

Information, Education, Discussion

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism

Jordan, Israel, and the PLO
by Chris Faatz 1

Warsawsky Trial Begins October 19 in Israel 4

**Mark Curtis Convicted in Rape Trial:
Stepped-up Defense Effort Projected** 4

Sesquicentennial, Trail of Tears 5

Mexico After the Elections 6

**Why the Central America Movement
Must Focus on Central America**
by Samuel Adams 10

FROM THE ARSENAL OF MARXISM:
Withdraw the Troops 15

U.S. Radicals and the Trade Union Movement
by Dave Riehle 17

**Program, Organization, Revolution:
Lenin and the Bolsheviks, 1905-1917 (part 2)**
by Paul Le Blanc 23

An Appeal to the SWP
by John Daniels 27

Notebooks for the Grandchildren (continued)
25. Butyrka Humanism
by Mikhail Baitalsky 29

REVIEWS:
The Transitional Program Today
by Paul Le Blanc 32

A Look at 1968
by John A. Kovach 34

LETTERS 35

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.

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism, No. 57, November 1988

Closing date October 5, 1988.

Send correspondence and subscriptions to BULLETIN IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009.

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Jordan, Israel, and the PLO

by Chris Faatz

On Sunday, July 31, King Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan severed all of his nation's ties with the Zionist-occupied West Bank. In doing so, he declared that if the Palestine Liberation Organization was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, then it would have to make good on that claim and assume the responsibilities that such a position conferred. Such a move on the part of the Jordanians can only be understood within the context of the present Palestinian uprising, or Intifada, which has completely redefined the balance of forces in the area.

Jordan annexed the West Bank in the aftermath of the 1948 war that led to the formation of the Israeli state. It ruled unimpeded until the six-day war of 1967, when it lost direct territorial sovereignty to the Zionists, although it has maintained administrative responsibility. Approximately 24,000 of the West Bank's inhabitants were employees of the Jordanian government, including between one-third and one-half of the region's teachers. Jordan's move has led to the complete loss of income to the area from the wages they were paid. Only about 5,300 pensioners—those who were employed before 1967—will continue to receive money from the Amman regime.

Most professions—such as pharmacists, engineers, and lawyers—have hitherto been licensed by Jordan. Three-quarters of a million inhabitants of the West Bank carry Jordanian passports. Students receive Jordanian diplomas upon graduation from high school, and most financial transactions in the West Bank are conducted through one of the three local branches of the Cairo-Amman Bank. All of these functions, totaling approximately \$50 million in expenditures annually by Jordan, will cease. In addition, the Jordanian regime has canceled a \$1.3-billion development program for the West Bank which it had initiated in 1986.

It would seem obvious that such an extreme renunciation of sovereignty claims long held—in this case at least since 1950—could only occur as a result of overwhelming pressure. And indeed that is the case. Yet there is more going on here than is apparent at first glance. What are the real motivations for King Hussein's move, and what does he hope to gain from it?

Impact of the Palestinian Uprising

The Jordanian regime's claim of sovereignty over the West Bank and as a representative of the Palestinians there received a serious blow as a result of the Intifada. The current Palestinian revolt has now received international recognition as a turning point in the struggle of that people for liberation; it is unparalleled in the 40-year existence of the Zionist state.

For the first time in their history the Palestinian people are acting in their own interests. They are not relying on outsiders to fight their battles for them. They are *not* waiting for the armies of a mythical Pan-Arabism to save them from Zionism; they are *not* waiting for the Fedayeen guerrillas of the PLO to drive the Zionists out of power; they are *not* waiting patiently for a leadership in exile to negotiate a solution to their problems.

Instead, under the tremendous pressure of a violently racist and increasingly genocidal occupation of their homeland, they are taking to the streets in their thousands to confront their oppressor and the apparatus that has been constructed to ensure their continued subservency. In short, the Palestinian people have begun to take their destiny into their own hands, and it doesn't look as if they are likely to give it up again too easily.

The leadership of the Intifada—the National United Leadership of the Uprising (NULU)—includes a wide cross section of the forces that are active in the territories. All three of the major PLO factions are represented—Arafat's Fatah, the pro-Syrian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Stalinist-oriented Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—as well as the Palestinian Communist Party. Yet despite its heterogeneous composition, this leadership has consistently and uncompromisingly insisted that the PLO is the only recognized representative of the people in the occupied territories.

It is this insistence, backed by the tremendous moral and political weight of the masses of Palestinians in motion, that initiated the crisis of legitimacy leading to Hussein's July 31 announcement. The Intifada dealt a serious blow to any claim by Jordan to speak for the Palestinians. And on top of that, the Organization of Arab Unity (OAU), in light of the uprising, reaffirmed its 1974 recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, pledging millions of dollars to support the Intifada, all of which was to be channeled through the PLO. Thus, Jordan suddenly found itself relegated to the sidelines.

A Calculated Gamble

But these factors only begin to explain Hussein's renunciation of his claim to sovereignty over the West Bank. It is necessary to dig a little deeper. Because Jordan is unlikely to relinquish its ambitions as arbiter of the Palestinians' fate so lightly.

While the renunciation was forced on Hussein as a result of enormous pressure, his real purpose is just the opposite of what it seems. He has no desire to give up his interest in the region. His objective is to provoke a crisis within the PLO by shifting, suddenly and without warning, the whole burden

of administering the West Bank onto its shoulders. Jordan's unexpected recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people is, in fact, a completely cynical move.

