform hearings on November 11, 1995. Joanne Bell is president of Communications Workers of America Local 2336 in Washington, D.C.*

I want to thank Kathy King [chairperson of New Jersey Labor Party Advocates] for giving me this opportunity to speak to you concerning labor's greatest challenge since World War II.

The labor movement is under attack by federal, state, and local government. Everything that our predecessors won, that we now enjoy, hangs in the balance. We, you and me, stand to lose any number of the benefits that most of us and our members take for granted: time-and-a-half for overtime, social security at a responsible age, Medicare, negotiated pension benefits until you die, decent wages and benefits, a safe work environment, and a strong voice on the job. Federal, state, and local politicians who have received union campaign funds and worker assistance have turned their backs on us and are implementing our demise. What am I talking about?

I am addressing the PATCO [Professional Air Traffic Controllers] fiasco that has changed the nation's attitude on replacing striking workers. Employers had the right to replace us for 50 years prior to PATCO, but no one ever dared to do it until Reagan busted PATCO. The labor movement stood idly by and watched Reagan bust them; Kirkland's position was that they were not an AFL-CIO affiliate and they did not ask for help. And now, every employer thinks that is something they want to do. We have and continue to suffer through the failure of legislation to protect us. President Clinton, who was highly supported by labor, was nowhere to be found when the striker replacement legislation hit the Senate floor. Clinton did sign an executive order that would have stopped the replacement of striking workers for companies that held federal contracts after the AFL-CIO pressed him to do so. And now, Congress has negated that half-hearted effort on his part.

### **PATCO — Beginning of a Downward Spiral**

PATCO was the beginning of what has now become the downward spiral of the labor movement's demise. You may say that PATCO was 10 or 12 years ago. Well, let's just take a look at some of the more recent incidents: President Clinton, a Democrat, twisted Congressional and Senate arms to gain the passage of NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement], a Reagan program, against and in the face of labor's total disagreement. He is giving our work to Third World countries for 59¢ to \$1.18

an hour. There is no place in the U.S. where someone can live off \$1.18 an hour. Just last week a contractor with a NAFTA work visa was working at one of my locations taking food and work away from my members and other American workers. GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] has restructured our pension payments by changing the formula. You may not recall, but when Reagan opened the "free trade markets," he put in tax credit incentives for American companies to take our work overseas. Clinton completed the Republican agenda when he passed NAFTA and GATT without removing those incentives. I have repeatedly asked members in the Department of Labor close to [Labor Secretary Robert] Reich, my Congressman Steny Hoyer, and Congressman Al Wynn about removing these incentives, and they have responded that the removal of these incentives is "not a priority."

Newt's "Contract on America" wants to get rid of the Davis-Bacon Act, which protects the salaries of the building trades. Newt wants to rewrite the Wagner Act, which includes the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board], and to throw us all into company-controlled partnerships that will result in a return to company unions, where if you get a raise it will be from the goodness of the heart of your employer. Do you want to risk your living conditions on the kind heart of your employer? I know I don't!

The courts are ruling that employers only have to honor their commitments to retirees from contract to contract. They make a commitment to you when you retire that should cover you until you die. Contract to contract is unacceptable! Newt has changed OSHA [Occupational Health and Safety Administration] to a toothless nothing that protects no one. The Liabilities Act now stops you from suing violators of safety laws when you have seriously been harmed by a manufacturer's neglect.

### **Workers Rights Legislated Away**

Employment rights? Negotiations? In the public sector, whether it be local, state, or federal, politicians have systematically legislated away negotiated worker salaries, benefits, and rights. Look at what has just happened in D.C. This city has a financial crisis. Congress called for a balanced budget. There was no question in anyone's mind that there was some room for cuts. Mayor Kelly implemented six furlough days last year that equated to a 6 percent reduction in



Joanne Bell

salaries. Then Mayor Barry comes to the unions and says first he needs \$30 million from labor, then \$40 million, then \$70 million, and asks us to agree to a 12 percent reduction in pay. Each of the involved unions sent their "bean counters" over to review the books. We submitted any number of proposals that would give him his \$70 million with minimal effect on the workers. He kept rejecting our proposals. Then finally he admitted that he was attempting to get \$100 million from labor, but he never thought that we would look at the books or find him out. We ended agreeing to a 6 percent reduction in salary plus six furlough days in '95. The city council voted to reject the negotiations and implement the 12 percent cut anyway. We ended up having the 12 percent vote overturned at a later session, but who do they think they are? The action of legislating pay reductions is going to affect you!

You are thinking, I'm not in the public sector. That is their problem. Wrong! Federal mediators, courts, and laws are instituted by government. When we need injunctions against employers or go to court on subcontract issues, how can we win if the government is the one setting the union-busting standard? The government in the U.S. today is the biggest union buster in the world. What government does affects each and every one of us.

### **Time for Labor to Take a Stand**

It is time for labor to take a stand! We can no longer risk our lifestyles and the futures of our children and grandchildren standing idly by, hoping that someone else will do something. How many of you have children at home that are between the ages of 21 and 30-something? They work every day but cannot afford to move or live in the style in which we have grown them to be accustomed? We, you and me, the grass-roots of the labor movement, are going to have



# Longshore Union Endorsement: "LPA Is A-OK"

by George Saunders

An interesting report on the endorsement of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) by the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) appeared in the September 26, 1995, issue of *The Dispatcher*, the ILWU monthly newspaper. An article by staffer Suzanne Doran about the ILWU's International Executive Board [IEB] meeting of August 17-18, 1995, had the following relevant passage under the subhead "LPA is A-OK."

"Picking up where they left off at their previous meeting, the IEB unanimously endorsed Labor Party Advocates (LPA), after a short presentation by Local 34 retiree and LPA charter member Asher Harer. Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers President Bob Wages had discussed with the Board in April LPA's history and mission, and why it was worthy of support. LPA has thousands of members and the backing of many unions. Participants at a recent LPA rally in Hayward, Ca., represented 135 unions[!]. In June 1996, LPA will hold a founding conference in Cleveland, Ohio, to formally create a Labor Party."

### ILWU Pensioners Also Endorse

In a related matter, the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association, an association of ILWU retirees that is independent of the union itself, also voted to endorse LPA. Ruth and Asher Harer report that about 20 ILWU retirees joined LPA at the association meeting and that, besides the Bay Area and elsewhere in California, ILWU retirees are active in LPA in Portland and Seattle in the Pacific Northwest.

(Readers are referred to Ruth and Asher Harer's report about the LPA hearings in Hayward, California, in the March 1995 issue of *BIDOM*; and to Asher Harer's report to his ILWU local in San Francisco on what was wrong with NAFTA and why solidarity with Mexican workers and with the revolutionary Zapatista tradition in Mexico was in the interests of American workers; see *BIDOM* March 1994.)

to be the ones to fight this battle. This time it is personal. We cannot allow our children to be the first generation in America's history to do worse than their parents! We cannot afford to stand idly by and lose our social security or retirement benefits, either.

As usual in leadership you have some saying, "Now is not the time." Well, when is the time? Should we wait for total devastation? In my opinion, we have already waited too long. At different levels of the trade union movement,

LPA activists in the Seattle area have informed *BIDOM* that a successful public meeting, with an attendance of about 100, was held by the LPA chapter there last fall. A stirring and effective speech was given by Dave Watts, head of the locked-out Paperworkers local at the A.E. Staley Co. in Decatur, Illinois. Watts is also a member of LPA's nationwide Executive Committee.

Elsewhere on the Pacific Coast, the Los Angeles Metro Chapter of LPA has been quite busy. Its banner was seen in a photo on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* of October 16 as part of an October 15 march and rally for immigrant rights and against California's Proposition 187. It held a "Jazz Night" fund raiser on November 8 at the Atlas Bar and Grill. The chapter has started a union/community organizing committee, which has launched an active campaign to make presentations before general membership meetings and executive boards of local unions in Los Angeles County and Orange County, as well as speaking before numerous community organizations. In January, LA Metro Chapter will be holding an economics workshop entitled "Corporate Power and the American Dream," a national program promoted by LPA (originally developed by the Labor Institute). In January, a second fund raiser, a jam session called "Jam Night," will be held to help pay delegates expenses to the June founding conference.

### Capitalist Press Noticing LPA

The *Los Angeles Times* is not the only major capitalist newspaper taking note of LPA. On October 10, the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, under a regular feature entitled "Work Week," had a subhead "LABOR PARTY boosters piggyback on third-party fervor" to introduce the following item (reproduced in full):

Ross Perot, move over. The group Labor Party Advocates wants to take over. That's right, some labor union leaders are stoking the flames for a party for "working class people," similar

some people are taking action. Tony Mazzocchi, in conjunction with other OCAW [Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers international union] officers and members, for over four years has spearheaded the effort to establish a labor party in America. Participants in this effort are called Labor Party Advocates [LPA].

There is a growing group of unionists from various unions who have joined together to determine a method for labor's needs to be represented in every level of government. Labor

to Britain's Labour Party. Long struggling as a minor political movement, the group is moving to raise its visibility with TV ads, fundraising, posters and, of course, pithy slogans.

The Labor Party Advocates sent 35,000 new promotional posters to union halls this summer. The group plans its first convention next June in Cleveland, and some leaders assembled yesterday to write rules for selecting delegates. [The proposed rules may be found in the November-December 1995 issue of the newsletter *Labor Party Advocate*.] But so far only a few unions endorse the party.

The new poster asks, "Who will speak for Labor?" and responds: "We'll speak for ourselves!"

Regardless of the "Work Week" writer's tone, the *Wall Street Journal* is letting its well-heeled readers know about this dangerous new trend (dangerous for them, that is) of workers wanting their own party. Further indication that the capitalist media are worriedly taking note of LPA can be seen from the following passage in the *Labor Party Advocate*'s report on the election of two LPA leaders to the new AFL-CIO Executive Council at the AFL-CIO Convention in New York City in late October.

LPA also drew the attention of about 1,000 delegates to the convention when panelist Ken Crowe, a labor reporter for *Newsday*, asked Sweeney and his opponent, Tom Donahue, during a debate on Oct. 24, what they thought about Labor Party Advocates' nationwide campaign to organize a labor party. Predictably, both men backed away from the idea, but LPA supporters were pleased with the attention...

After President Bill Clinton addressed the [AFL-CIO] convention on Oct. 23, LPA sponsored a reception that filled the room with...new people who wanted to learn more about the organization and its goals. [OCAW President Bob] Wages, LPA National Organizer Tony Mazzocchi and Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters President John P. Morris addressed the group. Morris, who has been friendly to LPA's objectives, urged the participants to keep working to build a political alternative for Labor. □

will have to speak for labor. Just like in the movie "Mouseland," we cannot continue to elect those who claim to have our needs at heart only to find out that we have been screwed again. That is why many unionists are digging in with their energy and patience to work to establish a *real* labor political party that will last through generations.

