

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

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Who We Are

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) 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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THE ARIAS PEACE PLAN How Should the Anti-Intervention Movement Respond?

The agreement signed in Guatemala City by five presidents of Central American countries can be a golden opportunity for the U.S. anti-intervention movement—depending on how we respond in the weeks and months ahead. Now, more than ever, we need united actions focusing on the key demands: No Aid to the Contras! End U.S. Intervention in Central America! These are the central demands which have mobilized opposition to U.S. policies in the region. These demands focus on the greatest obstacles to realizing the Arias peace plan.

This letter will take up aspects of the peace plan, strategies and tactics of the anti-intervention movement, and the 1988 elections.

Fundamental to our understanding of the Arias plan is the recognition that it is a direct result of U.S. intervention in Central America. The accord clearly reflects Central American fears of ever-more massive U.S. intervention throughout the region. These nations know that the U.S. government will never desist in its efforts to establish the kind of government in Nicaragua that suits U.S. interests—no matter how this goal hurts other Central Americans through militarization of the entire region and other U.S. actions.

The brutal U.S. war against the Nicaraguan people could be halted if the Arias plan were actually faithfully carried out—but it is crystal clear that the Reagan administration will do everything possible to prevent the plan from being implemented. Reagan's interview in *U.S. News and World Report* details his rejection of the peace process.

Previous votes in Congress have clearly shown bipartisan support for Reagan's policy objectives. A recent example was the Wright-Reagan "peace" plan. Consider: just when it looked like the scandalous facts revealed through the Iran-contra hearings might lead to the defeat of contra aid this fall, a leading Democrat—supported by many other prominent Democrats—rescued Reagan by joining forces with the president to try to control—and in fact subvert!—the peace process in Central America as well as provide the basis for granting more aid to the contras and more direct forms of U.S. intervention.

Further evidence of the bipartisan nature of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua is the fact that—while the ink was not yet dry on the Arias plan—

This statement issued by the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean was mailed out to hundreds of anti-intervention and solidarity organizations in September.

Democrats and Republicans were discussing a plan to put millions of dollars into an "escrow" account demanded by the contras. When Secretary Shultz announced that President Reagan intended to ask Congress for \$270 million to support the contras over the next eighteen months, Democratic congressmen criticized the *timing* of the aid request—but left the door wide open for more aid to the contras at the "right" time.

The continued public opposition to *all* contra aid has helped force a split among U.S. policymakers over *how* to get rid of the Sandinistas, although there is no fundamental disagreement over *whether* the Sandinista government must be overthrown. Such divisions among U.S. policymakers are of great importance because they offer our movement an opportunity to build broader support for ending U.S. intervention in Central America. After all, a divided opposition is always an easier target than one that is completely united not only in goals but in tactics as well.

How can our movement take the fullest advantage of this opportunity? By pressing ahead with the key demands: **No Aid to the Contras! End U.S. Intervention in Central America!**

Some movement activists are now highlighting support to the Arias plan itself. For example, one local group is distributing a leaflet urging: "Peace Plan—Yes; Contra Aid? . . . Just Say No!" Many activists sincerely believe that the Arias plan is consistent with principles of "self-determination" because it is the product of regional discussions instead of a "solution" dictated from Washington. But calling for support of the plan itself shifts attention away from the still serious problem of U.S. intervention, ignores U.S. pressures on the Central American signers of the accord, and obscures the plan's many weaknesses—issues recognized by supporters of the plan.

The Religious Task Force on Central America made important points in an August 19 letter:

"There are many risks in this endeavor and a number of dangerous pitfalls where things could break down. They include:

"The perceptions of blame. . . . The Reagan Administration is bound to try to disrupt the process then blame the Sandinistas. . . . If Congress blames the Sandinistas, contra aid will undoubtedly pass. . . . Reagan/contra rejection of a ceasefire. . . . Equating the contras with the FMLN-FDR. . . . This overlooks the fundamental difference between the two forces. The contras are an army created, directed and funded from *outside* Nicaragua. The FMLN is an indigenous force with wide popular support."

Signers of the plan also point out problems we need to pay attention to as we pursue our anti-intervention activities here. An August 13th article in *Barricada Internacional* described the dangers posed by continued U.S. aggression, and explained that Nicaraguans "will not lower their guard now. . . . The agreement, then, although unprecedented in recent Central American history, should not raise false hopes."

The Salvadorans make a crucial point which we must keep uppermost in our minds and activities. In an August 11th statement, the General Command of the FMLN reaffirmed its role in the struggle for peace and justice in El Salvador, and stated: "The Guatemala Agreement will be ineffective in achieving peace unless U.S. intervention and actions end in Central America."

Ending U.S. intervention is *our* job. It's one thing for the Nicaraguans, who are experiencing daily the direct and devastating consequences of U.S. intervention, to sign and begin implementing the Arias peace plan—but it's quite another thing for the U.S. anti-intervention movement to demand any less than *a total and immediate end to all U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of Nicaragua.*

The present situation is analogous to the latter stages of the U.S. war against the Vietnamese people. Then, too, the victims of U.S. aggression were forced to think in terms of a negotiated settlement given the destruction suffered by their nation; but most movement activists continued to support the right of the Vietnamese to *true* self-determination by continuing to demand a total and immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam—a demand that was ultimately realized!

That kind of victory can be won again. The question today is: "What can the U.S. anti-intervention movement do in the period ahead to support the legitimate right of the peoples of Central America to exercise *true and full* self-determination?"

We must continue to demand no less than a total, immediate end to all forms of U.S. intervention in the region. Central to this, we must continue to fight any efforts to aid the contras—whether it's sent directly or placed in escrow.

As electoral activity increases, we must resist the temptation to believe that we can use the ballot box to win what can be only won in the streets. Again, the experiences of the anti-Vietnam war movement are instructive. Remember, that war ended under Presidents Nixon and Ford—hardly "men of peace"—and that war ended during those U.S. administrations only because of the valiant struggle of the Vietnamese themselves combined with the strength and *independence* of the U.S. peace movement. We learned that the question for the movement was not "Who is sitting in the White House and in Congress?" but who is marching in the streets of our nation!

What our movement needs now is not new Democrats or Republicans in Washington; what we need now is another strong dose of the same kind of medicine we delivered on April 25 of this year:



massive, united, and broadly sponsored national actions in the streets demanding no less than a total and immediate end to U.S. aggression in Central America.

A number of groups have called for various forms of protest this fall and, in a number of key cities, there will be street actions against the U.S. war in Central America. This is good. *But, there is simply no substitute for the kind of united and nationally coordinated actions we had this past April!*

Think how much stronger the chances for true peace and freedom would be if there were large, simultaneous street demonstrations in every major city this fall—mass actions demanding an end to all U.S. intervention in Central America. The April 25 Mobilization proved how powerful and broad such demonstrations can be. Polls continue to show that the majority opposes contra aid—in spite of the brief surge of "Ollie-mania."

We urge all groups opposing U.S. policy in Central America to organize united massive street actions this fall—and beyond—to demand:

**Self-Determination for the
People of Central America!**

No Contra Aid!

End All U.S. Intervention in Central America!

In Solidarity,
Executive Committee,
Emergency National Council (ENC)
Against U.S. Intervention
in Central America/the Caribbean

A BAD BUSINESS ALL THE WAY AROUND Corruption and 'Cleanup' in the Teamsters Union

by Tom Barrett

On Saturday, October 10, New Jersey truckers, warehousemen, and messengers who "know what's good for them" will be attending a rally to "Free 560." The rally is being organized by the ousted leadership of Local 560 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and will be held outside the union's headquarters in Union City, directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan.

Local 560, whose jurisdiction covers the New Jersey side of the Hudson River waterfront, has been under court-imposed federal trusteeship since July of 1986 under the Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). At this writing, the Reagan administration is attempting to place the entire International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) under the control of the federal courts. The fact that the Reagan administration has been no model of "clean government," and that bringing in the federal courts to "clean up" the Teamsters union would be like hiring Dracula to guard the blood bank doesn't make the issue any simpler. It's true that the government's attempt to take over the IBT is an attack on all labor. It's also true, however, that the Teamsters leadership is "racketeer-influenced and corrupt" and has no interest whatsoever in improving its members' living standards.

There is probably nowhere in the United States where the unions are more gangster-dominated than in New Jersey, and in New Jersey there has been no union local more gangster-dominated than Teamsters Local 560. Until 1984 it was under the thumb of Anthony "Tony Pro" Provenzano and his family. His brothers Salvatore (Sam) and Nunzio held union posts. Provenzano's daughter Josephine held the position of secretary-treasurer and collected \$71,000 a year—and never came to work. They ruled with a combination of physical intimidation and bribery which would remind one of Elia Kazan's film "On the Waterfront." As everyone knows, the Mob "takes care of its own." Those who didn't go along with Tony Pro often simply disappeared, or died in "accidents."

The Newark branch of the Socialist Workers Party became involved with Local 560 through the efforts of Larry Stewart, who had been a member of the Newark branch since the 1940s, and had remained an at-large SWP member after the branch was disbanded. When the branch was reconstituted in 1975 Stewart returned to active branch membership. (Stewart was bureaucratically expelled from the SWP in 1984, became a founder of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, and served on the editorial board of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. He died in November 1984. An appreciation of his work as a

revolutionist can be found in the December 1984 and January/February 1985 issues of the *Bulletin IDOM*. An assessment of his and the Newark branch's experience in Local 560 has yet to be undertaken.) He had been for some years employed at Nu-Car Carriers, driving out of its Port Newark terminal. The conditions he described were disheartening. It was hard to distinguish between union officials and company management—in fact, the terminal manager was also the union steward! The best-paying classifications and routes were given to those whom Tony Pro's associates considered "their own," and among those not included in that group were the Black employees, including Stewart. A driver who raised an objection might find himself driving his next run in a truck with no brakes.

Given the level of corruption and violence which prevailed in 560, it would be understandable that a worker who had been excluded from the privileged group might welcome *any* intervention to remove the gangsters from the union leadership. That intervention—on the part of the federal government—began in 1981, when Local 560 became the first union cited under RICO.

The investigation which ensued led to a ruling that 560 was in violation of RICO and to criminal indictments against the Provenzano brothers. In 1984 they went to prison. Michael Sciarra, a Provenzano loyalist, took over the union at that time. He continued to run the union—or rather to carry out the orders Provenzano gave him from prison—until July 1986, when Judge Harold Ackerman, who had handed down the original RICO ruling, imposed federal trusteeship on the local. From that time until June 1987, Joel Jacobson, the trustee, attempted to clean things up. He curbed the most flagrant abuses, such as the no-show jobs and bloated salaries, but his campaign for "honest unionism" generated little enthusiasm. There are a number of reasons why. First, Sciarra did not roll over and play dead, and those who might like to change the union are afraid of reprisals. On the Hudson River waterfront one takes threats of violence very seriously. Second, there is a combination of apathy and mistrust of this federal trustee who was imposed from the outside. On January 21 of this year, the union held its first general meeting since the imposition of the federal trustee. Two thousand—about 25 percent of the total membership—attended, most of them Sciarra loyalists. Sciarra made an "entrance" at the meeting, clasping his hands above his head prizefighter-style and got a 20-minute standing ovation. It was clear that

Sciarra had mobilized his supporters in a show of strength against Jacobson, as he will do again for the "Free 560" rally in October.

This "conflict" between Sciarra and Jacobson—as stand-ins for Provenzano and Judge Ackerman—is a bad business all the way around. The rank-and-file drivers are, as usual, caught in the middle. Neither the court with its trustee nor the gangster officials care much about their needs. When all the hypocritical moralizing about organized crime is swept away one can see the gangsters for what they really are, and what they are is what they claim to be—businessmen. In fact, when it comes to bribery, dishonest dealing, and violence, the only difference between the ruling class and the "godfathers" is that the ruling class operates on a much bigger scale. The Provenzano gang is interested in profits, just as the employers are. In fact, in so many of the terminals organized by 560 the employers as well have connections with organized crime, so that the union officials and management represent the same interests. What a perfect setup for raking in profits!

In bottom-line terms, the drivers will be no better off with the trustees' "honest unionism" than with Sciarra's "dishonest" unionism. The only "honest" unionism which will really help them is the kind practiced by the elected leaders of United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9, now organizing the North American Meat Packers Union: unionism in which the *members* have the final say. But as the Hormel meatpackers have found out, union democracy is essential, but it isn't enough. Union militancy is necessary, but it takes more than that to win a strike. Winning strikes improves things, but the improvements which are won can be lost later on. A union leadership has to look further than its own union. Working people need a leadership with a thought-out political program. One can be sure that the federal courts won't appoint such leaders as union trustees!

How does one begin to develop such a leadership? There is no magic formula which works at all times and in all places. The Newark SWP branch made a good attempt in the 1975-76 period, one from

which the SWP of today could learn. In 1976 Larry Stewart ran as the SWP candidate for Congress in New Jersey's 10th congressional district. He explained the connection between the capitalist government—its Congress, its courts, its war machine—and the employers and union bureaucrats with whom the drivers had to deal every day. He explained the connection between class oppression and racial oppression, and why the fight for Black liberation must be combined with the fight for socialism. He explained that working people need to involve themselves in political affairs as well as union affairs, and that only working people can represent working people—lawyers, politicians, and "godfathers" will not do it. And when Stewart explained these things he spoke not in abstract slogans but in terms which meant something to his audience. Those drivers who became seriously interested in what he was saying and wanted to find out more were invited to a class series on socialism, organized by the SWP branch and held at Stewart's house.

Furthermore, Stewart never acted like a "missionary" or a "preacher." He was working to support a family just as all of them were, and he was there to stay. He wasn't there to sell newspapers, rattle off some slogans, and then jump like a grasshopper to a new trade or a new city. Stewart demonstrated in practice what is meant by Marx and Engels's statement that the revolutionary party has "no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." No leadership—even a leadership with the best program, the program of revolutionary Marxism—can be imposed from outside. Though the seed may be planted by colonization, it must be given time to take root and grow.

A class-struggle leadership for the unions today, in which revolutionary Marxists like Stewart could play a key role, is the only real alternative to bureaucratic leadership—whether "corrupt" or "honest." Helping to build that class-struggle leadership requires a long-term political vision and a long-term commitment. ■

September 26

ISSUES IN THE DEFENSE OF MARTIN HUGHES

by Jean Y. Tussey

The conviction of a prominent Cleveland labor official July 31 on federal charges related to the union's political activities sent shock waves through the local labor movement comparable to those that followed the headline news in June of government plans to take over the Teamsters union.

Martin J. Hughes, international union vice president of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), was found guilty of "falsifying" CWA union records and government reports in making campaign contributions to Democratic Party candidates.

Federal prosecutors said Hughes filled out union wage and expense vouchers for Democratic candidates or their aides, in effect listing them as union employees although they did no work for the union. By this means some \$300,000 was contributed to various candidates through the Communications Workers of America from 1981 to 1985, according to the prosecution.

Under federal law Martin Hughes, 64, who is also president of the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor (and a member of the Democratic Party National Committee), reportedly could be fined \$225,000, sentenced to up to 26 years in prison, and barred from holding union office for 10 years.

Hughes will appeal his conviction after U.S. District Court Judge Ann Aldrich pronounces sentence. His defense should receive the support of the entire organized labor movement, regardless of considerable rank-and-file criticism of his leadership both within his own union and in the central labor body.

Both issues—defense and criticism—need to be addressed because they are related and because they represent problems of broader significance for labor than the specific situation in Cleveland or the personal strengths and weaknesses of individuals like Martin Hughes of the CWA or Jackie Presser of the Teamsters.

The threat that the federal prosecution of Hughes presents for all unions was clearly indicated in an editorial in the August 5 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which was titled, "The CWA's money machine."

The editor hailed the conviction of Hughes as a "condemnation of a corrupt system of political campaign contributions." He ridiculed as "absurd" the charge of "local labor leaders who angrily in-

sisted that the decision is anti-labor and restricts union efforts to support preferred candidates."

"Labor has other ways to contribute legally and generously. If a union or individual wants to pick up some expense for a candidate, as Hughes tried to do, let them donate the specific amount directly, not through a subterfuge of ghost employment."

In other words, what Cleveland's class conscious newspaper objects to is not the "CWA's money" but the "machine"—and its potential power.

A *union* political machine, independent of private business's Democratic and Republican party machines—an independent labor party—could pay the expenses of real labor representatives who would not be "ghost employees" and who *would* work for the union.

Calling for more prosecutions like that of Hughes, the editorial concludes: "One question remaining is whether CWA is alone in such practices. *Additional federal inquiries are in order*, for as the nation moves closer to next year's elections, there will be a greater need to enforce ethical standards in campaign finances" (emphasis added).

First reactions in the local labor movement ranged from proposals for a legal defense fund to support Hughes's appeal in the courts, to a blunt statement on the need to fight back against the government.

Hughes was not accused of embezzling union funds for personal benefit, or of concealing the CWA campaign contributions from the union members or from anyone else. All contributions were reported, according to law, by both the union and the candidates who received them. Hughes was convicted for technical violations, bookkeeping and voucher practices which, he explains, have been followed for 47 years and which he inherited.

