

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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Who We Are

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

The F.I.T. was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. Since our formation we have fought to win the party back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and for our readmission to the SWP. In addition our members are active in the U.S. class struggle.

At the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, the appeals of the F.I.T. and other expelled members were upheld, and the congress delegates demanded, by an overwhelming majority, that the SWP readmit those who had been purged. So far the SWP has refused to take any steps to comply with this decision.

"All members of the party must begin to *study*, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to *study* both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else's say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand."

—V.I. Lenin, "The Party Crisis," Jan. 19, 1921.

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A PROGRAM FOR U.S. LABOR Debate and Lessons from the Hormel Strike

by Frank Lovell

Last July, after losing control of their local union (P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers) to the International officialdom, the strikers at the Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota, formed a new union—the North American Meatpackers Union (NAMPU). They petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for a certification election. The NLRB received their petitions, but they are still waiting for the election. No date is yet set.

On August 28, the International officials of the UFCW announced that they had reached a settlement with Hormel, covering workers in eight of the company's plants. The contract is company dictated and conforms in wages to the industry pattern, reaching \$10.70 per hour in September 1988. (In 1980, workers at the Austin, Minnesota, plant were making \$10.69.)

Debate Over the Strike

In the wake of the settlement, the debate about the merits of the P-9 strike built up steam. This debate is not limited to the various groups in the radical movement or the left wing in the unions that initially supported the strike. The employing class continues to take a keen interest in the strategy and tactics of the strikers. In a Labor Day editorial, September 1, the *New York Times* comments, "Organized labor is in deep trouble on Labor Day 1986. For most unions, however, it's still business as usual. The economy has been remade by deregulation, automation and imports. Rather than facing such realities, unions lunge for protectionist laws to hold back the tide or circle the wagons and battle it out to the end, as happened with the suicidal strike of Hormel meatpackers in Minnesota."

What the *Times* fears is the end which might come about if the union movement as a whole embarked on a course similar to that of P-9. It advises labor to take the route of the GM/Saturn concessions pact with the United Auto Workers; to endorse the School Reform Program which eliminates teachers' jobs and introduces incentive pay, following the example of Shanker and the American Federation of Teachers. "No less is required . . . if labor is once again to lead," says the *Times*. What they are talking about is the leadership of the Judas goat that leads the sheep to slaughter. That pretty well sums up the attitude of the employers today—at least those who are willing to sign contracts with the unions at all.

A senior vice president and chief lawyer for Hormel, Charles Nyberg, said Hormel was *more* willing to negotiate with the UFCW than with Jim Guyette, president of P-9, because the International had a more reasonable approach to the talks. "With the UFCW it was not an all-or-nothing proposition," Nyberg said. "But they are hard bargainers. This is no sweetheart contract."

The labor bureaucrats themselves are likewise anxious to dispel the notion that their "concession bargaining" is nothing more than the signing of sweetheart contracts. The *AFL-CIO News* (September 6) reported the Hormel contract in a story that was headlined: "UFCW recovers lost wages at Hormel and Oscar Mayer." The story reports that the UFCW succeeded in "returning the base labor rate to \$10.70 an hour by September 1988."

It also says that the settlement carries with it "a guarantee that Local P-9 members who remained on strike after the plant reopened earlier this year will have seniority-based preference as jobs become available at the plant." This is made up, a lie. There is nothing like this in the contract.

The same story reports that the UFCW has filed suit in Alameda, California, to block a buy-out of Safeway Stores there. Safeway owes its employees \$750 million in wages, vacation pay, and severance pay—according to the UFCW. They hope Safeway can become profitable again and pay the back wages. This deep concern for the financial future of the employers was expressed by Lewie Anderson, the UFCW vice president who negotiated the settlement at Hormel. He said, "There's just so much you can do. We believe that as business expands, [the P-9 strikers] will get their jobs back. That Austin plant has the capacity for 2,000 to 2,500 jobs."

The Bureaucrats' Solution

This is one issue in the debate within the radical movement as well: Can the union movement protect its members if the system cannot provide jobs? And if it can and should, how will it get started?

The AFL-CIO bureaucrats such as Lane Kirkland argue that concession-bargaining is, and must be, labor's basic strategic approach at this juncture. It is labor's duty to help resolve the problems of the capitalist system.

But Kirkland hasn't a clue as to what's really wrong with the system: "Today we suffer from

the consequences of one-way foreign trade—and the steadfast refusal of the Reagan Administration to speak up for the interests of the American working people." That's what he told the Steelworkers' convention on August 25. He went on: "Unions understand the need for cooperation where it is essential. We only ask that employers in turn cooperate with us. Unfortunately," he said, "we find too few examples of the latter form of cooperation."

This is true. Kirkland has been unable to find any segment of the employing class that will endorse his demands for protective tariffs. He pretends not to know that the "cheap goods" imported to this country are the product—in large part—of U.S. capitalist investment abroad.

The Communist Party

The so-called radicals—including the Communist Party and other Stalinoids—accept the premise that the well-being of the working class depends on the economic prosperity of the bosses, and that one of the ways to get this is through labor-management cooperation. The difference is that the Stalinists and the self-styled "labor left" argue, against the entrenched bureaucrats, that an aggressive campaign against givebacks, employing the proper strategy, will in the long run show the employers the evil of their ways and force them (once again) to collaborate with the unions.

In the case of the CP, they have carried this approach to the extreme so that they now find themselves in the camp of the UFCW against the P-9 strikers. The CP's line is "labor unity at all cost." A *People's Daily World* staff writer, Bill Dennison, got so carried away with this that he wrote the following about the P-9 strike:

It has exposed the "divisiveness of 'phoney left' organizations centered around a group called 'Rank and File Against Concessions,'" he said. "They used the legitimate struggle of the Hormel workers to launch a campaign to split and undermine other meatpacking locals, the UFCW and a number of other unions.

"The ultimate aim apparently is to break away a section of the trade union movement. Coming at a time of unprecedented attacks against unions by the monopoly corporations and when unity is essential, many view their activities as suspicious at best and at worst a conscious part of the Reagan-era union busting."

This slander is a small reminder of what Stalinism really is and how it functions, an echo from the past when it was an influential political current in the union movement. This time it netted Dennison a temporary writing assignment on the new *Unionist*, put out in Austin by the UFCW.

Supporters of the P-9 strike—and the organizers of the North American Meatpackers Union—respond that far from "splitting the union movement" they are trying to prevent the atomization,

the shattering, the disorganization of the union movement. This certainly does not mean that the new meatpackers union seeks to replace the present union movement, either. It is not a "dual" union. The *program* of this new union, if and when it is finally and properly formulated, can serve as an essential feature of a genuine class-struggle left wing within the AFL-CIO.

Time for a Program of Change

There are growing signs that the time is ripe for a program of change in the U.S. union movement. The year-long Austin strike and the broad support it received from workers across the country could not have happened four or five years ago. There is a general restiveness in the unions, and a growing dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy. Increasingly there is interest and participation in the affairs of the unions by their memberships. In Detroit this year 165,000 turned out for a Labor Day parade; and 50,000 marched in Chicago, where Lane Kirkland spoke. (Perhaps if Kirkland hadn't been present, the Chicago turnout might have matched Detroit's.) We also see, increasingly, genuine rank-and-file movements around important issues—such as union democracy.

These changing attitudes—the new militancy and advances in political consciousness—indicate that the North American Meatpackers Union has a chance to stay alive and make a valuable contribution. Its future will depend largely upon the kind of program it develops *for the union movement as a whole*. This can evolve in collaboration and consultation with other left-wing forces in the unions such as New Directions in the UAW, or Teamsters for a Democratic Union. The NAMPU has a chance to begin to influence the development of a genuine class-struggle program for U.S. labor's left wing.

Basic Planks

Most of the discussion within the unions—in particular during strikes like that of the P-9 workers or the Watsonville Cannery workers in California—has been about strategy and tactics. This, of course, is essential for any union leadership engaged in strike action. But beyond this there is the basic social program of the union movement. What should it be?

There are a few, main points which become very clear in light of what has happened in Austin and in the course of other battles over the last few years:

- Democracy in the unions. The better understanding of what this means in practice may be the most important contribution of the P-9 strike. There the membership not only *made the decisions*, but mobilized their own forces to carry out those decisions. This is the essence of union democracy

(working class democracy as opposed to the bourgeois variety).

● Independence of the workers from the bosses. The P-9 strike certainly contributed to a better understanding of this concept. In this respect the very first decision of the Local P-9 leadership and membership was the most important and far-reaching: to *fight* Hormel and not appeal to its goodwill; to organize the struggle and carry it through to its conclusion; to win back their rights as workers.

(Of course, they had to conduct this struggle according to the rules prescribed by the labor laws of this country, in particular by Taft-Hartley, and by the established practices of the union movement. But in doing this they advanced the consciousness of themselves and their supporters to the point where they can now challenge some of the unjust laws and most of the self-defeating union practices.)

● Mass unemployment dictates the demand for *jobs*. It is the responsibility of the union movement to present a program to create jobs, to put the unemployed to work at union wages. This can be done through a public works program to provide the many social necessities which are now sacrificed to the war budget, as well as through a reduction of the workweek with no loss in weekly pay so the available work is divided equitably among those who need jobs.

● Defend the union movement. This means organizing legal defense committees to launch a major public campaign to defend workers and union leaders victimized in the courts and on the picket lines. But it also means the beginning of a campaign to *educate*—both the general public and the union movement—about the necessity for workers' self-defense against police and national guard attacks.

● Working class political action. The unions must begin to prepare the way for the organization of a labor party as the result of the struggle for jobs—a political struggle—and through running union-sponsored candidates as independents in elections. Again, a major campaign to educate and explain the need for a new political party, one which would advocate a government run by and in the interests of working people, a government which would not call out the national guard to protect scabs or break up picket lines, must be begun by the left wing of the labor movement.

This modest five-point program is a place to begin our discussion. Other points will have to be added as we go along. The militants who have today formed the NAMPU, who exist in a less well organized form in many other unions across the country, need to adopt and begin to advocate this program, or one like it, in order to meet the goals which they are setting for themselves and in order to live up to the promise which the current wave of militancy in the U.S. labor movement holds out. ■

The Trenton Siege By the Army of Unoccupation

By George Breitman
Introduction by Frank Lovell

50th Anniversary Reissue!

"The Trenton Siege by the Army of Unoccupation" relates (and records) a dramatic moment in the struggles of the unemployed for their meager relief handouts during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Those were grim days and millions of unemployed workers led grim and desperate lives. But among the organized unemployed many were capable of humor and they experienced moments of triumph, as can be learned from the funny things that happened in Trenton fifty years ago.

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THE BIPARTISAN 'TAX REFORM' A Giveaway for the Rich

by Tom Barrett

In George Orwell's *1984*, the government of Oceania announces to its people that it is raising the chocolate ration to twenty-five grams. What Big Brother's spokespeople do not say is that the previous ration had been thirty grams. In a similar fashion the Reagan administration and a bipartisan coalition in Congress has announced that "most Americans" are going to get a tax cut.

Certainly when one looks at the provisions of the House-Senate compromise, which has now been passed by both houses, and signed by the president, one can conclude only one thing: the politicians have cut taxes for working people for the presidential election year and will begin the process of raising them thereafter. Many, if not most, unionized workers will find themselves paying taxes at the same rate as multimillionaires, 28 percent—on income earned in 1988. (The cutoff taxable income for the top rate is \$29,750 for a joint return, which is far from affluence, as any worker attempting to support a family on it can testify.) They will, however, be filling out their tax returns in early 1989, after the presidential election is over.

What's worse, a great many of the adjustments, credits, and deductions which have been available to working class taxpayers would be taken away by this "reform." The rich—whose taxes will be increased in 1987 but will be cut nearly in half in 1988—will still be able to put their money in tax shelters whose minimum investment is far out of the reach of the working man and woman.

War Spending—The Purpose of the Income Tax

There should be no misunderstanding about the purpose of the income tax being imposed on working people: it is to pay for war. The tax—which required a constitutional amendment to become law—was enacted in 1913 as the U.S. was joining in the imperialist division of the world. However, at first the tax was not imposed on incomes as low as those earned by industrial workers and small farmers. World War II changed that.

The extension of the tax to working class incomes was the result of an agreement between President Franklin Roosevelt and the trade union leadership. The explicit purpose of this agreement was financing the war effort, and it was agreed that when the war was over the floor income for taxability would be raised again to exempt workers and small farmers. As every American who

has ever held a job is painfully aware, that agreement was not kept. The end of World War II only led to preparations for war against the Soviet Union; after the Chinese revolution the cold war turned hot in Korea, and, of course, within a decade of the end of direct U.S. intervention in Korea, the United States was well on its way to war in Vietnam. The Pentagon could not do without the revenue it got from the working people's taxes. The income tax became permanent (as did the draft until 1973) along with the war economy.

The Great Swamp of the Internal Revenue Code

Over the decades the Internal Revenue Code has undergone thousands of modifications, usually to benefit one or another industry or corporation. A whole branch of the legal profession, specializing in taxation alone, has developed since World War II. Journalist Ferdinand Lundberg, in his book *The Rich and the Super-Rich*, documents an amendment to the tax code which Congress passed for the benefit of a *single wealthy individual!* The deductions and loopholes by which the wealthy evade taxation are scandalous; some of the more indefensible (but not necessarily biggest) loopholes are closed in the new tax legislation.

A number of deductions and credits are available to working people. These make tax preparation more complicated and cumbersome—giving rise to a whole consumer-oriented tax preparation industry, starting with the well-known H&R Block. Working class families have been able to reduce their tax bill by deducting the interest on home mortgages and consumer loans, their union dues, and sales and property taxes. Child-care expenses can be claimed as a tax credit, and working couples can claim a credit designed to offset the "marriage tax," the forcing of two-income families into a higher tax bracket. In the name of "simplification," a number of these tax benefits will be taken away from working class taxpayers. Congress has lumped the worker's deduction of his or her union dues with the executive's deduction of entertainment expenses—the notorious "three-martini lunch."

The Real Objectives of 'Tax Reform'

On August 16 a House-Senate conference committee came to an agreement, resolving the differences between the tax reform passed by the respective houses of Congress. What they had to resolve were differences in priorities among the capitalist

politicians. All of the concerns are real ones faced by the entire ruling class. Which concerns to address first is the question on which these individual members of Congress disagreed. Some of their objectives contradict others, and each proposed solution has a political overhead.

The overriding concern—in fact the question of the epoch—is inflation. Though it may seem that Reagan's administration has solved the problem, this is only the appearance. Today's low inflation rates are caused primarily by the drop in oil prices. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' agreement in July to limit production may mean that oil prices have bottomed out; inflation rates will certainly rise as oil prices rise.

Inflation's immediate cause—which the oil glut has temporarily masked—is government deficits, and the Reagan administration has not even begun to address this problem. In fact, the Reagan administration has run up a bigger deficit in its six years than the combined deficits of every preceding administration, from George Washington to Jimmy Carter. The primary cause of the deficit is war spending, and Reagan will not tolerate any reduction in that.

What happens when the government engages in deficit spending? The money has to be borrowed, mainly from private sources: banks, institutional investors, and wealthy individuals. When the government issues bonds and notes to cover its revenue shortfall it competes in the credit market with private borrowers. Consequently, banks are able to charge higher interest rates because there is a greater demand for the money available to be borrowed. Business is less able to expand because it has to compete with government for funds, and the overall effect is recessionary.

However, the government—through the Federal Reserve—can try to overcome the recessionary trend by making more money available to be borrowed. It can increase the money supply by lowering its discount rate (the interest rate it charges to banks). When "the Fed" does this, banks borrow more money and thus have more to lend. More money is in circulation, without necessarily an increase in goods and services on which to spend it. The overall effect is inflationary.

Deficit spending combined with "loose-money" policies at the Fed puts more money into the economy, creating the phenomenon of "too much money chasing too few goods." For nearly two decades economists have been calling on Washington to enact policies to reduce "aggregate demand," which is economist jargon for the working class's standard of living. Other economists and politicians, the so-called "supply-siders," have been calling on government to reduce taxes on business and wealthy individuals to stimulate investment and economic growth. This tax bill begins to accomplish both goals by shifting the tax burden from the rich to the working class.