Four national unions have voted to support LPA with personnel and finances thus far. They are OCAW, United Electrical, Radio, and Ma-

chine Workers Union (UE), the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE), and most recently the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. The California State Council of Carpenters recently voted to endorse LPA. AFGE's [American Federation of Government Employees] National Executive Board last week voted to endorse the LPA's founding convention, which will be held in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 6 through 9, 1996, and to send as many of their officers and members as possible. The Transit Workers Union, Teamsters Black Caucus, and many local unions from within the other unions all across this country, California, Texas, Arizona, Boston, Kansas City, Pennsylvania, Seattle, New York, St. Louis, and Detroit — just to name a few — have voted not only to endorse, but to actively participate in the establishment of LPA chapters in their areas.

### Building a Base Before Running Candidates

Now you are wondering, will we run a candidate in the '96 elections? No, we will not, because we do not have the established base to win. That is why meetings like this one and the one that I have set up on Tuesday are so extremely important. The British Labour Party worked 12 years prior to running a candidate. As you can see, they have stood the test of time and have been very successful. Our labor party will be no "flash in the pan." We will be vital, credible, and for real. This will take a lot of work and

growth. In the interim, however, our Labor Party Advocates can grow enough and work hard enough to make our agenda a top priority for the existing parties until we are ready to run our own and win.

If you are from CWA or some of the other unions that I have not mentioned, you may be wondering why our unions have not endorsed LPA. I have discussed this with CWA's Executive Board and my central body president; I am secretary of my Central Labor Council. In fairness to them, they are more concerned with the immediate elections. They are afraid that our efforts to start our own labor party will interfere with Bill Clinton's getting re-elected, which they see as our only chance right now. While they recognize the need for labor to speak for itself, they, too, feel that this effort is a flash in the pan. We will have to change their minds and make believers out of them. As you may know, all elected officials, regardless of whether they are public officials or union officials, are subject to the will of their voting constituencies. Once we have organized ourselves, central labor bodies and officials like President Bahr [Morton Bahr of the CWA] will participate.

What about finances, you ask? Our dues are \$20 a year. Perhaps at the convention or at a later date, when more unions become involved, there could be a per capita tax. Presently, we operate off of dues; we have asked national unions who have endorsed to contribute some of their COPE [Committee on Political Education] funds to

help with the founding convention and other activities and contributions.

You should have pride in our history. Union labor is the conscience and protector of all workers, whether they are organized or not. We set the standards. Who is labor? You and I are — the union. Our job stewards are the backbone and brains of our operation. There are no successes without you, me, without us!

I am sure that you are aware that labor was instrumental in the establishment of the eight-hour work day, time-and-a-half for overtime, the minimum wage, child labor laws, social security, the Wagner Act, Davis-Bacon, and many, many more of those laws and rights that protect working people. We cannot stand idly by and lose everything that our forefathers fought and had strikes over to make things better for us.

The establishment of our own labor party will help protect those benefits and rights that we hold dear and allow us to make improvements in government to the benefit of all working people, thus benefitting this country.

If you believe that America works best when we say "Union Yes," then you know that America will live better as a result of us coming together and establishing a labor party to speak for us and protect us!

I am proud to be LPA. I know that if you and I continue to work together, soon we will achieve our goal of electing our own and speaking for ourselves. I look forward to that day! □

## LPA Members Support Effort

# Arizona State AFL-CIO Calls for Workers Bill of Rights Ballot Initiative

by Andy English

The Arizona AFL-CIO is circulating petitions to place an Arizona Workers Bill of Rights on the November 1996 general election ballot.

Organizers plan to collect 250,000 signatures statewide between now and the deadline for filing petitions in July 1996. They also plan to register tens of thousands of new voters.

The initiative combines several proposals which have no hope of being heard in Arizona's anti-worker state legislature, which is dominated by extreme right-wing Republicans. If passed, the proposals will become part of the state's constitution.

If the initiatives under this Workers Bill of Rights make it onto the ballot, voters will have the following proposals to vote on.

- Establish a state minimum wage that would cover all workers and be equal to 50 percent of the state's average wage. This provision would increase the minimum wage to \$5.84 in 1997. It is expected that that would bring about a large boost in the state average wage, leading to a second large increase in the minimum wage in 1998 — to nearly \$7 per hour.
- Increase workers compensation benefits to 75 percent of a worker's wages and benefits prior to any on-the-job injury; and institute an annual cost-of-living adjustment for those with long-term disabilities.
- Prohibit employers from firing workers without just cause.
- Extend eligibility for unemployment compensation to all workers and increase weekly benefits.
- Provide that employers who receive economic development incentives from local government and who subsequently close down and move operations outside the state must return the subsidies they received and provide job training, health care costs, and supplemental unemployment benefits for 11 months to laid-off workers.
- Guarantee the right of all private and public employees to organize unions and to bargain collectively in an environment free of intimidation. □

Progressive pro-labor groups, including members and supporters of Labor Party Advocates, are organizing to support the AFL-CIO initiative. □

# Socialist Revolution and Ecology

by Eileen Gersh

**S**urvival of the human species is threatened by various kinds of environmental damage. "Acid rain," "destruction of the ozone layer," and "the greenhouse effect" have become commonplace terms. They threaten the death of forests, increases in deaths from cancer and other diseases, crop failures, and famine.

Except by "Green parties" and ecological groups, not enough attention has been paid to these dangers. While their roots can be discerned in the industrial revolution of the 19th century, it is only since World War II that quantitative and qualitative changes in industrial processes have resulted on the one hand in huge cumulative changes in the environment, and on the other in the risk of catastrophic accidents. Either way, dire and irreversible consequences for humanity can result. The air we breathe, the skies above us, the water we drink and need for our crops, and the resources of the earth and the seas are all affected; the problems are not confined to any one area of the globe.

Recognizing all this, the Fourth International adopted a 19-page statement under the above title at its Thirteenth World Congress in 1991. The purpose of the present article is to give the gist of that 19-page document.

## Environmental Hazards

Most atmospheric pollution is caused by automobiles and industrial processes. The water of rivers and lakes is polluted by acid rain and industrial wastes, and by excessive use of fertilizers in agriculture. The seas are polluted by oil spills and sewage effluents.

Oceans, wetlands, and forests have been great reservoirs of wildlife, providing foods and many other natural resources. They are being destroyed or poisoned, and their productivity is dwindling.

Added to all these threats to our well-being is the chance of large-scale industrial accidents from chemical factories or nuclear power plants (for instance, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Bhopal), not to mention accidental or deliberate exposure of populations to nuclear weapons. On top of this are unforeseen long-term effects of new technologies in industry and medicine, such as the use of asbestos for insulating buildings or thalidomide for medical treatment.

Some of the damage is reversible, though in some cases only in the long run, over hundreds of years; some is irreversible, permanently impoverishing our lives and demanding strict measures to prevent it from going further.

## Environment and Capitalism

If we had organized our social life in a manner compatible with preserving the environment, these changes would not be taking place. For the last two centuries, our social life has been organized predominantly on a capitalist basis. The

capitalist mode of production has dominated all countries of the world, including the noncapitalist countries of Eastern Europe, East Asia, and Cuba, and the countries of the "Third World."

The essence of the capitalist economy is private ownership of the means of production and the production of commodities to be sold for profit. In relation to the conservation of resources, this system results in vast contradictions. Energy is a good example: we cannot create or destroy energy, but the second law of thermodynamics tells us that energy tends to be dissipated. We cannot reverse this process, so we should obviously use energy as sparingly as possible. High-level sources of energy, such as coal, oil, or wood, take enormously long periods to build up. There is no way that we can produce them as fast as we are now consuming them. As long as profit can be made out of privately owned sources of energy by selling energy as a commodity, however, the incentive is to sell as much as possible. There is little incentive to invest in research into ways of using renewable sources of energy such as wind, waves, and sun, as alternatives to fossil fuels.

The logic of the capitalist mode of production, which maximizes profit through each of a series of steps from raw materials to salable commodity, has had the following results:

1. The effect on the planet of depletion of raw materials has not entered into the reckoning: it is irrelevant to the processes of production and profit making.
2. The effect of by-products that pollute the environment has been equally irrelevant, except in cases where unions have succeeded

in winning health and safety measures. It is usually cheaper to throw away waste products than to find ways of using them or breaking them down. Innumerable problems are created by dumping wastes.

3. The reinvestment of profits means a constantly expanding production and the creation of new needs: two cars instead of one, six kinds of detergents for different purposes, where one used to suffice.
4. In order to sell products, the capitalist must convince consumers that they need them. Vast sums are spent in advertising to create new needs or to convince consumers of the superiority of one brand over another. These costs are included in the cost of production and therefore paid by the consumer, though the advertising has little value for the consumer, only for the producer. In the end, this constitute a vast additional amount of waste.
5. Uncoordinated development of urban and surrounding space for industrial zones, residential areas, "bedroom communities," shopping centers, and tourist or recreation zones has resulted in transport problems which are solved with maximum profit by the proliferation of automobiles. This in turn gives rise to further problems: progressive covering of green space areas with new highways and parking spaces, with ever-increasing atmospheric pollution. This is the main cause of the greenhouse effect, as the polluting gases trap the sun's rays, thus increasing temperatures at the earth's surface. Unless checked, this will result in (a) a rise in sea level which will threaten millions of people now living near the sea; and (b) a change in climate, which will make it impossible to keep on growing crops in their present areas of distribution.
6. Twentieth-century agriculture ("agribusiness") has followed the trends of capitalist production: mechanization and factory



Genesis Farm, a biodynamic community-supported garden near Blairstown, NJ

## Demands of the Ecology Movement

### Demands

- A radical break with the exploitative system of agricultural export production in the dependent countries, a system which produces famine and poverty.
- An immediate ban on the entire nuclear power cycle.
- An immediate ban on the production and use of toxic and dangerous substances such as chlorinated fluorocarbons and asbestos.
- No economic exploitation of the Antarctic.
- No to the destruction of the tropical rain forests and to the fatal pollution of the forests in the industrialized countries.
- Stop all agricultural practices which destroy the soil in the industrialized countries.
- Stop dumping waste into the seas, rivers, and lakes.
- Prevent dangerous — and in the “Third World,” with the slaughter of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon basin, even genocidal — nuclear power projects such as Kararao (Brazil) and Sardars Sarovar (India).
- Ban all toxic waste transports and the transfer of hazardous production processes to the dependent countries.