Many officers or potential officers who follow national union policies of supporting Democratic candidates (or even Republicans, in the case of Teamsters) agree with Hughes and support his defense.

Some, like Charles R. Pinzone, head of the Cleveland Building Trades Council, go further than the simple legal defense. "Make no mistake," he said, "this isn't simply the federal government against Martin Hughes. It's the federal government against the labor movement."

"If we've got to put up with Reagan and his union busters for one and a half more years, so be it. But we won't do it without a fight."

The question, however, is what kind of fight? Particularly for some of the younger union leaders with years of struggle ahead of them, the question

Jean Y. Tussey is a 30-year member of Cleveland Typographical Union No. 53, recently affiliated by merger of the International Typographical Union with the Communications Workers of America. She is also an elected delegate from her union to the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor.

is what kind of fight is necessary *to win*—both the legal battle against Hughes's victimization, and the war against the current campaign of the government to control or destroy the unions?

The legal fight, appealing the conviction all the way to the Supreme Court, and beyond, is important. A nonpartisan united labor defense committee should be formed to educate on the facts and significance of the case, to mobilize broad public support, and to raise the funds for both the legal defense and the educational campaign.

The Hughes Defense Committee should be similar to United Organized Labor of Ohio, the organization that led the victorious 1958 campaign against the antiunion "Right to Work" bill. In that united front were the AFL-CIO, including the United Auto Workers; the United Mine Workers, the railroad brotherhoods, the Teamsters, and unaffiliated unions.

The UOLO gave free rein to the initiative and creativity of the rank and file, and union members were involved on a scale we had not seen since the height of the CIO organizing drives of the '30s. Union members took the campaign into their work places, their churches, and their social organizations, to county fairs and public squares. And we defeated the antiunion bill by a margin of almost a million votes.

A Hughes defense based on a principled challenge of laws that give any government agency the authority to usurp the democratic right of the membership to decide who can hold office in a union, or a union's right to engage in political action, has the potential for mobilizing such massive support.

This is a basic issue that should concern all union members, whether we agree or disagree with Martin Hughes on many questions, including what kind of political action is best for labor.

That is the other issue that must be addressed—the criticism of Hughes for subordinating the labor movement to the Democratic Party.

His President's reports at the monthly Cleveland Federation of Labor meetings for years have been boringly repetitious campaign speeches or lengthy accounts of Democratic Party trivia.

In a frenzied appeal to delegates at one federation meeting last year, Hughes went so far as to exhort them to "forget about grievances, forget about everything but getting out the vote" until after election day.

He has alienated union members in the CWA and in the central labor body who are looking for programs of action to fight back in their daily local battles against massive national attacks on their standard of living through the deunionization of America.

Working union members don't find electing Democrats helpful in dealing with grievances, negotiations, plant closings, layoffs, etc., and would like to see Hughes replaced in the next elections with a full-time union representative, not a misguided full-time Democratic politician.

Some critics think Hughes's big mistake, from which the other errors flow, is not how he imple-

ments the national AFL-CIO political action policy of support to Democratic Party candidates, but rather his consistent advocacy and support of that policy itself.

His reliance on Democrats instead of building labor's independent strength—and Teamster president Jackie Presser's dependence on government agents and Republicans—have been a major factor in the erosion of the historic sources of organized labor's strength and effectiveness: real democratic decision making by the members; independence from employer or government control; recognition that for workers, employed and unemployed, "an injury to one is the concern of all."

Martin Hughes, like many labor leaders caught in the trap of lesser-evil politics, stopped leading labor anywhere but into the Democratic Party. That made him—and the union—a target for Republican victimization. His friends in the Democratic Party cannot save him or the unions because those friends play by the same ground rules of the two-party system. They welcome contributions from the unions but are not responsible to labor.

Hughes's mistakes—and even Presser's—can be corrected but only by action of the union membership. They certainly cannot be corrected by the obscenely corrupt government and profit-hungry corporate bureaucracies whose naked contempt for democracy continues to shock the world.

The blatantly political attack on Martin J. Hughes may finally spur some of the critical thinkers in the labor movement to reevaluate the usefulness of the two-party system and the effectiveness of the hundred-year-old "reward our friends and punish our enemies" policy they also inherited.

If they do, they will see that the Democratic and Republican parties are not structured or programmed to represent the social, economic, or political interests of working people today. Those parties are obsolete and need to be replaced by an independent party, newly constructed, of, by, and for labor. That's the kind of modern vehicle the unions need to defend, advance, and implement labor's political action program.

What can be done to change the policies and the leaders that are contributing to labor's defeats? Who will lead the struggle? Can we clean house at the same time that we defend ourselves from business and government attacks?

Labor history teaches that no "friends" can do it for us. We've got to do it for ourselves. We have to think for ourselves. We have to speak up in our local unions and in the whole labor movement with our criticisms and proposals. We have to use our democratic rights to vote for the programs and policies that will advance our collective interests as workers, and to elect, reelect, or replace representatives on the basis of how well they carry out our decisions.

We have to do it NOW. Defend Martin Hughes and our unions from government intervention and change the harmful union policies and practices at the same time. ■

The drowning at Meech Lake

CONSTITUTIONAL questions have played an important part in Canadian politics. In particular, this is because of the bi-national character of the country and its history as a British dominion, and therefore subordinate to British legal institutions.

The rise of Quebecois nationalism put into question the old British North American constitutional framework. In this period also the constitution was "repatriated," that is Canada assumed the right to determine its own constitutional rules. The eclipse of the bourgeois Parti Quebecois (PQ) opened a space for English-speaking bourgeois politicians to try to come up with a new constitutional setup to contain Quebecois national feeling, which remains strong despite disillusion with the PQ.

BARRY WEISLEDER

WE GOT THE worst of both worlds. The constitutional assault on Quebec's national rights, begun with the unilateral repatriation of the British North America Act in 1981, was deepened and perpetuated with the signing on June 3 of the Meech Lake Accord.

At the same time, the capacity of the federal government to implement social programmes across English Canada, against the resistance of reactionary provincial governments, was undermined.

The over-riding purpose of the Constitutional Agreement — which was signed by the provincial premiers and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and based on a text first drafted at Meech Lake, north of Ottawa, on April 30 — was to co-opt Quebec.

The PQ government of Quebec refused to sign the constitution cooked up in 1981 by the previous prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, and the other nine premiers, because it deprived Quebec of its historic veto over future constitutional change. They also refused to sign because it denied that Quebec was a nation with the right to decide its own future and to take whatever measures may be necessary to protect its own language and culture. (French is the mother tongue of 90 per cent in Quebec, but only 2 per cent in North America.)

Despite some fancy window-dressing, the current Accord represents no meaningful change. Although the constitutional amendment states that Quebec will be "recognized as a distinct society within Canada", it does not spell out what that means. Nor does it say what powers it confers on the government of Quebec "to preserve and promote Quebec's distinct identity".

The Amendment goes on to say that although "the English-speaking population is concentrated outside Quebec, it is also present within Quebec", and vice-versa for Francophones — the classical rationale for Ottawa's hypocritical policy of official bi-lingualism [which is used as an excuse for denying French the rights of a national language in Quebec].

Big business speaks English

Because big business speaks English in North America, Quebecois workers suffer systematic discrimination at work, in education and healthcare, in department stores and restaurants and so on, even where Francophones are the overwhelming majority.

The provincial government in Quebec was led by the bourgeois nationalist Parti Quebecois, first elected in 1976. After they had passed Law 101 to give primacy to the French language within Quebec, the courts ruled the law unconstitutional on the basis that it violated the rights of the Anglophone minority — a privileged minority at that.

So, why did the current Liberal premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, sign the Accord — against the wishes of the majority of Quebecois, including the three Quebec union federations (the CSN, FTQ and CEQ), the farmers' union, the Mouvement Quebec Français, the opposition Parti Quebecois, and even the Quebec New Democratic Party? Certainly not because of minor concessions to Quebec in the areas of immigration, the appointment of Supreme Court judges, or financial compensation for opting out of federal-provincial shared-cost programmes.

The real motivation, one that Bourassa shares with Mulroney and most capitalists across Canada, is to destroy the national aspirations of the Quebecois. Canada's rulers hope that this new Accord, which has "brought Quebec back into the Canadian family", will once and for all put an end to the struggle for Quebecois national liberation.

Quebec is an oppressed nation

Pierre Trudeau's recent strong denunciation of the Accord merely reflects the view of the man who invoked the War Measures Act in 1970 against Quebec — the view that the federal government should not even give the *appearance* of making concessions to Quebec.

But Trudeau's allegation that the federal power has been weakened in relation to the provinces is not totally without foundation. Mulroney and the majority of the ruling class are prepared to pay this price to co-opt Quebec — whereas Trudeau and the more centralist (and protectionist) wing of the capitalist class he represents would prefer a sterner and more rigid stance.

Quebec is not a province like the others — it is an oppressed nation with its own distinct language, culture, history and territory. The refusal to recognize this fact constitutes a central contradiction at the heart of the confederal state. This problem is not confined to the capitalists and their state, however; it is one shared by the working-class organizations in English Canada and their political arm, the NDP, which has upheld a federalist perspective consistently hostile to the aspirations of the Quebecois workers. This accounts for the lack of significant support for the NDP in Quebec until very recently — and now the Quebec NDP has broken with the federal party line to oppose the Accord due to the pressure coming from Quebecois workers.

But, in supporting the Accord, the federal NDP and the NDP government

of Manitoba not only betray the interests of Quebecois workers, they place new obstacles in the path of progressive social change in English Canada.

The rights of native peoples and residents of the northern territories are frozen out of this constitutional agreement. There's nothing in it for women. There's no improvement in union liberties and other collective rights that have been severely undermined by recent Supreme Court decisions.

However, more fundamentally in structural terms, the clause that permits a province to receive financial compensation if it opts out of a shared-cost programme in a provincial jurisdiction may put an end to future universal social services.

What constitutes compliance with "national objectives" in order to receive compensation for opting out is not defined. Would it have been possible for the federal government, under tremendous pressure from labour, healthcare groups and the NDP, to force provinces to end extra-billing by doctors under public medical insurance plans, if such a provision had been in effect in recent years?

Cutbacks in social service programmes

Lise Corbeil-Vincent, coordinator of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, expressed concern that lax interpretation of "objectives" could give the provinces too much leeway.

She pointed out, for example, that

British Columbia is now using some Canada Assistance funds to subsidize baby sitters, who are regulated only by visits from parents. If objectives are defined only, for instance, "to provide care for children", British Columbia could use all its shared-cost money on unregulated services.

Louise Dulude, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, agreed that the Amendment could paralyze a national plan for childcare. "Ottawa could make proposals but say they have to wait until the legislatures make their will known. That alone could take three years. The need for child care is urgent", she said. "We can't afford to wait."

But the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney has no intention of introducing a universal childcare programme, or any other universal social service programmes for that matter. The Tory perspective is to cut back existing programmes. That is why they have so little difficulty with the Constitutional Amendment.

But a future NDP federal government would face new obstacles in the path of implementing even the simplest reforms.

Another obstacle may take shape in the form of a rejuvenated Senate. Although now the Senate has constitutional power to block legislation passed by the Commons, because it is an appointed body of bourgeois party bagmen and retired political hacks, it lacks the necessary credibility to exercise this power.

However, under a new system of pro-

vincial nominations, even though still subject to federal choice, the Senate may attempt to exercise power as an assembly representing "regional (i.e. capitalist) interests".

An NDP or more radical pro-working-class government would be locked in permanent battle with such a structure to struggle to overcome this — as if there weren't enough obstacles in the existing capitalist state (the judiciary, the army and police, top levels of the civil bureaucracy).

Socialists demand abolition of the Senate, not its reform! But the working class in English Canada and especially in Quebec has a more reserved, skeptical — even critical — approach to the Accord.

Socialists should work to deepen that criticism, to point out that Meech Lake represents the worst of both worlds: the drowning of Quebec rights and the paralysis of future social change initiatives within the framework of the existing state.

Until socialist revolution sweeps away the chains of the present structure of bourgeois domination, working people will look for ways to win our demands, and fight all efforts to place additional obstacles in our path. Socialists should work with our sisters and brothers in Quebec and unite with them on the basis of Quebecois self-determination, because "no nation that oppresses another can itself be free".

For all of these reasons, the entire labour movement and the NDP should organize to defeat the constitutional amendment. ☆

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AN OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY AND YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

by Keith Mann

Dear Comrades,

I am writing this letter to you, the ranks of the SWP and the YSA. Some of you will remember me from when I was in the YSA and the party, and others may remember my interventions in the 1984 written preconvention discussion. I recently experienced one of the saddest political experiences of my six and one-half years in revolutionary politics—one that speaks volumes of the sorry state of the SWP today. On July 24 I was thrown out of a public Militant Labor Forum.

In the summer of 1984, like hundreds of loyal party members before me, I was harassed and then expelled on totally groundless charges. I, too, had expressed my disagreement with the sudden and unwarranted break of Jack Barnes and other party leaders with the SWP's long and proud Leninist/Trotskyist/Bolshevik heritage. But unlike many others, I was not branded a "splitter." The "exclusion policy" adopted by the party toward members of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and the FI Caucus of Solidarity was not applied to me. I was allowed to continue attending public party events, which I did on a regular basis. I was approached about supporting the party's ongoing and increasingly successful suit against the FBI and other governmental cop agencies. On several occasions I made modest financial contributions to the Political Rights Defense Fund.

Then, suddenly, on the day of a forum given in New York by Mary-Alice Waters on recent developments in Cuba, I was confronted by two comrades—who informed me that I couldn't enter the hall. After I explained that I had come to many party events after I was expelled, and had another comrade verify this, I was whisked into a side room and confronted with a question: "Are you in F.I.T.?"—referring, of course, to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Believing that it would be improper to participate in any anti-proletarian "exclusionary rule," that honest revolutionists should, on principle, refuse to answer witch-hunting questions such as "are you now or have you ever been . . .," I declined to respond and asked again to enter the forum hall. The two SWP representatives then told me "we think you are [a member of F.I.T.]" and ejected me from the party's Manhattan headquarters.

I find it hard to believe that sincere and honest members of the SWP can be happy with this sort of travesty being carried out in their name. Aren't party members aware that at the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International the "exclusion policy," along with the expulsions themselves, was rejected by an overwhelming majority of the delegates, and that this decision has been reaffirmed on several occasions since then? What could possibly be the motivation for openly flouting the decisions of the highest body of the world party of socialist revolution? How can the SWP benefit from violating the most elementary concepts of proletarian democracy? Surely comrades can see that the reasons given by their leaders are obviously invented fabrications, which have even changed a number of times as previous pretexts have become politically indefensible.

Others have been excluded from public party functions in the past. Who are they and why?

Fascists, cops, and other racist, labor-hating scum have been and should be excluded. The Spartacist League, whose members have sometimes disrupted party meetings in the past, has also been excluded, as have those who belong to the Workers League which continues its scurrilous agent-baiting campaign against party leaders. I have never disrupted any party event which I have attended, nor have I been accused of this or any similar offense. Neither have former SWPers organized in the F.I.T. and SA, who continue to be excluded. How then could such a policy possibly advance the socialist objectives of the party?

Time and again, in the course of the present dispute, your current leadership has placed its own, petty factional interests above basic political principles. Recently, for example, when Lea Tsemel—the Israeli attorney and noted Palestinian rights defender—toured the U.S., the *Militant* reported on her Washington D.C. tour, where the party presumably participated in organizing and building the public event. But the week before, when Tsemel was in New York speaking out against the

treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and the occupied territories, as well as the harassment of our comrade Michel Warshawsky—leader of the Alternative Information Center and the Revolutionary Communist Party—our Israeli sister party, the *Militant* was silent. Four organizers in New York, which included other U.S. Fourth Internationalists who had been expelled from the party, tried to involve the SWP in the building of this meeting. The party refused to participate in doing so, and no party members were present when it took place. Was this voted on? Was it even reported to the membership?

I think we could formulate a basic law of revolutionary politics: when individuals or organizations begin to make political decisions based on petty, vindictive, sectarian considerations—instead of basic proletarian principles—the end result will be far more extreme than even they imagined at the start. Apparently, this sort of approach now guides the attitude of the SWP toward international defense work. Doesn't this reflect a most cynical attitude toward the Palestinian struggle and the precarious situation of Israeli revolutionary Marxists?

Certainly the exclusionary policy must be an unpopular one. Can it be opposed within the party or does the heavy-handed internal atmosphere make that impossible? If the second of these is true, doesn't that shed some light on who is really responsible for the split?

Leninists have always said that the party is its program, not this or that leadership body, not any particular clique, or group of comrades. How is it, then, that in the name of Leninism the leaders of the SWP were able to completely transform the program of the party—expelling those who disagreed without even allowing an opportunity for an open and democratic discussion? Surely there are those in the party who have some honesty and honor who can still protest the exclusionary policy and the completely undemocratic expulsions, who can begin to try to reverse the completely antidemocratic practices which have led our movement in the U.S. into its current, fragmented state.

Like the publishers of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, I refuse to believe that all of the several hundred members of the SWP who remain have forgotten the most elementary principles of proletarian politics, much less the finer points of theory and program. Like those who write for this journal, I am pained when the party makes such destructive choices and am gratified when good work is done and advances made. That is why I have asked that my letter be published in this magazine.