The compromise reached between the House and Senate versions of the bill essentially follows the House of Representatives' plan for 1987, then the Senate's plan for 1988 and thereafter. Taxpayers will be preparing their 1987 returns in early 1988, the year of the presidential election. Working people will pay less on 1987 earnings, and the rich, assuming they have not hidden their income away, will pay more. As any capitalist politician worth his foot-long cigar knows, there is no vote-getter more effective than a tax reduction. However, money earned in 1988—which will be reported in 1989—will be taxed at a higher rate for working people. The rich, on the other hand, will see their taxes cut nearly in half.

Two Hypothetical Families

Let's look at two sample families. Family #1 is a working class family with two children. Their gross annual income is \$26,325, based on one worker, a union member, earning \$13.50/hour.

They own a home with a mortgage, and they carry a home-improvement loan and an auto loan. In addition, like most working class families, they have run their credit cards up a bit, and pay finance charges on them. The worker pays \$37.50 per month in union dues. They gave \$10 to the local First Aid squad. They will itemize their deductions on their 1986 return, which will total \$10,887.19. The standard deduction, \$3,670 on a joint return, is subtracted from the total because the federal tax tables have already factored it in. The itemized deductions therefore reduce their taxable income by \$7,217.19. With two children the family's exemptions add up to \$4,160, leaving them with taxable income of \$14,947.81. The tax on that amount is \$1,507.75.

Now, let's have a look at the tax on the same family, with the same income, in 1987. Some deductions have been lost. Union dues, for example, are only deductible in the amount exceeding 2% of adjusted gross income. Sales taxes are no longer deductible. Consumer interest is being phased out as a deduction, but in 1987 65% of consumer interest remains deductible. (By 1990 none of it will be deductible.) The standard deduction is no longer figured into the tax rates. Consequently, the itemized deductions reduce taxable income by \$9,079.86, based on the 1987 law.

An adjustment to benefit families with two incomes, designed to offset the so-called "marriage tax," is repealed effective in 1987 (this does not affect our hypothetical family but will severely affect the high proportion of working class families with two wage earners). However, the personal exemption is increased to \$1,900. Their tax, under the 1987 law, amounts to \$1,393.07. This represents a modest tax cut of \$114.68.

What happens in 1988? First, deductions are reduced. The phase-out of consumer interest continues. In 1987, 65% of consumer interest was

deductible. In 1988, only 40% is deductible. Consequently, our example family's deductions are reduced to \$8,041.07.

Exemptions are increased by \$50, to \$1,950, leaving the family with taxable income of \$10,925.93—over \$800 more than in 1987. Their taxes go up to \$1,638.89, a nearly \$250 tax increase over 1987, and a \$131.14 increase over 1986.

Now let's look at the figures for a wealthy family, whose income was \$200,000 in salary, plus \$10,000 in interest. This family also has two children, and owns a more expensive home with higher property taxes and a higher mortgage payment. Their state income tax is, of course, higher. Deductions total \$23,855, which includes \$450 in professional association dues, deductible under the same provision as union dues. After subtracting the standard deduction, taxable income is reduced by \$20,315. This family's income tax comes to \$72,691 under the 1986 law.

In 1987, this family will get a tax increase, to \$83,206.25. But in 1988 this rich family gets a tax cut, to \$46,729. That is a reduction of over \$20,000 from 1986 and over \$30,000 from 1987.

Medium-income taxpayers who report taxable income under approximately \$29,500 in 1988 and 1987 will pay more taxes in 1988 than in 1987. Six-figure incomes will pay less. Genuinely poor families will to a great extent be removed from the tax rolls by the new law. The increase in personal exemptions and standard deduction will essentially mean that a single working mother with two or more children will not be taxed on anything less than a \$10,000 income. The figures are not yet available for 1987 on the rates for a single person filing as head-of-household; however, in 1988 a single mother with two children would have to earn \$11,000 before she would pay income tax.

Corporate Taxes

How the new law will affect business taxes is not as clear, mainly because different businesses will be affected quite differently. In general, rates are reduced, but some loopholes are closed. A number of tax breaks relating to real estate, for example, will no longer be available. However, even this segment of the business community is joining the rest of the capitalist class in its support of the new tax bill. In their quarterly letter to shareholders, the executive officers of Hutton Advantaged Properties, a real-estate limited partnership (designed to take advantage of current tax laws), while complaining about the provisions of the new bill closing some real estate loopholes, nevertheless state their belief that the overall effect of the new bill will be positive.

As might be expected, military industries will do very well under the new legislation. War producers defer their taxes until their government contracts are completed, a period of several years. They will be taxed at considerably lower

rates on that money—essentially their tax cut has been made retroactive.

A Spoonful of Sugar . . .

The working masses are quite conscious of their own interests when it comes to taxation. Consequently, the ruling class is proceeding cautiously to shift the tax burden. Once the new regressive rates are in place there will be less attention paid when greater tax rates are imposed on workers' incomes. Furthermore, excise taxes, which the Reagan administration has already raised, could be raised again, and some economists, such as "neoliberal" Lester Thurow of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, are calling for a "Value Added Tax," essentially a national sales tax.

The government will without doubt, for the reasons stated earlier, increase taxes in the future. The current tax law, with its whopping tax cut for the rich, is at best "revenue neutral." It does not address the ruling class's need to control the federal deficit. Former budget director David Stockman, who has renounced the "Reagan revolution" but not his right-wing political ideology, says in his book *The Triumph of Politics*, "We can afford to be the arsenal of the free world and have our modest welfare state, too. The only thing we cannot afford is to continue pretending we do not have to finance it out of current taxation." To impose higher taxes on the working class in the future will be a lot less difficult after the 1986 "tax reform" than before. And, in fact, the debate has already begun, with Democratic Representative Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois, one of the architects of the tax bill, calling for tax increases in the near future.

A Socialist Approach to Taxation

In 1977 the Socialist Workers Party ran Richard Ariza for governor of New Jersey, in a campaign whose central issue was the newly imposed state income tax. The SWP campaigned around the slogan "Tax the Rich, Not Working People." That is the slogan which SWP candidates should raise now.

Socialists' first demand in response to the income-tax issue is to eliminate the original cause of the income tax: the war budget. None of that money is used for "defense" of the American people; its purpose is aggression against other countries, such as Nicaragua and Libya. War spending is inherently inflationary: it pays wages but does not increase in the least the amount of consumer goods which those wages can buy. Of course, the scandalous robbery of the taxpayers by the war-producers (the \$400 monkey wrenches and \$1,000 toilet seats) only compounds the problem.

The second demand is an end to taxation of working people's incomes, either directly through

the income tax or indirectly through sales taxes and similar levies. A good formula would be to take the highest union scale in the United States and make that the cutoff point: any income less than or equal to that amount would not be taxed. A working couple would need to earn twice that amount before they had to pay. How the rich taxed themselves would be their business; however, we demand that they provide the money for public works, unemployment compensation, aid to families with dependent children, social security, and other programs which benefit those made needy because of capitalist greed. If that adds up to a confiscatory tax on all income above the highest union scale, then so be it.

Though the current law is less regressive than the "reform," socialists in no way support it. Though the 1987 law reduces workers' taxes slightly and increases slightly the taxes on high incomes, socialists do not support that either, nor do we have any time for the totally regressive two-rate tax law to take effect in 1988. The American revolutionary slogan "No taxation without representation" has been grossly misused in recent years; however, it is applicable in this case: this government is a capitalist government, which does not represent workers. As long as the United States has a government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich, revolutionary socialists demand, "tax the rich, not working people." ■



VOTE FOR CANDIDATES OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

In Massachusetts, New York, West Virginia, Ohio, and other states from coast to coast this November, many working people will have a chance to cast their ballots for some candidates who are a bit different from the usual non-choice we are offered by the Democrats and Republicans. The candidates of the Socialist Workers Party have been campaigning for the U.S. to get out of Central America, to end complicity with the racist apartheid regime in South Africa, for the funding of human needs, and in defense of civil liberties here at home. They have walked the picket line with workers fighting for a better life—such as the Hormel strikers in Austin, Minnesota, and the TWA flight attendants; they have marched with the National Organization for Women last spring in the demonstrations to defend reproductive rights, and have participated in other battles both nationally and locally.

The kind of program of action advocated by the SWP candidates is what is needed today by

working people, Blacks, Latinos, women, and others oppressed by this exploitive system. But most important, a vote for the SWP candidates is a way to demonstrate our opposition to the two parties of big business which completely dominate the electoral arena.

While the SWP candidates deserve the votes of all those who are looking for a working class political alternative, support to their campaign is especially incumbent on those who are fighting actively and consciously to bring about fundamental social change in the United States. In the absence of any movement by the representatives of organized labor to provide a political alternative, urging a vote for the candidates of the SWP is the best way we can let the politically alert workers of this country know that at least *some* of us are not going to be fooled by the slick campaigns of the so-called "friends of labor"—the liberal Democrats. ■

The following is taken from a leaflet issued by the Ohio SWP Campaign:

BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICA - NOT NICARAGUA STOP THE U.S. WAR IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Bring all U.S. troops home from Central America and the Caribbean. U.S. hands off the Philippines and Haiti. Stop funding the CIA-backed contras fighting to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Cancel the economic debt that overburdens the semi-colonial countries. Lift the blockade against Cuba. Break all U.S. ties to the racist Apartheid regime in South Africa.

FOR LABOR SOLIDARITY. STOP UNION BUSTING SUPPORT FAMILY FARMERS

All working people should stand together against company attacks on our unions. Stop court and police attacks on striking workers. Support the heroic struggle of United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9 against the Hormel company in Minnesota. Support the organizing efforts of farm workers in Ohio. Stop farm foreclosures and institute a moratorium on farm debts for family farmers. Guarantee family farmers an adequate income to meet production and a decent living standard.

STOP RACIST ATTACKS

Defend affirmative action in employment and education which is now under attack by the government and big business. For open admissions at Ohio state colleges. Desegregate all Ohio schools

and classes. Stop police brutality. No to the death penalty which is used most often against the poor, especially Blacks and Latinos.

FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Stop government and terrorist attacks on abortion clinics such as the firebombings that have occurred throughout Ohio. Full medicaid coverage for abortion and birth control. No forced sterilizations. Equal pay for work of equal value. For public child care centers available to all women who need them.

FOR WORKING CLASS POLITICAL POWER

For a labor party based on a fighting, democratic trade union movement. For a Black party with a social and economic program in the interests of the Black community. The Republican and Democratic parties are the corporations' parties -the parties of big business, war, racism union-busting, and sexism. For a fighting alliance of workers and farmers to take governmental power to run society for human needs instead of private profits.

FOR SOCIALISM

For a social system where the benefits of industry and science will eliminate poverty and social insecurity - where exploitation and war will no longer exist. Human needs, not profits!

PROSPECTS FOR A LENINIST PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES

by Steve Bloom

Since at least the end of the 1970s (and we can certainly trace the roots back even further) the Socialist Workers Party in the United States has been in an ever-deepening crisis of perspective. This crisis has taken on a political form: the questioning by the party leadership of every major programmatic premise on which the party was founded and built for over 50 years. And as we all know, it has also taken on an organizational form: the expulsion from the SWP of scores of activists, including a significant layer of the old-line cadre from the 1930s and 40s who remained in the party. This purge was compounded by the resignation of hundreds over the past few years who simply got disoriented, demoralized, or disgusted and walked out.

I will focus this talk on what has happened to the Socialist Workers Party because that party and its predecessors, going back to the Communist League of America founded in 1928, represent a continuity of Leninism in the United States for over fifty years. No other national revolutionary organization in the history of the international working class movement has lasted as long as the SWP without degenerating. The present crisis of the SWP is an event with major implications for those who want to build a revolutionary organization in this country. It has even caused a great many to question whether it is possible or desirable to construct a Leninist party in the U.S.A.

My contention, of course, is that it is not only possible and desirable, but *absolutely necessary* for conscious revolutionary Marxists to continue to devote ourselves to the task of building a Leninist combat party. The crisis of the SWP and the fact that that organization seems to have failed the test, that it may well prove not to be the vehicle through which our party-building tasks can be accomplished in the long run, will certainly make our job more difficult. But no one ever promised that making a socialist revolution in the United States would be easy.

I want to first look a little at what happened in the SWP and at the conclusions we can draw from these events, then turn to the struggle to overcome the crisis which has engulfed the party. Finally we can discuss a little about the objective situation of the U.S. class struggle

today, and what that tells us concerning the need for a Leninist organization in this country.

The Crisis in the SWP

When people who are familiar with the proud past of the SWP look at what has happened over the last few years they are inclined to ask a key question: How did this party begin its current transformation from the basic nucleus of a future mass revolutionary party of the U.S. working class into its opposite—an obstacle to the construction of that party?

Let's keep foremost in mind that we are talking now about a process which is still going on. This transformation is not complete. The SWP remains a revolutionary party today. But it is moving in a certain direction, and has taken giant strides away from the kind of program and practice which would allow it to grow and become the tool for the American socialist revolution. Unless a movement develops in the party which can reverse these policies, the ultimate degeneration of the SWP is the only foreseeable outcome.

Let's also keep in mind that the most important question here isn't what happened to Jack Barnes or the party leadership team around him. When we get down to the cases of individual comrades or individual party leaders, or even groups of leaders, a whole host of personal and psychological factors come into play. It's not so unusual for individual party members or leaders to degenerate, to become tired, to lose their revolutionary convictions and their confidence in the working class. In the history of the revolutionary international—and even of the SWP itself—we have seen this occur over and over again.

What's most important is what happened to the party as a whole, that is, to the party membership. In the past whenever a group of leaders entered a path similar to that of Barnes and company, the party as a whole has risen to the challenge and been able to defend itself successfully. Why has the present membership—recruited primarily through the radicalization of the 60s and 70s—proven unable to do the same thing?

I will mention a number of factors, which only outline the most important elements. These need further elaboration and investigation:

1) There was an overall downturn in the U.S. class struggle during the period in which the party crisis was developing. This contributed to an atmosphere of pessimism and a search for quick

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and easy answers of the type offered by the Barnes current.

2) The nature of the class struggle experiences of the 60s and 70s, as part of a radicalization which took place outside of the main organizations of the working class itself, in more volatile layers which were quick to mobilize but also quicker to demoralization and demobilization.

3) The complete lack of any serious program of Marxist education among the younger generation of party members in the 60s and 70s. In particular, there was little or no education about the Marxist method—either through conscious instruction or through seeing it applied in life. Empiricism and pragmatism were the dominant methods of reasoning utilized in reaching party decisions. Every idea—even correct ideas like the turn to industry—became a caricature of itself in the hands of a leadership which couldn't conceive of or relate to a contradictory reality. Even projects which should have advanced the party were carried out so badly that they turned into stumbling blocks in the path of its development.

4) The almost completely monolithic front presented to the party ranks by the members of the National Committee once the fight broke out in earnest. This was different from previous programmatic struggles—when even if significant sections of the leadership took the wrong position, another solid wing stood in defense of Marxism. This time only four NC members, divided into two currents, took a position in opposition to the leadership's course. We seemed very weak and ineffectual.

Rank-and-file members who may have had questions or disagreements felt disinclined to raise them when it meant a lonely struggle against overwhelming odds. Those who did go into active opposition to the program being imposed on the party from above turned out to be the most conscious and persevering elements. Many others simply resigned for "personal reasons."

5) The development over a period of years of an extreme apparatus functioning—where decisions were increasingly centralized in New York. Branches of the party were expected to do as little thinking as possible. They simply carried out predetermined national campaigns. This approach was mirrored in the branches, where it was expected that the Executive Committee would make all important decisions. Branch meetings became little more than ratification sessions for the EC. The result was a view which came to dominate the conceptions of many in the party, and particularly in its leadership—that the leaders made all decisions for the party, that the party was *identical* with its leadership. This approach rejected the idea that the membership *as a whole* was, in fact, the key unit of party organization—either at the branch or national level.

6) A method of discussion in the party—which developed gradually but became predominant some time in the last half of the 1970s—where any kind of argument was deemed legitimate as long

as it served to advance the "correct line." Little concern was given to presenting disagreements honestly and in a way that would best further the education of the party as a whole.

Inevitable Result of Leninism?

There are, no doubt, many other factors, and perhaps we can get into this a little more during the discussion period if people want to. But I will move on now to what is the key question we need to discuss this evening: Was this process of degeneration of the SWP something inherent in the attempt to build a Leninist organization in the U.S.A.? Was it inevitable? Does it negate Leninism itself?

This is not a new question, nor is it surprising that it should be posed. It's the same as the question which has been discussed for many years concerning the Bolshevik party of the USSR. Was its degeneration under Stalin inevitable? Did it indicate that Leninism has within it the seed of an inevitable bureaucratization?