### Alternatives

- A system of agriculture in dependent countries that is primarily oriented to securing the basic necessities for the population.
- Production of goods for civilian instead of military use.
- Useful and planned use of energy instead of overexploitation of nonrenewable energy sources; development of alternative energy sources such as solar and wind energy, energy from biological sources, etc.
- Ecological farming.

farming on a scale with which the small family farm cannot compete, so that the small farmer becomes an “endangered species.” The use of chemicals instead of organic fertilizers and crop rotation results in deterioration and erosion of soil. Chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides drain into streams and lakes and pollute the water.

### The “Third World”

If all this environmental damage is attributable to the capitalist system, however, we may ask: why is there as much, if not more, damage in the “Third World” and in “post-capitalist” countries?

In the “Third World,” capitalist exploitation takes the form of the mining of minerals, wholesale destruction of forests for timber, and wholesale use of land for cash crops instead of growing foodstuffs needed by the local people.

- Development of public instead of private, individual transport systems, especially local transport and railway.
- Filters and sewage works, etc., are insufficient. What is required is a fundamental industrial conversion which forbids environmental pollution right from the start.
- A policy of recycling and radical avoidance of waste.

### How Can the Alternatives Be Put into Practice?

- Thoroughgoing land reform in the dependent countries.
- Total cancellation of the debts of the countries maintained in a state of underdevelopment and of the transitional societies.
- Development of alternative energy plans by the environmental and workers movements, together with progressive scientists.
- Elimination of business secrets, which serve for example to disguise real emission levels of chlorinated fluorocarbons; compulsory introduction of records detailing materials involved in production and right of access to them.
- Program of public works for the conversion of production.
- Set up “ecological dual power” via workers control of production; workforce to have the right to veto production that is hazardous to health and the environment.
- Transfer key areas of the economy to public property under the control of the workers, consumers, and environmental movement.
- Set up ecologically compatible production based on the principle of satisfying needs instead of the profit principle or the rule of the bureaucracy.
- Fight for a free, democratic, pluralistic, self-managing socialist society.

Destruction of the rain forest deprives the planet of a carbon dioxide “sink” which counteracts the greenhouse effect. Agribusiness leads to all the abuses mentioned previously. It also leads to a drift of workers into the towns, where multinational industries employ some of them. The imperialists gain a double advantage — first, to have a workforce which accepts much lower wages than prevail in the “First World” countries; and, second, to export whatever pollution their industry may cause, thus avoiding hostility and/or the cost of reducing pollution in factories in the home country.

### Post-Capitalism

The record of the ex-Soviet Union and its satellites, of China, and of the smaller post-capitalist countries, is another matter. From the beginning of the 1930s, Stalin’s declared goal was to overtake the capitalist countries in industrial produc-

tion. This was also what Khrushchev meant in 1956 when he told the USA, “We shall bury you!” This brought the Comecon bloc into the same ruthless drive for increased production that we see in capitalist countries. Although Soviet industry was publicly owned, it was not controlled by the workers. Had it been, the workers could have seen that it was in their own interest to put the brakes on environmental destruction. The only country that has tried to make a revolution *and* do everything it could to preserve and improve the environment is Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, where “revolution [was] also for the lakes, rivers, trees, and animals.” Unfortunately, the Sandinistas considered it necessary to continue producing crops such as coffee and cotton for export, in the same way that Cuba continued to concentrate on its sugar crop. As it turns out, now that the Soviet Union’s support has been withdrawn, it might have been better for these revolutionary countries to concentrate on self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs.

### Environment Is a Class Issue

We can see that it is the capitalist pattern of expanding production that is responsible for degrading the environment all over the world. The solution, therefore, lies in the struggle against capitalism. As much as exploitation of labor, oppression of women, or racism, this is a class issue, and one that can only be solved by the intervention of the working class, albeit an issue that, like nuclear weapons, has a wide appeal outside the working class.

The ecology movement has presented a challenge to the bourgeoisie. The assumption that capitalism is endlessly progressive is questioned from a new angle. The bourgeoisie has responded by studies such as “The Limits of Growth,” produced by the Club of Rome in 1972, and the Brundtland Report, “Our Common Future,” adopted by the United Nations in 1988. Capitalist tycoons occupy prominent positions in the ecology movement. Maurice Strong, secretary-general of the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development, is head of the Canadian national oil company, Petro-Canada. The co-editor of *The Economist* magazine, Edward Goldsmith, belongs to a millionaire family.

Governments have established limits for environmental pollution (of air, soil, and water) and proposed methods of limiting pollution by individual companies, such as imposing fines for polluting or taxes on the use of natural resources. New (capitalist) industries are arising, making profits from a whole range of products from biodegradable detergents to catalytic converters, to “scrubbers” for industrial machinery. None of these programs envisages a radical change in the structure of society, nor do they offer even temporary solutions for the “Third World” countries where capitalist profits depend on exploitation of labor and the environment, including pollution of the latter.

### The “Green” Parties

It is to the credit of the “Green” movement that many of its participants have recognized the

need to organize on a broad basis, forming national Green parties which aim to coordinate different interests, such as nature conservation, clean air and water, preservation of the ozone layer, the use of sustainable energy sources, etc. The Green parties tend to see themselves as classless and to have a revolutionary program without recognizing the revolutionary weapon (the working class) that is essential to carrying the program through. Some members of the working class tend to side with the capitalist industries which employ them because their jobs are at stake. As a result, sectors of the ecology movement become polarized against sectors of the working class.

To some extent the movement has been successful in introducing reforms, perhaps the greatest of which have been the virtual stoppage of building new nuclear power plants and the fifty-year moratorium on mining in the Antarctic. All

the same, nothing that has been done so far has stopped the ever-increasing global damage.

### For International Working-Class Action

Revolutionary Marxists have been aware of a number of ecological issues for a long time and have recognized that they arise from the capitalist system, but it is only since the early 1970s that we, like others, have realized the scope of the threat to life on our planet. It was the mass movement against atomic energy, a worldwide phenomenon, which got us involved (resolution of the Eleventh World Congress of the Fourth International, 1979).

It is important for us to develop relations with the Greens for two reasons. They have scientific knowledge and expertise which few of us can claim, and they must obviously be a component of united-front action on ecological issues. These issues are of international concern and

demand internationally coordinated action. Our demands are a challenge to capitalism and can only achieve maximum effectiveness with the involvement of the working class. Our task is to enlist workers behind our demands, as outlined in resolutions of the Twelfth and Thirteenth World Congresses of the Fourth International. (See "Demands of the Ecology Movement" on the previous page.)

We cannot expect to achieve a "clean" capitalism, yet it is clear from experience in the post-capitalist countries that a revolution which socializes the means of production provides no assurance of a green revolution. Our perspective must therefore be, as it is for women's liberation, to build an autonomous movement, independent of political parties, which will continue after the socialist revolution to safeguard the environment for the benefit of future generations of humanity. □

## A Feminist Poet from Bangladesh

*Continued from page 36*  
for an essay. In poetry it is flat rhetoric, at best an exasperated expression of frustration not yet fully realized in verse.

Carolyne Wright's translation has succeeded in bringing Nasrin's poems into the English language; no awkwardness obtrudes to disrupt their sound or sense. Some poems were translated with Nasrin herself, while others were completed with the assistance of Bengali collaborators. As a result, the poems read smoothly, forcefully, and naturally. Quite properly, the poems do retain their specific references to Ben-

gali culture, but these, when not clear from the context, are concisely explained in end notes provided by the translator.

At their best, there is an undeniable quality to these poems which is to be found in the uncompromising voice of a poet who does not flinch from writing strong statements of a terrible reality. While the purpose of her work is to expose and change social conditions that deaden the lives of women, the poems are not simply pamphlets in verse. These poems reveal the thought and spirit of a woman fighting for

her life against the political and religious systems that would smother her.

The emotional truth Taslima Nasrin describes has its parallels in the West, though the specific physical conditions differ. Women, especially, may well recognize aspects of personal experience in these poems. *The Game in Reverse* can strengthen and stimulate the consciousness of its audience, even as readers admire the courage of a poet who knows "somewhat too much" and who, despite the safety of silence, is determined to speak. □

December 4, 1995

## Taslima Nasrin and Her Battle Against Women's Oppression — Not Only in Bangladesh

*Continued from page 37*  
**her clarification inflamed Muslim organizations and led the government to issue a warrant for her arrest. Do you have any idea of what really occurred?**

**A.:** My guess is that she really did say those words, but that it was a slip of the tongue. I think she really meant to say the Sharia, the family law, should be revised thoroughly. When you're talking, going back and forth between one topic and another between two Islamic texts, it's easy for a slip to happen.

**Q.:** In Bangladesh, who is Nasrin's audience?

**A.:** People who can read and write, first of all, educated people. That's still only about 30 percent of the population. The more urbanized, educated people read her work.

I don't know if her poems spread to those who are illiterate or semi-literate. There are village folk poets who work in the oral tradition, and their poems are always rhymed and metered for mnemonic purposes. Taslima's poetry is not

like this. Remember, she is from an upper middle class family; her father is a physician. She herself was a doctor. Much of what she writes about in her columns concerns the problems of middle class women. She has written about villagers, mainly in terms of going out to villages and providing health care for rural women. What she has written about village women that I am aware of was done prior to her departure from Bangladesh.

Now that she's in the West, she is asked a lot about life in the villages and the rural countryside. After all, our notion of Bangladesh is this poor "basket case" country with poor villages and poor villagers. People here are not so well aware that there is a substantial, urbanized middle class, and also a mercantile, a shopkeeper class in Bangladesh. So, there's doctors and lawyers and professors and writers. They read Taslima's work. But had their maids, and the people who cooked for them, had they read her work? I don't think so, simply because many of those people do not read, and if they could, they wouldn't have the money to buy books. I do

think she is known about in the villages. But a lot of the people who have criticized her have not read her work. They are reacting to her as a symbol on whom they can project their own agenda.

**Q.:** Why should *The Game in Reverse* be read by a Western audience?

**A.:** A lot of the interest, of course, is that Taslima has become a personality, a celebrity, a name in human rights circles. Her work has generated great controversy in Bangladesh and become a focal point for a major political crisis in that country. She is a symbol of the dangers to free speech and so has gained a wide following all over the world.