I agree with these comrades that our political differences with the party are not big enough to warrant separate organizations, and that if and when allowed back in the party, when allowed the right to a basic discussion of the theoretical programmatic issues which was denied, our confidence in our ideas will be matched only by our discipline, loyalty, and dedication to what can and should be the nucleus of the mass revolutionary party that will lead the U.S. working class and the oppressed to victory. A reversal of the expulsions and an end to the "exclusionary rule" against other U.S. Fourth Internationalists would be a small, but important and vitally necessary, step in the construction of such a party.

Comradely,
Keith Mann

BUILDING THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES

by Evelyn Sell

Although this talk is specifically about building the revolutionary party in the United States, what I say also applies to building a revolutionary international around the world, so keep this in mind as I speak.

As a high school student, I learned a very useful rule in my journalism class. We were taught

F.I.T. HOLDS SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

This talk by Evelyn Sell was delivered at the Socialist Educational Conference at Wilder Forest, Minnesota, September 4-6. The conference, sponsored by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, drew dozens of participants from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, Seattle, Oakland, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis-St. Paul. There were international guests representing the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and the Alliance for Socialist Action in English Canada. Observers from the U.S. organizations Socialist Action and Solidarity also attended.

In addition to Sell's talk on the revolutionary party the conference included the following presentations:

"Developments in the U.S. Economy" by Carol McAlister, an instructor at Carlow College, Pittsburgh and Steve Bloom, managing editor of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*; "The American Class Struggle Today" by Dave Riehle, rail worker, activist in the Twin Cities P-9 Support Committee, and a member of the National Organizing Committee of the F.I.T.; a panel "Labor Activism in the 80s" featuring Bud Schulte, UFCW Local 879 steward, South St. Paul, Barney Oursler, Mon Valley Unemployed Project, Pittsburgh, Bob Kutchko, UAW committeeman, General Motors Fairfax, Kansas City, and Rita Shaw, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Seattle; "The Dialectics of the Transitional Program" by David Weiss, veteran Trotskyist from New York. A special session "The Revolutionary International" featured talks by the United Secretariat and Canadian guests. Several films and slide shows were interspersed over the three-day conference.

Over four hundred dollars worth of F.I.T. literature was sold at the event and MayDay Books, a Minneapolis independent radical bookstore, also reported brisk sales at its booth.

Future issues of *Bulletin IDOM* will feature other presentations from the conference.

that the first sentence of our articles should include the "six Ws": What, Who, When, Where, Why, and How. I'm going to use this formula in structuring my talk on "Building the Revolutionary Party in the United States."

What is the basis for creating a revolutionary party? Who is going to build such a party? When is the right time to form such a party? Why has it proven so difficult to build a revolutionary party in the United States? Where do we stand now in the process of party-building? How do we go forward from this point?

A full talk could be given on each one of those questions but time is limited, so I'm only going to touch on certain aspects of each question.

The Basis for a Revolutionary Party

In looking at the basis for creating a revolutionary party, I'm going to take up a very general and broad process that has spanned hundreds of thousands of years: the relation between the objective and subjective forces in history.

It's very common to hear people *counterpose* the importance of objective factors to subjective factors when discussing what determines the course of history. On the one hand, people say that impersonal conditions such as geography, climate, and natural resources determine what happens in history. In this view, individuals and societies are the products of their environment. On the other hand, many people assert that subjective elements determine the course of human events. They point to an abstract Divine Will, or to the actions of great scientists, political leaders, and military geniuses.

Each of these positions contains part of the truth but distorts the real driving forces of historical change.

Marxists maintain that—far from being opposites—objective and subjective aspects are inter-related forces which condition each other. And, further, that this relationship is not a static but a dynamic one. It cannot be set down in rigid mathematical terms which hold true for all times and all places. You can't say, for example, that reality everywhere equals 79 percent objective factors and 21 percent subjective factors. No, there has been a changing relationship between the objective and subjective forces in terms of affecting historical developments.

Objective reality existed long before living organisms appeared, and long before the remote ancestors of the human species developed. The first human beings were products of natural processes and for millions of years people were governed by objective conditions. Nature was very little affected

by the activities of our species when we kept alive by picking berries, killing small animals, and drinking from streams. But when agriculture and the domestication of animals developed, people began to leave their marks on their natural environment. The subjective element—people—interacted with the objective—nature—to create a new relationship.

We now live in a world where the products of human consciousness can be seen from airplanes many miles above the earth. Cities, cultivated farm areas, and construction of waterways are obvious signs of human activities which have changed the natural environment. In fact, our understanding of natural laws and processes has given us the nuclear ability to destroy all life on earth—and even the planet itself. Quite a strong example of the power of the subjective element in shaping our destiny!

How does the question of the revolutionary party fit into these general points about the changing relations between objective and subjective factors? What is true for historical change in general—the increasing importance of subjective factors—also holds true for social change. People make history—but, for the most part, this happens in an unconscious fashion. In modern times, human consciousness has played a more and more active role in determining the pace and direction of historical changes. The basis for a revolutionary party comes from the essential role played by consciousness.

In the United States, the objective conditions for a socialist revolution are overripe—as we heard in the other sessions at this conference which took up the economic, political, and social conditions confronting working people. We heard how some sections of the working class are fighting back—like the packinghouse workers in the Midwest. Over the past thirty years, we've seen struggles which have changed laws and attitudes in the U.S.: the struggles of Blacks, students, women, lesbians and gays, Chicanos, and Native Americans. The drive to wage wars, inherent in the capitalist system, was thwarted when the antiwar movement forced the U.S. government to pull its troops out of Vietnam. The power of the subjective force in history is expressing itself today in the movement against U.S. intervention in Central America. It is this mass opposition which has severely limited the options open to the U.S. government as it tries to serve the interests of its capitalist masters.

All of these struggles are part of the subjective preconditions for a socialist revolution in the United States. And they begin to answer the second question I posed at the beginning of this talk: Who is going to build the revolutionary party?

Composition of the Revolutionary Party

A revolutionary party is built by people who have been set into motion—who have been compelled by the objective conditions of life under capitalism to defend themselves from being exploited and victimized. When an individual or a group begins to fight back, certain dynamics are triggered—dynamics which lead to a higher level of consciousness.

People engaged in struggle are compelled to define their demands and strategies. They develop the understanding that this is not an individual problem to be solved at the purely personal level, but a general problem confronting others and requiring collective action. People learn about the power of united actions and about their own individual strengths. Activists develop or discover talents and abilities they didn't know they had. The needs of the situation pull them into chairing a meeting, giving a speech, organizing a demonstration, making a leaflet, and so on.

When people are set into motion, their horizons are broadened. Action on one issue tends to make people think about related issues. This happens, in part, because they need to find allies in their battles. In looking for support, people are forced to consider the interests of other sections of the population, and to find common ground for mutual help. This need reshapes consciousness in many ways. For example, when the auto companies deliberately hired Blacks as scab labor to smash trade union organizing efforts 50 years ago, white auto workers had to make a choice between their racist conditioning and their self-interest as exploited workers. They chose to break down the racial barriers which kept them weak and divided, and they created powerful multiracial labor organizations. We can see the same thing happening today with those unions who defend the rights of undocumented workers in order to present the necessary united front to the bosses.

In the course of their struggles, people are shaken out of their patterns of thinking and behaving. For some, this leads to radical conclusions about society. People begin to grasp the interconnections between various problems. Some seek out explanations and solutions for the wider set of problems inherent in capitalism. Some find their answers in the program and principles of the revolutionary party.

I want to stress that I have said that *some people* come to radical conclusions, that *some people* understand the need for a revolutionary party. Engaging in struggle requires a certain degree of consciousness but getting involved in a revolutionary party requires a broader and deeper level of consciousness. Not everyone reaches radical conclusions at exactly the same time. Not all five-year-old children reach the same height, weight, and physical skills at exactly the same time. Just as there are individual variations in physical development, there are individual differences in the development of revolutionary consciousness. This unevenness extends to groups and classes in society as well. In fact, the existence of a revolutionary party is proof of the uneven development of consciousness.

Those who sneer at the concept of a *vanguard party* completely ignore this uneven development. These critics claim that efforts to build a vanguard party are: "elitist," "sectarian," "a sure way to become isolated from the real mass movement." There's nothing elitist about recognizing that certain individuals are ready to build a revo-

lutionary party while others are hesitant or unconvinced. There's nothing sectarian about uniting people who share goals, strategies, and principles. The party is not isolated from the "real mass movement" if it presents a program and strategy that meets the needs of the movement.

Here's a dramatic example to help prove my point. Quoting now from the February 22, 1939, issue of the newspaper *Socialist Appeal*:

"In addition to the fifty thousand demonstrators who responded to the call of the Socialist Workers Party (emphasis added) for a labor rally against the fascist concentration, official police estimates given to the press counted another fifty thousand among the spectators. . . . Their presence around the Garden, in response to the appeal of a comparatively small organization, showed the Socialist Workers Party had correctly gauged the sentiments of the best sections of the New York working class" (*Education for Socialists* bulletin, "The Fight Against Fascism in the USA," page 9).

If the party has "correctly gauged the sentiments" of workers and oppressed groups, if the party presents a program and strategy that meets their needs, people will respond. They'll work with the party or with party members on particular issues. They'll join the party. In his book, *Teamster Rebellion*, Farrell Dobbs described his own experience in 1934. Farrell wrote:

"After the strike, Hall (the union business agent) and his henchmen began to make snide remarks around the union hall about the Dunne brothers being communists. Their talk interested me, but not for the reasons they intended. I was impressed by the way Grant and Miles had handled themselves during the strike. They appeared to know what had to be done, and they had the guts to do it.

"One night after a meeting, I went into a beer joint across from the union hall and saw Miles Dunne standing at the bar. I took a place next to him, and after engaging in a little small talk, I came right to the point.

"Are you a communist?" I asked.

"What the hell's it to you?" he shot back.

"I heard that you are," I told him. 'If that's so, I guess that's what I want to be.'

"I reasoned that if I joined a communist organization, I might be able to learn some of the things they knew."

This incident identifies an important role played by a revolutionary party: to be a part of and to help organize day-to-day social, political, and economic struggles.

Another important role of the party is to serve as the living memory of the working class. The party keeps alive and passes along the experiences and lessons of key struggles. A clear example is this year's bicentennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution—with its emphasis on "Founding Fathers" and lack of attention to the battles fought by small farmers to add the Bill of Rights to the fundamental law of the land.

Over the past 25-30 years social protest movements have insisted on reclaiming their heritages.

Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, women, lesbians, and gays—all insisted on presenting a fuller and truer picture of their histories in order to strengthen themselves. Revolutionaries have roots, too. And we, too, gain strength from our heritage. By knowing and passing on our history, we can avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, and keep from stumbling around in trial-and-error fashion.

Lessons learned from past successes are quickly lost unless they are preserved and applied. For example, the movement against the U.S. war in Vietnam is still remembered—but many of the key lessons learned just 15-20 years ago are not known to those active in the movement opposing U.S. intervention in Central America. It's necessary to argue once more for a mass action strategy and a clear focus. Many anti-intervention activists simply don't know what was done to get U.S. troops out of Vietnam. It's necessary to patiently explain the facts, and to use specific examples from that period to drive the points home. The collective experiences and resources of a revolutionary party serve to maintain the record of past struggles, and to make them available to those fighting back today.

When to Build a Revolutionary Party

A study of working class and protest struggles in this country shows how events have been affected by the actions of a revolutionary party. But some radicals argue that such a party is not needed or not realistic at this time. This view was described in an article by John Trinkl published in the September 11, 1985, issue of the *Guardian*.

Mel Rothenberg, an activist in the Chicago area, told Trinkl: "In the 1970s people tried to follow the model of the party put forward by the Third International. . . . In most of the advanced capitalist countries it didn't work.

"There is no basis within the U.S. working class right now for a vanguard Leninist organization. . . . To have an authentic vanguard, a party must actually represent the most advanced elements of the working class who are looking for revolutionary solutions. We'll have to settle for something short of that until other developments occur. . . . There's no way right now a party can genuinely represent the most advanced positions on a number of different fronts. . . . We need something more than working in the solidarity movements but short of forming a party."

David Finkel (at that time a member of International Socialists, now a leader of Solidarity) told Trinkl: ". . . the Bolshevik model of the party has one purpose and one purpose only: to organize and lead the working class to power. Here the working class struggle for state power is not on the agenda; it's not even on the horizon."

Jim Jacobs, a Detroit activist, said: "You can't build a party in the absence of a mass movement with a strong socialist component. The immediate task is to build a socialist movement."

I'm going to present a couple of general reasons why a revolutionary party is needed now. I've

already touched on one important reason: the role played by a revolutionary party in the day-to-day struggles of working people, and in the mass protest movements which have shaken this country. There are many specific examples of the critical role of revolutionaries in aiding these struggles and winning battles.

In his book, *Labor's Giant Step*, Art Preis evaluated the impact of three strikes that paved the way for the establishment of the CIO. But had these magnificent examples of labor struggle not occurred, in all likelihood the CIO would have been delayed or taken a different and less militant course.

"It was these gigantic battles—all led by radicals—that convinced John L. Lewis that the American workers were determined to be organized and would follow the leadership that showed it meant business. . . .

"Of course, 'civil war' was going on in the towns and cities from coast to coast and blood was being spilled in scores of other places besides Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco. These latter cities were unique, however, in this: *they showed how the workers could fight and win. They gave heart and hope to labor everywhere for the climactic struggle that was to build the CIO.*"

The impact of revolutionaries was also felt during the labor upsurge following World War II. In his book, Art Preis explained that the CIO National Executive Board had designated April 1947 as "Defend Labor Month" and isolated mass actions were held to protest antilabor measures pending in state and national legislatures. In the Detroit area, the UAW Executive Board was pressured by local unions to call "a cease-work mass demonstration in Cadillac Square, Detroit, for the afternoon of April 24. An estimated half million workers quit the plants at the appointed time and 275,000 jammed the Square and all the streets for blocks around. It was the greatest outpouring of labor in the auto center's history."

About a year and a half after this event, I joined the SWP. As a member of the Detroit branch, I got to know the key strategists and organizers of the Cadillac Square demonstration. I assure you, they did not spontaneously step out of the UAW ranks during the labor upsurge. They were experienced comrades, experienced both in terms of party activities and in terms of clashes with the bosses during the lull period before the postwar explosions. They were *prepared* to play a leading role—a vanguard role.

"Be prepared" is not just a slogan of the Boy Scouts; it's an essential concept for revolutionaries. Be prepared to challenge both the short-term and the fundamental interests of the most powerful ruling class in the world. Be prepared for today's struggles and be prepared to advance those struggles to the next stage in the development of the revolutionary process. Be prepared to ensure the creation of a new kind of society controlled by the overwhelming majority. That kind of preparedness takes more than militancy, takes more than activ-

ism, takes more than a general sentiment that socialism is the ultimate solution.

James P. Cannon explained in a 1953 speech to a plenum of the Socialist Workers Party:

"For the revolution is not simply the struggle for power, and the transformation of the social system from capitalism to socialism. The revolution is also the preparatory period, the period in which we are living now. And the most important part of the preparation for the revolution is the building of a Leninist party, which alone can lead the struggle for power in this country and carry it through to irreversible victory."

As we know, there are many who would argue that Cannon was wrong about the indispensable need for a Leninist party. And there are many who would argue that Leninists are wrong about the role of the party in organizing and leading the majority's struggle for power over the tiny ruling minority of capitalists. The fact that such differences of opinion have long existed is one of the reasons why it has been so difficult to build a revolutionary party in the United States.

Problems in Party-Building

As I've already pointed out, there is an uneven development in the consciousness of labor militants and activists in social protest movements. The number who reach revolutionary conclusions and who are ready to help build a revolutionary party is relatively small—small in comparison to the total population. This small vanguard has been fractured into even smaller groups because of differences over program, strategy, tactics, organizational questions, and many other related matters. This has led many people to ask, "Why can't you all get together?" Attempts to explain the situation often bring the response, "But can't you get together on some kind of basic program? Don't you have some fundamental agreements?" The answer to that is, "Yes and no."

Yes, numerous groups say capitalism is rotten and should be replaced with a socialist society. No, there are many disagreements on crucial questions of program and principles.

Programmatic positions, demands, and concepts are constantly challenged by the test of events—and this often leads to splits in organizations as well as the formation of new groups. Some radical groups in the U.S. today have their origins in the differences over workers' democracy which arose in response to the 1953 uprising in East Germany, the 1956 revolts in Hungary and Poland, the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union, and the Polish workers' struggles which began in 1980. All radical groups were faced with the question, "Which side are you on? Do you support the actions of the regime in Moscow? Or do you support the workers and students?"

Marxist principles are involved in decisions about participation in election campaigns. Revolutionary socialists insist on not crossing the class line during elections, that is, you can't fight the

bosses in the factories and fields and then support and vote for the bosses' political servants in the White House, Congress, state legislatures, city councils, and so on. Social democrats have a basically different view.