We would answer an unequivocal no! Far from being a result of any logical application of Leninist organization, the course of events in the SWP resulted from the *rejection of Leninism* on the part of the central party leadership. Far from negating the need for a Leninist organization, the experience with Barnes *confirms* the need for a *genuine* Leninism. And it also clarifies once again the one condition which is absolutely essential if a Leninist organization is to be constructed—the active intervention and mobilization of the party rank and file in the day-to-day life of the organization, in thinking out and deciding all questions before the party. As soon as this process is ceded to a group of leaders, no matter how conscious and capable those leaders appear to be, the likelihood of degeneration becomes much greater.

It was the process of demoralization and demobilization of the ranks of the Bolshevik party in Russia which laid the basis for its demise. A similar demoralization and demobilization of the SWP ranks took place—though obviously the root causes were not at all the same as in the USSR. I think if someone asked me what the main lesson was that I would draw from my own experience in the SWP for future generations of revolutionaries it would be that you can't take the party for granted.

That's what happened to those SWPers who didn't like what was happening in the organization but found themselves unable to confront it (and I am convinced that there were and remain a significant number of such individuals in the SWP). They had begun to take the party for granted, to believe that it had lasted so long, had weathered every storm, had developed such a body of experience, that somehow its health and continued vitality were guaranteed, were institutionalized. This conviction demobilized a whole layer of party cadre and made them lethargic. They were unable to respond even when the party leaders began to make

grotesque programmatic revisions and carry out the most transparently bureaucratic policy of expulsions.

There are not and cannot be any institutional guarantees against degeneration. The only assurance remains the mobilized, conscious, educated membership—and all three, education, consciousness, and mobilization are required. Things in party life which contribute to the process of education, consciousness-raising, and mobilization of the rank and file will contribute in the long run to the health of the party. Those which fail to educate, dull the consciousness, and demobilize, lay the basis for degeneration. Although this lesson isn't exactly new, it's worth repeating and reeducating ourselves about.

But isn't this process—of building a party with an active, educated, and conscious membership—exactly what Leninism is all about? Isn't it clear that the process which took place in the SWP, the process which resulted in the crisis of the 1980s, is the *exact opposite* of the construction of a Leninist party? If that is true, then how can the fact that this process culminated in that crisis be cited as proof that Leninism doesn't work? As we have said, it should be cited as proof that real Leninism, the Leninism of Lenin, of Trotsky, and of Jim Cannon, is needed more than ever.

The Present Struggle

How then do we continue the fight for the revolutionary party, for a Leninist party, in the United States today?

We in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency believe that the central struggle at the present time continues to be the fight to reform the SWP, the fight to regenerate the old party. That party remains affiliated in a fraternal way to the Fourth International. It maintains a body of cadre—the largest by far of any of the four currents in the U.S.A. fraternally affiliated with the FI—which remains committed to the perspective of a socialist U.S.A. and a socialist world, which continues to want to defend the revolutions in Central America, to fight apartheid in South Africa, and to strive for working class solidarity, human rights, and social justice in the U.S.A. Most importantly the party continues to advocate mass mobilization and class independence as the key elements in these struggles.

We insist that it will require a major test of the membership of the SWP, some definitive proof that it, along with the party leadership, has degenerated beyond all hope of reform, before we will give up on the process of winning the party back to the road of revolutionary Marxism. This attitude stems from our own rejection of the idea that the party is the leadership. For us the party has always meant the members, and it is to the members that we appeal for a change in the present policies.

Of course, we don't have any illusion that a change for the better is going to come about simply as a result of our efforts to direct propaganda and information toward the ranks of the SWP. Far more important than that will be the force of the class struggle in this country and around the world—which has some severe tests in store for the political line of the Barnes faction. How the SWP ranks respond to these tests will be crucial. There is, of course, no guarantee that they will respond correctly. We simply don't know. But we do know that if we don't continue to do everything we can to help them, to fight for them, then we will be partially responsible for the completion of the process of degeneration.

Whether or not we are successful in our fight to reform the SWP, we *insist* that this fight is an essential prerequisite to any healthy development of a future revolutionary party in the United States. It will allow us to clarify the programmatic foundation on which we can build anew if that is necessary, or rebuild the old if that is possible. Without such a struggle around fundamental programmatic issues, without solidifying this basic foundation for the party, any future efforts to construct a Leninist revolutionary organization will be doomed to repeat the process of degeneration—though no doubt in a different form.

Unfortunately, this perspective of the F.I.T. is not shared by the majority of those who went through the crisis in the SWP. I think it is a basic historical law that if it's possible to make a particular error in a given situation, someone will make it. In this case, there are two polar opposite errors which can be made, and sure enough, both are being pursued with a vengeance by some of those who have drawn the wrong conclusions from their experiences in the SWP.

Erroneous Views

One of these errors we have already discussed—believing that what happened in the SWP proves that Leninism is wrong and that it is incorrect to try to construct a revolutionary party in the U.S. today. The group which has drawn this conclusion most clearly is no longer even part of the Fourth Internationalist movement in this country. It is represented by ex-members of the SWP and others grouped around Pedro Camejo and the North Star Network. In a subtler way, however, without drawing the same programmatic conclusions as North Star and without even admitting to themselves that they are undermining a Leninist perspective—in fact believing most militantly that they are defending one—the group which constitutes the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity is following a policy which poses some of the same dangers.

This group has gone through several stages since its expulsion from the SWP—as a minority in Socialist Action, an independent group known as

Socialist Unity, and now as the FI Caucus. But in each stage its fundamental orientation has consisted in advocating a "regroupment" of forces on the U.S. left—in particular with two organizations: International Socialists and Workers Power.

But the regroupment strategy outlined by the FIC, when they were the organization known as Socialist Unity and published a magazine by the same name, clearly rejected the primary law of a Leninist regroupment effort—that clarification of programmatic questions must always be given primary consideration. Since they have become part of the regrouped organization, Solidarity, they have faithfully carried out the policy which they announced in *Socialist Unity* magazine—of putting together an *organizational* unification, and subordinating all *political* questions to that process.

Now, giving primary consideration to the clarification of programmatic questions—which is a necessity for a Leninist regroupment strategy—doesn't mean that everyone in a fused organization has to agree with each other on everything, or even on the most important things. If you have that kind of agreement then you have already solved the most difficult problem of fusion. That kind of approach can't answer the key question, a legitimate question, which is precisely: How do you overcome real differences which always exist in a process of fusion or regroupment?

Giving primary consideration to the clarification of programmatic questions also doesn't mean that it's necessary to engage in an immediate knock-down drag-out fight to resolve whatever differences exist. On this point we don't necessarily have any big argument with the fact that the FI Caucus of Solidarity doesn't choose to immediately launch a factional struggle in defense of every aspect—or even major aspects—of the program of the FI.

Where the perspectives being carried out by the FI Caucus fail to meet the mark—in the Leninist sense—is that they have publicly declared, and militantly applied in life, their insistence that the *programmatic* differences which exist between themselves and the other forces participating in the fusion process *have little or no relevance whatsoever to the question of organizational unity!* That's false, and can only lead to a very bad situation in the long term—either the adaptation of the comrades of the FI Caucus to the programmatic weaknesses of their fusion partners, or else the breakup of the fused organization.

The minimum that Leninists require in any fusion process is the basic *definition* of the political differences, and an initial, sober assessment of the obstacles which such differences will place in the way of the new organization. A calm discussion and the test of practice can then be undertaken to try to resolve the disagreements—and resolving disagreements on major questions can and should be the perspective in any fusion which has a realistic prospect for success. The FI Caucus has refused to attempt even this elementary process of *definition and initial dis-*

ussion, and in that refusal it is dangerously flirting with an unprincipled method of organizational combinationism.

If any serious Leninist thinks about things for half a minute, it will be clear that one way or another, a Fourth Internationalist current in a common organization with other forces, forces with other political programs, *must* take up a political discussion—in one form or another. Anything less can't possibly advance our perspectives.

Socialist Action

The error made by the third organized group of expelled SWP members (or perhaps I should call them the first, since Socialist Action was formed first chronologically) is somewhat different. They act as if they, and they alone, represent the true continuity of revolutionary Marxism in the United States. They have set out to build a new party, to replace the SWP, declaring informally in words and formally by their actions—even if not in their programmatic statements—that the SWP is dead, finished as a revolutionary party.

This, too, while believing itself to be a militant defense of Leninism, is in fact its opposite. In rejecting the fight for the old party, in turning their back prematurely on the SWP, the members of Socialist Action have violated another basic principle of Bolshevik organization—that the formation of separate parties, splits in the revolutionary party, can only be justified on the basis of a clear programmatic debate and discussion and a test of practice which *demonstrate unequivocally* that such a division is unavoidable and necessary for the pursuit of a revolutionary proletarian strategy.

In fairness to the leadership and membership of Socialist Action, I think they simply don't understand the political implications of the course they have chosen. They genuinely believe that they have carried out a programmatic struggle directed toward the SWP—that they have done their duty in this regard. But if you look at the kind of theoretical defense of Trotskyism which they have made (for example in the pages of their newspaper) it generally consists of quoting or paraphrasing words and repeating ideas which were developed in the past, by others. There are some exceptions, of course, but that's the general trend. This is totally inadequate. The program of the revolutionary party can't be found in old books and repeated by rote—like some schoolbook ABCs.

Every great political struggle in the revolutionary movement has resulted in an expansion and development of theory and program. The current struggle—which is the greatest since the fight against the petty-bourgeois opposition in 1940—has certainly shown its capacity to do the same. This is a great opportunity for us. Already, through the work of leading comrades in the FI and of the F.I.T. and some others in the U.S., we have done a great deal in the way of programmatic

clarification and development. But we have a long way still to go. If we had all followed the strategy of Socialist Action—concentrating primarily on practical work in the mass movements and building an organizational alternative, to the exclusion, or virtual exclusion, of theoretical development—the SWP leadership would have been far more successful than it already has in undermining the program and organization of the FI.

How Contradiction Will Be Resolved

How will all these problems resolve themselves? That's a question which everyone is naturally interested in. Sometimes it's posed more crudely in the form of the query: "Why can't all of the expelled work together?" The answer is that we can—in some ways and on some projects. Most recently, for example, all three organizations in which expelled members are regrouped worked to build a tour for a Swedish Fourth Internationalist, Goran Jacobsson, who spoke in a number of cities about his experiences in Poland (where he was a political prisoner) and Central America. But it's impossible for us to be united in a common *organization* today, because what actually exists is four separate political tendencies which should be united in a common party—the three groups of expelled and the SWP itself. Since unification in a single *party* is blocked by the SWP leadership, the political differentiations in the other tendencies take on an unusual form. They can no longer manifest themselves in the normal way *inside* a common party. Instead these tendencies now organize themselves as independent political groupings *outside* the party. In our opinion that's the only practical form of organization for now—given the attitude of the SWP.

The task, obviously, is to try to overcome the political differentiations and reunite the Fourth Internationalist movement. This could be accomplished quickly by a decision of the Socialist Workers Party to readmit the expelled, as demanded overwhelmingly by the delegates to the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International. Unfortunately, such a decision seems rather unlikely in the near future. The alternative—that is, the reuniting of the other three groups—will require a further period of practical experience in the carrying out of their three different perspectives. When we can have a sober discussion of the different courses, when political life has passed its judgment on a number of matters—which alone can lay the basis for a fruitful collective discussion and assessment by the organizations and individuals involved—then it should be possible to move forward to build a united Trotskyist movement in the United States in fraternal affiliation with the Fourth International. That's the goal of the F.I.T.

It's impossible to give a very precise timetable for this at the moment. Suffice it to say that we are receiving a good test of patience as a revolutionary virtue. It's vital that we not try

to push artificially ahead of where objective reality will allow us to go. That would only lay the basis for further fragmentation and for demoralization as a result of unfulfilled expectations. Through the different experiences and joint discussions of all of the comrades of the Fourth Internationalist movement—in the SWP, the F.I.T., Solidarity, and Socialist Action—the best elements from each will be strengthened by their experiences, learn some valuable lessons, and prepare the ground for the future. That's the most we can ask of the present.

Role of the Fourth International

One of the most important elements in our struggle to reunite the Fourth Internationalist movement inside the SWP on the basis of a revolutionary Marxist program is our international connection—the Fourth International itself. The FI has played a key role in defending those who were expelled from the party and demanding our readmittance, demanding that the party respect democratic rights for its members. The leaders of the FI have also contributed to the defense of the program of Trotskyism against the retreat of the Barnes faction. (Internationally the Barnes perspective has significant influence with a large minority of British Fourth Internationalists, and the support of leaderships of official sections in Canada and New Zealand.) One of the most important recent events is the relaunching of the English language theoretical magazine of the FI, the *International Marxist Review*. The first issue has a valuable explanation of permanent revolution by Ernest Mandel, as well as a report on South Africa adopted by the last meeting of the International Executive Committee of the FI—a report which completely rejects the theses on South Africa presented by the SWP leadership.

I also want to mention another magazine, which is several years old now—*International Viewpoint*. It is also published by the United Secretariat and presents an in-depth understanding of events in Central America, Poland, the Philippines, Haiti, Europe, and other parts of the world. Last winter a special issue appeared, containing a pamphlet-length article by Ernest Mandel in response to the split from the FI of the Australian Socialist Workers Party. I recommend that pamphlet highly for everyone who wants to learn more about the present political dispute in the FI—especially about the response of the international as a whole to the political positions of the U.S. SWP, positions which closely mirror those of the Australians.

The U.S. Class Struggle Today

The F.I.T. is occasionally criticized for having a simpleminded fixation on the SWP and on discussing program. But our practice makes it clear that this is not the case. Our members play a key role in many areas of the living class

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struggle—including the movement against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, the struggle against apartheid, committees to support the P-9 strikers in Austin, Minnesota, in the women's movement, in unions to which we belong, and more. We don't see any of this as being in contradiction to, but rather a part of, the struggle to explain and develop the application of the revolutionary Marxist program to members of the SWP, as well as being a way of participating in and supporting the struggles of working people all over the world in their own right.

And that takes me to the final point I want to discuss about the need for and the method of building a Leninist party in the U.S. today: the objective reality of the class struggle in this country. The present situation in American politics is a prime example of what results from the lack of such a party, from the lack of a militant class struggle leadership. Consider what such a party could do, for example, in defense of the right of the Central American peoples to peace and self-determination. Every opinion poll shows that the overwhelming majority in this country wants

the U.S. to keep out. Yet when the House of Representatives passed the contra-aid bill, there was barely a murmur of protest. The reason—a complete lack of perspective among those forces which present themselves as being in solidarity with the Central American revolution.

Think of the needs of the labor movement—of the P-9 workers, or those like the TWA flight attendants—for a basic application of solidarity and class independence. These strikes and others, and the reactions to them among broad layers of the rank and file in many unions throughout the U.S., the movement against apartheid in South Africa, and similar events show that the problem is not primarily a lack of combativity on the part of the average working person in this country. Much more could be done than is being done.

The problem is one of leadership, a crisis of leadership. I remember how profoundly influenced I was when I first joined the Young Socialist Alliance in 1968 and learned about this elementary concept—the crisis of leadership of the working class—and with the solution to that crisis which was promised in the program of the Socialist Workers Party. The solution is no different today than it was when hundreds joined the SWP in the 1960s and 70s. Our struggle is the same—to construct a Leninist vanguard party of the U.S. working class which can guarantee the success of the fight for a socialist America.

It is pointless to spend our time bemoaning the decline of the SWP. That's simply a fact of life which revolutionary Marxists in this country must work to overcome—either through the rebirth of the party if that is possible, or through the construction of a new one if it turns out not to be. Out of our present experiences we will learn and grow. We will certainly become a stronger force as a result of this test in the long run. We will proceed to construct a more committed, more conscious, and more resolute revolutionary Marxist, Leninist combat party in the U.S.A. That is not only possible, it is a vital necessity for the future of this country and of our entire planet. ■

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IN APPRECIATION OF NAOMI BERMAN

by David Weiss

On Tuesday, September 16, at 3:30 a.m., Naomi Berman died in her Philadelphia home after a seven-year fight with cancer. She was 64. Despite her illness, Naomi had dedicated the last years of her life—after her expulsion from the Socialist Workers Party in January 1984 as part of the purge of dozens of loyal party members who sought to defend the SWP's revolutionary Marxist program and principles—to helping organize the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. She remained active in the work of the F.I.T., and in the fight against U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, as well as in the women's movement, until she became completely incapacitated in the final weeks.