Her poetry gives a glimpse into the culture that she comes from. She has held up to Bangladeshi men a mirror of their own attitudes toward women; she has fought the mullahs' fire with fire of her own. She is a writer of powerful poems, and, to many, an embattled heroine. □

November 28, 1995

# Can NAALS Capture the Promise of the Million Man March?

by Ron Daniels

On November 16–19, thirty days after the historic Million Man March and Day of Absence (MMM/DOA), Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis convened the fifth meeting of the National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS) in Washington, D.C., at Howard University. Originally convened by Dr. Chavis in June of 1994 in Baltimore during his tenure as executive director of the NAACP, the summit concept initially captivated the imagination of Black America because of the broad cross section of leadership that participated in the first meeting. At that juncture, the prospects of building a united front/umbrella-type structure inclusive of major civil rights organizations, civic and fraternal associations, business and professional organizations and nationalist, pan-Africanist, and activist groups seemed like a distinct possibility. When Dr. Chavis was ousted from the NAACP the Summit still continued, but the base of participation narrowed significantly. A dedicated core of national organizations, local and regional community-based organizations, nationalist groups, and the Nation of Islam kept the Summit alive.

The adoption of Minister Farrakhan's vision of a Million Man March at the third meeting of NAALS in Chicago in November of 1994 as a part of the Summit's Action Agenda for 1995 proved to be the most critical decision in the life of the NAALS. The selection of Dr. Chavis as national director of the MMM created an opportunity for him to re-emerge as a national leader. The astounding success of the MMM/DOA not only affirmed Minister Farrakhan as the pre-eminent leader in Black America, it resurrected Dr. Chavis and created new possibilities for the NAALS as a mechanism to guide the progress of Black America.

It is against that backdrop that more than 500 participants came to Washington to attend the

largest and most diverse gathering of the National African American Leadership Summit. Hugh Price, president and chief executive officer of the national Urban League, made his first appearance at a Summit. Rev. Jesse L. Jackson of the National Rainbow Coalition and Rev. Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference joined the Summit for the National Town Hall Meeting. Scores of representatives of Local Organizing Committees for the MMM/DOA were also among those who came to the Summit to participate in the deliberations on the follow-up to the MMM/DOA.

Several major initiatives were adopted by the Summit as a part of its Strategic Action Agenda: a National African American Economic Development Trust was established to serve as a vehicle to receive contributions to be earmarked for Black economic/business development; an Abundant Life Health Plan, as presented by Dr. Alim Muhammad, minister of health for the Nation of Islam, was adopted to begin the process of building a national, Black-based Health Maintenance Organization; NAALS affirmed its support for the Black Adoptions program of the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW). Leonard Dunston, president of NABSW, reported that 2,600 Black children were in the process of being adopted as a result of the MMM/DOA, thereby achieving 10 percent of the goal of adopting 25,000 Black children; the Summit also adopted an ambitious political mobilization agenda, which includes registering millions of Black voters, a National Black Agenda Conference, and a National Black Political Convention in 1996.

While the fifth meeting of the NAALS was generally quite successful, several issues regarding the character, mission, and structure of the Summit must be resolved before it can be determined whether the NAALS can effectively

capture the promise of the MMM/DOA. In my judgment a united front, an organization of organizations functioning under the principles of operational unity, is a strategic imperative for Black America. Therefore, the Summit must not become a mass-based, unitary organization, nor should it be viewed as an extension of the Nation of Islam or be seen as a "new organization" for Dr. Chavis. Other major organizations and leaders will not become a part of or remain with such a formation.

Secondly, NAALS must be committed to inclusive, collective leadership and shared decision making. A number of participants felt that some of Dr. Chavis's rulings during the Summit were arbitrary and undemocratic. Dr. Chavis cannot carry the full weight of moving the Summit forward on his own shoulders, and even if he could, such a stance would violate one of the basic tenets of a united front. Unfortunately, the Interim Coordinating Committee of the NAALS did not meet even once during the Summit to share in the decision-making process and to assist with the facilitation of the meeting.

Obviously, the Coordinating Committee must play a more meaningful role in the collective leadership and decision-making process if the NAALS is to reach its full potential as a united front. In addition, those organizations, like the National Urban League, the NAACP, National Rainbow Coalition, and Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which became involved in the Summit should be offered seats on the Coordinating Committee to broaden the base of organizational representation and participation in the decision-making process. Finally, there must be a real commitment to gender equality and youth participation in the NAALS as a matter of principle. These concerns were raised rather forcefully at the Summit.

It is clear that Black America urgently needs the NAALS to succeed as a united front mechanism that can maintain the momentum of the MMM/DOA and guide the destiny of the Black Nation into the next century. Whether the NAALS will be up to that challenge remains to be seen. □

November 27, 1995

## Build a Black Workers Unity Movement!

by Angaza S. Laughinghouse

This article is reprinted from the front page of the November 1995 issue of *Justice Speaks*, newspaper of the Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ). To order the November issue of *Justice Speaks*, or to subscribe, write to: P.O. Box 26774, Raleigh, NC 27611; one year, individuals, \$10; organizations, \$15.

On Monday, October 16, more than a million African Americans responded to the call for a national Million Man March in Washington, D.C.

More than a million people were prompted essentially by an overwhelming desire for unity and the need to address the U.S. economic and

social crisis's destructive impact on the Black Community and Nation as well as the need for Black men to make a personal commitment to address this crisis.

The personal commitment was so powerful that it prompted over a million Black men to

sacrifice their money and take time off from their jobs and families to travel long distances.

In a number of cities, bus services for public school students were canceled because many drivers were at the march. Camden, New Jersey, and other schools were closed after many employees used "union contract" annual leave to

attend the rally. Several local unions of the Teamsters, AFSCME (the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees), 1199 Hospital Workers Union, New Jersey Mailhandlers Local 300, and others mobilized "all out," with bus loads of union members.

### Labor Strong in the Ranks

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Black Workers for Justice, and other Black workers' organizations also attended. In Miami, Florida, Black men and boys chanted and marched hand in hand through the streets of Brownsville. In rural and urban churches throughout the U.S., Black people sang, prayed, and watched television coverage of the march.

In Omaha, Nebraska, residents rallied for children vulnerable to gangs and demanded jobs for youth. Shouting "No Justice, No Peace!" two hundred Brothers marched through downtown Kansas City, Missouri. Speakers urged the crowd to "struggle for jobs," get rid of drugs, and "build a stronger, tight-knit community."

In 1995, we must begin the process of build-

ing a new, broad-based African American Freedom struggle that unites Black men and women, [and that unites] the Black movement with the struggle of Black workers. Black workers and their organizations must bring their leadership, concerns, demands, and program to this new developing movement and Black united front. We must be vital to this movement.

### Workers' Issues and Unity Must Be in Program

Black workers make up 90 percent or more of the African American community inside the U.S. We, as employed, unemployed, contract and temporary workers, women, men, and youth workers, union, not-yet-unionized, organized and unorganized workers must unite all Black workers behind an action program that addresses our concerns as workers in the community and in the workplace.

This program must work to obtain decent jobs with livable wages and solid benefits, our democratic right to rank-and-file-led unions, end privatization of public service/government

jobs, end gender and race job discrimination, protect workers' rights, provide safe, healthy workplaces and communities, end homelessness, stop corporate toxic dumping in our communities, stamp out economic exploitation, obliterate "right to work" laws, achieve the right to organize unions, fulfill the need for independent political action and party, and uphold majority-Black voting districts.

### Build a Black Workers Unity Movement!

Black workers: take part in speak-outs, forums, etc., to plan and develop action plans that address our concerns as workers in the community. We call upon all Black workers, labor activists, union members, labor leaders to help build a National Black Workers Unity Movement and a Black Workers Congress.

A planning meeting for a Black Workers Unity Movement will take place November 11 in Washington, D.C. For more information, call Roger Newell, (202) 624-6912, or BWFJ headquarters, (919) 977-8162. □

## Why I Went to the Million Man March

by Shafeah M'Balia

*This article is reprinted from the November 1995 issue of Justice Speaks, newspaper of the Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ). It has been edited slightly for reasons of style, and the last two subheads were added, but we have retained the non-capitalization of the first person pronoun ("I"), except at the beginning of a sentence, as in the original article.*

**T**he Million Man March was awesome. I must admit, i went with mixed emotions. Somewhat skeptical, somewhat curious, somewhat defiant, and very excited.

Why defiant? Despite having been in the Black Liberation Movement for almost 30 years, fighting for community control, against police brutality, for the development of independent Black political institutions and organizations, in short, Black political power, i wasn't supposed to come to the march.

Despite the conscious decision to move South, where the majority of my people have always remained, to be part of strategically positioning our people to struggle more effectively for power, i wasn't supposed to come.

And despite being among the very, very few organizations that would picket, leaflet, demonstrate at 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 a.m. for Black workers' and Black people's rights, and yes, for full and equal rights for women, half of the leadership and membership of Black Workers for Justice weren't particularly welcome — because we are Black women.

### Standing at Master's Door, Arguing Our Family Problems

Washington, D.C., is the capital of the United

States, the most powerful military force in the world, the most dominant economic and, therefore, political influence. It is master's porch.

With Wall Street, D.C. is the heart of the world economic system that is the root of racism and white supremacy that oppresses Black men and women. This system's exploitation of our labor down through the pages of history until this very second — that is ultimately responsible for our condition, not Black men.

Malcolm X said that the system's propaganda is slick. It will make the victim look like the criminal, and the criminal look like the victim. We cannot afford to be confused about who or what is fundamentally responsible for our oppression. Yeah, we need to talk about personal commitment — but not in D.C., not on the slave master's porch. In D.C., we need to charge the government with genocide. To D.C. we come to place the blame for disrupting and destroying our families, for the drugs, for the 2-3 jobs we must hold to meet bills.

### Continue the Discussion

Black men and women must continue a deep discussion on leadership and responsibility for the future of our people disconnected to gender or sex, women's equality, and ultimately [the]

ending [of] male supremacy. We must come to agreement on the joint — equal — responsibility for our Nation. Unless we step forward on a basis of equality, we will continue to cripple our movement. So, in 1995, to insert gender artificially, to unnecessarily divide our people, is politically backward, at least, and flies in the face of the experience and history of our women and our movement in general. It politically undermines our movement as well.

### A Warm Welcome

While we were moving through the throng, taking pictures, passing out the special edition of *Justice Speaks*, and selling *JS*, 99% of the Brothers reacted warmly to my presence. Several said they couldn't figure not wanting Sisters to come.

No liberation movement can be successful when, to bring one sector forward, it suppresses [another], women in this case, the majority of the population. That's why i felt somewhat defiant as i went to D.C. to stand with my Brothers to take responsibility for the future of my people. □

# The Great Million Man March

by Muhammad Ahmad

*The author, an activist and college teacher in the Cleveland area, formerly headed the African American Institute there.*

Basically, there are two kinds of power that count in America: economic power and political power, with social power being derived from these two. In order for the Afro-Americans to control their destiny, they must be able to control and affect the decisions which control their destiny: economic, political, and social. This can only be done through organization...