Earlier this year, the *Los Angeles Times* had a long article about Michael Harrington who, according to the writer, "has become the most outspoken socialist in the United States, spiritual and ideological leader of the Democratic Socialists of America, one of the last vestiges of the Old Left. . . . The Democratic Socialists of America is a movement, not a political party, and most of its members, including Harrington himself, are registered Democrats."

What does Harrington think about the idea that socialists should run campaigns independent from the capitalist parties? Here's what Harrington said about the Socialist Party: "They're a tiny group of very, very nice people . . . who run these pathetic little candidacies during each presidential election, raising and spending every cent they can get—but they aren't productive, they only take a few votes away from liberal Democrats who share many of our goals."

The radical movement is permeated with an unprincipled and pragmatic approach to the electo-



ral process. The argument is, "Let's be practical and realistic. A radical party can't win political office. Therefore, we have to pick and choose among the candidates who can win. It's better to have a liberal politician in office than a conservative one."

Such "lesser-evil" sentiments are extremely powerful in U.S. political life. This is partly due to the subjective influence exerted by social democrats and the Communist Party. The major objective influence involves the level of class struggle in the U.S. Many people are not actually satisfied with the Democratic and Republican parties but don't see any attractive alternative. One indication of the deep dissatisfaction with the two major parties is the huge numbers of eligible voters who list themselves as "independent"—either officially on registration cards or in answer to polls. Surveys consistently show that independents plus non-

voting citizens outnumber hard-core Democrats and Republicans.

The development of a labor party would be a powerful magnet to a substantial section of the unaffiliated and alienated grouping. A labor party would cut across class collaborationist practices, demonstrate the power of working people to make changes in society, and help develop revolutionary consciousness. Such an ideological and organizational break with capitalist political parties would provide fertile ground for the growth of a revolutionary party.

The lack of independent working class political activity had a profound effect on the young people radicalized during the 1960s. Although radical groups attracted many young people, most of the youth who made up the "New Left" were lost to the revolutionary movement. Tom Hayden is a good example of this development. The *Gentlemen's Quarterly* magazine recently called Hayden "the epitome of the Sixties revolt, a leading philosopher and organizer of the movement."

In 1962 Hayden wrote "The Port Huron Statement," the founding document of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). This program for the New Left projected the need for a "realignment of the political parties," that is, the Southern wing of the Democratic Party should join with Republican conservatives allowing the Democratic Party to function as a vehicle for liberals, progressives, and leftists.

During the 1964 presidential campaign, Democratic candidate Lyndon Johnson claimed to be the peace candidate and campaigned with the slogan, "All the way with LBJ." SDS advocated, "Part of the way with LBJ"—a recognition of Johnson's imperfections but, nevertheless, a clear call to vote Democratic in order to defeat the Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater.

As the SWP candidate for U.S. senator from Michigan, I was campaigning against this "lesser-evil" position and exposing the bipartisan support to U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Tom Hayden and I debated these questions at a meeting in Detroit. He sneered at my "Old Left" views on independent working class political action.

As we all know, Hayden went on to public fame as one of the leading radicals of the period, and later succeeded in winning office as a Democratic Party candidate. Hayden's political course, which has been consistent for 25 years, is representative of thousands and thousands of young people who were radicalized during the ferment of the 1960s but who were sucked into the swamp of the Democratic Party. This hampered efforts to build a revolutionary party during a period of intensive struggles.

For those who didn't fall into the trap of bourgeois politics, the capitalist class used other methods.

As a named plaintiff in the SWP's lawsuit against the U.S. government, I've read thousands of pages from documents of the FBI, CIA, State Department, and other government agencies. They show how the government used its vast resources against

radical groups and protest movements. People lost their jobs and their apartments because FBI agents talked to their employers and landlords. People were physically assaulted and lost their lives—victims of right-wing elements encouraged, in general, by government agents planted in their organizations. The FBI provoked internal disruption in groups by planting false evidence that a member was an informer or had made racist remarks. The FBI fomented hostility between organizations by sending forged letters to make it appear that one group had done something to damage the other group.

The government's dirty tricks weakened radical parties internally, caused members to drop out of political activity, and discouraged recruitment. Without new members, a party withers on the vine. The process of party-building requires an incoming flow of fresh, new, energetic, enthusiastic members. It's not easy to challenge the most powerful ruling class in the world. People get burned out, frustrated, dispirited, seduced by well-paid jobs as union bureaucrats. Radicals are pressured into leading more comfortable lives away from the storm and stress of revolutionary activity. People just plain get old—the will remains strong but the body becomes weak. All of these factors take their toll and make it necessary to constantly replenish the human resources for party-building.

The capitalist barrage against socialism is an ever-present obstacle to party-building. I've only presented a very brief glimpse of the efforts to smash the radical movement. The capitalist rulers of our society will do everything in their war against the development of socialist consciousness, activity, and organization. They will seize on any weakness in the revolutionary process.

In a 1957 speech to a conference like this one, James P. Cannon focused on a key weapon used by the propagandists for capitalism: the confusion and demoralization created by Stalinist crimes against workers' democracy. Cannon explained:

"Now, of course, the Stalinists and their apologists have not created all the confusion in this country about the meaning of socialism, at least not directly. At every step for thirty years the Stalinist work of befuddlement and demoralization, of debasing words into their opposite meanings, has been supported by reciprocal action of the same kind by the ruling capitalists and their apologists. They have never failed to take the Stalinists at their word, and to point to the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union, with all of its horrors, and to say: 'That is socialism. The American way of life is better.' . . .

"This game of confusing and misrepresenting has been facilitated for the capitalists, and aided to a considerable extent, by the Social Democrats and the labor bureaucracy, who are themselves privileged beneficiaries of the American system, and who give a socialist and labor coloring to the defense of American 'democracy.' . . .

"There is no doubt that this drumfire of bourgeois propaganda, supplemented by the universal revulsion against Stalinism, has profoundly affect-

ed the sentiments of the American working class, including the bulk of its most progressive and militant and potentially revolutionary sectors."

Current Situation Facing Party Builders

Cannon's talk was given while radical circles were reacting to Khrushchev's revelations of the crimes of Stalin. In the U.S., reevaluations of Stalin and the Communist Party resulted in a number of people leaving the radical movement, but others formed new groups or joined other organizations. What happened with the CP was not unique. Over the past 30 years, the radical movement has experienced many splits and fusions, the birth of new organizations and the disappearance of others.

Today the radical movement encompasses many, many groups ranging in size from tiny to thousands, and offering a wide variety of programs, methodologies, strategies, tactics, priorities for activities, and so on. This may appear bewildering but a closer look reveals three main currents in the working class movement. The political resolution of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in 1985 explained:

"The most important political organizations within the working class movement of this country—each offering its own solution to the crisis—are the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the most active and viable branch of Social Democracy; the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), identified with and a defender of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union; and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which despite its continuing programmatic and organizational crisis remains the party that embodies the heritage of the Russian Revolution."

Although almost all radical groups are experiencing modest recruitment at this time, these three major organizations—DSA, CP, and SWP—have the advantage in attracting people because they have sustained greater national visibility than other groups. Each has a number of local units across the U.S. Each has substantial physical and human resources. Each carries out national campaigns which receive attention. While those very general features are shared by the three organizations, there are deep differences in program, strategy, organizational structure, and history which set each apart from the other. These differences help explain why and how each organization competes with the others for members, supporters, and influence.

Democratic Socialists of America is a magnet for people who hold socialist ideals but recoil from the negative developments in the USSR and other workers' states. The DSA's pro-Democratic Party election policy appeals to the prevailing pragmatism in the U.S. radical movement. The DSA's structure and mode of functioning suit those who reject Leninist organizational principles. DSA recruitment is helped by the fact that well-known persons, including leading labor figures, are members of the organization. This results in media publicity which, in turn, encourages people to turn to DSA when they want to become socialist activists.

The Communist Party attracts radicals who identify with revolutionary struggles around the world. The CPUSA is seen by many as the representative of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The CP halo has been polished by the Soviet Union's support to revolutionary triumphs in Cuba and Nicaragua. The CP appeals to radicals because of the prestige and authority earned by the party during past struggles to establish industrial unions, to fight Jim Crow laws and racism, to defend civil liberties, and to challenge the capitalist system. Although the CP's reputation has had its ups and downs over the years, many still see the party as a champion of the working people and oppressed groups. The CP's "peaceful coexistence" line impresses radicals as the reasonable and achievable way to prevent nuclear war.

In a rather ironic twist, the CPUSA has benefited—to a certain extent—from the U.S. government's attacks and propaganda against the party, against the Soviet Union, and against communism in general. Because it receives so much unrelenting attention, the CP is more widely known than other organizations on the left and attracts those who want to oppose U.S. imperialism.

I speak from personal experience on this point. While still in high school, I became intellectually convinced of the desirability and need for socialism. The only radical organization I had ever heard or read about was the Communist Party. I simply didn't know that any other radical group existed. So, I looked in the telephone book to find out where I could get in touch with the party. The CP wasn't listed and I didn't know how else to find it.

I was still a convinced socialist when I entered college. By sheer accident, I was introduced to the Socialist Workers Party. A friend of mine had been invited to go to a class sponsored by the SWP youth group in Detroit. She asked me to go along to keep her company. We attended one class together. She never returned but I had found what I was looking for and I joined the SWP in 1948.

I believe that the SWP's newest recruits join for the same reasons I did. They see the SWP as a revolutionary organization. They are impressed with the SWP's strong defense of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions as well as other struggles around the world. They hear and read about the SWP's involvement in struggles or come into contact with SWPers engaged in battles against racism and sexism, against U.S. intervention and wars, against the bosses' attacks on workers, against the destruction of small family farms, and against other manifestations of capitalist greed and exploitation.

The SWP appeals to people who understand the need for political action independent of the two capitalist parties. SWP election campaigns have played a significant role in attracting young people to the party and to the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), the youth organization which promotes the program and various campaigns of the SWP. Earlier this year, the YSA national secretary noted that 1986 was the first year in about a decade that the YSA had grown. It was reported that 140 new

members were gained last year, and that 97 joined during the last five months of 1986. This is a significant fact for the SWP because, for 27 years, the YSA has been the major immediate source of new recruits to the party.

A high school student who joined the YSA explained, "I had been looking into various groups for some time, ones that could be vehicles for gaining a socialist system." He found the "YSA's organizational methods and ideological orientation as the most viable vehicle for Marxist work." Another high-schooler explained, "I have found the YSA is an organization that is active in the same things I have been thinking about, such as abortion rights for women, and ending apartheid in South Africa."

The rise in student activism—particularly in the anti-apartheid and anti-intervention movements—has brought new members into radical groups. In general, we are in a period of increased struggles on a number of issues—resulting in a growth in radical consciousness and recruitment. The prospects for building a revolutionary party in the United States are more favorable than they have been since the end of the war in Vietnam. And let me make it clear that when I say prospects are more favorable, I am not saying or implying that the revolution is just around the corner or that party-building will take a great leap forward in any immediate sense. Objective events have opened the door a little wider than before, more people are engaged in protest and working class activities, the younger generation is once again in motion, and capitalism is being hit some hard blows by struggles around the world.

When I look at the world situation, my reaction is quite different from that of Secretary of State Shultz. At the end of his testimony to the congressional committees investigating the Iran-contra affair, Shultz made a speech in which he repeatedly exclaimed, "Things are going our way around the world!" As I listened to him, I felt like shouting at the screen, "Wrong, wrong, wrong! Things are going *our* way—the revolutionary struggle is irrepressible!"

My optimistic view provides the framework for my answer to the final question posed at the beginning of this talk, "How do we go forward from this point in building a revolutionary party in the United States?"

Party-Building in the Period Ahead

Coming full circle from the beginning of this talk, I'm going to return to the role of consciousness. More specifically, the consciousness of revolutionaries concerned with advancing the process of assembling and educating the nucleus for a revolutionary party. We need to cultivate particular ways of thinking about ourselves and the world around us.

We need to be patiently impatient.

We must be patient in terms of time. We need to hang on in there. No one can say exactly when the crucial turning point will be reached. The

revolutionary clock is ticking away—but revolutionaries must be time-proof. The Marxist long view of history recognizes the ebbs and flows of the revolutionary process. This helps sustain us during difficult periods, helps us roll with the punches so that we don't get knocked flat by temporary setbacks.

But good times can be even more dangerous than bad times. Here, too, we have to maintain a long view of history and keep our balance. We have had the sad example of the 1960s radicals who were sure that the revolution was just around the corner. When the revolution didn't happen, the anticipators were demoralized or—like the new young leadership of the SWP—disoriented to the point of abandoning political positions in a search for magic formulas and get-rich-quick schemes.

We must be *impatient* in terms of eagerness to take advantage of opportunities. As Marxists we know that capitalism continually gives birth to crises—we can anticipate general problems and trends but there's no way of figuring out ahead of time exactly what will provoke a mass reaction. History is full of surprises. Rosa Parks got on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and refused to move to the back—and that's the accepted event marking the beginning of the decisive struggle to overthrow Jim Crow laws. The historical calendar is set by hindsight. But there are radicals who claim to have foresight. For example, they think it is possible to pinpoint the next big upsurge of labor. At one time the SWP said it was supposed to happen in steel, at another time in the mines. I heard that Socialist Action members said that the place to be was in rail because that's where the upsurge was coming. As we know, the highest level of struggle today is being demonstrated by the packinghouse workers. That wasn't in anyone's crystal ball.

Even the smartest, most experienced revolutionaries can't pinpoint exactly where crucial eruptions will occur. A classic example of the unexpected is described by Trotsky in *The History of the Russian Revolution*. February 23, 1917, was International Women's Day and there were plans to mark the day in a general manner with meetings, speeches, and leaflets. Trotsky wrote, "It had not occurred to anyone that it might become the first day of the revolution." But, as it turned out, a strike by women textile workers was the beginning of the decisive struggle against the tsarist regime.

The fact that the total situation is extremely complicated doesn't mean that we should throw up our hands and say, "What's the use in trying to figure things out?" It does mean that we need to be patiently impatient, that is, we must combine constant readiness with a restless search for opportunities to advance the class struggle. We need to be prepared at all times to respond quickly and appropriately to openings. And those openings will come as the contradictions within capitalism cause convulsions in the system.

In dealing with such developments, Marxists understand that there are no blueprints, no road maps, no books with detailed instructions. But we don't have to start from scratch. We have a guide: the transitional program.

It's not easy to patiently prepare ourselves, to persist in our activities, to rise to the occasion on a moment's notice. But the alternative is not easy either. The alternative is to accept this rotten capitalist system. All of us at this conference have chosen to fight back—as our discussions this weekend have shown. Now we need to forge ahead by rebuilding and revitalizing the revolutionary socialist movement in the United States. I urge you to join us in this effort. ■

COMMON GROUND BETWEEN MARXISM AND RELIGION?

by Paul Le Blanc

For many decades Marxism has been attacked by critics (often disillusioned devotees) who proclaim that, far from representing a *scientific* socialism, it is merely a "secular religion" with scientific pretensions. While this notion has been confronted and refuted most ably by revolutionary Marxists, more interesting questions about common ground between Marxism and religion have been generated by the dramatic influx of religious activists into liberation struggles throughout the world.

Over the past several years, it has become clear that there is *something* that is shared on the one hand by certain secular socialist activists who view themselves as atheists and embrace the revolutionary Marxist tradition, and on the other hand by certain deeply religious political activists. In fact, there have been grounds for being more impressed by the qualities—a seriousness, a harmony between what one believes and what one does, a strength and thoughtfulness—of some of these religious radicals than by the narrowness and smugness and superficiality of some secular radicals who may quote the "holy texts" of Marxism and render the most revolutionary judgments from the comfort of an armchair or the security of an insulated sect.

At the same time, one can only be perplexed over the tendency of some secular and religious radicals to idealize "the Religious Left," to dull the critical senses and blunt Marxist analysis in the face of this phenomenon—as if to do otherwise would somehow defile or dissolve the movement among Christians and other religious believers toward the struggle for peace, justice, and human liberation. One of the virtues of Paul Siegel's book *The Meek and the Militant* (reviewed in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 42) is the refusal to give in to this uncritical tendency. Siegel offers an historical-materialist analysis which greatly contributes to a clear-minded understanding of religion.¹ Yet, as was observed in the earlier review, he doesn't succeed in providing a satisfactory explanation of how religion can generate not simply reactionary and obscurantist barriers to human liberation, but also can generate popular revolutionary currents contributing to the progressive struggles of humanity.

In a recent discussion group of Christian and Marxist activists in Pittsburgh an opposite challenge was posed by one devoutly religious person who had difficulty understanding how an atheist—who did not accept the God whom she believes reigns over the universe as a supreme moral force—could possibly transcend selfish and amoral impulses. It seemed difficult for this honest and decent person to believe that there could in fact be any common ground or trust between a Christian and a Marxist—

which is also the opinion of many others to her right and to her left.

Perhaps the further exploration of these questions can shed additional light not only on the nature of religion but also on the nature of Marxism and of the revolutionary process.