Early Life and Influences

Naomi was born in Philadelphia on April 8, 1922, in a Jewish neighborhood which she described as "economically poor but with middle class aspirations." Her father, Max Morganstein, had been a revolutionist in Russia, but had been forced to flee in 1914. Her mother, Rose, was an active Zionist, and her older brother belonged to Hashomer Hatzair, a left-wing Zionist youth organization, which Naomi also joined in 1936.

Here she was first introduced to radical ideas. Her earliest social vision was of a communal society, a kibbutz in a joint Jewish-Arab socialist state. This, she believed, would serve as a solution to anti-Semitism and also to imperialist oppression of the Palestinian people. But with the outbreak of World War II, and the overt capitulation of the "left" labor-Zionist current to British and U.S. imperialist policy, Naomi was part of a group which broke with Zionism and developed a more consistently socialist perspective. In 1942 she married Haskell Berman, who was also part of that group.

Joins the Trotskyist Movement

In 1945 the Bermans became acquainted with the Trotskyist movement. Later that year, while Haskell was overseas serving in the Navy, Naomi joined the Socialist Workers Party. She immediately began work in the relief effort for European revolutionists who had suffered as a result of the war.

As a result of being forced onto the job market at the age of 16—immediately out of high school—Naomi acquired advanced secretarial skills. She readily applied these to her work for

the Trotskyist movement and in the various struggles for social change in which she was active.

Naomi's work in the SWP during those early years included being on the branch financial committee and working for the national and local election campaigns in 1947 and '48. As a result of these efforts she was the target of a frame-up effort by the state government, which accused her of falsifying ballot petitions. (The charges were subsequently dropped.) Also beginning in 1947 she was employed at an RCA plant in Camden, New Jersey, where she joined a drive to unionize the clerical workers.

In 1950, pressures resulting from Haskell's difficulty in finding employment during the witch-hunt and the birth of their first child, Eric (a second, Susan, was born three years later), caused the Bermans to decide to resign from the SWP. However, they did not lose their revolutionary convictions, and remained sympathizers of the party.

In 1960, Naomi returned to work, getting a job at the University of Pennsylvania. There, in 1974, she was again active in a union organizing effort—by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. That same year, she joined the National Organization for Women. In the late '60s and early '70s she was actively involved in the massive movement against the Vietnam war, as a member of the National Peace Action Coalition. She served on the national coordinating committee that planned and built one of the largest demonstrations in Washington, D.C., on April 24, 1971.

Rejoins the SWP

The SWP's turn to industry in 1976 convinced Naomi that the party would make a greater orientation toward the working class, broadening its concerns from simply those of the student movement. She decided to rejoin. In 1978 she was selected to become the party's candidate for Pennsylvania lieutenant governor in the statewide campaign of the SWP. Naomi was a leader of the Philadelphia branch, serving on the executive committee, as branch treasurer, and often representing the party at public forums.

Naomi never hesitated to express her honest opinion when asked for it, and was completely forthright in her criticisms—though always in a constructive way. These qualities (which are essential for a proletarian revolutionist and were

highly prized by the SWP before the current process of political degeneration began) got her into trouble when the party leadership decided to change the basic political orientation of the organization without a discussion by the membership.

When Naomi saw central leaders begin to revise programmatic principles and democratic traditions, without any opportunity for the rank and file to express its point of view, she voiced her concerns in her branch. This resulted in the younger branch leaders, with encouragement from the national office, gradually isolating her from active branch political life. These events occurred almost simultaneously with a reduction in her own physical strength as a result of her cancer.

In May of this year Naomi decided to terminate treatment she was receiving in the hospital and return to her home. She no longer believed that science could help her, and wanted to control the last weeks and days of her life as best she could. Carefully she prepared those around her, family and friends, for the outcome of her decision. As she had been throughout her life, Naomi remained deeply concerned about the needs and feelings of others.

Despite the personal difficulties that confronted her in the last years, Naomi never lost

the political vision that first inspired her to join the revolutionary movement. To the end she remained a loyal Fourth Internationalist, a committed Trotskyist, and a dedicated proletarian fighter. Four days before her death she learned of the decision by federal judge Griesa in the SWP's lawsuit against the FBI. Though she was angry at the paltry amount of monetary damages awarded, she expressed her pleasure in the important victory for civil liberties which had been won. ■

MEMORIAL

A memorial service for family and friends of Naomi Berman was held on September 19 in Philadelphia. Over 100 attended, including neighbors, coworkers, members of women's groups and other mass organizations in which she was active, former graduate students and faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, friends and acquaintances, members of the F.I.T. and other political organizations, and former members of the SWP. A political memorial meeting is planned for October 19.

It is requested that financial contributions in Naomi's memory be made to: MADRE, 853 Broadway, Room 301, New York, NY 10003.

SPECIAL FEATURE: BEGINNING IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

The memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky: a Ukrainian
Supporter of the Left Opposition

In 1977, a manuscript totaling hundreds of pages arrived in this country from the Soviet Union—the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky, who was in his middle 70s at the time and living in Moscow. His work consisted of a series of nine "notebooks" which describe his life as a Ukrainian Jewish revolutionary militant. He narrates how, as a teenager inspired by the October revolution, he joined the Communist Youth, tells about his participation in the Red Army during the civil war years that followed 1917, his disenchantment with the developing bureaucracy under Stalin and his adherence to the Left Opposition, and his subsequent experiences in Stalin's prison camps.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey has, since then, devoted her spare time to translating this work and preparing it for publication and is hoping to find someone to print the book as a whole. In the meantime she has agreed to let the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* begin serializing it.

Baitalsky's account of his experiences presents a great deal of new information about the situation faced by Trotskyists who remained in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 40s, and sheds additional light on many events that were previously known only in outline. But it is of more than simple historical interest. Baitalsky is a talented writer and journalist who brings a real sense of human solidarity and revolutionary fervor to his work. To the very end of his life he remained devoted to the ideals of the October revolution and maintained his vision of a better world, despite the isolated conditions in which he was forced to live and work. He says that he is writing "for the grandchildren" so that they can know the truth of the revolution's early years and of the repression which followed, a truth which is consciously suppressed by the official historians of the Stalinist school.

The first installment of this important manuscript will appear in our December issue.

THE LIBERATING INFLUENCE OF THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM (Part 2)

by George Breitman

In the 1930s, as the American people began to learn more about World War I, partly through muckraking congressional investigations; and as the threat of World War II began to come closer a considerable antiwar or pacifist sentiment developed in this country. One of the forms this took was that of so-called isolationism, an expression of a desire not to get involved in foreign wars. Beginning in 1935 the Stalinists attempted to exploit this antiwar sentiment by channeling it behind Roosevelt's foreign policy and the policy of "collective security," according to which war would be prevented through an alliance by the peace-loving countries (the United States, USSR, etc.) against the bad, aggressive, peace-hating countries (Germany, Italy, and Japan).

In 1935 a Democratic congressman from Indiana named Ludlow introduced a bill in the House to amend the U.S. Constitution so that Congress would not have the authority to declare war until such a declaration had been approved by the people voting in a national referendum. Of course the bill had many loopholes, one of which was that this limitation on the war-making power of Congress would not apply if the United States were invaded or attacked; and this wasn't its only weakness. Support began to build up for the amendment as fears of war were deepened in this country by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. The Ludlow amendment was reintroduced in the House in 1937, and in the Senate by La Follette of Wisconsin, and finally came to a vote in the House in January 1938, nine days after our convention.

The Roosevelt administration was bitterly opposed to the amendment and used all of its patronage pressures to bring about its defeat. The Communist party also opposed it, charging that it was in the interests of the reactionaries and fascists because it would limit the ability of the U.S. government to deter the fascist powers from starting a war. Just before the vote in the House a Gallup Poll showed 72 percent of the population favored the Ludlow amendment. Most of the new industrial unions supported the bill, along with the National Farmers Union. The pro-Ludlow sentiment in the UAW was so strong that the Stalinist members of its executive board were forced to vote in favor of it. The bill was defeated 209-188, a rather close vote considering all the circumstances.

So far I haven't been able to find any references to the Ludlow amendment in our press before the vote in the House in January 1938, but without any specific articles in

our press, I knew at that time what our position on the amendment was, and I approved of it wholeheartedly.

Before explaining what our position was, I shall have to make a correction of what Comrade Hansen said about it in 1971 in a speech included with the introductory matter in the Transitional Program book. After telling who Ludlow was and what his amendment called for, Comrade Hansen said, "Comrade Trotsky proposed that the Socialist Workers Party should offer critical support to the Indiana Democrat's proposed amendment to the bourgeois constitution of the United States. After a bit of hesitation by some comrades our party adopted this position. Trotsky considered the matter so important that he included a paragraph about it in the Transitional Program." I am afraid Comrade Hansen must have relied on his memory here instead of checking the facts; perhaps because he didn't have access to the records when he was making the speech, but in any case he doesn't have it right.

The fact is that we were opposed to the Ludlow amendment before Trotsky had any opinion about it. If we had had a member in the House on January 10, 1938, he would have voted against the amendment, after making or trying to make a revolutionary speech differentiating the SWP from the nonrevolutionary forces opposing it. And if you had been a sympathizer in 1938, asking me why we were opposed, I would have answered at length along the following lines:

"Pacifism is one of the most pernicious elements obstructing the revolutionary struggle against imperialist war. It misleads and disarms the workers, delivering them defenseless at the crucial moment into the hands of the warmakers. Lenin and the Bolsheviks taught us that implacable opposition to pacifism and the illusions it creates is obligatory for all revolutionaries. All the documents of the Left Opposition and Fourth International stress the principled character of the struggle against pacifism in all of its forms. Our stand on this question demarcates us from all other tendencies. The Ludlow amendment is a pacifist measure, designed to create the illusion that it is possible to prevent war at the ballot box while leaving power in the hands of the capitalists. It misdirects the workers from the real struggle against war, and therefore we cannot support it or assume any responsibility for it. Not to oppose it would be a betrayal of our revolutionary principles."

On the same day that the House voted down the Ludlow amendment, the newly elected Political Committee of the SWP held its first meeting. The PC minutes of that date show that under one point on the agenda Burnham proposed launching an antiwar campaign, consisting of eight "concrete points." The eighth point read as follows: "For the Ludlow amendment on the general motivation of the opportunities which it, as an issue, provides." All of the eight points were approved, except the eighth, which was defeated by a vote of six to one. A counter-motion to

This is a continuation of the talk on the Ludlow amendment which George Breitman gave at a Socialist Workers Party educational conference in August 1974. Part I appeared in the October issue of Bulletin IDOM, No. 34.

that eighth point was made by Shachtman, as follows: "That in our press we criticize the Ludlow amendment and the pacifist agitation connected with it from a principled revolutionary standpoint." This was carried, six for, one against.

In accord with this motion, our paper the *Socialist Appeal* carried a front page article by Albert Goldman, introduced with an editorial statement pronouncing it to be "the Marxian view on the amendment." Goldman's article begins by saying that the Ludlow amendment poses an old problem in a new form for Marxists and workers generally. But, he assures the readers, "It is only necessary to apply the accepted principles of revolutionary Marxism to solve the problem correctly." Applying them, he showed all the shortcomings of the Ludlow amendment and the pacifist illusions fostered by its advocates, demonstrated that it would not really prevent war, differentiated our position from that of the Stalinists, and pointed to the destruction of the capitalist system as the only solution to war. I might add that he also said the Ludlow amendment carried even greater dangers than other pacifist schemes precisely because it added "an element of democratic procedure."

Also in accord with the PC motion were two editorials in the next issue of our magazine. The longer one, which could have been written by Burnham, denounced the pro-imperialist forces that voted down the Ludlow bill and explained why. The shorter editorial, which could have been written by Shachtman, sought to "represent the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism." Among other things, it said: "Where pacifist nostrums are not outright frauds and deceptions, they are pernicious illusions which drug the masses into pleasant dreams and hallucinations and paralyze their fighting power. To teach the masses that they can 'prevent war' by a popular referendum is to foster a disastrous illusion among them. . . . Like the panacea of 'disarmament,' or 'international arbitration courts,' the referendum illusion diverts attention from the need of an intransigent class struggle policy against war every day in the year, because it cultivates the idea that when the 'real' war danger faces us in the remote future the masses will be able to avert it by the mere casting of a ballot. . . . In sum, to support the Ludlow resolution is to inculcate in the minds of the workers the idea that war can be 'prevented' or fought by some means other than the class struggle, that imperialist war can be averted otherwise than by the revolutionary socialist overturn of capitalist rule."

The PC minutes of February 18 have a point called "Ludlow Amendment," followed by this information: "Letter read supporting Burnham's position on the Ludlow Amendment." Not included with the minutes, and not identified as to author, this letter turns out to have been written by Trotsky, although it was signed "Hansen" for security reasons; its text will be found in the second edition of *Writings 37-38*, which should be out next year. The letter was addressed to Cannon, whom Trotsky gave permission to show it to Burnham if he wished. Cannon did, and he also turned it over to the Political Committee as a whole. The letter said that on the Ludlow question Trotsky was with Burnham, not with the majority of the Political Committee. He felt that after the Congressional vote the

question was settled practically, but wanted to make some comments on the important question of methodology. The government position against the Ludlow amendment, Trotsky wrote, represented the position of the imperialists and big business, who want their hands free for international maneuvering, including the declaration of war. What is the Ludlow bill? "It represents the apprehension of the man-in-the-street, of the average citizen, of the middle bourgeois, the petty bourgeois, and even the farmer and the worker . . . looking for a brake upon the bad will of big business. In this case they name the brake the referendum. We know that the brake is not sufficient and even not efficient and we openly proclaim this opinion, but at the same time we are ready to go through his experience against the dictatorial pretensions of big business. The referendum is an illusion? Not more and not less an illusion than universal suffrage and other means of democracy. Why can we not use the referendum as we use the presidential elections? . . ."

"The referendum illusion of the American little man has also its progressive features. Our idea is not to turn away from it, but utilize these progressive features without taking the responsibility for the illusion. If the referendum motion should be adopted, it would give us in case of a war crisis tremendous opportunities for agitation. That is precisely why big business stifled the referendum illusion."

Today's average SWP member will not find Trotsky's thinking on the Ludlow amendment extraordinary or controversial; in fact, it may seem rather commonplace and hardly worth the time I am giving it. This testifies to the political development of our movement since 1938; in certain respects we have come a long way, we live on a higher political plateau now. But what seems simple now to a new member didn't seem at all simple to the politically most astute leaders of our party then, as we can see from what happened after Trotsky's letter was read by the Political Committee.

Trotsky thought that because the referendum had been rejected in the House nothing more could be done about it. The members of the Political Committee knew better, realizing that the amendment would continue to be an important American political question for some time. So they decided, after hearing Trotsky's letter, to formulate their position anew. Goldman introduced a series of four motions, some of which were amended by Shachtman. The first two motions stressed the need to use the interest aroused by the amendment to expose the war preparations and the bourgeois and Stalinist opponents of the bill and to expose all pacifist illusions, by clearly stating at all times that whoever says any kind of referendum will stop war is seriously mistaken. The third motion declared that we cannot assume responsibility for the amendment under any circumstances and it is impermissible for us or our members in mass movements to organize or participate in or endorse any campaign for the amendment.

Up to this point it's clear and consistent. Goldman's fourth motion, however, says that since the amendment has been adopted by the most progressive forces of the labor movement, since the working class learns through experience, and since we need to be closely connected with those forces, our comrades in the mass movement are instructed to vote in favor of the Ludlow amendment, and to introduce pro-Ludlow clauses in antiwar resolutions, "at

all times making clear our position on the amendment.”

Shachtman disagreed with Goldman's point four and amended it to instruct our comrades to state our specific position on the Ludlow amendment, either orally or in writing, and to abstain when the vote is cast. Instead of stopping there, however, he added an exception: In those exceptional circumstances where our comrades hold the balance of power between the Stalinists and patriots on one side and pro-Ludlow forces on the other, our comrades are instructed to defeat the Stalinists and patriots by casting their vote for the Ludlow amendment with the qualifications given above.

And this was the position adopted by the SWP on February 10, by five to two (Cannon was absent)—to abstain, except in special circumstances where we should vote in favor in order to defeat the Stalinists and patriots. And although the Political Committee held other discussions on antiwar work during February, this was and remained the SWP's position when its delegation went to talk with Trotsky the following month.