*Malcolm X,*

*By Any Means Necessary, pp. 45-46*

On October 16, 1995, one million men marched in Washington, D.C., for a historical day of atonement. Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, issued the call for a day of atonement and absence of a million African American men. Many felt this was needed for African American men to repent for allowing themselves to fall victims of the capitalist system's institutionalization of self-destructive genocide, the selling and using of drugs, the fratricidal killing of blacks by blacks, the verbal, physical abuse of black women and children.

Though much of this activity stems from the lack of jobs due to the overseas expansion of U.S. industry, the day of atonement was needed to call African American men to accept the awesome responsibility to bring about a fundamental social change in creating a "New America." The great Million Man March created a day of black unity in which two million African American men and women who were there displayed love and respect for one another. Millions of other African Americans across the nation took the day off of work, held local support unity demonstrations, and watched the march on TV. Traveling on over 12,000 buses, mostly organized by local organizing committees (LOCs), of which thirty left from Cleveland, traveling by caravans of cars, overflowing airports and bus stations, the Million Man March, which had been organized through the African American Leadership Summit and mobilized by its national coordinator, the Reverend Ben Chavis, was a resounding success.<sup>1</sup>

The great Million Man March offers an alternative to the rightward drift of American politics. Many African American leaders realize that conservative Republicans like Newt Gingrich and Robert Dole, who are reversing the gains won over the last thirty years, would not be in office if African Americans used their voting power.

Along with atonement was the call by Reverend Ben Chavis, Minister Louis Farrakhan, and Reverend Jesse Jackson to register 8 million unregistered African Americans of voting age. The use of the power of an "educated" black vote could definitely move us toward "a more perfect union."

### History of Earlier Marches on Washington

The first March on Washington was proposed by A. Philip Randolph, an African American labor leader, who proposed a march of 100,000 black men on Washington in 1941. The purpose of the march was to shut Washington down if President Franklin D. Roosevelt did not end segregated practices in hiring in defense industries. The proposed march had local affiliates called the March on Washington Movement (MOWM). Hours before the march was to be held, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 ending racial segregation in the defense industry.<sup>2</sup>

The second effort at a March on Washington by African Americans and their allies occurred August 27, 1963. As thousands upon thousands of African Americans took to the streets facing water hoses, dogs being sicked on them, and mass arrests to end racial discrimination, a grassroots call went out to march on Washington. The masses were talking about shutting Washington down. Activists were planning to lie across highways and airport runways and sitting in the halls of Congress.

After much effort at negotiation, funding, and compromise, President John F. Kennedy met with the leaders of the major civil rights organizations, NAACP, SCLC, CORE, and SNCC [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Congress on Racial Equality, and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee]. Kennedy promised a civil rights bill and endorsed the march. Though the march was successful, with a participation of 250,000, it was not critical of the Kennedy administration. In 1983 a 20-year commemorative march, including a broad spectrum of leadership, was held. While the march gave a recommitment to the drive for racial parity, it failed to advance a program beyond supporting the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The 1993 march restated a similar program, with the reactionary sector

of the Jewish community demanding that Minister Louis Farrakhan not speak. He was excluded.

### Meaning of the March for the Black Community

Many people have asked, Why a day of atonement? One is accepting the responsibility of doing wrong. In order to move "toward a more perfect union," not only must the U.S. government atone for its crimes of genocide against African Americans, but so must African American men who have strayed from the path of black liberation.

With the statistics of 800,000 African Americans in jail and prisons and only 500,000 in college, someone, somewhere in the black community has been misdirected and miseducated. Jesse Jackson said in the last ten years the jail economy has risen from \$4 billion to \$72 billion. Companies such as American Express, who divested from South Africa, have now reinvested in prison construction and privatization. Black offenders, arrested for having five grams of crack cocaine, receive 5 years mandatory time, while white offenders, arrested for 500 grams of cocaine powder, receive a mandatory sentence of a year.

True, the cause is the capitalist system — no jobs and a drug economy. But African Americans must accept the individual and collective responsibility for submitting to the degenerating effects of monopoly capitalism's plan to destroy the African American community. African American men in particular have fallen for the "me first" as opposed to the "we" mentality. Too many African Americans have succumbed to drug and alcohol abuse, abusing ourselves, our women and children. Minister Farrakhan asked that African Americans stop using the "B" word against women. Jesse Jackson asked the question, "What can a million men do?" They can change the self-destructive behavior of the African American community.

### Day of Absence

One of the purposes of the Million Man March was the call for all African Americans to take the day off from work and not to purchase goods on the day of the march. If it could be done on one day, there is always a possibility of doing it longer. There is the potential of a national black general strike (work stoppage and economic

1. See "Black Men Triumph!" *Call and Post* (Cleveland), Thursday, October 19, 1995, Volume 80, No. 42, p. 1.

2. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, Dan Georgakas (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1990) pp. 642, 643.



boycott). This would be an effort at total unity and power of social activism of the African American community.

The Million Man March showed African Americans and the world the significance of the "power of numbers," the African American masses united. It showed that at least a million of the 15 million African American youth of America are willing to commit themselves to participating in the black liberation movement if provided the opportunity to do so. From cradle to grave, from generation to generation.

### **Pan-African/International Implications**

Like the mass struggles in South Africa, the Million Man March showed us the potential of African American mass struggle and its impact on the nation and the world.

With the support of 90 percent of the world, there is no power structure on earth that can stop the mass revolutionary action of 40 million African Americans. The African American and African struggles are one and the same.

While Africa is the world's richest land mass, providing the raw materials critical to the maintenance of the developed world's industries and economies, it is the world's poorest continent. The only way Africa can gain true liberation is by a fundamental change of the world economic order. The potential power of the world's oppressed remains dormant. The African American struggle for national liberation, self-determination, and economic equality can awaken this force. In this sense, what affects one affects all.

African Americans are "taxed without proportional representation." African Americans, as 10 to 15 percent of the U.S. population, should have 47,115 black elected officials out of the more than 497,155 elected officials in America. There are about 8,000 black elected officials in the U.S. in the year 1995. Living in the heart of the world capitalist economy, African Americans have an unestimated power to liberate Africa and the world. A mass self-defense civil disobedience movement for reparations could lead to a second reconstruction and a new socialist America.

### **The Goals of the March: Registration and a Third Political Force**

One of the major goals of the Million Man March is to register 8 million unregistered African Americans of voting age. One hundred and fifty thousand were registered on the day of the march. Another important goal is to create a "third political force." Minister Farrakhan said, "We will no longer vote for a black man because he is black; candidates will gain support of the community if they are in accord with our agenda.

We intend to never again let our vote be taken for granted. We'll never again vote personality or color. We'll vote for those who hold our agenda sacred....the day of party loyalty of black people is over and that "rather than a third party," a third political power will be formed "that will encourage black Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to vote for agendas rather than parties."<sup>3</sup>

Several speakers proposed the convening of local and statewide black political conventions to do this.

**African American Economic Fund**  
Minister Farrakhan recommended that a black economic development fund be developed to be supervised by a board made up from the National African American Leadership Summit. It was suggested that each African American contribute \$20 a month to this fund for two or three years or on a personal basis. It was calculated that in two or three years, \$20 billion could be generated.

True democracy exists only through the participation of the people, not through the activity of their representatives....<sup>4</sup>

Minister Farrakhan stressed the process of developing a process of building a holistic community. This would be the establishment of self-reliant economic institutions that survive from one generation to the next. These institutions (cooperative economic businesses) would provide the community with an internal safety net which would employ a network of self-employed semi-autonomous people. The political economy and education for self-reliance would be based on the theory that the African American community could not be totally economically independent as long as capitalism exists. But with a self-reliant culture that harnesses the economic resources of the community centered around central institutions, that community can flourish to the extent that the circulation of dollars turns over two or three times (supporting African American businesses) before leaving the community (\$200 billion).

Once the recirculation of the dollar within the community is established according to the African American working class through the African American Leadership Summit, a collective investment plan can be instituted for community manufacture development ventures which would hire a number of people from the community. This "internal" self-sufficient political economy and Afro-centric education can be centered around the African American Christian churches, Islamic masjids, or local African American educational centers. To illustrate the potential, Minister Farrakhan took up a collection of \$1 per person at the march to pay for the expenses of covering the march. The collection netted four million dollars.

### **Join an Organization** Minister Farrakhan said:

So my beloved brothers, here's what we would like you to do. We must belong to some organization that is working for and in the interest of the uplift and the liberation of our people. We must become a totally organized people, and the only way we can do that is to become a part of some organization that is working for the uplift of our people. We must keep the Local Organizing Committees that made this event possible; we must keep them together. Go back and join the Local Organizing Committee. And then all of us as leaders must stay together and make the National African American Leadership Summit inclusive of all of us.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pledging Ourselves to the Struggle**

Reverend Jesse Jackson in his speech said, "When you go back home today let's go back with power in unity and coalition. We are against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, and black face politics. Black and white must find common ground."

Minister Farrakhan concluded his remarks by asking all participants to the march to commit to the Million Man March Pledge:

I pledge that from this day forward, I will strive to love my brother as I love myself. I, from this day forward, will strive to improve myself spiritually, morally, mentally, socially, politically, and economically for the benefit of myself, my family, and my people. I pledge that I will strive to build business, build houses, build hospitals, build factories, and enter into international trade for the good of myself, my family, and my people.

I pledge that from this day forward I will never raise my hand with a knife or a gun to beat, cut, or shoot any member of my family or any human being except in self-defense.

I pledge from this day forward I will never abuse my wife by striking her, disrespecting her, for she is the mother of my children and the producer of my future. I pledge from this day forward I will never engage in the abuse of children, little boys or little girls, for sexual gratification. For I will let them grow in peace and be strong men and women for the future of our people.

I will never again use the "B" word to describe any female. But particularly my own black sister. I pledge from this day forward that I will not poison my body with drugs or that which is destructive to my health and my well-being. I pledge from this day forward I will support black newspapers, black radio, black television. I will support black artists who clean up their acts to show respect for themselves and respect for their people and respect for the ears of the human family. I will do all of this so help me God.

The Million Man March was a new beginning. Long live the spirit of the Million Man March! We will win! □

November 12, 1995

3. "New Political Force Unleashed," *The Final Call*, Volume 15, No. 1, November 8, 1995, p. 12.

4. Muammar al-Qaddafi, *The Green Book* (Tripoli, Libya, Africa: Libyan Government, 1969), p. 7.

5. "Towards a Perfect Union," *The Final Call*, November 8, 1995, p. 30.