Einstein on Religion

The great 20th-century physicist (and socialist) Albert Einstein offered, over the years, reflections on religion which are worth considering. Much of his thought coincides with the lucid analysis which one finds in Paul Siegel's book and reads like a summary of important points in *The Meek and the Militant*. There is also, however, at least a shade of difference which deserves attention. Einstein made a distinction between "a religion of fear" on the one hand (the focus of Siegel's study) and "cosmic religious feeling" on the other.²

Essential to the religion of fear, according to Einstein, is the concept of God, "a being from whose care one hopes to benefit and whose punishment one fears; a sublimation of a feeling similar to that of a child for its father, a being to whom one stands, so to speak, in a personal relation, however deeply it may be tinged with awe." He noted that "during the youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution human fantasy created gods in man's own image, who, by the operations of their will were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. Man sought after the disposition of these gods in his own favor by means of magic and prayer." Such a religion of fear, "though not created, is in an important degree stabilized by the formation of a special priestly caste which sets itself up as a mediator between the people and the beings they fear, and erects a hegemony on this basis. In many cases a leader or ruler or a privileged class whose position rests on other factors combines priestly functions with its secular authority in order to make the latter more secure; or the political rulers and the priestly caste make common cause in their own interests."³

Einstein explained that such religion is incompatible with science. The scientific-minded person "is imbued with the ordered regularity of all events" and recognizes that "there is no room left by the side of this ordered regularity for causes of a different nature. For him neither the rule of human nor the rule of divine will exists as an independent cause of natural events." At the same time, Einstein acknowledged that "the doctrine of a personal God interfering with natural events

could never be *refuted*, in the real sense, by science, for this doctrine can always take refuge in those domains in which scientific knowledge has not yet been able to set foot." But he argued that "a doctrine which is able to maintain itself not in clear light but only in the dark will of necessity lose its effect on mankind," and that religion can survive in the long run only if its teachers "have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God, that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such power in the hands of priests." Instead, "a man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties and needs; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death."⁴

Against this "religion of fear," Einstein counterposed what he called "cosmic religious feeling," elements of which he believed could also be found in the early religious development of humanity. In modern times, however, it could best be awakened and kept alive by art and science. The scientist, for example, "is possessed by the sense of universal causation. The future, to him, is every whit as necessary and determined as the past. There is nothing divine about morality; it is a purely human affair. His religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law," and in the face of this "the individual feels the futility of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole." This outlook is also inconsistent with "the shackles of selfish desire" and the "bondage of egocentric cravings." The "profound reverence for the rationality made manifest in existence" leads the individual toward "a far-reaching emancipation from the shackles of personal hopes and desires, and thereby . . . [to] that humble attitude of mind toward the grandeur of reason incarnate in existence, and which, in its profoundest depths, is inaccessible to man."⁵

In celebrating this nonmystical "true religion," Einstein asserts that "a person who is religiously enlightened appears to be one who has, to the best of his ability, liberated himself from the fetters of his selfish desires and is preoccupied with thoughts, feelings, and aspirations to which he clings because of their superpersonal value." He argues that "the religious geniuses of all ages have been distinguished by this kind of religious feeling, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image; so that there can be no church whose central teachings are based on it. Hence it is precisely among the heretics of every age that we find men who were filled with this highest kind of religious feeling and who were in many cases regarded by their contemporaries as atheists, sometimes also as saints." Einstein recognizes that, historically, "the churches have always fought science and persecuted its devotees," and indeed

they have perceived this "cosmic religious feeling" which denies gods, dogmas, priests, and masters as *atheism*, pure and simple. Einstein (unlike most Marxists) seems reluctant to accept this label, although—at least in common parlance—it seems accurate enough.⁶

It is important to note that Einstein was not content simply with a sense of rapturous awe over the infinite wondrousness of the universe. His sensibilities caused him to feel that "the structure of society and the cultural attitude of man should be changed in order to make human life as satisfying as possible," but that human beings in capitalist society, "unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, . . . feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, unsophisticated enjoyment of life. . . . The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil." He concluded: "I am convinced there is only *one* way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals." In Einstein's opinion, "man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society."⁷

The "Religion" of Marxists

There have been, in the revolutionary movement, attempts to fashion a form of Marxist religion, perhaps the most notorious being the efforts of some in and around the Bolshevik Party in the 1907-12 period (Anatoly Lunacharsky, Maxim Gorky, and others) to formulate a "new religion of Man." Lenin, along with most Russian Marxists, uncompromisingly rejected such poetic-mystical "God-building" as being inconsistent with and destructive of the frank materialism which permeates the Marxist approach. It should be noted that—as Paul Seigel documents—Lenin in no way opposed united fronts with genuine religious activists who struggled against tyranny and injustice, nor did he oppose taking sincere religious believers into the membership of the Bolshevik Party. Least of all did he favor the persecution or forcible repression of religion, either before or after the socialist revolution. But he angrily fought against any attempt to infuse into Marxism itself what he believed to be the muddying and disorienting outlook of religious mysticism.

Nonetheless, what Einstein has chosen to call "cosmic religious feeling" can be shown to be an important element in the outlook of a number of revolutionary Marxists who were in no way shy about proclaiming their atheism. At the same time, this is tempered—as it was in Einstein's case—by a vibrant concern with the human condition. "If I were one of the celestial bodies," wrote the young Leon Trotsky at the beginning of the 20th century, "I would look with complete detachment upon this miserable ball of dust and dirt. . . . But I am a *man*. World history which you, dispassionate gobbler of science, to you, bookkeeper of eternity, seems

only a negligible moment in the balance of time, is to me everything! As long as I breathe, I shall fight for the future" (quoted in Siegel, p. 49). One of Trotsky's closest comrades, Adolf Joffe—in a farewell letter to Trotsky just before committing suicide to protest the bureaucratic-authoritarian degeneration of the USSR under Stalin—wrote in 1927:

More than thirty years ago I embraced the philosophy that human life has meaning only to the degree that, and so long as, it is lived in the service of something infinite. For us humanity is infinite. The rest is finite, and to work for the rest is therefore meaningless. Even if humanity too must have a purpose beyond itself, that purpose will appear in so remote a future that for us humanity may be considered as an absolute infinite. It is in this and only this that I have always seen the meaning of life.⁸

From a prison cell during the awesome inter-imperialist slaughter of the First World War, where she noted that humanity was at a crossroads of "socialism or barbarism," Rosa Luxemburg wrote to a friend: "Everything would be much easier if I only didn't forget the basic commandment that I have set myself for life: the main thing is to be good. Simply and plainly to be good, that is what binds and unbinds all things, it is better than all cleverness and self-righteousness. . . . I decided to be good again, simply good at any price: that is better than 'being right' and booking every injury." Some years later A.J. Muste commented on this:

She, too, it would seem, confronted by an impersonal economic system which man had created and which had become his master and by the elemental forces which produced the class struggle and were unloosed by it, felt suddenly the need of another kind, another order, of power, or a moral science to set over against political science, and so turned to conscience, being good, simply, plainly and at any price, for deliverance for herself and the exploited peoples!⁹

Yet Muste's comment is misleading if it is interpreted as meaning that Luxemburg's views were unique among Marxists. For example, James P. Cannon made a similar point when he wrote: "The true revolutionist lives and acts the way he thinks and talks. . . . The true art of being a socialist consists in anticipating the socialist future; in not waiting for its actual realization, but in striving here and now, insofar as the circumstances of class society permit, to live like a socialist; to live under capitalism according to the higher standards of the socialist future."¹⁰

Lenin—like the others we have quoted—believed that "nature is infinite, but it infinitely exists" independently of humanity (which is, of course, a part of nature) and independently of some

supernatural force (which is, on the other hand, a phantom of human imagination). He argued that "the individual thought of many billions of past, present and future . . . human beings . . . is . . . able to know the world as it exists, if only mankind lasts long enough and insofar as no limits are imposed on its knowledge by its perceptive organs or the objects to be known." This "should make us extremely distrustful of our present knowledge, inasmuch as in all probability we are but little beyond the beginning of human history, and the generations which will put us right are likely to be far more numerous than those whose knowledge we—often enough with a considerable degree of contempt—are in a position to correct." Combined with this modesty imposed by a scientific sense of the infinite cosmos, however, is a human-centered morality which is grounded in the determination, above all else, to eliminate human oppression: "Our morality is derived from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. . . . We say: morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all laboring people around the proletariat, which is creating a new, communist society. . . . Morality serves to help human society rise to a higher level and get rid of the exploitation of labor."¹¹

Similarly, the youthful Marx had asserted: "The criticism of religion ends in the teaching that *man is the highest being for man*, it ends, that is, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a debased, forsaken, contemptible being forced into servitude." And Trotsky, not long before his death, commented that "to participate in this movement with open eyes and with an intense will—only this can give the highest moral satisfaction to the thinking person" (quoted in Siegel, pp. 49, 50).

Common Ground?

We find within revolutionary Marxism, then, an element which encompasses the infinite universe while giving meaning to the life of every individual human being, involving a sense of community with others as well as a sense of how one's own passionate and creative impulses can be fulfilled. It is precisely this element, latent in the mystical religions of the world, which—for all of their dehumanizing and reactionary qualities so well recorded by Paul Siegel and others—has been essential for the survival of these religions.

The importance of this element within revolutionary Marxism should not be minimized. First of all, it exists and Marxists are foremost among those who want to recognize "what is." And at least for many people it is an essential quality in any viable worldview which can have the power to motivate them and help them endure in the struggle for a better world.

More than this it is precisely this element—this "cosmic sense" and moral passion—which is a driving force among those in the religious community who have become engaged in struggles for social

change and revolution. Within the context of oppressive realities, such people reshape, redefine, reinterpret the concepts and structures and vocabulary of their own particular religion; with these revitalized ideological tools they develop an outlook and become involved in activity which moves in the direction of human liberation. Many who are not immediately open to the vocabulary and traditions of Marxism *do* respond to such revitalized religious orientations which speak to their needs and hopes in a way that strikes deep chords within them, rooted as they are in symbols, idioms, and value systems that have been an intimate part of their cultural environment and psychological landscape from early childhood. And despite such different traditions and vocabularies, this elemental "cosmic sense" and moral passion which flow into a will to struggle, combined with a growing perception of the kinds of struggles which are necessitated by the realities of capitalism, create—at least potentially—a common ground for religious and secular activists. The common ground can ultimately become the terrain of a mass movement for socialist revolution.

Of course, this sweeping generalization is by itself utterly inadequate, because the truth is always concrete. Specific situations require specific analyses. Liberation Theology in Latin America cannot be comprehended in the same way as Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. Fundamentalist Christianity often takes on dramatically different forms among Black and white Americans. Self-proclaimed "Christians for Socialism" in a "third world" country may have a mass base which their supposed counterparts in another country—existing as a marginalized countercultural sect—may be unconcerned about developing. The experience of the last several decades, however, should be enough to make revolutionary Marxists alert to the potential importance of religion as something more than an obstacle or diversion, but rather as a vital current within the struggle for liberation.

Marxists bring something to this common struggle which has special value—their Marxism, which provides analytical tools, a methodology, a theoretical and political inheritance, which no other orientation can match if one wishes to understand and change

society. At the same time, all too often those who have identified with the Marxist tradition have allowed their own vitality to become dulled: standard theories and standard operating procedures, the perceived dictates of History or the dictates of a Central Committee, have sometimes crusted over their own "cosmic sense" and moral passion. Consider what Rosa Luxemburg once wrote to friends:

Do you know what keeps bothering me now? I'm not satisfied with the way people in the party usually write articles. They are all so conventional, so wooden, so cut-and-dry. . . . Our scribblings are usually not lyrics, but whirrings, without color or resonance, like the tone of an engine-wheel. I believe that the cause lies in the fact that when people write, they forget for the most part to dig deeply into themselves and to feel the whole import and truth of what they are writing. I believe that every time, every day, in every article you must live through the thing again, you must feel your way through it, and then fresh words—coming from the heart and going to the heart—would occur to express the old familiar thing. But you get so used to a truth that you rattle off the deepest and greatest things as if they were the "Our Father." I firmly intend, when I write, never to forget to be enthusiastic about what I write and to commune with myself¹²

In some cases at least, this "communing with one's self"—which can generate freshness and insights and passion—corresponds to qualities which the best of the religious activists bring to the struggle. Albert Einstein predicted that as the vital and humanistic currents in the religious community progress, the specifically theistic-mystical-supernatural elements in their outlook will give way to a "cosmic sense" and down-to-earth ethical force fully in harmony with the scientific approach. To the extent that this happens, we can expect that in the process Marxism itself will experience an enrichment contributing mightily to the goal of human liberation. ■

NOTES

1. Paul N. Siegel, The Meek and the Militant, Religion and Power Across the World (London: Zed Books, 1986).

2. Albert Einstein, Ideas and Opinions (New York: Dell, 1979), pp. 46, 47.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50, 55, 46-47.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57, 48-49.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 47-48, 57-58.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 48, 49. It should be noted that Einstein's male-biased vocabulary—a product of his (and our) patriarchal culture which often refers to "men" instead of "people" or "men and women"—obscures the often crucial role of women in the development of religion, particularly of the "heretical" currents to which he attributes such importance.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 157, 159.

8. Joseph Hansen et. al., Leon Trotsky, the Man and His Work (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), p. 124.

9. A.J. Muste, Not By Might (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p.44

10. James P. Cannon, "Happy Birthday Arne Swabeck," Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, June 1986, p.33

11. Howard Selsam and Harry Martel, eds., Reader in Marxist Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1963), pp. 90, 152, 272, 273, 274.

12. Paul Frolich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), pp. 39-40.

IN THE USSR, it is a time of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). You are not supposed to be afraid of the truth any more. That's official. The authorities themselves are putting up posters everywhere saying "You must not be afraid."

The press has become very interesting. Writers, film-makers and historians are having a field day. This summer, researchers in various fields who had been repudiated as "bourgeois" by Stalin were rehabilitated.

In this atmosphere, it is the most natural thing in the world that among intellectuals (and not only among them) a real determination is emerging to get back in touch with real history — the opposite of the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*.

An article in the September 10 issue of the Paris daily *Libération* announced that rehabilitation of Trotsky was a sure thing. The fact is that such things are still far from certainties. This was not a factual report but an interpretation of rumors, such as the one that Trotsky's grandson had been invited to Moscow (which he denied). But this impression developed against a real background of rapid changes in the cultural and political climate in the USSR.

We do not of course expect any rehabilitation of Trotsky's ideas. But his re-appearance in the real history of the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s is inevitable. First of all, *glasnost* would not have much credibility if people speaking in its name continued to make historical assertions as dubious as claiming 2+2=5.

What is more, encouraged by the official line, the truth is continuing to be brought out by layers that will remain "Gorbachevite" if Gorbachev moves forward. In other words, layers that he no longer has the political means to repress.

But if the truth has to be accepted, the men in the Kremlin want it to serve a useful purpose. An immediate effect of a rehabilitation of Trotsky, Bukharin and the entire Bolshevik old guard would be a terrible blow to the oldest and most conservative wing of the bureaucracy, the one most reluctant to accept the present changes.

There are many signs of increasing tensions with those who have based their job security and prospects on lies. At least there was order in the past, they say, while *glasnost* is leading to anarchy. The police no longer

Trotsky rehabilitated?

IS GORBACHEV preparing to rehabilitate Trotsky? Recently there has been speculation about this in the Western press, especially in France. Catherine Verla commented on it in the September 28 issue of *Rouge*, the paper of the French section of the Fourth International.

know what they are supposed to do. Cops who beat up some hippies found themselves denounced by the new Social Initiative Clubs, which carried out their own inquiry and reported the results to the press. The overzealous cops now face a court case. Suddenly, no one wanted to clobber the Tatars this summer when they held a sit-in for 25 hours in Red Square.

Following the line of Ligachev, the regime's number two, complaints are increasing that criticism should not be carried too far. *Pravda* articles have stressed that not everything that happened under Stalin should be rejected. The debate is focusing more and more on the interpretation of the 1930s, the sudden halt of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and also the purge trials.

Some are trying to find a justification in the past for Stalinism, while others are trying to find one for their more radical critique, which is necessary for reforms.

The working class for the moment is in the wings. But it is there, and it is a powerful onlooker. Its scepticism about the reforms could turn tomorrow against Gorbachev. Cultural liberalization is not the essential thing for winning the workers. But they are not unaffected, especially by the invitations to "feel masters in their own sphere." Every day, features in the

press, letters from readers, the regular TV programs on the *perestroika* report obstacles to change, reticence on the part of the workers, a daily life that is not changing much, and sometimes even changing for the worse.

Changes in agriculture and the services are most likely to improve daily life. But they are slow because they are running up against the passivity, the past and the weight of the bureaucracy. Appeals for initiative run up against fears that the pendulum can swing back. The end of the NEP, and the trials of the 1930s, still cast a shadow.

In this context, a rehabilitation, not of Bukharin alone and still less of the ideas of Trotsky, but in a more diluted way of a certain "historical legacy" of the 1920s has its advantages for the rulers. Using this to praise Lenin and his flexibility would enable Gorbachev to justify his pragmatism. At the same time, it would undermine the historical legitimacy of its immediate opponents.

For that purpose, it is necessary to accentuate the criticism of Stalinism but without going to the point of accepting a plurality of political organizations. It is necessary to bring Stalin's opponents and victims out of non-history, to allow them to exist again, but not too vividly. They have to be kept in the past to be used selectively to justify the present.