In the back of the second edition of the Transitional Program book you will find the stenogram of the discussion in Mexico about the Ludlow amendment. There we can see Shachtman especially, who was the chief formulator of the abstentionist position, although of course the Political Committee as a whole was responsible for it, still dragging his heels: “. . . there is great danger that in jumping into a so-called mass movement against war—pacifist in nature—the revolutionary education of the vanguard will be neglected. At the same time, not to enter the movement leaves us mainly in a propaganda position.” And at the end, returning to a point he had made in the February magazine article, he asks: “How do you distinguish between our support of the Ludlow amendment and our attitude toward disarmament programs, international arbitration, etc.?”

Trotsky's answer: “They have nothing to do with one another. The Ludlow amendment is only a way for the masses to control their government. If the Ludlow amendment is accepted and made part of the constitution it will absolutely not be analogous to disarmament but to inclusion in the right to vote of those 18 years old”—that is, a democratic right.

Trotsky's arguments in this discussion were so persuasive the others were convinced. The Ludlow amendment was not the subject of much debate at the stormy plenum of the SWP National Committee held a month later. It was not taken up until the last hours of the plenum. Then two motions were presented:

Cannon's motion said: “That the Plenum finds that the Political Committee took a correct principled position on the Ludlow amendment but made a tactical error in failing to give critical support to this movement without making any concessions whatever to its pacifist and illusory character.”

Motion by Carter: “That the Plenum reverses the position of the Political Committee on the Ludlow Amendment and declares it incorrect; that the PC be instructed to issue a statement in support of a popular referendum on the question of war, with a critical declaration in reference to the pacifist and illusory tendencies in the pro-Ludlow movement.”

Seven members spoke during the discussion, and then

Cannon made a substitute motion for the whole: “The Plenum finds that the Political Committee was correct in principled opposition to the pacifist illusions contained in the Ludlow amendment—an opposition that was fully justified—the P.C. nevertheless took a purely negative position which prevented the party from utilizing the entirely progressive sentiment of the masses who supported the idea of submitting the warmongers to the control of a popular referendum before the declaration of war. The Plenum instructs the P.C. to correct its position accordingly.”

This substitute motion carried, and the Carter motion was defeated, the vote not given.

A month later, our paper printed a public NC statement reporting the change in the SWP's position on the Ludlow amendment and explaining why. At this point it could be said that the error was corrected and the differences liquidated—so completely that three months later, in August, nobody thought it was out of order for the Political Committee to send the National Committee members the copy of a draft written by Goldman for an improved version of the Ludlow amendment, that is, one free of the defects in Ludlow's bill, which we were to try to get some member of Congress to introduce so that we could use it in our antiwar propaganda and agitation.

(This series continues in our next issue, December 1986.)

EDITORIAL NOTE

In Part 1 of this talk Breitman states that Trotsky had called for the founding of the Fourth International at the July 1936 conference which was designated the First International Conference for the Fourth International. In a talk in 1978 he says that was not so:

“The time has come to put to rest the principal legend about this conference, which I must admit with regret I have been helping to circulate for the last decade. I refer to the legend according to which Trotsky proposed that this conference should found or proclaim the foundation of the Fourth International. . . . How did this legend arise? There isn't the slightest basis for it in any of the surviving documents of the conference, or in the presently available correspondence about the conference in 1936 by Trotsky or anyone else.

. . . So what is its source? Probably the statement Trotsky made two years later, in 1938, when he was arguing in favor of dropping the name ‘Movement for the Fourth International’ and in favor of establishing the International at the international conference later that year.” That talk, entitled “The Rocky Road to the Fourth International, 1933-38,” was published by the Socialist Workers Party as an *Education for Socialists* bulletin, November 1979. It includes an appendix documenting this question.

BEYOND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY—AND BACK AGAIN?

Socialist Register, 1985/86, edited by Ralph Miliband, John Saville, Marcel Liebman, and Leo Panitch. London: Merlin Press, 1986. 489 pages. Published in the United States by Monthly Review Press (New York). Paperback price: \$12.00.

As we approach the final decade of the 20th century, revolutionary socialists are faced with a broad array of complex problems which must be worked through if we are to translate our hopes into realities, if we are to defeat the dehumanizing and murderous tyranny of capitalism and begin the socialist reconstruction of society.

Over 20 years ago, Ralph Miliband and John Saville initiated the *Socialist Register*, an annual collection of articles by different authors surveying a variety of problems from a more or less left-wing socialist perspective. The contributions have been of uneven quality and have reflected diverse political orientations: left Social Democratic, "new left" socialist, Trotskyist, Euro-communist, eclectic combinations of these—all that and more. Some of the essays have been outstanding, some mediocre, some flawed but stimulating. Over all, they have made a positive contribution to the development of socialist thought and are well worth the attention of revolutionary activists who are grappling with the problems facing us.

This can certainly be said of the present volume under review, which focuses on changes taking place in capitalism today and on what this means for the left—particularly for the substantial reformist current known as the Social Democracy. Aside from major essays by Vincente Navarro on the U.S., Peter Beilharz on Australia, and James Petras on the "third world," most of the articles concentrate on European realities, though they have clear implications for the North American situation. Some of the articles deal with recent developments in technology, the labor process, and the structure of the working class. Particularly valuable among these is Ernest Mandel's "Marx, the Present Crisis and the Future of Labor," which effectively challenges the fashionable theories of Andre Gorz and others regarding the alleged "fading out" of the working class and, consequently, of the class struggle. There are also interesting critiques of anti-socialist and revisionist-socialist economic theories, two concrete analyses of the recent British miners' strike, and case studies of the Social Democracy in Britain, West Germany, France, and Greece.

One thrust of the entire volume is that Marxism and revolutionary socialism remain relevant to the problems we face today, that the reformism of the Social Democratic movement (and of the Euro-communists) constitutes a dead-end adaptation to capitalism. What is needed, Ralph Miliband and Marcel Liebman argue in the volume's final essay, is "a firm revolutionary commitment, namely the wholesale transformation of capitalist society in socialist directions." This volume provides a wealth of information and reasoned analysis supporting this perspective.

At the same time, a seriously debilitating fuzziness creeps into the volume, which could actually contribute to drawing activists into a reformist trajectory. One of the clearest manifestations of this is in the essay just referred to, "Beyond Social Democracy," by Miliband and Liebman. "What then," they ask, "in socialist terms, is there beyond social democracy?" They continue:

"There have over the years been a good many different answers to this question. One of the main ones, of Leninist inspiration, proposes the building and nurturing of a 'vanguard' party, tightly organized on 'democratic centralist' lines, involved in a daily class struggle at the point of production and at all other points of tension in capitalist society, with the expectation that capitalist crisis must ultimately reach a point at which it will become unmanageable, as a result of which it will no longer be possible to contain popular anger within the confines of the political system. At that point, a revolutionary situation will have come to exist, which will make it possible for the 'vanguard' party to seize the moment and lead the working class towards a seizure of power. The bourgeois state will be smashed, and replaced by a dictatorship of the proletariat, on the basis of proletarian power, workers' councils and other authentically democratic forms."

This may not be perfect or complete, but it's not bad as a thumbnail summary of important aspects of the Leninist-Trotskyist outlook.

Arguments Against Leninism

Miliband and Liebman then proceed to develop a brief polemic *against* this perspective. Given the fact that both authors have written influential works which show a lively sympathy for much of the Leninist tradition, their remarks deserve special attention.

1. *It won't work.* That is, "in no advanced capitalist country has this 'scenario' come anywhere near to being realized." (This could be disputed, but we must deal with various cases of "what might have been" in Germany, in France, in Chile, etc. some other time.) What's more—for reasons the authors decline to discuss (not wishing to engage in "speculation of a fairly futile kind")—the Leninist scenario "is very unlikely to be realized in advanced capitalist countries" in the future. In the face of such absolute, if vaguely reasoned, practical condemnation, there is little more to be said. But the authors go on to say more anyway. Arguing that socialists of advanced capitalist countries in the immediate future will be facing political realities characterized by crisis and conflict but *not* revolutionary potential, the Leninist form of organization will be ineffective not because it cannot attract a mass following but because it has "generally proved unable to attract any serious measure of activist and socialist support." The reasons for this relate to their next two points.

2. *It is bureaucratic and authoritarian.* Miliband and Liebman tell us that "the notion of a tightly-organized, democratic-centralist organization has proved to be a very good recipe for top-down and manipulative leadership, for undemocratic centralism and the stifling of genuine debate, sharp divisions and resort to expulsions, and a turn-over of members so high as to make the organization a transit camp from innocence and enthusiasm to disillusionment and bitterness. Only the leadership remains permanently entrenched, presiding year after year over a constantly renewed membership, and virtually irremovable save by internal upheavals, splits and excommunications. Parties and groupings such as this have shown very little capacity to think through the problems which the socialist project presents, and have tended instead to resort to incantation and sloganeering as a substitute." This corresponds closely enough to many different experiences in supposedly "Leninist" organizations to give one pause. Of course, it can be argued and demonstrated that the actual party of Lenin functioned differently, and that many impeccably non-Leninist or anti-Leninist groups have also functioned in the manner described by Miliband and Liebman. But this should not be used simply to sweep aside their remarks. The question is: Is this a danger which honest Leninists must be sensitive to, or is it an iron law which invalidates Leninism itself? Miliband and Liebman imply (without evidence) that it is an iron law.

3. *It is arrogant and divisive.* As our authors put it, "the very notion of a 'vanguard' party has acquired an arrogant and 'imperialistic' ring, quite unacceptable in labor movements with a long history and with many different and contradictory or at least disparate tendencies. Vanguard parties are by definition unique and dominant: there cannot be two or more such parties. But it is only by compulsion and coercion that one party

can impose itself as the 'vanguard' or 'leading' party." There have certainly been altogether too many examples of such behavior on the part of sects considering themselves to be Leninist. The experience of Lenin's own party stands in stark contrast—for example, the united front which Lenin advocated (and which was realized) among revolutionary forces in the 1905 anti-Tsarist upsurge, and again in 1917 (though by October, Bolshevik-Leninist hegemony proved to be essential). This approach was developed on a broader scale in the early 1920s, as the Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky further elaborated the united-front tactic. Although in each case, sectarian impulses had to be overcome, it was finally demonstrated in practice that the concept of a *revolutionary vanguard* can be harmonized with working class unity and effective mass struggles in which a variety of groups and currents participate.

There is another point which must be made here. Most of the "vanguard" organizations to which Miliband and Liebman refer have memberships of 2,000 people or less. Among the more mature Leninists in the world, it would be denied that self-proclaimed "vanguards" are thereby vanguards. They must prove themselves over time (and continue to prove themselves) not by ranting louder than anyone else or imposing themselves through cheap maneuvers, but by doing good work and offering useful perspectives in actual movements and struggles, thereby winning the respect and trust and adherence of growing numbers of activists among the workers and the oppressed. Historical experience—from Russia to Nicaragua—suggests that the actual "revolutionary vanguard" is not found in one particular grouplet at any one moment; rather, it is formed through a process, over time, from more than one source. It doesn't even make sense to refer to an actual vanguard *party* unless the organization in question has the active support of a sizable percentage of the workers and the oppressed. Until such a situation exists, it makes more sense scientifically to refer to "an element of the vanguard" or "part of the nucleus of the future vanguard party." The recognition that real, human, political dynamics necessitate and generate such vanguard elements, and the conscious effort to help create and be part of such a vanguard, doesn't necessarily imply arrogance or sectarianism—although it can degenerate into that. But such tendencies can also be overcome, as the Bolshevik experience demonstrates.

4. *It has an ultra-left sectarian attitude toward elections.* Miliband and Liebman argue: "These groupings tend to treat capitalist democracy as a complete sham; and therefore to accord a wholly subordinate place to electoral struggles, a form of activity for which they have great contempt. Whereas social democratic parties suffer from 'parliamentary cretinism,' they tend to suffer from something akin to 'anti-parliamentary cretinism.' The fact is, that whatever the limitations of capitalist democracy may be—and they

are drastic enough—no party or grouping operating within its context can afford not to seek some degree of electoral support, not least at local level. This requires a great deal more than a sudden eruption on the scene at election time." Again, there is food for thought here, though (also again) the argument is offered with little elaboration and no documentation. The authors write as if they had never heard of Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*. On the other hand, it's not clear what their "revolutionary" electoral policy would look like. Their earlier criticism of Leninism could certainly be applied here: in no advanced capitalist country has this electoral/parliamentary scenario come anywhere near to being realized (with the partial and disastrous exception of Allende's Chile, as they themselves acknowledge). One suspects that they are giving too much weight to the electoral process and far too little to extra-parliamentary forms (such as unions, community organizing, anti-war struggles, the movements of women and oppressed nationalities, etc.), but it's difficult to know this, given the cryptic nature of their comments.

Against Stalinism

Miliband and Liebman openly reject not only Social Democracy and the Leninist-Trotskyist approach, but also Stalinism. And yet, their most positive comments are reserved for the Communist parties of the Stalin period, particularly from 1935 to 1939 and from 1941 until, apparently, the present. "What was fundamentally wrong with these Communist parties was two things: first, their total subservience to Stalin's policies and purposes; and secondly, closely related to this, their mode of organization." In regard to organization, Miliband and Liebman seem to equate Lenin's democratic centralism with the authoritarian and bureaucratic party norms under Stalin—although other things they've written in the past suggest that they know better. In regard to Stalinist parties, they comment that "it is enough to note the degree to which the combination of sectarianism and opportunism which characterized Stalinism, together with sudden changes of policy imposed from Moscow, blighted their politics and blunted their political effectiveness." Communist parties shorn of their Leninism on the one hand and their Stalinism on the other—this is what Miliband and Liebman seem to project as models for today's socialists. Yet it is not clear in what ways this would differ from Social Democracy.

'Revolutionary Reformism'?

The two authors promulgate an approach which they call "revolutionary reformism." Here is how they describe it:

"Such 'revolutionary reformism' involves intervention in class struggle at all points of conflict in society, and pre-eminently at the site

of work. It also involves electoral struggles at all levels and conceives these struggles as an intrinsic part of class struggle, without allowing itself to be absorbed into electoralism and parliamentarism; and it also means the permanent striving to strengthen the socialist presence on the political scene and in the political culture.

"It should also be said that 'revolutionary reformism' does not postulate a smooth and uneventful transition to socialism by way of electoral support and parliamentary majorities. It acknowledges that, in the context of capitalist democracy, such a transition requires a massive degree of popular support and commitment, one of whose expressions (but by no means the only or even the most important one) is electoral strength and parliamentary representation. But 'revolutionary reformism' is also bound to be very conscious of the fact that any serious challenge to dominant classes must inevitably evoke resistance, and will be determined to meet that resistance with every weapon that this requires, including of course the mobilization of mass support."

It is not exactly clear what Miliband and Liebman mean by all of this. It could be argued that this is in harmony with Leninism. Lenin himself took participation in the electoral process and reform efforts seriously enough to wage a sharp struggle with the Bolshevik faction precisely around these questions in 1907-09. *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* was written in 1920 precisely to help orient parties of the Communist International along these lines. Of course, if a revolutionary socialist party is not organized in a cohesive manner, in which activists are collectively applying and carrying out the orientation which Miliband and Liebman argue for, it is not at all clear how these ideas could possibly be actualized. But the two authors seem unconcerned with such practicalities after enunciating their rejection of "democratic centralism."

It's necessary to recognize that their "revolutionary reformism" could be interpreted in a less revolutionary manner than just indicated. This is true particularly given their assertion that "in historical terms, the parties which have embodied this 'revolutionary reformism' are the Communist parties" not only in the era of Lenin but also in the era of Stalin, especially in the years of the People's Front strategy. This strategy was designed explicitly *not* to overturn capitalism and establish a workers' state, but rather to form an alliance between the labor movement and "progressive capitalist" political forces (as well as farmers and the "middle classes") for the purpose of preserving capitalist democracy and achieving social reforms within that framework; the struggle for the transition to socialism was to be postponed to a distinctly "later" period.

Miliband and Liebman do not explicitly advocate a return to the People's Front strategy. But their fuzzy formulations leave ample room for a "left-wing" legitimation of this approach. And given their rejection both of the Leninist tradi-

tion and of the Stalinist subservience to "policy imposed from Moscow," it is easy to envision this approach facilitating a backward slide into the Social Democratic reformism which they themselves wish to go beyond.