# Thoughts About the Million Man March

by Walter Lippmann

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*The author, who lives in the Los Angeles area, has been active in the organized labor and socialist movements for over thirty years. He did not personally attend the Million Man March. His impressions are based on media reports.*

October 16, 1995, saw the largest mobilization against injustice ever held in the United States. The Million Man March took place in the context of new and intensified attacks, by both the Democratic and Republican parties, on the social, economic, and political gains won by Black people during the past 60 years.

More than anything else, the Million Man March showed graphically that 130 years after the Civil War and 30 years after the Civil Rights Movement, institutionalized racial oppression remains a central fact of the political and social life of the United States.

Initiated by the Nation of Islam, the largest Black nationalist organization in the country, march attendance was said by the U.S. Parks Service to be 400,000. Organizers said over a million attended. Subsequently, the Park Service had to revise its estimate upwards. An exact number has not yet been forthcoming.

Past experience with crowd estimates indicates that they are influenced by political considerations. So it is entirely reasonable to say that a million participated. Whatever the precise number, clearly an event of historic significance took place.

### Treatment by Mass Media

Organizing efforts were virtually ignored by the mass media during the preceding year. By the end of the summer, sensing the growing mass support for the mobilization within their communities, figures within the Black political establishment, such as Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Congressional Black Caucus came out in its support.

The mass media then began to attack the event, but its efforts backfired. Many Blacks resented the media's attempts to tell them whom to follow and how they should express their anger at injustice.

Outside the arenas of professional sports and music, Black men in the United States are most frequently portrayed in the U.S. media as violent criminals. Black men are increasingly seen as an endangered species in U.S. society. A survey by the Sentencing Project, a legal reform group, has shown that one out of three young Black men are either in prison or under the supervision of the so-called "criminal justice" system by being on probation or parole. As of 1994, according to the U.S. government, Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 constituted

30.2 percent of the population in prison or on probation, whereas white men made up only 6.7 percent. Black men also experience homicide at the rate of 72 per 100,000 while the rate for whites is but 9.3 per 100,000. Black men make up 20 percent of those living below the poverty line, while white men make up only 7 percent of the same grouping.

In the United States today, prison construction is the most rapidly expanding growth industry. Politicians run for office throughout the country on themes of "lock em up and throw away the key," "three strikes and you're out," and the restoration and expansion of capital punishment.

The year-long trial of Black former football player and movie actor O.J. Simpson, concluded just prior to the march, fit graphically into these trends. Following the verdict, sharply differing views, polarized broadly along racial lines, added fuel to Black peoples anger against the racism of U.S. society.

Whites mostly thought Simpson guilty and wanted a conviction at any cost. Blacks mostly refused to accept the tainted evidence against Simpson. The main evidence gatherer, police detective Mark Fuhrman, was shown in the trial to be a flagrant racist in a department long known for its history of racist brutality against Black people.

### Some Protest Sidelineing of Black Women

Some within the Black community protested the march's focus on Black men and its suggestion that Black women remain on the sidelines in a supportive role. March organizers responded to such criticism by including prominent Black women such as the poet Maya Angelou and Rosa Parks, the Black woman whose refusal to move to the back of the bus sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956, as featured speakers. In addition, Black women across the country played a central role in the many organizing activities leading up to the march.

The criticism, whatever its validity, had little noticeable effect on the size of this largest demonstration in U.S. history. The criticism also did not address the demonization of Black men in the media.

### March's Significance Exceeds Stated Program

Called as a "day of atonement" for Black men in which individuals were supposed to apolo-

gize for their self-destructive and anti-social behavior, rather than examining the causes of internalized rage, the event's significance went far beyond its stated program. That is what this article discusses.

As articulated by the leader of the Nation of Islam, Minister Louis Farrakhan, a wide range of individual atonement, self-help, personal responsibility, community and private initiatives and enterprises, were promoted. Given patterns of self-destructive and anti-social behavior which actually exist within the Black community, the call for personal and community reform clearly struck a chord among the hundreds of thousands who rallied at the nation's capital. They speak to real issues.

The Nation of Islam itself has a long record of success in the reform of individuals from self-destructive and antisocial behavior. The best-known example of this is in the life of Malcolm X as detailed in his Autobiography.

Minister Farrakhan's emphasis on the role of men as fathers and heads of families is strikingly similar to themes stressed by both President Bill Clinton and Christian fundamentalists such as Rev. Pat Robertson and the Promise Keepers, a fast-growing, right-wing Christian group organizing mass rallies among men. These themes of "personal responsibility" and male leadership in the family have been put forth as rationalizations to gut social services and all forms of aid to the poor and working class in the United States.

The morning after the march, Pat Robertson stated on his nationally-syndicated TV program "The 700 Club" that Minister Farrakhan "is embracing initiatives we all applaud: law and order, discipline in children, family, unity." In a post-march news conference, Minister Farrakhan took note of this, "If there are similarities in our speaking, it's because we're coming from the same frame of reference."

Presented from the vantage point of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech, event organizers stressed their goal of achieving a "more perfect union" with God. This parallels the "more perfect union" advocated in the U.S. Constitution.

Unlike previous mobilizations, this one made no demands on the government. It did not call for any legislation to be passed, or for any to be retained, such as affirmative action or jobs programs. It did not support the rights of political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, sentenced to death in Pennsylvania and the focus

## Of Marches and Men...

Our thanks to Walter Lippmann, who called to our attention this article on the Million Man March by Mumia Abu-Jamal. — Eds.

"If there can be an all-women conference in Beijing, China, there can be a Million Man March." — Dr. Betty Shabazz (widow of Malcolm X [al-Hajj Malik al-Shabazz])

Magnificent. Massive. Marvelous.

The Million Man March in Washington, D.C., was all these things and more.

Ignored by major (i.e., white) media from the inception, and then vilified once it began to mushroom, it was a day when blacks forced white America to acknowledge their existence and the potential of their power.

Using the authority of the state and the connivance of the media, the first attack was an overt attempt to minimize those massive numbers of men; "400,000...tops," crowed the U.S. Park Service police, an incredible affront to any who had eyes, and a "fact" mimicked by every major media outlet from "here to East Jablip."

Is there any wonder why blacks distrust both the police and the white media — when they lie so nakedly?

Dr. Farouk El-Baz, a scientist on loan from the Egyptian government to Boston University, was commissioned to do a computer analysis of the march and found the park service wrong by over 60 percent! According to Dr. El-Baz over 1,000,000 men were there — initially [his figure was] 1.1 million!

Later projections were 837,000 men — but with a 20 percent margin for error. That means over 1,004,000 men — amazing! Astonishing!

How could anyone look at such numbers and not see a million people? How could anyone "lose," or miss, over 600,000 men?

That "how" can be answered by America's historic malady — white supremacy.

As I'm sure many readers have seen, the mass media, almost uniformly, have condemned the Million Man March. Why?

Who condemned the Beijing Women's Conference? Who condemned the gay rights march in D.C.? These were welcomed and praised by politicians. The "why" can be answered also by white supremacy.

Many criticized the leading participation of Minister Louis Farrakhan, who, in media accounts, appeared to have the title "anti-Semite" as opposed to "Minister." One searches in vain for similar appellations used in published references to the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was beyond doubt, an overt racist and nakedly anti-Arab. Was "Rabbi" ever dropped from his name?

In a nation founded on the fundament of white supremacy, and maintained on that institutional imperative, nothing so threatens their future stability as does the unity of black men. Nothing.

One may challenge the lack of political focus of the march, as does this writer, or its tone, as did other writers (notably Herb Boyd of the *Amsterdam News*, who likened it to a rebirth of Booker T. Washingtonism), but one cannot deny the remarkable success of its organizers, and yes, its chief organizer — Minister Louis Farrakhan.

If white readers were surprised by such success, they need to begin to seriously question their chosen media, which consistently depicted him and his influence as marginal: they were lied to, just as surely as the U.S. Park Service lied in their "official" march undercounted by over 100 percent — all served to "comfort" white sensibilities, instead of reporting the truth.

What other black leader in America could have called for a million men to assemble — and have it done? Name him!

That over a million African American men — more people than populate most American cities — assembled, from every relig-

ious, political, and ideological persuasion, is a mighty demonstration indeed, but to make it a religious "let-us-be-good" event, as opposed to a political "let-us-make-others-be-good-to-us" event, gives one cause to pause, as if politics was a no-no.

Where was former Black Panther political prisoner Dhoruba bin-Wahad? Why was my son, Jamal ibn Jamal, sabotaged from speaking there? Were they too radical?

Africa-America is not in the hell we are in because we don't pray enough! Blacks are not at the bottom of every socio-economic measure because they are bad people.

The frantic and frenzied comparisons between Farrakhan and Mark Fuhrman are far off the mark. Can Farrakhan stop your car on a dark night and order you out of it? Can he kick your door in and go through your personal property at will? Can he take your freedom? Can he beat you? Can he take your life?

Similarly, Boston College professor Elaine Pinderhughes, in *Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power* (Free Press, 1989) defines racism as an element of "social structure" adding, "belief in superiority of whites and the inferiority of people-of-color based on racial difference is legitimized by societal arrangements that exclude the latter from resources and power, then blame them for their failures, which are due to lack of access."

Racism and bias, Professor Pinderhughes explains, are often confused with one another, but they aren't the same thing.

The Million Man March brought a lot out of white America that was unleashed at the sight of so many black men. Such a positive event — such a negative response.

Mumia Abu-Jamal  
November 2, 1995

of international protests of support. No foreign policy concerns were addressed, such as the plight of Haitian refugees in the United States.

### Gap Between Leaders and Crowd

Though the march had no declared political platform or program, it did have a political significance. Understanding the difference between the issues as posed by organizers, and the needs, hopes, and aspirations of participants is vital to an objective assessment of the event.

Organizers planned to register people to vote in order to become a voting bloc to be wooed by candidates for public office. Not calling for a break from the Democratic or Republican parties, march organizers hope to become a factor in the current wobbly political framework. They do not propose an alternative to

today's politics. Rather, they project a role for Black people within these politics.

In the 1930s, Blacks and all workers made social gains through the rise of industrial trade unionism. In the 1960s, Blacks made social and political gains through the civil rights movement. Both of these eras also were characterized by, and influenced by, the existence of the Soviet Union as an alternative (however marred by bureaucratic deformation) to the capitalist form of social organization.

Today, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and given the rise of sharp competition between the major capitalist powers, the rulers of the United States no longer feel compelled to make concessions to Blacks and other working people. Hence, the Democratic and Republican political parties, with few differences between them, have joined hands in a concerted effort to

dismantle past social gains. These attacks, which are affecting all working people, disproportionately affect Black people, as all forms of social injustice do within the United States.