Trotsky's ideas on "building socialism in one country" are not, in the short term, too worrying for the Kremlin, which will continue to try to represent them as leftist. It would not be very new either to select from his writings passages that make him look like an iron-fisted bogeyman.

Much more troublesome, to be sure, are Trotsky's analyses of the bureaucracy, of Stalin and of the revolution betrayed. They are little known by the new generations, and not too dangerous as long as criticism of bureaucracy remains controlled from above.

But millions of non-Trotskyists were persecuted for "Trotskyism" in the 1930s. One of the ideological foundations of the Stalinist state was the struggle against Trotskyism. Children of that generation do not know what Trotskyism is. They want to know.

Can they be kept much longer from finding out? Gorbachev, the sorcerer's apprentice, may not have any choice in the matter. ☆



NOTEBOOKS FOR THE GRANDCHILDREN

by Mikhail Baitalsky

14. Cain, Abel, and the 'Platform of the 83'

In Artemovsk, working on the newspaper, I was very keen on local matters which fed my professional interest, and little concerned about nationwide matters. Meanwhile, events of extreme importance for the entire country were ripening. Preparations were underway for the Fifteenth Party Congress. I read the "Platform of the 83," which had been printed clandestinely,¹ not in the Donbass, where hardly anyone had gotten hold of it, but in Odessa, where I had gone on a mission in the summer of that year [1927]. There I met with Maryusa and several other friends. Rafa had been working in Moscow at the Komsomol Central Committee for some time.

Lenin's letter to the congress (it had been read to the delegates to the Thirteenth Congress), now usually called his Testament,² I had read for the first time when I was in Kharkov. It had also been published clandestinely (on a stexlograph).³ For 30 years it was hidden from the party. And not simply hidden, but the minutes of an investigation alleged that it was not a letter from Lenin but a Trotskyist falsification, an anti-Soviet document.

Beginning in 1917, more than one internal party opposition announced its existence, while Lenin was alive and after his death. The points of view of those who spoke out during Lenin's lifetime we know from his works. He set forth their arguments, examining them point by point, and they never complained that he was distorting their words. Much less is known about opposition groupings that arose during Stalin's time. He presented the ideas of others in an unscrupulous manner; but more often he did not present them at all. Rather, he would brand them with some name and the case was closed. If he was not ashamed to declare a letter of Lenin's a fabrication, then what could be said about the letters and speeches of other people? After October, while Lenin was alive, Trotsky was in opposition to him twice: on the subject of the Brest peace and on the trade union question.⁴ And both times, Lenin, while arguing with him and with other opponents, did not deprive them of his trust.

During Stalin's time, differences that again arose took on an unprecedented and sharp form, and moreover, from the first day. Because behind all the theoretical discussions of all the post-Lenin years and between their lines stood the dispute that Lenin foresaw when dictating his Testament, warning that it could "inadvertently lead to a split": the dispute over power.

During the Brest talks, under Lenin, it was a matter of life or death for the young Soviet republic, but there was no dispute over power, over leadership, and the discussion ended as any normal

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 consists 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 subsequent experiences in Stalin's prison camps.

To the very end of his life Baitalsky remained devoted to the ideals of the October revolution. He says that he is writing "for the grandchildren" so that they can know the truth of the revolution's early years.

The first installment and an introduction by the translator, Marilyn Vogt-Downey, appeared in Bulletin IDOM No. 36, December 1986.

discussion ends. There could be no peaceful end to the new discussions that flared up after Lenin's death. One of the parties to the argument had to go. And everyone fought using the methods his conscience would permit.

Stalin applied the most extreme method, the murder of his adversaries. But to murder for objectionable views smacked too much of the Inquisition. And so he imputed to his opponents fantastic crimes that he himself invented. He got the people to think that these crimes had actually been committed by the people who were in the dock, and then he shot them.

We will believe for a moment that Stalin's aim was party unity. But the methods he used to achieve this were slander, demagoguery, lies, falsification of history, and executions. And all this was on an incredible scale. Never in the history of humanity was a struggle over ideas so bloody. In 100 (100!) years of persecuting the Huguenots in France in the Middle Ages, the Catholics killed 200,000 people, and 50,000 on St. Bartholomew's night, which went down in history as the blackest night of Catholicism.⁵ But in two years' time—1937–38—Stalin executed not less than twice the number killed in that bloody medieval century.

We are obliged to clearly distinguish the means a leader proposed before beginning his actions from the means he in reality later applied. For example: Stalin did not propose that the Seventeenth Party Congress adopt a resolution that with-

in three years' time 60 percent of its delegates be shot.⁶ He proposed quite a different resolution. And it is impossible to imagine that the party congress by unanimous vote would have approved in advance its own execution. Stalin's cause, his practical measures, did not correspond to resolutions. It was proposed, in fact, to strengthen the party and its leadership, not to kill the majority of its Central Committee. It is not only that low means undermine high goals. They lead to results that are totally different, unforeseen, unwanted, and often opposite from what had been intended.

It is not the first time in history that a secret scheme of a figure has been fundamentally different from the goals he proclaimed aloud. But where there is such a scheme, there is no room for honest actions, and dishonorable ones are inevitable. And it is there, in the actions themselves, which in the end are revealed, that the essence of the secret scheme is also discovered. The means expose the goal.

And we, knowing about (far from all!) the mass murders, would have had to ask ourselves: what do we think about their actual purpose? Can we consider that it coincides with what has been proclaimed aloud? Could mass murders really have been permissible in order to achieve socialism? Where then lie the boundaries of the permissible?

We have before us a document that has become impossible to falsify or hide: Lenin's Testament. This is the most important and—because of the time it was concealed—the first material evidence of Stalin's crimes. It has been published—good. But it is also necessary to compare the task projected in it—maintaining party unity—with the means Stalin used to realize the task. These means were his first crime.

Meanwhile, even now it is not clear who was in fact the criminal: those who were killed or the one who did the killing. Even now, when listing the names of those people who worked with Lenin during his lifetime, only those who died of natural causes are named, and instead of the names of those who were killed, "and others" is written. Even now, the stories of the first years of the revolution gape with endless omissions. Even now, it is forgotten that of the six people about whom Lenin wrote in his Testament, he proposed that the congress remove and replace only one—namely Stalin—and the removal of the rest was a question he did not raise. In the meantime, the five others were not only removed, but murdered, and their murder Stalin included in his realization of Marxism, as part of his service to history.

Our contemporary historians very energetically criticize many points of view of bygone times. The criticism is especially convincing because the other points of view are not presented through documented statements but by the method of a free retelling. They can ascribe to their opponents any sort of nonsense and then convincingly criticize it. Such was Stalin's favorite device, and his students mastered it well.

The Platform of the Opposition, at first distributed illegally, was later reproduced in its

essentials in the countertheses of the Opposition for the Fifteenth Party Congress.⁷ They were in the official party publication, in the "discussion bulletin," which *Pravda* issued in November 1927, on the eve of the congress. If those who are interested can manage to read through the back issues of *Pravda* for those days, they will see how distinctively today our yesterday is set forth there.

In light of what happened over the past forty years, it would seem most interesting to familiarize oneself with the Opposition's proposals on the peasant question. The main one is a compulsory loan of 100 million rubles from the wealthy peasants, to be raised from no more than 10 percent of all the peasants; and to realize Lenin's plan for the gradual organization of the peasantry along cooperative lines (i.e., collectivization) on the basis of a technological revolution in agriculture: the introduction of machinery, large-scale crop rotation, and the application of artificial fertilizers.

In the theses on industry, the proposals to accelerate industrialization of the national economy occupied an important place and also the demand not to increase the indirect taxes and not to expand vodka production.⁸ Of course, my brief account of the fundamental provisions of the countertheses can in no way take the place of reading the original in the *Pravda* of those years.

Yet I must pause on one of them—the indirect taxes, which since that time have grown immeasurably.

Under Lenin, there was no such thing; only direct taxes were imposed, mainly an agricultural tax and an income tax. Now there is a sales tax. According to the USSR budget, reviewed by a session of the Supreme Soviet in December 1970, this tax comprised 48.8 billion rubles, and in 1971 it was the still larger sum of 54.1 billion rubles. This is almost two-fifths of the state income (145.9 billion). Comparing the figure for the sales tax with the figure of total commodity circulation (180 billion) we see what a significant share of the workers' budget it eats up, about one-third of all the daily expenses of the family of every worker for the purchase of food, clothes, and other primary necessities. Out of every ruble we pay at the store, 30 kopecks are the indirect tax.

Any indirect taxation by its essence falls most heavily on the lower-paid section of workers: if you make 300 rubles per month it is easier to lose this fourth or third in hidden extra charges for goods than if you make 100 rubles per month. But then the indirect is more convenient because it is unseen and allows for assuring the workers that taxes are being lowered.

Vodka is also a type of indirect taxation. Imagine, naively, that the vodka tax is levied only on drunks. If the high price of vodka restrained people from drinking even a little bit, then its perpetually increasing price should have lowered the amount of drinking. But in reality, vodka gets more costly and drunkenness grows. The growth of revenue from vodka means nothing other than a lowering of the standard of living of the families where there is a drinker.

But of course it was not taxes and loans that were the point of departure of the Opposition before the Fifteenth Congress, but rather theoretical theses about the impossibility of the full construction of socialism in one separate country. This thesis flowed directly from the understanding of October as the first chapter of the world revolution. "Soviet Russia is the cradle of the world revolution"—I have already spoken sufficiently about this slogan. Russia, according to the understanding of the Opposition, could begin to construct socialism but its completion would come only with revolution in the main capitalist countries. Indeed, tomorrow would see a worldwide October!

Life frustrated these expectations. Now no one cries: "Long Live World Revolution!" The world revolution is no longer thriving. The mass revolutionary movements of 1918-19 are no longer being repeated. Instead of world revolution there is now a socialist camp. China makes up almost two-thirds of it. But the very character of the socialism that is being built (or perhaps has already been built) in China does not lend itself to any kind of study, because of the impenetrable and truly Great Chinese Wall with which it has surrounded itself.⁹ So, if you think about it, the socialist camp consists of two not very friendly camps, not counting Yugoslavia, which is affiliated with neither; counting it would make three. The greatest industrial countries in the world, at which our basic slogan was aimed, fell from the orbit of revolution and we ourselves removed the slogan from our banner. And now no one will repeat (or is even in a hurry to quote) Lenin's opinions in a report on the tactics of the Russian Communist Party at the Third Congress of the Comintern, July 5, 1921:

When we started the international revolution, we did so not because we were convinced that we could foretell its development, but because a number of circumstances compelled us to start it. . . . It was clear to us that without the support of the international world revolution the victory of the proletarian revolution was impossible.

(I suppose it is clear to the reader that Lenin is speaking about the proletarian revolution in Russia.) And further:

We did all we possibly could to preserve the Soviet system under all circumstances, come what may, because we knew that we were not only working for ourselves, but also for the international revolution. . . . Actually, however, events did not proceed along as straight a line as we had expected. In the other big, capitalistically more developed countries the revolution has not broken out to this day. True, we can say with satisfaction that the revolution is developing all over the world. . . .¹⁰

In Lenin's writings you will find still more statements reaffirming his point of view of "the development of the world proletarian revolution as an indivisible process" as he expressed himself in the theses for the above report at the congress.

Here is the main thing that distinguishes the post-Lenin years from the Lenin years: We ceased to expect world revolution. And from this flowed such consequences as no one—least of all Stalin—could have foreseen. Only today can illuminate the past for us, just as the past illuminates for us today's life.

Many thousands of communists seeking party unity abandoned the Platform of the Opposition. But precisely because of it, they were sent to prison long before 1937, which in the official history is the date given for the beginning of the repression. Eight years or so after the Twentieth Party Congress [1956], people were allowed to speak of this later "unjustified" repression, from which one could, perhaps, conclude that the repression that raged prior to 1937 was "justified."

But it is impossible to erase from the fifty-fourth volume of Lenin's works the names that have been erased from the official history! Lenin shared his plans with these people, he trusted them, they occupied positions immediately under him in the Politburo, the Council of People's Commissars, the Comintern. Contemporary historians avoid dealing with those events in which Trotsky, Kamenev, Bukharin, and any other objectionable persons they have not been told to allow into history, played any notable positive role. And if it becomes totally impossible to keep them out, then they are referred to not by name but by title: "Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council." Such a writer as A.N. Tolstoy used this ignoble method even during Stalin's time.

In fact, who will remember what the Revolutionary Military Council was? It sounds like a regional military committee—nothing more than some sort of regional institution. Other names are avoided by methods on a par with this. Thus they take away not only the people's memory, but the very taste for truth in history.

When Cain killed Abel, as the biblical legend goes, God asked the murderer, "Cain, where is your brother Abel?"

And Cain answered: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

The contemporary Cain will not answer that way. He cannot deny that he watched every step of his brother before anyone even knew that he intended to kill him. He cannot deny that he himself appointed and paid the surveillance agents, the overseers and escorts of Abel.

Now Cain himself has died, having completed his job. He has spiritual heirs. They, knowing everything, cannot properly say, "I don't know." And the Cainists answer: "Abel was not the brother to our father and teacher. And anyway, there never was an Abel." ■

[Next month: "The View from Cell No. 9"]

NOTES

1. The "Declaration of the 84"—originally known as the "Declaration of the 83"—was submitted to the Political Bureau of the Soviet Communist Party in May 1927. It marked a stage of renewed Opposition activity and an effort by Trotsky to win over the proletarian core of the party to the anti-Stalinist struggle. It dealt with a broad range of domestic problems as well as the recent disaster resulting from Comintern policy in China, and insisted on the Opposition's right to circulate its Platform in preparation for the coming Fifteenth Party Congress. The full text is in Trotsky's Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27), Naomi Allen and George Saunders, eds., New York, Pathfinder Press, 1980, pp. 224-39. The number of signatories later rose to 3,000.

2. Lenin's Testament, letters written in December 1922 and January 1923, gave his final evaluation of the other Soviet leaders. Since it called for the removal of Stalin from the post of general secretary it was suppressed in the Soviet Union until after Stalin's death; it is included now in volume 36 of Lenin's Collected Works, and in Lenin and Trotsky's Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism, Russell Block, ed., New York, Pathfinder Press, 1975, pp. 61-69.

3. A printing apparatus of frosted glass moistened with a sticky liquid on which an impression of an original is made.

4. The Brest-Litovsk treaty, signed March 3, 1918, ended hostilities between Germany and Russia. It was the subject of a sharp struggle at the Seventh Congress between Lenin's faction which felt Russia was too weak to continue fighting and had to sign; Bukharin's Left Communists, who repudiated the treaty and called for revolutionary war as a matter of principle; and Trotsky, who opposed continuing the war but urged signing the treaty only when there was no other choice. When Germany attacked, Trotsky sided with Lenin, giving him a majority.

After the conclusion of the Russo-Polish war in the fall of 1920, Lenin and Trotsky disagreed about the extent to which the militarization of labor, introduced as part of war communism, should be pursued. Although Trotsky was opposed to the system of war communism as a whole and had earlier proposed replacing it with a system very like the New Economic Policy, he argued that as long as war communism was maintained, it should be administered consistently. He saw no independent role for the trade unions in a system of war communism in which all resources were nationalized and distributed by government order. Lenin sensed the unpopularity of the trade union measures and felt it was politically necessary to relax the restrictions. The dispute was settled in March 1921 when war communism was replaced by the NEP.

5. On St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572, Catherine de Medici (1519-1589), in an effort to neutralize the growing economic and political strength of the Protestant Huguenots in France, inspired a massacre of major Huguenot leaders by the Catholic monarchical forces. Three thousand Huguenots were butchered in one night in Paris and within three days tens of thousands of Huguenots were killed throughout France. This marked the resumption of a bloody war between the two contending social forces that extended over the second half of the sixteenth century.

6. "Of 1,966 delegates . . . 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes." Dozens of them were shot. "It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the party's Central Committee who were elected at the Seventeenth Congress, ninety-eight persons, that is, 70 percent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937-38)" ("Secret Report to the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU," by Nikita S. Khrushchev, The Stalinist Legacy, Tariq Ali, ed., London, Penguin Books, 1984, pp. 232-233).

7. The Platform of the Opposition (September 1927), subtitled "The Party Crisis and How to Overcome It," was designed as a contribution to the discussion preceding the Fifteenth Party Congress, and it summed up virtually every criticism of Stalinist policy that the Opposition had made. The full text is in The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27), pp. 301-94.

The Opposition produced its "Countertheses on the Five-Year Plan" (November 1927) when it was prohibited from circulating its Platform and allowed only to publish countertheses to the official theses. By the time the "Countertheses" appeared in Pravda's "discussion bulletin" supplement on November 19, delegates to the congress had already been elected. The full text is in The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27), pp. 455-62.

8. The Opposition Platform actually called for abolition of the state sale of vodka because of the vast social and economic costs which resulted from excessive drinking. In Commodity No. 1, Baitalsky, writing under the pseudonym A. Krasikov, expands considerably on the theme raised in the Opposition Platform of the vast harm to the working class which has accompanied the state sale of vodka. Commodity No. 1, which circulated unofficially in the USSR, is available in English translation in The Samizdat Register, Roy A. Medvedev, ed., New York, W.W. Norton, 1977.