A Repetition of the New Deal

For revolutionary socialists in the United States, it is particularly important to understand how this relates to our own country. Some insight into this can be gained by referring to the American "embodiment" (to use the Miliband-Liebman criterion) of "revolutionary reformism"—the American Communist Party whose leader of the 1930s, Earl Browder, explained that President Franklin D. "Roosevelt's programmatic utterances of 1937, when combined with the legislative program of the C.I.O. (his main labor support), provides a People's Front program of an advanced type." (Earl Browder, *The People's Front*, New York: International Publishers, 1938, p. 13.) Years later Browder explained that with this perspective the Communist Party "relegated its revolutionary socialist goals to the ritual of chapel and Sundays on the pattern long followed by the Christian Church. On weekdays it became the most single-minded practical reformist party that America ever produced." (Rita James Simon, ed., *As We Saw the Thirties*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967, p. 237.)

This orientation is in harmony with the strategy advanced in *The Socialist Register 1985/86* by Vicente Navarro in his article "The 1980 & 1984 Elections and the New Deal." Navarro persuasively argues that "Reaganism" has *not* gained the support of the majority of U.S. citizens or working people, and he ably documents that it is the bulk of capitalist politicians of both the Democratic and Republican parties, *not* the population as a whole, which has shifted to the right. He also laments the fact that there is no labor party in the United States. So far, so good. Then he maps out the way forward:

"To recognize this situation is not to say that there is no room for change within the Democratic Party or that all work within that Party is a waste of time and energy better invested in establishing a new Party. There is a need to work both within and outside the Democratic Party, via all forms of participation, organization and mobilization to re-establish a left-wing space and historical block including a broad coalition of forces, centered around labor, struggling for the further expansion and redefinition of democracy, initiated in the New Deal and still far from completed. The New Deal was not the accomplishment of a Party or of a President Roosevelt. It was the fierce struggle of the working population that pushed and pressed that Party and Administration towards the establishment of the bases for the American Welfare State. The New Deal, rather than coopting and integrating the working class, fur-

ther empowered it, which explains the hatred of the ultra-right for those programs."

There are several things that must be said about all of this.

First, this happens to be a perspective shared by the major representative of the Social Democracy in the United States, Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialists of America.

Second, while the ultra-right certainly hated the New Deal (and still does), decisive sectors of the capitalist class and its political representatives found it quite acceptable (and would again, under similar circumstances). The "deal" was that major social reforms would be granted to working people, many of whom were becoming militant and radical, in exchange for the continued preservation of U.S. capitalism. Included in this was an acquiescence in the policies of U.S. imperialism. Franklin D. Roosevelt was not only the universally acknowledged leader of the New Deal coalition, he was also the "good neighbor" of Latin America who—for example—said that the murderer of Augusto Sandino, Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza "may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he's our son-of-a-bitch." In the wake of the New Deal programs came a massive military rearmament program designed to protect U.S. corporate interests from German and Japanese competitors and, with the eruption of the Second World War, to create an "American Century." Dr. New Deal made way for Dr. Win-the-War, who was followed by cold war "Give 'Em Hell" Harry Truman, the scourge of communism at home and abroad. The bulk of the U.S. left, politically compromised by years of collaboration with liberal Democrats, more concerned with maintaining a New Deal coalition than with creating a working class *socialist* base, quickly found itself either absorbed in or smashed by the anti-communist crusade. Navarro is correct to insist that there were elements of working class victory in the New Deal reforms, but he is wrong to ignore the profound disorientation and defeat which resulted from the left's (i.e., Communists' and Social Democrats') participation in the New Deal coalition.

Third, the well-intentioned muddledness which we find in the articles by these relatively sophisticated authors reflects a larger lack of political clarity within the left as a whole, including among those who reject Stalinism and are determined to go "beyond Social Democracy." It indicates a general crisis of perspectives among those who consider themselves revolutionary socialists.

Revolutionary Program

Marcel Liebman was a friend of Isaac Deutscher, has read the works of Trotsky, and has written a fairly good book on *The Leninism of Lenin*. Ralph Miliband has written an important Marxist study on *The State in Capitalist Society*, has been a long-time critic of Labor Party reformism in his native Britain, and is an "advisory editor" of the U.S. journal *Against the Current*, published

by the recently formed left-socialist group Solidarity. It is a sobering thought that such prestigious figures in the left wing of the socialist movement could contribute to the programmatic disorientation of thoughtful activists who might turn to them for information and for suggestive ideas on what to do next.

The two authors appear to confuse fighting for reforms with *reformism* and to counterpose reform struggles to revolutionary struggles. They favor a socialist revolution but realize that one is not around the corner, so they advocate a struggle for reforms without a clear notion on how a *transition* might be made from reform to revolution. The result of such confusion can sometimes involve sliding into reformism while assuming a revolutionary pose. Yet there have been serious-minded efforts by others to address and transcend this dilemma. Out of the experience of the workers' movement and out of the writings of Marx and Engels, Luxemburg and Lenin, and other practical-minded revolutionaries, Leon Trotsky and his comrades of the Fourth International summarized a dynamic approach in what has come to be known as the transitional program. This involves a blending

together of immediate demands and democratic demands (reforms which in many cases can be realized under capitalism) with transitional demands that correspond to the present needs and consciousness of the workers and oppressed but which cannot be realized under capitalism. It indicates a general approach which, if creatively and intelligently applied, could enable revolutionary socialists to avoid both reformist and sectarian dead ends.

At the same time, we can't be satisfied simply to counterpose to Miliband's and Liebman's fuzzy generalizations our own revolutionary Marxist generalizations. Revolutionary socialists must also come to grips with the genuine problems which they raise, further develop our understanding of the changing realities we face, and work to translate this understanding into a specific, practical revolutionary program. If we do our work, we will develop the programmatic clarity which can provide a sound basis for genuine unity among revolutionary socialists. Only the utilization of such a program can lead us beyond Social Democracy, beyond Stalinism, and beyond capitalism. ■

Reviewed by Paul Le Blanc

THE 1918 GERMAN REVOLUTION IN REVIEW

The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power, Documents: 1918-1919, Preparing the Founding Congress. Edited by John Riddell, Anchor Foundation, 1986, 540 pp. \$12.95 paper. (Distributed by Pathfinder Press, New York)

This book is Volume II of a series *The Communist International in Lenin's Time*, which according to its editor John Riddell "will follow the Comintern's development from its foundation until the end of 1923." The series is open-ended. The first volume, *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International* (Documents: 1907-1916, The Preparatory Years) was published in 1984, and reviewed by George Breitman in *Bulletin IDOM* No. 19, June 1985. This second volume was released in mid-1986. A third volume, *The Founding of the Communist International*, is scheduled for release later this year, according to a footnote in the present volume.

Purpose of New Series

The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power is narrowly focused, centered on the two questions stated in the title and limited to the 1918-1919 time span. The question of Leninism is tangential to the specific issues examined, and does not arise in this volume as a directly related subject even though it is implicit in all the documents and debates presented here. Despite

the claim that this volume contains *new*, previously unavailable, or hard-to-find documents (some in English for the first time), the great bulk of it—all the *essential* documents and some of the secondary commentary—is old material. Much of it has long been familiar to succeeding generations of revolutionary socialists and other radicals in this country. What then is the urgent purpose behind the current selection, updating, annotating, cataloging, indexing, and reissuance of these documents and related material in this newly revised format?

In his review of the first volume in this series, George Breitman explained that the Barnes group in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (which is responsible for the political inspiration of this project), having lost confidence in the capacity of the SWP and the Fourth International to fulfill their revolutionary mission on the basis of their traditional perspectives, had decided to try and link up with the Castroist political current in Latin America in a "new International." One of the reasons for the publication of these books is to provide a theoretical basis for the projected fusion with all "revolutionists of action" in Central America. Since Castro embraces Lenin but not Trotsky, the Barnesites reason that those seeking to identify with Castroism must disassociate themselves from Trotskyism while demonstrating their adherence to Lenin's heritage. Having explained the motivation,

Breitman added that these books must be judged objectively, "just as we have to do with the Lenin literature published by the Stalinists and others."

The German Events

The two questions dealt with in this book about the 1918 German revolution and the debate on soviet power are: Why did the revolution fail at that time in Germany? And should the Bolsheviks have taken power in 1917 in Russia? Accordingly, the book is divided into two parts. Part One traces the course of the German revolution from the mass political strikes of workers in Germany and Austria-Hungary at the beginning of 1918, leading to the downfall of the Kaiser on November 9 and the end of World War I. It then follows the efforts of the Spartacus faction, the revolutionary current in German Social Democracy, to establish a soviet government in alliance with the Russian soviets. The revolution brought the release from prison of the Spartacus leaders Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, but its progress was halted by the counterrevolution which culminated in the defeat of the Berlin uprising and their assassination in mid-January 1919. This first part is the major portion of the book, constituting six of the total nine chapters.

The dramatic events in Germany at the close of World War I confirmed both the fears and hopes of revolutionary working class leaders throughout the world. The German workers and their capitalist oppressors were locked in mortal combat, both sides weakened by four long years of war among the imperialist nations of Europe, and neither side sure that it could summon the necessary forces to vanquish the other. The capitalist class gained the upper hand temporarily at that juncture, but the working class bid for power in Germany did not end there. It would be renewed twice again in the five years ahead. And the lessons of the 1919 defeat would be mulled over—all the strategic mistakes and tactical blunders reviewed many times—by all sections of the newly formed Communist International.

Germany was the center of great interest from the beginning. At the founding congress of the CI in early March 1919, Lenin cited the German events as a most tragic example of the failure of the working class majority to understand the complete hypocrisy of the democratic republic. Instead of instituting majority control of government, as promised, bourgeois democracy proved to be another form of capitalist suppression and exploitation. "The murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg is an event of epoch-making significance not only because of the tragic death of these fine people . . ." he said, "but also because the class nature of an advanced European state . . . has been conclusively exposed."

This latest Pathfinder book on the 1918 German revolution reprints a brief description and analysis of the events by Trotsky, which first ap-

peared in *Pravda*, April 23, 1919, captioned "A Creeping Revolution." It has been easily available in English since 1945 when it was published in Volume I of *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, reissued and distributed by Pathfinder since 1972. The latest reprint carries a footnote which gives only the Russian title and 1924 as the publication date, implying that it is translated here for the first time and avoiding reference to the earlier Pathfinder book. The earlier book is mentioned only as one of several in a "Further Reading" list at the end of this volume.

History Distorted

It soon becomes clear to the informed reader that the conscious intent of editor Riddell and his associates is to downgrade Trotsky as the co-leader of the Russian revolution, the closest associate of Lenin in the founding of the Communist International, and the continuator of Leninist politics. Under Riddell's editorship documents of the early years of the CI are carefully selected and arranged in such a way as to create the illusion that Trotsky was there some of the time, but he was some sort of "also ran," an able writer and speaker who seconded what Lenin and others did, they being the true Bolsheviks and Trotsky forever remaining the tag-along newcomer or outsider.

An example of this distortion of history is the documentary evidence selected to show how leading Bolsheviks evaluated the defeat of the Berlin uprising. "Lessons of the Civil War in Berlin" by Karl Radek is published here. Radek was on the scene and wrote about the uprising shortly after it was crushed. He criticized the abstentionism of the Spartacus faction. Radek contrasted the lack of strategy in Germany with what the Bolsheviks did (were able and prepared to do) in a similar situation in Russia when the Petrograd workers, responding to government provocations in July 1917, sought to seize power. The Bolsheviks, because of their influence in the soviets, were able to keep the uprising in check and prevent disaster. This shows that Radek (the true Bolshevik) understood the basic problem. But Radek was unable to communicate this to anyone else at the time, either in Germany or Russia. He was arrested and his manuscript confiscated. It was not published until 1921.

After the Berlin Defeat

In April 1919 shortly after the founding congress of the Communist International while on the southern front in the Civil War which was then still raging and its outcome still uncertain, Trotsky set down "Thoughts on the Progress of the Proletarian Revolution" in which he directs attention to the relationship between Germany and other imperialist countries, tracing the uneven development of capitalism in Europe and the effects of this on the development of socialist ideology in

the working class. "The revolutionary 'birthright' of the Russian proletariat is only temporary," he said. He expressed the great confidence of Bolshevism in the solidarity and power of the workers of all countries. "If today the center of the Third International lies in Moscow then tomorrow—of this we are profoundly convinced—this center will shift westward: to Berlin, to Paris, to London." In these thoughts Trotsky compressed the Bolshevik conviction that the workers of every country would be able to master the particular intricacies of the class struggle in their homelands and surmount the chauvinistic pressures that inhibited and confused them in Germany, and in Hungary and Bavaria as well. These are lessons that have yet to be learned by the working class of Europe and North America. The complete text is available in English in *The First Five Years of the Communist International, Vol. 1*, reprinted in *The Age of Permanent Revolution*, 1964, Dell Publishing Co., New York.

What Might Have Been

The Bolsheviks were not given to looking back upon the cruel tricks of history, wishing that things could have been different. They assessed the situation in Germany immediately after the defeat in Berlin in 1919, and they tried to draw the lessons of that defeat for the benefit of the German Communist Party. Trotsky drew "a certain analogy between what is now occurring in Germany and the period of the first (1905) Russian revolution." This indicated a period of time necessary for the German workers to absorb the lessons of their temporary defeat, regroup their forces, and develop a new revolutionary leadership. They had been strategically outmaneuvered by the German general staff and its political advisers Scheidemann and Ebert, the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party.

The limitations and weakness of the leadership that emerged in the course of the struggle were recognized by Luxemburg, Liebknecht, and others at the founding conference of the German CP on the eve of the Berlin uprising. But they were a minority in the party they were helping to found. They strongly urged the young party to participate vigorously in the coming elections for a national assembly that had been announced by the Ebert/Scheidemann provisional government and endorsed by the Reich Conference of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. This position was decisively defeated by a large majority that chose to boycott the elections and oppose the convening of a national assembly. Luxemburg regarded this as "somewhat childish, half-baked, narrow-minded radicalism." But it expressed the temper of the newly radicalized sectors of the Berlin working class at the time. She and her associates in the leadership of the new party hoped that experience and education would soon overcome the impetuous mood. Unfortunately, it led within the week to the premature Berlin uprising.

Useful Supplements

One of the useful services of the Pathfinder collection of documents on the German revolution is the relatively large number of articles, editorials, excerpts from pamphlets, declarations and statements of purpose issued by the right-wing Social Democrats who controlled the agencies of government and spoke in the name of the working class, of democracy, and for socialism in the future. These clearly reveal the strategy of the capitalist class to control and eventually destroy the revolutionary movement released by the imperialist war and military defeat.

The plan of German capitalism to survive the crisis utilized and benefited from the political collaboration of the Social Democratic Party in the aftermath of the war, as it had during the war. (The postwar strategy was a continuation and extension of the wartime collaboration, applied under drastically altered circumstances in which the relationship of class forces was reversed.) At every juncture in the crucial first months after the war the capitalist ruling class managed to keep the old governmental structure of the Kaiser intact and retain control of a reliable core of the old army in the hands of the general staff despite the disintegration. This would have been impossible without the active participation, and very often the guiding hand, of the Social Democratic Party. This is no new revelation. The excerpts from articles and statements by the Spartacus League and its leaders which are also published in this volume testify that Luxemburg and Liebknecht—and other Spartacus leaders—understood the strategy of the ruling class quite well. But they were unable to organize and mobilize the necessary forces to expose and defeat it. A chapter under the heading "The Counterrevolution Gathers Strength" which includes the programmatic statement drafted by Rosa Luxemburg, *What the Spartacus League Wants*, is a helpful lead to understanding the causes of failure even though the editorial notes do not pursue this.

A Non Sequitur

There is, instead, a curious chapter on the political role and revolutionary potential of the peasantry in Germany—"Toward a Worker-Peasant Alliance," Chapter 5—which has little or no connection to the political struggle described in the other chapters in Part One of this volume. It is a fairly long chapter of 26 pages, mostly commentary. There is a two-and-a-half page excerpt from articles by the Austrian Social Democrat, Otto Bauer, written in 1919; another brief excerpt of hardly more than a page from a pamphlet by Paul Frolich, *The Road to Socialism*, which mentions the German peasantry as a potential counterrevolutionary force after the successful proletarian revolution; two excerpts from Luxemburg in which she criticizes the Bolshevik "land policy" and urges

(at the founding congress of the German Communist Party) that the German CP "carry the class struggle to the countryside and mobilize the landless proletariat and small peasants against the peasantry"; and finally, less than three pages of excerpts from the congress minutes of the debate following Luxemburg's report in which delegates referred to her remarks on this subject. This is the "documentation," altogether no more than ten pages of snippets. Sixty percent of the chapter consists of commentary and explanation.