Black community leaders committed to support to the politics of capitalism through the Democratic and Republican parties have been unable and unwilling to effectively protest the drive to cut back social services in the United States because of their continued stake in the systems two political parties. Because of its religious foundation, and its militant-sounding Black nationalist rhetoric, the Nation of Islam became a *de facto* vehicle through which Black protest against injustice has been channeled.

### What Will Come Out of the March?

The political standing of the Nation of Islam and of Minister Louis Farrakhan, its central leader,

has clearly been enhanced. The NOI made the decision to call the march, and allocated the resources to make it happen, long before anyone else decided to join in the activity. No one can take the credit for this success away from them.

This may not translate into membership in the NOI, however. A *Washington Post* survey of Black men at the march revealed that 87 percent had a favorable impression of Minister Farrakhan, but only 5 percent said they belonged to the Nation of Islam.

Despite the theme of "atonement," most participants did not regard theirs as a religious statement; rather, they saw this as a moment to improve relationships within their families and within the Black community. God was not part of the equation, according to the *Post*.

## Long Strike at Caterpillar

*Continued from page 17*

allow them due process. The chain-wide UAW vote was just under 80 percent. Regardless of the outcome of the return-to-work announcement and the media attitude that we have surrendered — the NO vote has sent a clear message to all concerned that we will go forward with our heads high and every continued intention to get CAT straightened out. We will win this struggle one way or another.

CAT initially requested the UAW to meet with them and agree that the Code of Conduct contained in the Proposal was part of a "tentative agreement." They also repeatedly wanted reassurance regarding the "unconditional" nature of our return. UAW representatives, through letters and personal contact, assured CAT that "unconditional" meant exactly that — no conditions. No conditions given or accepted. CAT then made noises to the effect that they might not allow our return without further assurances, but in the end they are calling our members back to work. I am to return Wednesday, 12/13. I was told I would have to attend an "orientation meeting" and that I was to arrive dressed in "proper apparel, ready to go to work." I was further admonished I was not to have "any disruptive union insignia upon my clothing, my lunch box, my vehicle or any other personal possession upon CAT property." So I don't know how long I will be there Wednesday.

This was signed Michael Legel, UAW Local 974.

## Civil Liberties and the Trial of Sheik Abdel Rahman

*Continued from page 7*

"mollify" the informer "who just before raising the subject of bombing targets is heard imploring Mr. Abdel Rahman for guidance on how to 'give you my allegiance to death.'" (*New York Times*, September 3, 1995.)

"The many other recordings of the cleric used as prosecution evidence contain no words of his advocating or discussing tactics for violence in the United States," *Times* reporter Joseph P. Fried goes on. "But like the speeches

In fact, many strongly rejected the "atonement" theme. They felt that they had nothing to atone for, but rather, that U.S. society has a great deal to atone for in its treatment of Black people over the hundreds of years since they were brought to America in slave ships.

The march may well spur an increase in Black political activism on a range of levels. In his address, Minister Farrakhan urged participants to join and become active in a range of Black community organizations. He did not try to insist that the only thing they could do would be to join the Nation of Islam, as he has done on other occasions.

The sense of dignity and pride and confidence demonstrated in this mobilization gave a message to Blacks and toward all who could see

that Black anger at continued racism will not go unprotected.

The march also gave a glimpse of the potential for even larger and more powerful protest in the future. The entire public school system of Camden, New Jersey, was shut down for the day because so many students and staff planned to attend. The school bus system of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was shut down for the day because so many of the drivers attended the march.

The social services cutbacks being imposed on the entire population make it incumbent on all who would fight the cuts to find ways to join hands for a strengthened and broader struggle. From this point of view, the Million Man March, whatever criticism one may have of it, must be viewed overall as a highly positive event. □

October 22, 1995

Readers may speculate as to whether Legel's response is typical of other strikers, or what the purpose of his independently proud attitude is, whether this is wise under the circumstances, and to what extent it reflects discussion and debate at the union hall among strikers prior to returning to work. Is all this part of the continuing UAW strategy to gain recognition and civil treatment of Caterpillar workers by the corporation?

### Broader Discussion in Union Movement

Broader discussion of this kind among interested parties in the union movement developed almost immediately after the announcement that the Caterpillar strike had ended. Harry Kelber, former teacher at Empire State Labor College in New York City and student of union politics and negotiating strategies, submitted the following opinions as part of his analysis, which appeared December 8 on the computer network conference called "labor newswire."

The media has created the public perception that the United Auto Workers suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Caterpillar. In reality, the company's executives have no cause for jubilation. Indeed, the end of the strike has left them with some vexing problems that did not exist during the 17-month walkout.

Kelber's argument rests on NLRB decisions, as he explained:

CAT managers have asserted that the rehiring of strikers may take weeks, possibly until the end of the year. The union position is that strikers must be restored to the company payroll as of December 3, the date when the UAW agreed to have its members return to work "unconditionally."

Then follows Kelber's clincher.

A Labor Board ruling states that "back pay shall begin from a date five days after the date on which each unfair labor striker unconditionally offers to return to work." There are at least two precedent-setting Labor Board cases in which the five-day limit on rehiring was imposed on a company when workers involved in an unfair labor practice strike agreed to return "unconditionally" to their jobs: Drug Package Company, Inc., of O'Fallon, Mo., vs. Local 505 Graphic Communications International Union, and S&E Enterprises, Inc., Las Vegas, Nevada, vs. Steelworkers.

### What Will the Bosses Do?

Kelber's advice to Caterpillar managers is: "If wise counsel prevails... they will decide to build a harmonious relationship with their employees based on mutual respect instead of past practices of intimidation and disciplinary action."

Whether it all works out this way will depend on the relationship of labor-management forces on the shop floor and the further course of the class struggle in this country. □

and sermons introduced, they contain his harsh views of American policy in the Middle East and of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and were offered to show that [the cleric] has the state of mind to commit the crimes charged."

Sheik Rahman was also being charged with plotting to assassinate Egyptian President Mubarak during his April 1993 visit to the U.S. The 59-year-old cleric, a longtime, ardent opponent of the Egyptian government, had been arrested several times in Egypt and was tried

there four times, including once when he was charged with plotting the 1981 assassination of murdered Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat. In each case, the cleric was acquitted.

The defense charged that the U.S. government had engineered this case, involving cooperation of police agencies at the highest levels, in order to help its loyal Middle Eastern prefect, Hosni Mubarak, get rid of one of that regime's most prominent opponents. The blind Sheik Rahman has a broad following not only in Egypt

but also in the United States. That the Egyptian regime is vulnerable to the sheik's criticisms is evidenced by the fact that mere possession in Egypt of a cassette of Sheik Rahman's speeches is a crime punishable by imprisonment for up to five years.

### The Question of the Mubarak Regime in Egypt

The sheik's opposition to the Egyptian regime is not based solely on the regime's "secular" nature but also on its oppressive and brutal policies, which have resulted in the deepening impoverishment and exploitation of the vast majority of the population. The policies of all the Egyptian regimes throughout the colonial and neo-colonial period have been fundamentally calculated to serve the interests of the domestic and foreign capitalists and the tiny local elite these regimes have served and on whom the regime, in turn, depended on for support against the masses. These policies have led to an unemployment rate of over 15 percent and conditions of degrading poverty. In fact, Sheik Rahman lost his sight when he was 10 months old due to the conditions of poverty and deprivation of the Egyptian people. As the *New York Times* put it: "Many Egyptian youngsters lose their sight because of parasites or disease." The ruling party responsible for the conditions has been in power for over a half a century.

Living conditions for the masses of Egypt's population (now numbering some 60 million) have worsened in recent years. First suffering from declining oil prices and revenues from the Suez Canal, Egypt's economy also suffered from the collapse of the Soviet Union, on which Egypt depended for military aid. The Egyptian ruling clique was subsequently forced to rely on imperialism for economic and military assistance. Its foreign debt — around \$50 billion in 1990 — has mounted dramatically. So did its interest payments, which continually sapped declining national and export income, leaving the government without funds for vital food imports.

The Egyptian government, like many others dependent on U.S. capitalist lenders, was caught in a bind: if countries do not pay the interest they owe on military loans from the United States — and Egypt owed larger and larger interest payments — they forfeit all U.S. assistance. Since Egypt had become dependent on U.S. assistance (of which over half has gone to the military to help keep the Arab masses down), Egypt was forced to default on other debts to pay the interest on U.S. military loans, thus, ironically, rendering it even more dependent on U.S. imperialism to meet its needs.

That, incidentally, is how the U.S. government was able to obtain Egypt's support for the war against Iraq in 1990: in exchange for Egypt's support, the U.S. "forgave" some \$8 billion of Egypt's debts.

### Worsening Conditions in Egypt

The privatization of large state-owned sectors of the economy has been accelerated under Mubarak to meet the requirements of imperial-

ist lenders. This has resulted in growing domestic unrest. These lenders, primarily the International Monetary Fund, universally demand reliance on "the market" and an "austerity" budget, which means not only privatization of all government enterprises, but drastic cuts in all government subsidies, including for vital services and food products. Because of the scarcity of goods and services, the cost of living shoots up while wages remain fixed. A tiny part of the population profits while the rest suffer from worsening malnutrition and neglect. The food riots of 1977, had already signaled the growth of popular opposition to government policies, which only expanded as the economic and social crises worsened.

At least since the 1970s, the Egyptian government — with assistance from foreign governments, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and their wealthy ruling elites, as well as various U.S. government agencies — has been backing various Islamic currents to counter and use against the secular pro-socialist or anti-capitalist activists and worker militants. On some occasions the Egyptian government even used Sheik Rahman against socialist activists by circulating statements signed by him declaring socialists "infidels." As the economic conditions have worsened over the years, there has been a proliferation of radical Islamic currents, many of which were strongly opposed to the government. The assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981, allegedly by a radical Islamic breakaway group within the armed forces, marked the beginning of a wave of repression aimed at such groups with hundreds arrested, including Sheik Rahman, who was acquitted of all charges.

Although the current regime, headed by Hosni Mubarak, represents the interests of only a tiny rich and privileged minority, the thoroughgoing political repression has severely crippled efforts to organize resistance within the working class. Although there were heroic struggles by textile, rail, steel, and other workers in the late 1980s, the government responded with violence. There is little sign that the situation has improved since November 1989 when Samia Hussein wrote the following in *International Viewpoint*:

...the organization of the workers' movement remains very weak. Deprived of independent trade union organizations since 1952, mistrustful of political organizations because of the undemocratic methods of the CP [Communist Party] and its 'defeatist' strategy in past struggles, subjected to the pressure of a police intelligence well versed in the practice of infiltrating clandestine organizations, the workers movement is not sufficiently structured to gain a favorable relationship of forces vis-à-vis the state.