9. At the time that Baitalsky wrote this, around 1970, China was much more isolated from the world's eyes than in the late 1980s.

10. The full text of Lenin's report is in his Collected Works, volume 32, pp. 478-96. In the third line of our excerpt, the Collected Works translation erroneously substituted the word "forestall" in place of the correct word, "foretell."

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IN MEMORY OF PROLETARIAN REVOLUTIONARY CHEN BILAN (1902-1987)

Chen Bilan, an early leader of the Chinese Communist Party and a Trotskyist militant, died on September 7 at the age of 85.

At the age of 20, Chen Bilan committed herself to the cause of the liberation of humanity. For over 60 years, she had persisted in her belief in communism. Like Peng Shuzhi, her life companion, she had throughout her life fought all adversities and defied the enemies.

Soon after the May Fourth Movement of 1919, Chen Bilan was converted to socialism. In early 1922, in the Hubei Provincial Teachers College for Women where she was studying, she initiated and led a strike to protest the college's dismissal of progressive lecturers and to demand the resignation of the principal. The strike was the first victorious struggle of women students in Chinese history.

In April the same year, while she was struggling in the student strike, she joined the League of Socialist Youth; six months later, she became a member of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1923, she was sent to study in the social sciences in the Shanghai University. The next year, she was sent to study in the University of Toilers of the East in Moscow.

When the May 30th Movement of 1925 broke out, Chen Bilan, on the decision of the CCP, returned to China to join the revolution. In autumn 1923, she became secretary of the Department of Women of the Shanghai Regional Committee (Joint Provincial Committee of the Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui provinces), and was a member of the Presidium of the Regional Committee. Soon afterwards, she was chief editor of *Chinese Women*, published by the Party Central. In July 1926, she was also acting secretary of the Department of Women of the Party Central, and took up practical leadership work of the revolution.

After the strangling of the revolution by the Guomindang, Chen Bilan and many other comrades together tried to find out the reason and the lesson of the failure of the revolution. Subsequently, they came to learn of the differences between Trotsky and Stalin on the question of the Chinese revolution, and from their own experience they knew Trotsky's propositions were correct, and that Stalin's incorrect line and policy in guiding

the Chinese revolution was the central subjective factor for the failure of the revolution. Thus, Chen Bilan, Chen Duxiu, Peng Shuzhi and others submitted their opinion to the Party Central, which requested a general review to be conducted throughout the party to discuss the reason for the failure of the revolution, opposed the putschist adventurism practiced at the time, and advocated the formulation of a correct line and policy. However, not only was their proposal flatly rejected, they were also expelled from the party.

From 1929 onwards, Chen, as one of the initiators, participated in the Chinese Trotskyist movement to continue carrying out revolutionary work and underground activities under the white terror of the rule of Jiang Jieshi's Guomindang. When Peng Shuzhi and others were arrested and imprisoned by the Guomindang regime, under the manifold oppression, she had to bring up the children and make a living by writing journal articles and taking a job. The book *Essays on the Women's Question* was a compilation of articles she wrote for the journals under the pen name of Chen Biyun. In the preface written by Jin Zhonghua, the author was referred to as "a woman who is genuinely devoted to the women's movement and has a profound understanding of women's problems."

Due to the eruption of the war against Japan, the Nanjing authorities released Peng Shuzhi and other Trotskyists. During the war of resistance against Japan, Chen Bilan and Peng Shuzhi remained in Shanghai to lead underground revolutionary work. Their comrades were arrested by the Japanese occupation forces for leading workers' strikes, and they were the targets of arrest (Peng Shuzhi narrowly escaped from a siege).

After Japan surrendered, Chen Bilan and other comrades published two monthlies in Shanghai: Chen was chief editor of *Youths and Women* (later the name was changed to *New Voice*), and Peng was chief editor of *For Truth*. Through these publications, political influence was spread and organizational strength was developed.

At the end of 1948, Chen and others knew that they would not be tolerated by CCP rule since the CCP had persisted in the slander of and hostility to the Trotskyists, and so they were compelled to go abroad. A few years later, all Trotskyists in the country were arrested, and many were detained for a quarter of a century.

Chen Bilan, Peng Shuzhi, and Liu Jialiang went to Vietnam, and when Liu was murdered by the Vietnamese Communists, they feared their lives threatened, and so went to Europe. Their lives in Vietnam and Europe were very difficult, and they had to do manual work for meager wages to maintain a living.

This article is reprinted from the September 1987 issue of October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. Chen Bilan, better known as Ch'en Pi-lan, also wrote "Looking Back Over My Years with P'eng Shu-tse [Peng Shuzhi]," which was published as an introduction to the book The Chinese Communist Party in Power, by P'eng Shu-tse, edited by Les Evans, Pathfinder Press, 1980.

In their exile, they participated more closely in the work of the Fourth International, and frequently wrote articles analyzing developments in different countries, in particular China. In the first few years in France, Chen Bilan began to write *My Memoirs*, which recalls her experience in, understanding of, and opinion on the decades of struggle (in particular the 1925-27 revolution) that she had participated in. (The book, in 28 chapters, was printed in serial form in *October Review*, March 1981 to November/December 1984.) In the mid-1960s, Chen and Peng went to the United States.

The life of Chen Bilan is one of a proletarian revolutionary and militant for women's liberation. Her dedication to the revolutionary cause manifests her virtues as an upright, kindhearted, strong, brave person. At the same time, the arduousness of her life manifests the oppression suffered by the Chinese working women.

Chen has left us, three years after her partner Peng Shuzhi. Yet her example of a revolutionary militant will inspire the later generations, and her deeds will go down in history. ■

COURT TURNS DOWN APPEAL IN FREEWAY HALL CASE

On September 8, the state Court of Appeals turned down the last appeal possible before a default order takes effect against the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) and nine activists who have refused to divulge confidential FSP minutes to the court.

In May, Superior Court Judge Warren Chan found the defendants in default because of their refusal to comply with the disclosure order. However, Chan delayed filing the default order so that the FSP could seek appellate review of the constitutional issues involved.

Now that the appellate court has denied discretionary review, the Superior Court has filed the default order, thereby making Richard Snedigar the victor in his lawsuit against the defendants without a trial, and without requiring a shred of evidence substantiating his charges. Ex-FSP member Snedigar is suing for return of a \$22,500 donation made to a party fund eight years ago for the construction of a new headquarters.

At a hearing on September 25 he asked the Superior Court to award him a monetary judgment. Judge Chan, however, ruled that a stronger case was required before granting an award. Had not Chan delayed judgment, Snedigar could have immediately attempted to seize the defendants' property and bank accounts.

This article is extracted from news releases dated September 17 and September 28, 1987.

Clara Fraser, defendant and FSP national chairperson said: "Judge Chan is the first to acknowledge what we have said all along, that there isn't any case against us. But he gave Snedigar three weeks to try to throw one together.

"This is unprecedented! After three and a half years, Snedigar's lawyers couldn't come into court with a reasonable case. Chan should have sent them packing without a penny. I think what happened here today testifies to our contention that this is a case of sheer political harassment which would have been thrown out long ago were we not political radicals and outspoken opponents of the establishment."

Snedigar will have his second chance to convince Chan to make an award on October 12 at 8:30 a.m., again at the King County Courthouse in Seattle.

Meanwhile the list of prominent individual and organizational endorsers of the FSP's defense of privacy rights continues to swell. The day after the hearing on September 26, two striking football players for the Seattle Seahawks endorsed the case. Other recent endorsements have come from feminist cartoonist and "Sylvia" creator Nicole Hollander, the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, respected pediatrician and activist Dr. Benjamin Spock, and the General Oil Workers Union in Tokyo, Japan.

For further information about the case contact the Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee, 5018 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118. ■

A USEFUL STUDY OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

The Chinese Revolution, by Pierre Rousset. Translated from the French by John Barzman, *Notebooks for Study and Research*, Paris.

Reviewed by Tom Barrett

The Chinese Revolution is a two-volume pamphlet written for the continuing education of revolutionary socialists. Though brief, it provides the reader with a rather detailed history of China in the first half of the twentieth century. Though obviously written by a Trotskyist author for a Trotskyist audience, it contains no empty slogans. No complexities are glossed over; no facts are adjusted to fit theories. Rousset has spent many years studying the history and politics of the Far East, and he knows what he's talking about.

Nevertheless, the pamphlet has weaknesses: some of the conclusions Rousset draws are not very useful for our understanding of the workers' state which emerged from the Chinese revolution, nor does he help us put the relevant lessons of the Chinese revolution to work in the international socialist struggle. In the closing paragraphs Rousset promises a contribution on the evolution of the Chinese workers' state since 1949. This would be valuable indeed, and would help to clarify his views on the Chinese Communist Party's role in the revolution, along with his conception of revolutionary policy towards the Chinese state.

Rousset's history centers on his analysis of Maoism, which the author distinguishes both from Trotskyism and Stalinism. Whether or not Rousset is correct in his opinion, in explaining how Maoism came to be he does a valuable service for revolutionary education. He explains the complicated relationship between the infant Chinese workers' movement and the Chinese national liberation movement, which expressed the deeper problem of the relationship among the Chinese working class, peasantry, and intellectuals. He also explains the relationship between the fledgling Chinese Communist Party and the Communist International, and the relationship between the Guomindang (the bourgeois-nationalist movement, founded by Sun Yatsen and eventually led by Chiang Kai-shek) and the Soviet state.

The facts which Rousset presents will not make comfortable reading to those revolutionists who see political principles as commandments from heaven or who see the Russian Bolsheviks as political "saints" whose every action is to be emulated. Rousset demonstrates incontrovertibly that the Comintern support to the Guomindang was not originally an example of "Stalinist betrayal":

Maring [Henricus Sneevliet, who was to become a Left Oppositionist] had proposed that the CCP join the Guomindang as early

as 1922. Now, Sun Yatsen demanded that the Communists' integration be carried out through individual admissions. Their integration was approved in Moscow and confirmed by the third congress of the Chinese Communist Party in June 1923. At the time, the CCP had 432 members. The basis for the agreement between the two parties was a joint struggle for the reunification of China against the Warlords and imperialist domination.

The relationship between the revolutionary workers' movement and the national liberation struggles in the colonies and semicolonies could not possibly have been fully understood because there had never been a relationship before. The Second International's understanding of imperialism was quite limited (to be charitable!); by 1922 only six years had elapsed since Lenin had published *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and widespread struggle against imperialism was a recent development at that time. The ideas presented in Trotsky's 1928 Draft Criticism and in *The Permanent Revolution* were developed from the experiences of the period which Rousset is discussing, not from any theoretical contemplation or divine revelation. Rousset presents effective arguments against sectarians who falsely counterpose principle to work in existing struggles as well as against those former Trotskyists of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party who justify their new-found opportunism in "the first four congresses of the Communist International."

Furthermore, the Comintern's China policy was not based on the interests of the nascent Soviet bureaucracy; rather, it was a tactical decision which the responsible people thought, rightly or wrongly, would help to build the Communist Party and enable it to assume the leadership of the peasantry and proletariat. Rousset says:

In June 1923, the Manifesto of the third congress of the CCP granted the Guomindang the leadership of the national revolution. But it also asserted that the Communist Party's own function was to lead the workers and peasants within the national struggle. Nevertheless, the Comintern's analysis of the relationship of forces and potential of the Chinese Communists evolved quickly. As early as May 1923, the Comintern announced in a directive on relations between the CCP and Guomindang that "hegemony" in the national revolution should belong to the party of [the] proletariat. This was the orientation approved at the fourth congress of the Communist Party in 1925.

Clearly then, what was at stake in the decision to enter the Guomindang in 1924

was not the implementation of a "Menshevik-Stalinist" orientation of revolution by two historically separated stages: in fact, the Communist movement was to begin to contend for the leadership of the national revolution. At the time, the entry into the Guomindang was a tactical choice which was not perceived as contradictory with this strategic goal.

It should be understood as well that Soviet and Comintern policy toward China was by no means inconsistent with Soviet and Comintern policy in general toward the colonies and semicolonies, in particular the countries of Asia. The Soviet Republic (and later the Soviet Union) gave full recognition and support to the Turkish Republican People's Party, a bourgeois party headed by Kemal Ataturk, and gave the new Turkish government whatever aid it could to defeat the British-sponsored Greek invasion, in spite of the centuries-long hostility between tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Turkish Empire.

In retrospect one might call such political support a mistake. The communist movement in those Middle Eastern countries which were once dominated by the Turkish Empire has never been able to achieve a mass following. On the other hand, the new workers' state could hardly have afforded the continued enmity of Turkey, especially a British-dominated Turkey. According to Rousset, "The Soviet Republic had to act *for the present*, that is, to aid the development of the anti-imperialist movement and defend the first workers' state. This was the role of its diplomacy. But it had also to preserve *the future* by enhancing the formation of the workers, peasant, and Communist movements. This was the role of the Comintern. Combining the two was no simple task, and the history of Communist international policy in the East is particularly complex."

By the time of the second Chinese revolution in 1925-1927, the Soviet bureaucracy was in control of both the Soviet state and the Communist International, and it was guided by different priorities. It is important to understand that the Comintern policies, which led directly to the crushing defeat of the workers' revolution and to the decimation of the Chinese CP, were not only opposed by Trotsky and the Soviet Opposition, but by the Chinese Communist leaders themselves. They understood all too well what the Guomindang had become under Chiang Kai-shek's leadership.

One may debate the correctness or incorrectness of Comintern policy in 1922-24, and if one concludes that it was incorrect one must also conclude that it was an honest mistake based on insufficient knowledge and understanding. However, when knowledge and information become available but are ignored, one can no longer speak of an honest mistake. And when the results of an error begin to take their toll and the error is deepened, rather than corrected, one must begin to speak no longer of error but of political crime. Revolutionists who

are not yet acquainted with the Chinese events of 1925-27 will find valuable information about them in Rousset's *The Chinese Revolution*.

The Trotskyist movement assimilated the lessons of the Chinese disaster, and made them part of its program and principles. The Soviet CP and Communist International made no attempt to understand what had happened. The Chinese Communists, however, did not have that luxury. Some of them, notably CP founder Chen Duxiu and the young leader Peng Shuzhi, joined the Left Opposition. Others, less well educated in theory but still committed to the cause of Chinese national liberation and socialism as they understood it, responded pragmatically to the situation. Among them was a peasant leader from Honan province, Mao Zedong, and it was during the period between the defeat of the second revolution and the Japanese invasion that Mao and his associates took over the CP leadership, defeating not only the Left Oppositionists, but the direct representatives of Moscow as well—the so-called "28 Bolsheviks," led by Wang Ming.

Though Mao did not lead the fight against Trotskyism in the Chinese CP, he participated in it; thereafter internal democracy was dead inside the Chinese CP, and it has not been resurrected to this day. Rousset underemphasizes the fact that the Mao faction took the leadership of the CCP in intrabureaucratic struggle. Even though the CCP did not represent any privileged state bureaucracy at this time, its leadership had become bureaucratized in the sense that it was no longer selected through the democratic participation of the party ranks.

Furthermore, the axis of "debate" between the Mao and Wang factions was military strategy. Some leaders of the Wang faction, including Zhou Enlai, went over to Mao. The military forces led by Wang faction supporters suffered crushing defeats in battle against counterrevolutionaries; what remained of them joined with Mao shortly before the Japanese invasion. In addition, Mao knew how to maneuver within the bureaucratized leadership of the party and Comintern. Rousset writes:

Mao had not been completely defeated between 1932 and 1934; he retained the—discreet—support of a section of the army around Lin Biao. He was protected by the prestige he still enjoyed, the friendship of Zhu De, the cautiousness of Zhou Enlai, and even Moscow's calculations that it was best to keep more than one egg in its basket and therefore rejected Bo Gu's and Otto Braun's injunctions that Mao be purged.

The Maoist CCP was forged in battle—against the Guomindang forces from 1927-37, against the Japanese from 1937-45, and again against the Guomindang from 1945-49. Furthermore, the prolonged warfare was imposed on the CCP because of the defeat of 1927, which was not inevitable at all. If the working class had been successful in the 1925-27 period there is no doubt that it would have had to defend itself militarily in the rural areas,

just as the Soviet Republic did from 1918 to 1921. However, it would have been able to do so from a position of strength, and the war would not have been so prolonged.

The prolonged war had a serious deleterious effect on the CCP, and reinforced the bureaucratic methods of functioning which it learned in the Stalinized Comintern. Rousset writes:

But war is just one form of struggle among others. It can be used by the revolution, but it, in turn, imposes its own laws on the latter. It is a tough school of cadre-training but it is not the best school of democracy. It turns secrecy into a cult, a certain form of hierarchical discipline into a vital necessity; it hardens human beings. War requires that the party develop and maintain social roots lest it become unable to continue the fight. But it also bolsters authoritarian structures. The best, most representative local cadres are often called upon to join the mobile, conventional forces, and can no longer play their earlier role, in a symbiosis with the direct mobilization of the people. The Maoist "mass line" reflects this two-fold process of sinking roots and identifying with the people on the one hand, and becoming autonomous and rising above the masses on the other. . . .