The editorializing includes reference to the role of the peasantry in the 1848 revolution, remarks by Engels as late as 1891 on the "colossal survivals of feudalism," the observation that Lenin prior to 1914 "followed the agrarian question in Germany closely and wrote frequently about it," and concluding with the assertion that the strike movement of farm workers in mid-1919 was doomed to defeat because "the peasants movement had been repulsed, and the industrial proletariat had not yet recovered from its defeat in the civil war of early 1919." In this way, say the editors, the possibilities opened by the strike movement of farm workers "for an alliance of farm workers, small peasants, and urban proletarians were not achieved." The implication here is that if the German revolutionists had understood sooner and better the urgent need for a worker-peasant alliance, the 1918 German revolution would have turned out differently.

All this is contrary to the remarks by Lenin (published in Part Two of this volume) about how Kautsky "in 1905, when he was not yet a renegade, . . . explicitly advocated an alliance between the workers and peasants as a condition for the victory of the revolution." In the early days of the Communist International there was never a hint of the "underestimation of the peasantry" by the Spartacists or other tendencies in the German CP. Nor was there ever mention even of their failure to forge a "worker-peasant alliance" as being one of the possible causes of the defeat of the Berlin uprising, and of the series of defeats that followed.

If the uninformed reader has trouble understanding why this peculiar "Chapter 5" about the absence of—but ineluctable march toward—the worker-peasant alliance is inserted, it will help to know that this is part of the theory that a workers' and farmers' government, separate and distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat, is a *necessary* first stage in the anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist revolution. This unique theory was spawned and is being propagated by those responsible for the publication of these volumes.

Schema as Theory

It is true that an alliance of workers and farmers has been one of the goals of the revolutionary party since the time of Marx and Engels, but the present leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (which promotes Pathfinder Press) lumps

this together with its own new notion that a two-class version of the "workers' and farmers' government" is the universal prelude to the working class coming to power.

This schematic concept governs the content *and style* of these volumes which are intended to demonstrate the results of a new reading and deeper understanding of Lenin's method of organization. Telltale signs frequently appear. One of the most glaring examples is the consistent use of "workers' and peasants' government" to designate the type of government that was established in Russia as a result of the October revolution, or the type of government that *could have been* constituted in Germany through the workers' and peasants' councils (soviets) that were created there by the November 9, 1918, revolution that dislodged the Kaiser.

This rigid stylistic device is used despite (as if to correct or make more precise) quotations from Lenin, Radek, Zinoviev, and other "true Bolsheviks" which refer to the Soviet government as the "dictatorship of the proletariat," the "proletarian government," the "government of workers," or "Soviet power." Lenin described the Soviet government in different ways, in one context as follows: "Proletarian democracy, of which Soviet government is *one* form, has brought a development and expansion of democracy unprecedented in the world, for the vast majority of the population, for the exploited and working people." Rosa Luxemburg on at least one occasion referred to the government in Moscow as "a Trotsky-Lenin government," which was so common in the early years that many people thought Trotsky-Lenin was one person. Trotsky wrote about "the workers' and peasants' government" as a way to popularize and explain the democratic aspect of the proletarian dictatorship.

Part One ends on a sober note sounded by Lenin in a short excerpt from his 1921 "Letter to German Communists." He warned that the "noble sentiment" of hatred for the opportunism and treachery of the old German Social Democrats had "blinded people and prevented them from keeping their heads, and working out a correct strategy with which to reply to the excellent strategy of the Entente capitalists, who were armed, organized and schooled by the 'Russian experience', and supported by France, Britain and America. This hatred pushed them into premature insurrections." This, in brief, was Lenin's explanation for the defeat in Berlin on January 10, 1919.

The Other Part

Part Two of this volume, "The Debate on Soviet Power," is shorter. And in almost every way better than Part One.

The first part consists of 272 pages, the second part 173. But Part II gains weight in content far more than its comparative size measured in numbers of pages suggests. The inclusion of the complete 78-page text of Lenin's famous pamphlet, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Rene-*

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS AND PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

When part of the material in *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power* was previously published in English (by Pioneer Publishers, predecessor of Pathfinder Press) in 1945 (the first of two volumes titled *The First Five Years of the Communist International*), an introduction by Joseph Hansen explained that "it provides model analyses for the solution of the great postwar problems of the Second World War now confronting us, problems similar in essence to those which confronted the Bolsheviks at the close of the First World War." And when Volume II of the English text was published in 1953, the editor and translator John G. Wright wrote: "The reader will gain an understanding why the decay of capitalism has turned out more gangrenous and has stretched out longer than anyone had expected; why the epoch of capitalist decline has turned out more stormy, dramatic and bloody than the epoch of the rise of capitalism."

This two-volume English edition was reissued in 1972 by Monad Press (affiliate of Pathfinder) with the original 1924 introduction by Trotsky retained.

The only change was the omission of the Hansen and Wright introductions. A new introduction thought to be more suited to the changing moods and needs of the radical movement in this country was provided by David Salner, a young editor at Pathfinder at the time. He said, "this material indicates the immensity of Trotsky's contribution to the Comintern . . . also valuable because it shows Trotsky's keen insight into future events . . . evidence of Trotsky's awareness of the potential power of the colonial revolutions . . . (and) the role that women would play in revolutionary developments." Salner reminded readers that the first four congresses of the Comintern were part of the basic program of the Fourth International, founded in 1938, "indispensable source material for understanding one of the most crucial periods in twentieth century world politics."

In 1980, Ink Links Ltd., London, brought out *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, a one-volume English translation. The contributions by Trotsky were taken from the Monad Press publication,

retaining the John G. Wright translations. The new translations of other material were made by Alix Holt and Barbara Holland from the original Russian. They explain that they preferred the Russian text even though German was the official language of the Comintern. An introduction by Bertil Hessel reveals one reason for collecting and publishing this material at that time: to substantiate the thesis that the Comintern from its inception served two contradictory purposes, one to defend the Soviet state and the other to develop the world revolution. "By the time of the Fourth Congress, the latter had disappeared, and the Comintern had completed its conversion into a foreign policy agency of the Bolshevik regime," Hessel says. "*Things could not have been otherwise.*" He contends that Rosa Luxemburg described this inevitable development in 1918 when she wrote "The Russian Tragedy" while still imprisoned in Germany. Whatever the reasons for publication of these documents in English, their usefulness to revolutionists and scholars in this country is indisputable.

gade Kautsky, makes the difference. It's true that this work, taking up almost 50 percent of Part Two, is widely available in various editions, but its further circulation is nothing to complain about. Also, it provides a much needed corrective to some of the editorial commentary in this volume.

Lenin's debate with Kautsky is about Soviet power, more precisely about the ability and timeliness of the working class in Russia and elsewhere to manage the economic affairs of a vast country and to reorganize society in such a way as to bring about the transformation from capitalism to socialism. Lenin is responding directly and specifically to an attack by Kautsky upon the Soviet government in the widely circulated pamphlet, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. But Lenin does not limit himself to this pamphlet. He draws upon the ideological debates within the pre-war Second International, the revolutionary experiences of 1905 and 1917 in Russia, and the postwar resurgence and brutal repression of the working class by the "democratic" capitalist governments of Europe and America.

Lenin's Method

Lenin takes up in detail each and every one of Kautsky's charges. Here he demonstrates his method of analysis, the way he had learned to approach all questions. To explain why the Bolsheviks had favored the election of delegates to a Constituent Assembly *before* the October revolution and had seemed to reverse themselves *after* the revolution when the newly elected Soviet government voted to dissolve the Constituent Assembly, Lenin refers to (and produces) the complete text of his "theses on the Constituent Assembly" (which in Pathfinder's arrangement is properly published separately ahead of Lenin's pamphlet, as is the government decree dissolving the Assembly), and in this context he draws attention to the fact that this question was resolved "in the light of theory, history and practical politics."

How the transformation of the soviets came about and why the working class in Russia was able to *hold* power is of special interest in light of the failure of the Berlin uprising, which occurred

shortly after this polemic was written. Lenin describes the political process in Russia. He has explained how a full year after the soviets took power in the major cities the proletarian revolution *began* in the remote rural districts, and finally consolidated the Bolshevik power. Then he asks: What if it had happened differently? What if the urban proletariat and the Bolsheviks had failed to rally the rural poor against the rich farmers? He continues: "(But let it be said in parenthesis, even if this had been the case, it would not have proved that the proletariat should not have taken power, for it is the proletariat alone that has really carried the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its conclusion, it is the proletariat alone that has done something really important to bring nearer the world proletarian revolution, and the proletariat alone that has created the Soviet state, which, after the Paris Commune, is the second step towards the socialist state.)"

"On the other hand, if the Bolshevik proletariat had tried at once, in October-November 1917, without waiting for the class differentiation in the rural districts, without being able to *prepare* it and bring it about, to 'decree' a civil war or the 'introduction of socialism' in the rural districts, had tried to do without a temporary bloc with the peasants in general, without making a number of concessions to the middle peasants, etc., that would have been a Blanquist distortion of Marxism, an attempt by the *minority* to impose its will upon the majority; it would have been a theoretical absurdity, revealing a failure to understand that a general peasant revolution is *still* a bourgeois revolution, and that *without a series of transitions, of transitional stages*, it cannot be transformed into a socialist revolution in a backward country." (all emphases in original)

Later, in his 1921 letter to German workers, Lenin would recognize that the same political process, *through a series of transitions*, never developed sufficiently to allow the German proletariat to consolidate its own forces. This was due partly to the lack of revolutionary strategy, but primarily "to the excellent strategy of the Entente capitalists." This was the lesson of the 1919 defeat in Berlin. The lack of a strategy to unite and mobilize the majority of the working class, *in transitional stages of struggle*, would remain the bane of the German CP, contributing finally to the victory of fascism in 1933.

The Struggle Continues

The editors of this volume, in explanatory notes on Lenin's polemic against Kautsky, say "it represents the main Bolshevik contribution to the debate in the workers' movement between those advocating a revolutionary government of the exploited and those favoring some form of continued capitalist rule—the disagreement that divided the world workers' movement in 1919 into rival

organized internationals." But it does not end here. What developed was a struggle between *and within* the two contending internationals. At issue was the necessary strategy to develop the *political consciousness* of the working class and win a majority in the course of the class struggle to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. This proved to be more difficult than anticipated at the founding congress of the Communist International in 1919.

While Lenin was completing his polemic against Kautsky word came that the November 9 revolution had brought down the Kaiser and created Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in several major German cities including Berlin. Lenin then wrote, "The conclusion which still remained to be written to my pamphlet on Kautsky and on the proletarian revolution is now superfluous." But the defeat during the two months that followed forced Lenin to revise his judgment. The reformist social current that Kautsky represented tipped the balance strongly on the side of capitalist reaction. Kautskyism remained an influential political current in the German working class. Kautsky continued his ideological attack on Bolshevism and his active political opposition to the Soviet government.

The Readership

Anyone interested in the Russian revolution and its influence on the politics of present day working class organizations will perhaps find this book useful. It is complete in itself, providing a good deal of information about the revolution in Russia and the counterrevolution in Germany in the years 1918-1919, all brought together in one cover. Unlike the first volume of the series which was about the same size (604 pages) and consisting of selected documents and commentary with less than one quarter of the total being commentary, this second volume is more weighted on the side of commentary with less documentary material. It is not necessary to read Volume One of the series to understand and appreciate this second volume. But it raises some questions, too. For whom is this book written? And who is likely to read it?

It is of course directed to a rather broad audience: those who already have an interest in the subject for various reasons; and those who may become interested, or be convinced that knowledge of the early years of the CI will help them understand politics today. This latter group is the potential readership. At the moment this book will attract the attention of those already interested in the subject. Its publishers realistically expect it to have a limited circulation. Serious students of the Bolsheviks and the Russian revolution, whether in the academic world or in the revolutionary movement, will find it inadequate for their purposes because for them there is very little new in it, nothing that they are not already familiar with or have not read about elsewhere. They will find the arrangement of the ma-

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terial inadequate, often frustrating, because it is incomplete and truncated.

The informed reader will get a sense that something is missing. This material is presented as if it is not part of the historical process, as if time stopped in 1919. Presumably in Volume III the clock of history will start again and tick away until the concluding chapter of that volume. What is missing is the historical perspective that gives the historian the advantage of greater insight in presenting and describing a segment of history. This insight comes from the knowledge of subsequent events, an understanding of the consequences that followed from prior decisions and actions. Here the editors seem unaware that Stalinism strangled the Russian revolution, that fascism seized power in Germany, and that World War II ensued.

The Pathfinder editors and publishers are inhibited in this respect because they must pretend, for the moment at least, that there was no significant history from the closing session of the Fourth Congress of the CI until the victory of the Cuban revolution. This helps to add some semblance of plausibility to the pseudo-theory promulgated by the Barnes leadership group within the Socialist Workers Party that allows them to come forth as the true continuators of Leninism.

Unintended traces of this manipulation of history crop up unexpectedly in this book. It has a good index and an excellent glossary. But *Stalin* is not listed in either. The name "Stalin" appears occasionally in the text (as a signature—along with Lenin, Trotsky, and others—to one or two documents). It crops up in the Glossary under the listing of Trotsky, "Assassinated by an agent of Stalin." Even though Stalin played only a small part in the Russian revolution compared to Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin, and many others, nonetheless he *was* there. And he did hold positions of authority and influence within the Bolshevik party. During the Civil War he exercised his influence to such an extent as to contribute in very large measure to the disaster in Poland. In the Soviet Union today Stalin has become a kind of "non-person," but that does not justify completely ignoring his presence during the crucial events of the early years. Dropping Stalin is a conditioned reflex of the Barnesite anti-Trotsky school. They are overly conscious of their need not to leave tracks that can lead to the source of their new discoveries in the realm of Marxist theory. ■

Reviewed by Frank Lovell

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LUXEBURG AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

by Leon Trotsky

Efforts are now being made in France and elsewhere to construct a so-called Luxemburgism as an entrenchment for the left centrists against the Bolshevik-Leninists. This question may acquire considerable significance. It may perhaps be necessary to devote a more extensive article in the near future to real and alleged Luxemburgism. I wish to touch here only upon the essential features of the question.

We have more than once taken up the cudgels for Rosa Luxemburg against the impudent and stupid misrepresentations of Stalin and his bureaucracy. And we shall continue to do so. In doing so we are prompted not by any sentimental considerations, but by the demands of historical-materialist criticism. Our defense of Rosa Luxemburg is not, however, unconditional. The weak sides of Rosa Luxemburg's teachings have been laid bare both theoretically and practically. The S.A.P. people and kindred elements (see, for example, the dilettante intellectual "proletarian cultural" French *Spartacus*, the periodical of the socialist students appearing in Belgium, and often also the Belgian *Action Socialiste*, etc.) make use only of the weak sides and the inadequacies which were by no means decisive in Rosa; they generalize and exaggerate these weaknesses to the utmost and build up a thoroughly absurd system on that basis. The paradox consists in this, that in their latest turn the Stalinists, too—without acknowledging or even understanding it—come close in theory to the caricatured negative sides of Luxemburgism, to say nothing of the traditional centrists and left centrists in the Social Democratic camp.

There is no gainsaying that Rosa Luxemburg passionately counterposed the spontaneity of mass actions to the "victory-crowned" conservative policy of the German Social Democracy, especially after the revolution of 1905. This counterposition had a thoroughly revolutionary and progressive character. At a much earlier date than Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg grasped the retarding character of the ossified party and trade union apparatus and began a struggle against it. Inasmuch as she counted

upon the inevitable sharpening of class conflicts, she always predicted the certainty of the independent elemental appearance of the masses against the will and against the line of march of the officialdom. In these broad historical outlines, Rosa was proven right. For the revolution of 1918 was "spontaneous," that is, it was accomplished by the masses against all the provisions and all the precautions of the party officialdom. On the other hand, the whole of Germany's subsequent history amply showed that spontaneity alone is far from enough for success; Hitler's regime is a weighty argument against the panacea of spontaneity.