(Samia Hussein's article is recommended to readers as an excellent, detailed account of the Egyptian economic and political situation, shedding important light on the background to this trial in New York.)

### Repression of Fundamentalists Aimed Against All

The repression now aimed at the Islamic fundamentalists has been frequently used against worker activists, strikers, organizers, and political voices from the workers' movements, who have long lived under conditions of a state of emergency police regime.

As the economic crisis deepened, many workers emigrated, sending what they earned abroad home to the families they had to leave behind, but even these opportunities have been curtailed as worldwide recession hit the oil fields of the region. The organized workers, who should be leading the opposition to the regime, unable to organize effectively even in their own interests, have been totally unable to organize to assist the unemployed and oppressed, despite periodic militant outbreaks.

Since 1981, antigovernment violence, apparently by sectors of the Islamic movement, has intensified. It is aimed at, among other targets, police, security, and government personnel and foreign tourists. The latter has been particularly damaging to the government because the economy has become heavily dependent on the tourist industry. Hundreds have been killed. The government has responded with what the *New York Times* has called a "blood-letting." Over the past two years, the government has been at war against its own people. Heavy battalions of police and other military units launch nighttime raids into poor and working-class neighborhoods, where government opponents are allegedly finding sanctuary. Hundreds have been killed in such attacks. Tens of thousands have been arrested without being charged with any crime, held incommunicado, and horribly tortured, including women, children, and the elderly. Many of the arrested have died under interrogation. Amnesty International says that "the Egyptian authorities have handed the police an 'official license to kill with impunity' all suspected militants" (*New York Times*, April 1, 1993).

### Mubarak Regime's Use of "Counter-Insurgency"

In addition, the Mubarak regime has instituted emergency draconian "counter-insurgency" measures which make even association with "terrorist groups" a crime punishable by hanging. Hundreds of defendants have been hauled before military tribunals in groups held in cages and swiftly convicted and sentenced. At least seventy death sentences have been handed down and fifty have been carried out.

As the *New York Times* put it (July 18, 1993), "for all this force the Government has employed, it has not addressed underlying issues like poverty, unemployment and limits on political expression that [one Western diplomat] said 'had pushed many young men into this extremist movement.'" Since 1993 the Mubarak government has only intensified and broadened its repression, moving to shut down and destroy any Muslim or other group that appears at all politically inclined, with a brutality that only inspires deeper popular hatred toward the

regime. As the *New York Times* stated on April 1, 1993, "If the crackdown fails, the stability of the state is in jeopardy." This, of course, would be a nightmare for the IMF and the imperialist financial interests that are extracting super-profits under the current regime.

### The Context of the New York Trial

It is in this context that the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center took place, with the subsequent police measures against Muslim activists in the United States, including Sheik Rahman.

It is important to note that the sheik had previously worked at least in tandem with the CIA. In the late 1970s and in the '80s, he helped recruit forces and raise funds among foreign Muslims in Egypt and elsewhere for the CIA-backed guerilla war to overthrow the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan. Sheik Rahman, who had friends among wealthy Saudis, made trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan to encourage the guerilla fighters. In recent years, with the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the CIA curtailed its covert support for the Afghani-based mujahadeen.

### Sheik Rahman's CIA Connection

In the early 1990s, opposition to the Egyptian government among Muslim forces had transformed the political climate in Egypt and Sheik Rahman, although acquitted of formal charges, lived under virtual house arrest. While this obviously complicated relations between Rahman and the CIA, the CIA, evidently, assisted the sheik in relocating to the United States. It is otherwise difficult to imagine how he could have been admitted. In 1987, because of his anti-government role in Egypt, from which he secretly escaped, his name had been placed on a U.S. "watch list" of 2.1 million foreigners barred from entering the United States.

All the defendants tried with Sheik Rahman in the New York trial had worshipped in mosques in Brooklyn or Jersey City where the sheik preached and several of them may at some point have helped raise funds or even recruit for the Afghan rebels. However, beyond that, they had neither the skills nor the financial wherewithal to organize the type of conspiracy the prosecution charged them with.

As the late civil liberties attorney William Kunstler, once connected with the case, described it, the FBI agent Salem "planned the whole operation. . . He signified what targets they were going to hit, he rented the places, he spent the \$30 on the drums [where the supposedly explosive concoction was mixed], then he got these poor slobs to mix the stuff." Kunstler said that Salem had paid for all this with FBI funds. "My client [Nosair] wouldn't have \$300 if his life depended on it. He peddles clothing for a living. Where do you think he got it? From the sheik? Please!" (*New York Times*, June 30, 1993.)

It is obvious that the U.S. government targeted Sheik Rahman to help its trusted regime in Cairo. It is not so clear why it undertook this elaborate and expensive government conspiracy against the other defendants. However, this U.S. government conspiracy is a reality, and it is alarming that the jury in the case condoned it.

### Other Cases of Government Entrapment

In another case, that of Randy Weaver, a white separatist who was a victim of an FBI sting operation, the jury did not cooperate with the prosecution. Weaver was first the victim of a government-sponsored entrapment effort and when that fizzled, his wife and son were murdered by FBI agents when they attacked Weaver's home at Ruby Hill, Idaho, in August 1992. The government charged Weaver with murder, when one of the FBI snipers attacking Weaver's home was killed as Weaver tried to defend himself and his family from the attack. The FBI had not identified themselves to him when they attacked. The jury in that case acquitted Weaver and condemned the government's entire way of proceeding in the case. This verdict has prompted a series of ongoing Congressional hearings that have clearly exposed how the FBI plot against Weaver led to their agent's death as well as the murder of Weaver's wife and son. Weaver and his children have now sued the government for millions in damages.

In 1995, the U.S. government was also forced to retreat from its case against Malcolm X's daughter Qubilah Shabazz who a government agent had tried to entrap into a plot to assassinate Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan.

The attorneys in the case against Sheik Rahman and the others, including noted civil liberties attorney Abdeen Jabara, have many grounds for appeals, including the very constitutionality of the 19th-century law under which the defendants were convicted. In the meantime, all the defendants continue to be held in harsh, maximum security conditions and the sheik — who, in addition to being blind, is very ill with diabetes — has been transferred to a prison in the Midwest, far from his supporters and the attorneys who handled his case.

### Cause for Alarm

The fact is, however, that the government has so far succeeded in carrying out this expensive and elaborate entrapment program to eliminate targeted individuals. This is cause for alarm for all who defend civil liberties, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Of course, repressive regimes the world over try to make it a crime to call for their overthrow. Egypt's repressive regime takes things further than that, even going after and torturing to death lawyers who dare to defend the accused. Sheik Rahman advocates the overthrow of the Egyptian and U.S. governments

and the defeat of Zionism, because of their brutal repression of millions of Palestinians and other Arabs. Many people in Egypt and elsewhere undoubtedly find these sentiments understandable, even laudable. That was the sheik's message, and it reached far and wide. That was what the prosecution considered him "guilty" of, because they submitted his speeches and sermons on these themes as "evidence."

With the conviction of the ten defendants in this "terrorism" case, must all who call for the overthrow of the vicious Mubarak regime and those who call for socialist revolution in Egypt or the United States also be afraid? The U.S. government's police agencies are still busy spinning new cases against other defendants who are being caught in the U.S. government's international "dragnet" and implicated in Sheik Rahman's "conspiracies." The U.S. government is trying to link all such cases with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

The three defendants in that case, sentenced to 240 years of imprisonment, were also convicted on the basis of highly dubious "evidence". The same FBI operative, Emad A. Salem, was also the key prosecution witness in that trial and had helped prepare the bomb that was used in the explosion (*New York Times*, November 8, 1993). It seems very likely that the bombing of the World Trade Center itself — in which six people were killed and which served as the pretext for a worldwide police operation costing millions of dollars followed by two costly "anti-terrorism" trials — was a result of an elaborate attempt by the U.S. government to entrap and frame up a targeted set of people.

### Time to Protest

Despite the government shenanigans in this case, there has been little outcry from civil liberties supporters, even though some of the country's most prominent civil liberties attorneys have served on the defense teams. However, it is obvious that if the government can get away with convicting these defendants by using informers to entrap them and portraying their expression of disapproved ideas as "conspiracy," it will use these techniques on others.

It is time to condemn the entire set of procedures the government has used in these cases. A million dollars of public funds were wasted on a plot by a government informer (better described as an *agent provocateur*) to blow up public facilities. There should be massive public protest over the fact that the government consciously set out to entrap people simply because they effectively espouse ideas the U.S. government opposes.

It is also time to publicize the repression of workers and their allies in Egypt and call for an end to all U.S. aid to the murderous Egyptian regime! □

October 28, 1995

Continued from Inside Front Cover

ary socialist movement, such as James P. Cannon and Farrell Dobbs, as well as Leon Trotsky's analysis of the meaning of the labor party slogan — as a central transitional demand in the effort to fundamentally change the existing social and economic system.

### Readers' Help Needed

We have outlined what we want to do; we ask for your help in this effort. Help build the circulation of this magazine among labor party supporters and contribute your ideas and suggestions, your energy and resources.

This is the first time there has been a serious effort to establish a labor party in the framework of the industrial union movement in the U.S. — that is, since the founding of the CIO. Back in 1924, when a Farmer-Labor Party was

created, only to quickly pass away, there were no industrial unions. In the Debs era and in the early 1920s, the trade union movement did not exist in its present form.

There are those who say that a labor party in the United States would become just another reformist party that would help to shore up the existing system, as the Labour Party ended up doing in Britain, Canada, or Australia. But a labor party here would not arise in the same conditions as in those countries. It is emerging now out of a crisis of U.S. society and of world capitalism that is not allowing any leeway for reform or moderation of the system. A labor party in the U.S., if it is to come into existence at all, will have to radically confront this declining capitalist system, which claims not to have any resources left to meet people's needs.

This system still manages, however, to increase the resources of the small percentage who own most of the wealth in America and who are expanding their influence and control around the world.

The LPA organizers are certain they are going to have the kind of convention they want, one with solid backing among important unions. This is the time to act, to support and build this effort with all the resources, experience, and commitment we can contribute. The LPA founding convention will help change the way the organized working class sees itself and thinks of itself. All the issues we have traditionally talked about in the revolutionary socialist movement are going to be much more relevant in the framework of class consciousness that a labor party will help create. □

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Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

## In Defense of Marxism

### 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.