The functioning of the party and revolutionary army had already been severely affected by the factional and bureaucratic climate initiated in Moscow. To that was added the deep imprint of the permanent state of war.

For over half a century, the Chinese Communist Party has proudly defined itself as "Stalinist," and continues to do so today. Rousset, however, makes a distinction between Maoism and Stalinism: "Neither by its origins, doctrine or practice could it be reduced to Stalinism; Stalinism formed in a bureaucratic counterrevolution in a transitional society. Maoism formed in the revolutionary struggle for power in a semi-colonial society." However,

the analysis which leads Rousset to such a conclusion blurs the distinction between political leadership and the objective course of the revolution, over which even the best political leadership has only partial influence. Programmatically, such an analysis disarms revolutionists in combating the entrenched bureaucracy in the Chinese workers' state, whose domestic and international role over the past two decades has been as thoroughly reactionary as the Soviet CP's at its worst.

To be fair, Rousset does not gloss over the CCP's serious shortcomings, nor does he minimize the effect of Stalinism on it:

Maoism, a revolutionary movement, was not Stalinism, but cannot be understood without it. The victory of the Soviet bureaucracy dealt a death blow to internationalism. These were the circumstances in which what I call "national communisms" [Chinese, Yugoslavian, Vietnamese, etc.—T.B.], for lack of a better word, emerged. These currents were shaped in a long struggle for power. They proved able to define the road to their revolution; their coherence was that of their own historical trajectory. But, despite their qualities, they remained dependent on a context shaped by Stalinist supremacy over the international workers movement. The sclerosis of Marxist research accentuated their empirical inclinations. Since relations between the various parties became more and more formal, it became more and more difficult to rise above the national horizon of each revolutionary experience.

It is since the seizure of state power that the Chinese workers' state's Stalinist deformities have become such a serious obstacle both to Chinese progress and to the world revolution. For example, as Rousset correctly points out, a process of permanent revolution has been going on in China since 1949. We understand that permanent revolution is not something we "like" or "want." It isn't something that is "better" than revolution by stages. Revolution by stages is a fallacy. The only alternative to permanent revolution is no revolution at

Notebooks for Study and Research

Number one: "The Place of Marxism in History," by Ernest Mandel
\$3.50

Number two: "The Chinese Revolution, Part I: The Second Chinese Revolution and the Shaping of the Maoist Outlook,"
by Pierre Rousset
\$3.50

Order from: F.I.T.
P.O. Box 1947
New York, NY 10009

Number three: "The Chinese Revolution, Part II: The Maoist Project Tested in the Struggle for Power," by Pierre Rousset
\$4.00

all. The Chinese leadership's rejection of the theory of permanent revolution could not stop the process from taking place, as Rousset notes. However, had the Chinese leaders accepted and understood the theory they would have grasped far better the process taking place in their country, and they could have avoided a number of the serious policy mistakes made during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Trotskyist movement has had to live with the Maoism of the present, not the Maoism of the 1930s and 1940s. That includes the cult of personality, the Cultural Revolution, and disastrous attempts by well-meaning revolutionaries in other countries to import Maoism. The Deng Xiaoping leadership today has taken positive—albeit pragmatic—steps towards improving China's economy and breaking the country out of underdevelopment. However, in so doing, it has put itself in a contradictory situation by giving a small opening to a nascent

democratic movement, which if allowed to grow can threaten the ruling bureaucracy. Our discussion of Maoism and the Chinese revolution must arm us as revolutionists to confront these situations—to assess the economic reforms, to contribute to the growth of a mass antibureaucratic movement in China, to discuss political perspectives with those revolutionists who at one time attempted to apply Maoism in their own countries.

Revolutionists can make good use of Rousset's two pamphlets on the Chinese revolution. Rousset's factual presentation is thorough and helpful; by debating the positive and negative aspects of his political analysis revolutionists can enrich their own understanding not only of Chinese politics and history, but of political theory as well. In my opinion, an explanation of the later history of the Chinese People's Republic is made more difficult by Rousset's political conclusions, but we will see. ■

IN SEARCH OF RELEVANT FACTS AND PRACTICAL ANSWERS

The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States, by Michael Goldfield. University of Chicago Press, 1987. 294 pages, \$25.95.

Reviewed by Frank Lovell

This book is filled with statistics, data tables, charts, graphs, and econometric models. It has no less than 57 tables and analytical figures measuring everything from the uneven rise and decline of union membership to the shifting occupational distribution of nonwhites in the workforce. The organization of the book makes all this factual information easily available to the reader. Complete lists of the tables and figures are provided at the outset (right after the contents page) and a bibliography of more than 400 authors and references is at the end, just ahead of the index section. Also, the four indexes explain and illustrate the author's basic strategy in examining the exhaustive data he has gathered and his basic econometric model. These will interest some readers. Most will welcome the assemblage of facts, a ready reference book where one can easily verify, for example, that the peak AFL-CIO membership of 13,621,000 in 1979 had declined to 13,109,000 in 1985. Much comparative data are provided for the history of the modern union movement, from the rise of the CIO in the 1930s to as recently as 1984. A comparison table of union membership in 13 economically developed capitalist countries will perhaps surprise many readers. For all these reasons this is a useful handbook for anyone interested in unions, for whatever purpose.

The \$64,000 Question

But there is a great deal more to this book. The author, Professor Michael Goldfield who teaches at Cornell University, tells a story in his introduction to illustrate what prompted this extensive

research. He says that in early 1985 he asked a middle-level union bureaucrat what are the reasons behind the dramatic loss of union membership, particularly in the private sector. "Mike, that is the \$64,000 question," said the bureaucrat. Goldfield had been looking for the answer. Of course, he was not alone. But others had different motives.

Where to begin? Most researchers and other interested parties who seek answers to this perplexing question begin with a goal in mind, to explain the unfettered functioning of the capitalist market or to justify the need for institutional restraints on capitalist greed. Such investigations assume the social validity of capitalist property relations and parliamentary democracy. Goldfield puts such assumptions aside. He begins with a careful examination of the facts. And he brings a different purpose to his analysis. "Those of us who still cling to more traditional Marxist forms of class analysis," he says, "must examine carefully and provide plausible explanations for the trade union decline." His purpose? "I view the attempt to understand the decline of labor unions in the United States as the beginning of an attempt to understand the conditions necessary for their future rebirth." This approach was conditioned and tempered by the author's experiences as an industrial worker and union activist before entering academia.

His first task as a student was to familiarize himself with the work in labor studies in the academic world. This is a big job. Within the vast amount of material which Goldfield subjects to critical analyses, he finds that the various conclusions other scholars had reached fall into three main categories: 1) unions are declining because of changes in the structure and composition of the workforce; 2) various cyclical economic, social, and political conditions have weakened the unions; 3) the changing character and interrelation of

class forces—workers, unions, employers, and the government or administration in power—has produced a social environment hostile to labor unions. Even though these theories and tentative explanations are not mutually exclusive and contain many common or overlapping factors, Goldfield sorts out all (or nearly all) the factors, weighs and evaluates them, and analyzes each of these three broad tendencies. He finds none of them yields a completely satisfactory answer.

The AFL-CIO Conducts Search

While Goldfield was working on his project the AFL-CIO Executive Council in August 1982 established a "Committee on the Evolution of Work," chaired by AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Thomas Donahue. They were worried about the decline in union membership. But they, unlike Goldfield, were not interested in tracking down the causes. They hired "experts"—including professors Richard Freeman and James Medoff of Harvard, Thomas Kochan of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sar Levitan of George Washington University, Steven Miller of Carnegie-Mellon University, and others—to prepare reports and give advice. After two and a half years the committee finally reported. Its report, *The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions*, contained brief sections on changes in the workforce, failure of the law, desires of workers, and seeds of resurgence. In all these areas, broad generalizations were drawn from public surveys. A sprinkling of wish-fulfilling interpretation was added to conform with the expressed needs of U.S. industry. Under the heading "The Desires and Perceptions of Workers," a remarkable discovery was revealed: "The striking new factor is a shift in which Americans are less likely to see work as a straight economic transaction providing a means of survival and more likely to see it as a means of self-expression and self-development."

Such groundless assertions, of course, are the responsibility of the AFL-CIO committee that signed the report. But the experts who were hired to advise should have felt a twinge of guilt when the end result was finally announced. There can be no doubt that they all knew what to expect. The committee's initial report, *The Future of Work*, issued in August 1983, anticipated the banal conclusion with a commonplace discovery. It said, "Without determined and effective action to change economic conditions and increase job opportunities, America will move from the 1980s into the 1990s with an increasingly significant labor surplus." This uninspired revelation was bolstered by tables and graphs on unemployment, occupational profile, changing technology, and the staggering increase of foreign imports over U.S. exports. The final report, published in February 1985, promised "new approaches." High-sounding rhetoric, provided by the hired academicians, predictably reasserted the long-standing pledge of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy to promote U.S. capitalism in the glimmering hope that the needs of U.S. labor will be served.

Social Democracy vs. Revolutionary Socialism

The AFL-CIO report cynically concludes with selected "quotes from our predecessors," Meany and Debs, to avow faith in the survival of unionism. George Meany thought the unions could survive in the service of capitalism whereas Debs, the socialist agitator, proclaimed his faith in the power of labor to overthrow capitalism, "and its historic mission is as certain of ultimate realization as is the setting of the sun."

These two contradictory theories on the historic mission of the working class and the role of unions in capitalist society have vied for acceptance and support in the union movement since the beginning of unions in the 19th century. The political evolution of these theories in the 20th century produced contentious working class parties, both claiming to represent and defend the interests of working people against the greed of capitalist exploitation. Social democracy on the one side seeks to demonstrate that labor's needs are best served within the framework of capitalist property relations and bourgeois democracy. This was George Meany's position. On the other side revolutionary socialism contends (on the basis of economic laws of capitalism as discovered and explained by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and their successors in the science of political economy) that the condition of the working class will continue to deteriorate until capitalism is abolished and working class democracy established. This is what Debs preached. It is what Professor Goldfield seeks to demonstrate. The debate is continuous; each new turn of events in the struggles between workers and employers brings additional facts and fresh insights to the opposing political forces.

Goldfield puts aside these underlying theoretical considerations and concentrates his study on available data. This is not to say that he ignores the various methods of data analysis and the range of hypotheses currently in use among scholars in labor research. To the contrary, this is the stuff of his study. In the course of examining what other scholars have projected he exposes some myths that have come to be accepted by labor journalists and other popularizers as (almost) self-evident truths. Among them are the notions that the decline of unions since the mid-1970s is the most sustained and significant in this century; that the "relatively stable size (or slight growth) of U.S. union membership from the early 1960s until 1980" demonstrates union stability; that union organizing is harder in traditionally unorganized areas of the country and easier in regions where unions are established institutions; that the vast majority of U.S. workers have never been organized because they accept and often agree with the antiunion attitudes of their employers; that unions associated with left-wing (communist) leadership in the past are less appealing or acceptable to unorganized workers than unions controlled by conservative leaders; that women are inherently less likely to join unions than men; that the enactment of social legis-

lation is a measure of union strength; that the union movement in the U.S. has at different times wielded significant "national political influence"; that Black workers and other minorities are more suspicious of union officials and therefore harder to organize than white workers; that the openly antiunion policies of the Reagan administration are the primary cause of union decline in the 1980s. This is a partial list of misinformation exposed by Goldfield's research.

Hunting Down Hidden Causes

In his investigation into the causes of union decline, Goldfield proceeds like a detective, tracking down suspected culprits. First he examines changes in the composition of the workforce and finds that these have "little negative bearing." Likewise, changes in economic structure (reorganization in the capitalist process of commodity production and distribution) "while certainly having some immediate negative effects, cannot be accepted as a primary cause of the long-range declines." Next he turns attention to economic booms and depressions, and related social and political variables. He finds here a correlation between union success and these cyclical variations, "yet they ultimately fail to explain the bulk of the decline over the past several years." Finally in his continuing search for the real culprits he undertakes an in-depth examination of the relation of class forces in this country, i.e., the irreconcilable conflict between the working class (with its stratified composition and present level of political consciousness) on one side, and the employing class (with its governmental institutions) on the other side. He examines a massive amount of evidence and concludes that in this evidence lies the answer to "the immediate causes of the trade union decline in this country."

Goldfield employs the most highly developed and widely used tools of his trade, including the econometric model which adapts statistical methods to the study of economic data and social problems. Such tools are recognized investigative devices, aids in the learning and discovery process. But Goldfield recognizes and acknowledges their limitations. On the use of econometric models (examples of which this book is replete) his stated axiom is "models are to be used but not to be believed."

Challenging the Experts

In his argumentation in support of his findings, Goldfield collides with "recognized authorities" such as the impressive collection assembled to advise the AFL-CIO bureaucracy on the extent of its problems, and with others of the same bent such as former secretary of labor John Dunlop who returned to labor studies at Harvard after leaving partisan politics. Dunlop won high marks from the union bureaucracy as a "friend of labor" in the

liberal wing of the Republican Party. Goldfield contrasts "the impressionistic arguments of Dunlop and others" on the political influence of unions (designed to flatter and console Meany and other top union officials during the Nixon administrations) with the factual evidence of almost total lack of union influence in the enactment of social legislation. He cites the studies of sociologists Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward as a reminder that "major disruptions by blacks (from sit-ins and demonstrations to ghetto rebellions) led to the successful passage of social legislation, some of which unions had been pressing unsuccessfully for many years."

Arguments for concession bargaining, advanced by Dunlop and others, are shown to be unfounded. These labor analysts have based their justification of union concessions on the conjunctural downturn of the economy in the early 1980s and projected that union losses would be restored with the return of profitability to the distressed industries. Nothing of the sort has happened. Contrary to these views, Goldfield argues that union "concession bargaining"—a recent innovation in labor-management relations—is "a reflection of long-term union weakness and declining strength."

In the closing chapter of his book Goldfield permits himself "some speculations," suggesting what might have been if a more militant leadership had prevailed in the struggles within the union resurgence of the 1930s. He says: "The seeds of today's situation in the trade union movement were planted during the 1930s and 1940s," anticipating a promised second volume which can be expected to elaborate upon this theme.

This first volume is a major work which prepares the attentive reader for continued discussion and debate on the basic causes of labor's decline and the necessary conditions for its rebirth.

There is little to fault in Goldfield's dissection of data and marshaling of facts, and in his persuasive argumentation. His book is compelling reading, especially remarkable given the characteristic features it inherits from its genesis as a doctoral thesis. Some decisions on the editorial side should be reconsidered. Names in the index ought to include both the first name and surname of individuals listed. But judging by some other errors it seems as if proofreading is a neglected craft. Neither the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), an AFL-CIO affiliate which represents dock workers on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, nor the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), the independent union with firmly established jurisdiction on the West Coast, is listed in the index. In the text ILA is misprinted "ILU" and the ILWU turns up as the "International Longshoremen's and Workingmen's Union." Such errors are distractions to be avoided in Professor Goldfield's next book, which we hope will appear soon. ■

Glasnost

Gorbachev's effort through "*glasnost*/openness" and "*perestroika*/reconstruction" to solve Russia's economic, social, and political discontent, point to the glaring question: Can the bureaucratic regimes in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China, undemocratically empowered and ruling by fiat, solve the needs of their people?

I do not think a return to limited free enterprise is the answer. It will only result in further anarchy in production, increased spread in incomes, and become a further threat to socialized, planned production and distribution, the goal of socialism.

What is needed in those countries is a return to socialist democracy, not a more liberal bureaucracy. What is needed is the establishment of workers' democracy wherein people can become participants in policy making through exercising the right of forming political parties and fielding socialist candidates as an alternative to the bureaucratic, self-centered, one-party regime now governing in the "socialist" countries.

The workers in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and China have tried and are struggling to gain real socialist democracy—which would eliminate the mismanagement and crisis of the bureaucratic regimes. That is the only way out.

Joe Carroll
Verona, New Jersey

Lenin on the Two-Stage Theory

While doing some research the other day I ran across the following passage from Lenin, which I thought might be of interest to fellow readers of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*:

"The question was posed as follows: are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation and among whom a certain advance towards progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative. If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

Gay Rights March

During the final preparation of this issue of the *Bulletin IDOM* the huge march for gay rights took place in Washington D.C.—October 11. Crowd estimates ranged from 200,000 (D.C. Park Police) to half a million (demonstration organizers). In our next issue we will have a report on the demonstration.

propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal—in that event it will be mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development. Not only should we create independent contingents of fighters and party organizations in the colonies and the backward countries, not only at once launch propaganda for the organization of peasants' Soviets and strive to adapt them to the precapitalist conditions, but the Communist International should advance the proposition, with the appropriate theoretical grounding, that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage" ("The Second Congress of the Communist International," *Collected Works*, Volume 31, p. 244).

The Barnes faction in the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party, which has embraced "Leninism" in order to reject permanent revolution, has been doing a great deal of research into and writing about the first four congresses of the Communist International. One has to wonder what they think when they come upon such a passage. It reveals very cogently that their "Leninism" is the "Leninism" of convenience, and that they lack even an ounce of intellectual honesty.

A Reader,
New York City

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