Rosa herself never confined herself to the mere theory of spontaneity, like Parvus, for example, who later bartered his fatalism about the social revolution for the most revolting opportunism. In contrast to Parvus, Rosa Luxemburg exerted herself to educate the revolutionary wing of the proletariat in advance and to bring it together organizationally as far as possible. In Poland, she built up a very rigid independent organization. The most that can be said is that in her historical-philosophical evaluation of the labor movement, the preparatory selection of the vanguard, in comparison with the mass actions that were to be expected, fell too short with Rosa; whereas Lenin—without consoling himself with the miracles of future actions—took the advanced workers and constantly and tirelessly welded them together into firm nuclei, illegally or legally, in the mass organizations or underground, by means of a sharply defined program.

Rosa's theory of spontaneity was a wholesome weapon against the ossified apparatus of reformism. By the fact that it was often directed against Lenin's work of building up a revolutionary apparatus, it revealed—to be sure, only in embryo—its reactionary features. With Rosa herself this occurred only episodically. She was much too realistic in the revolutionary sense to develop the elements of the theory of spontaneity into a consummate metaphysics. In practice, she herself, as has already been said, undermined this theory at every step. After the revolution of November 1918, she began the arduous labor of assembling the proletarian vanguard. Despite her theoretically very weak manuscript on the Soviet revolution, written in prison but never published by her, Rosa's subsequent work allows the sure conclusion that, day by day, she was moving closer to Lenin's theoretically clearly delineated conception concerning conscious leadership and spontaneity. (It must surely have been this circum-

This article, written in June 1935, was published in the August 1935 issue of New International, magazine of the American Trotskyist movement until 1940 when its name was changed to Fourth International. The S.A.P. was the Socialist Workers Party of Germany which was formed in 1931 through a merger of left Social Democrats and Right Communists. Some of its leaders briefly supported Trotsky's call for a new International in 1933.

stance that prevented her from making public her manuscript against Bolshevik policy which was later so shamefully abused.)

Let us again attempt to apply the conflict between spontaneous mass actions and purposeful organizational work to the present epoch. What a mighty expenditure of strength and selflessness the toiling masses of all the civilized and half-civilized countries have exerted since the world war! Nothing in the previous history of mankind could compare with it. To this extent Rosa Luxemburg was entirely right as against the philistines, the corporals and the blockheads of straight-marching "victory-crowned" bureaucratic conservatism. But it is just the squandering of these immeasurable energies that forms the basis of the great depression of the proletariat and the successful fascist advance. Without the slightest exaggeration it may be said: the whole world situation is determined by *the crisis of proletarian leadership*. The labor movement is today still encumbered with huge remnants of the old bankrupt organizations. After countless sacrifices and disappointments, the bulk of the European prole-

tariat, at least, has withdrawn into its shell. The decisive lesson which it has drawn, consciously or half-consciously, from bitter experiences, reads: great actions require a great leadership. For current affairs, the workers still give their votes to the old organizations. Their votes—but by no means their boundless confidence. On the other hand, after the miserable collapse of the Third International, it is much harder to move them to bestow their confidence upon a new revolutionary organization. That's just where the crisis of proletarian leadership lies. To sing a monotonous song about indefinite future mass actions in this situation, in contrast to the purposeful selection of the cadres of a new International, means to carry on a thoroughly reactionary work.

That's just where the role of the S.A.P. lies in the "historical process." A left-wing S.A.P. man of the Old Guard can, of course, summon up his Marxian recollections in order to stem the tide of theoretical spontaneity-barbarism. These purely literary protective measures change nothing in the fact that the pupils of a Miles (the precious author of the peace resolution and the no less precious author of the article in the French edition of the *Youth Bulletin*) carry on the most disgraceful spontaneity nonsense in the ranks of the S.A.P. itself. The practical politics of Schwab (the artful "not saying what is" and the eternal consolation of future mass actions and the spontaneous "historical process") also signifies nothing but a tactical exploitation of a thoroughly distorted and bowdlerized Luxemburgism. And to the extent that the "left wingers," the "Marxists," fail to make an open attack upon this theory and practice in their own party, their anti-Miles articles acquire the character of the search for a theoretical alibi. Such an alibi really becomes necessary only when one takes part in a deliberate crime.

The crisis of proletarian leadership cannot, of course, be overcome by means of an abstract formula. It is a question of an extremely prolonged process. But not of a purely "historical" process, that is, of the objective premises of conscious activity, but of an uninterrupted chain of ideological, political, and organizational measures for the purpose of fusing together the best, most conscious elements of the world proletariat beneath a spotless banner, elements whose number and self-confidence must be constantly strengthened, whose connections with wider sections of the proletariat must be developed and deepened—in a word, of restoring to the proletariat, under new and highly difficult and onerous conditions, its historical leadership. The latest spontaneity confusionists have just as little right to refer to Rosa as the miserable Comintern bureaucrats have to refer to Lenin. Put aside the incidentals which developments have overcome, and we can, with full justification, place our work for the Fourth International under the sign of the "three L's," that is, not only under the sign of Lenin, but also of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. ■

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Alternative to '60 Minutes'

Tonight "60 Minutes" news program (CBS) devoted 20 minutes to Emelda Marcos and we saw Cory Aquino also: they spoke of fashion, etc.

This is the sort of program the ruling class of the USA loves to feed us. It was a study in irrelevancy.

Thank goodness there is an alternative to capitalist-controlled news . . . like *Bulletin IDOM*.

A comrade
Miami, Fla.

'Men from Nowhere'

Some of your readers who may have noticed in the October 3 issue of the *Militant* my letter about the mysterious "men from nowhere" will perhaps be interested in the full text of that letter. (The *Militant* cut most of the last part.) I am sending it to you in the hope that it will help promote the discussion among SWP and F.I.T. members on labor history and contemporary union problems:

In a recent issue of the *Militant* (September 12), Doug Jenness explained that the column

Labor and the Democratic Party

This report, on the negligible influence of the labor movement in the Minnesota Democratic Party, was sent to us by a reader. It was published by the Ford UAW Local 879 in St. Paul, and underscores one of the points made by Paul Le Blanc in his article on "Socialists and the Democratic Party" in the September issue of the Bulletin IDOM. Paul showed that the so-called "freedom of movement" of Democratic Party politicians "away from their (electoral) constituency traditionally flows from their adaptation, after taking office, to the needs and dynamics of American capitalism." The report of the UAW-CAP member, Grant Colstrom, shows the further tendency of the Democratic Party to ignore the needs of its working class constituents before winning seats in government.

Another revealing aspect of the Colstrom report is what it says about its author, a serious union member who wants "to strengthen labor's impact on our society." He doesn't know of any other way to accomplish this except through the Democratic Party. This is the fault of those Democratic Party socialists like Walter Reuther, Leonard Woodcock, and Doug Fraser, who abandoned the Socialist Party in the 1930s, helped block the formation of a labor party in the 1940s, and endorsed Democratic Party candidates since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Social Democrats of this type in concert with the Stalinists are responsible, as Le Blanc explained, for the fact that union men and women today know of no feasible alternative to the Democratic Party.

Reports like Colstrom's ought to help convince a new generation of union militants that an alternative must be created.—Editors.

I'm writing this article to let my union brothers and sisters know why I became involved with CAP (Community Action Program) at our local.

In June I was a delegate to the DFL [Democratic Farmer-Labor Party, the name of the Democratic Party in Minnesota] State Convention in Duluth. I arrived Thursday night. The Convention began at 10 A.M. Friday. I was very surprised to

find that no labor pre-convention meetings were being held. Multiple concerns issues were voted on Friday. NO labor issues were debated. During the three-day Convention, the hosting Congressional District supplied a deli and cash bar, continuously open.

The Convention reconvened at 9:00 A.M. on Saturday. I, again, searched for labor representation. It was not evident. I did, however, meet a delegate who was wearing a Region 10 UAW jacket. He was intoxicated. Most of Saturday was spent on the endorsing process. John Dooley, who is running for State Auditor as the endorsed candidate, was the only candidate wearing a P-9 button. There was a smattering of P-9 support present via T-shirts, buttons, etc. One labor issue was brought to the floor and ruled out of order.

Sunday morning got off to a late start. The Convention floor was notably quiet as many delegates had left early and many delegates were nursing their hangovers. Most of the day was spent sub-caucusing to elect delegates to the State-Central Committee. I attended the Farmer/Labor subcaucus and walked into a room of 27 delegates (4 were farmers and 23 were labor). **27 people out of 2,000 plus delegates and alternates!!** 95 people were needed to be a visible percentage, so these 27 delegates joined other sub-caucuses.

I left Duluth with a bitter taste in my mouth because of the absence of an overall movement presentation.

Since the Convention I have become increasingly aware of the lack of labor lobbying and representation at the state level.

It is crucial that each of us become more aware of labor issues and support pro-labor candidates!

I feel that being a member of our Local Union's CAP is making me more involved in the effort to strengthen labor's impact on our society, starting at the local level.

In solidarity,
Grant Colstrom
Swing Line

"Learning About Socialism" tries to "offer glimpses" of labor history. As an example, he referred to a piece by Norton Sandler in the August 29 issue captioned, "How industrial unions were built: 'men from nowhere'." At the time I thought the Sandler piece was strange, and when Jenness called attention to it two weeks later it aroused my curiosity. Who were these "men from nowhere"? Were they important figures in labor history?

Sandler's piece about them leads off with a reference to the myth that either John L. Lewis or Roosevelt, or both, built the CIO unions. It goes on to mention the 1933 strike of meatpackers in Austin, Minnesota, and the 1934 strikes of teamsters in Minneapolis and longshoremen in San Francisco. It winds up with a peculiar assertion: "The creation of the CIO unions in auto, steel, electrical, and many other industries were the products of struggles by men and women from nowhere." It offers no hint as to who these men and women really were.

I try to read most radical publications, including the *Militant*, the *Guardian*, *Bulletin IDOM*, the *People's Daily World*, and others. It occurred to me that somewhere I had recently seen other references to these mysterious "men from nowhere."

Looking back through issues of the *Bulletin IDOM* I came upon the 2-part series on "labor radicalism in the 1920s and today" by Frank Lovell. In the second part (April 1986), Lovell takes up a report by Jack Barnes on the plight of the union movement. He mentioned remarks by Barnes that were quoted in the *Militant* of December 27, 1985. So I looked it up. There it was.

Last December Jack Barnes explained (according to the *Militant* article back then), "it was 'the men from nowhere'—as some historians of the labor movement referred to those who built the

CIO—who redefined the character of the U.S. labor movement between 1934 and 1937. For those who didn't know anything about history, it seemed they came out of the blue."

In Lovell's comparison of the labor movement in the 1920s and today, he says the rank and file of the CIO movement were the millions of workers who had been radicalized by the Great Depression and they were led by men and women who were trained in the political parties of the working class, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the Communist League of America, which was the forerunner of the SWP.

It would be helpful if the *Militant* would give its readers a glimpse of these men and women, and tell us about their origins and political identities.

A reader from nowhere,
James Gorman

Abolish the Senate

I believe it's time to renew the slogan "Abolish the Senate." I think a good round-up article can be written showing how the Senate plays a major role in reactionary policy-making. More and more it serves as the mechanism screening the hypocrisy of the Democratic Party fakers' pretensions to liberalism. "We win in the House and lose in the Senate" precedes every capitulation on social issues. Two senators from Alaska or Hawaii offset two from New York. And the Senate as a whole is a reactionary bulwark in the parliamentary system. Therefore, even a liberal should support the demand "Abolish the Senate."

Nat Simon
New York City

KERR PUBLISHERS CELEBRATE 100TH BIRTHDAY

The Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, the oldest independent socialist publishing house in the United States, is currently celebrating its centennial. Kerr brought out the first complete translation of Karl Marx's *Capital* (1906-09), as well as other key writings by Marx, Frederick Engels, James Connolly, Karl Kautsky, Antonio Labriola, Paul Lafargue, Wilhelm Liebknecht, William Morris, Anton Pannekoek, George Plekhanov, and other major figures in the early years of international socialism.

Kerr's *International Socialist Review*, a leading organ of the Socialist Party's left wing until the government suppressed it in February 1918 for its opposition to World War I, included among its contributors James P. Cannon, Louis C. Fraina, Joe Hill, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Kate O'Hare, John Reed, Charles Ruthenberg, Vincent St. John, and Art Young.

The Kerr Company has been celebrating its hundredth birthday appropriately—by publishing

books. Its new list features the massive and profusely illustrated *Haymarket Scrapbook: A Centennial Anthology*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont; a new edition of Illinois Governor John P. Altgeld's *Reasons for Pardoning the Haymarket Anarchists*; and *The Autobiography of Florence Kelley*, a major pioneer in the struggle for workers' health and safety.

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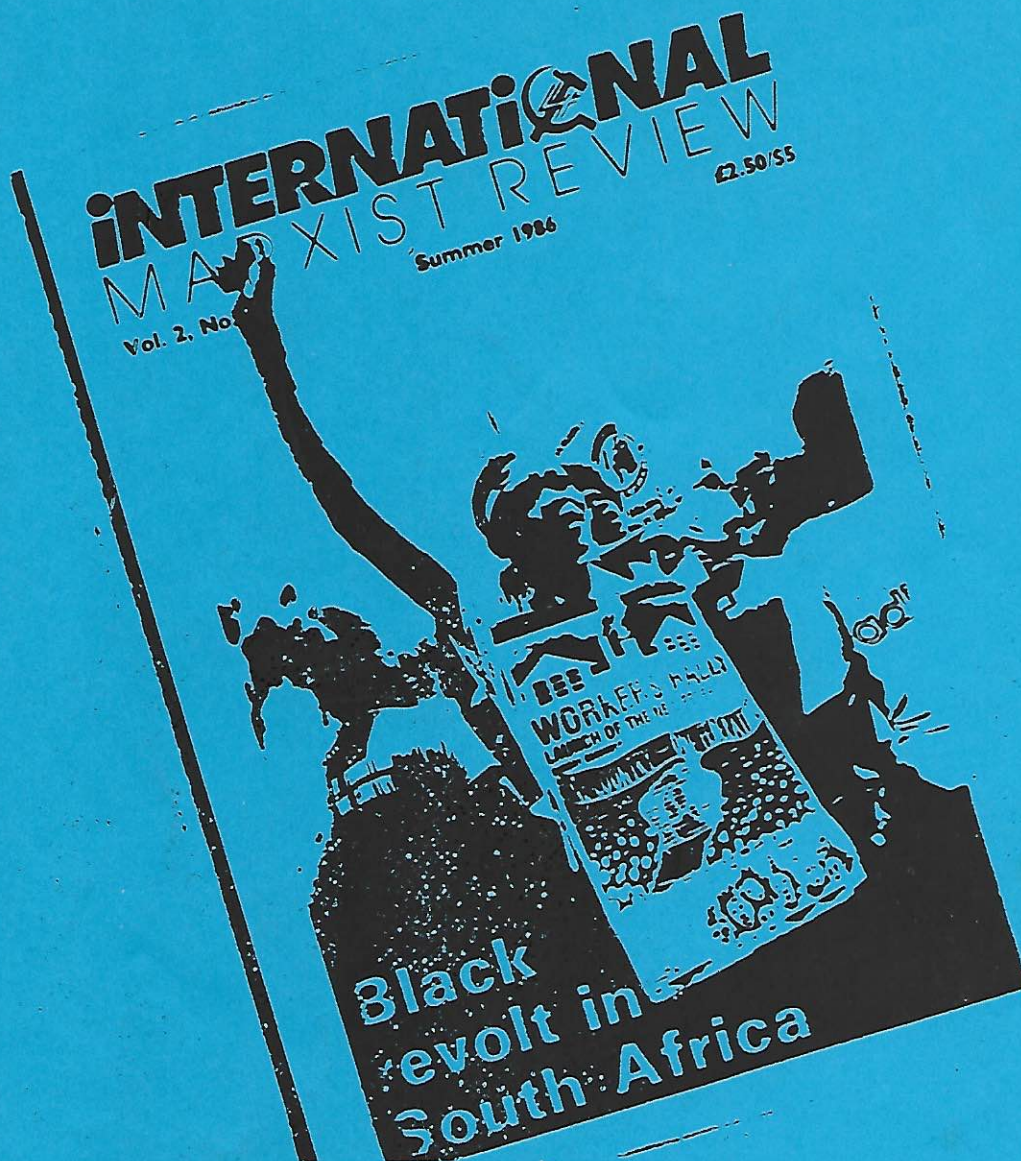
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