Hussein is gambling that the PLO will be incapable of administering the West Bank. He expects that education, medical care, etc., will deteriorate dramatically and rapidly, that the standard of living will plummet, and that the PLO will be unable to meet the financial obligations of genuine governmental administration. Amman further hopes that the OAU will be unwilling to deliver on its promised financial backing for the Intifada and that the Israeli state, which has de facto control over all of the institutional structures of the West Bank, will do everything in its not inconsiderable power to impede attempts by the Palestinian leadership in exile to intervene in an effective manner.

The goal of King Hussein, in short, is to discredit the PLO leadership by effectively alienating it from its constituency in the occupied territories. This, it is hoped, will create a vacuum of leadership that the Jordanians can take advantage of, regaining some of the bargaining power they have lost as a result of the Intifada.

Palestinians in Jordan

There is another factor which motivates the maneuvering of the Jordanian regime. Two-thirds of that country's 2.8 million people are Palestinian. The Intifada has proven a great stimulus to them — as it has to Palestinians throughout the world, even within the Israeli state itself. (Palestinians who are citizens of Israel have taken to the streets more and more in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the occupied territories, even to the extent of participating in general strikes called by NULU.)

The impact of the uprising on Palestinians within its own borders makes the Amman regime nervous. Jordan's economy is in trouble. It operates mainly as a banking and commerce center for the Arab states, because Jordan itself is poor in oil. Generous support is given to Jordan by other Arab regimes. However, due to the decline in oil prices on the world market and the massive outlay by many of the Arab states to support Iraq's war with Iran, Jordan's economy has slumped, causing unrest. By renouncing responsibility for the West Bank, Hussein will be able to infuse \$50 million extra per year back into his own economy in hopes of averting a crisis situation.

Israeli Elections

The elections taking place within the Israeli state itself are also a factor. The Intifada has had its effects here as well. Both of the major parties are focusing on counterposed programs for achieving "peace" in the occupied territories. The hard-line Likud stands for blatant military suppression of the Intifada, no matter what the cost, in order to safeguard Israel's inherent, biblically derived "right" to further colonization of the area through its settler communities.

Labor, on the other hand, which has until recently been seen as the almost preordained loser in the elections, is running on a somewhat desperate "trade land for peace" platform. This proposes negotiations with Jordan which would

lead to a portion of the West Bank being turned over to the Jordanians as a Palestinian "autonomous zone" (Bantustan?) in confederation with Jordan. Known as "the Jordanian Option," the purpose of this is to let go of the majority of the Palestinian troublemakers while holding onto a good portion of West Bank territory to act as a buffer between the Israeli state and its neighbors. Such a move is touted as the "solution" to the region's problems by the U.S. as well.

The "Jordanian Option" appears to have been summarily destroyed by Hussein's formal abandonment of any claims to sovereignty over, or right to represent, the Palestinians of the West Bank. But if one looks at the wider context of the Intifada, and Jordan's attempt to strengthen its position in the long term through an immediate tactical retreat, Hussein's gamble, if it pays off, could, in the long run, strengthen the wing of liberal Zionists and their supporters who are looking in this direction.

For Jordan, peace means confederation. The only acceptable solution to the continuation of hostilities between the Zionists and the Palestinian masses is the inclusion of parts of the West Bank within the broader Jordanian kingdom. This has, for now, been summarily rejected by the Palestinians themselves through their reaffirmation of allegiance to the PLO and their own national claims for an independent state. But if Hussein is successful in provoking a crisis in the PLO and its relations with the masses on the West Bank, if the upsurge among the Palestinians recedes a bit allowing a hearing for more conservative voices within the Palestinian community, the present situation could be transformed into its opposite, and Jordan's fortunes in the West Bank become stronger than ever.

Israeli/PLO Negotiations?

One of the elements in Jordan's approach is the hope that it can compromise the PLO leadership by forcing it into a position where it will have to bargain for peace with the Israeli government, simply in order to construct a civil administration in the West Bank. That would be very difficult for the PLO because the Zionists, with strong U.S. backing, have refused outright to deal with, much less recognize, the PLO or the Palestinians' claims to national self-determination. Both Likud and Labor are agreed on this issue: They will not deal with "terrorists." In order to even enter into negotiations the PLO would have to grant major concessions and tone down its militant opposition to Zionism and the state of Israel.

But the pressure of the situation works both ways. There are also changes which might take place within the monolithic front the Zionists have maintained on the question of negotiations with the PLO up to now. Labor has seen its "land for peace" collaboration with the Jordanians destroyed by its erstwhile partner. And though within the context of electioneering its line has changed little ("if elected we shall deal with Jordan") the fact is that the same factors which forced even this mild concession to the Palestinian movement will continue to force the "left" Zionist politicians to look for some solution other than the purely military one. The attempt to suppress the Intifada by force has served to discredit the Israeli government around the

world—even within important sectors of the Jewish community. That is what has had the biggest effect on Israeli politics.

It is not at all excluded that sectors of the Israeli leadership will try to seize upon changes which have already taken place in the political approach of the PLO, and try to find a basis for negotiations. In recent months the PLO has explicitly come out in support of the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. There is some ambiguity about the political significance of this move. The most radical elements within the Palestinian movement see the formation of such a state as simply a first step in the direction of complete self-determination and the abolition of Zionist rule over Palestine. Others understand it as an implicit recognition of Israel's right to exist.

In the context of the Intifada, the possibility certainly exists for the establishment of a ministate to be seen by the Palestinian masses as simply a *partial* victory wrested from the Zionists, which must lay the basis for an intensified struggle in the future. If that is the case, if the Palestinian movement remains mobilized and active, then the creation of a ministate would be a blow to the Zionists and a clear victory for the Palestinian cause, a step on the road to a truly democratic and secular Palestine where both Arabs and Jews can live with equal rights and opportunities.

If, however (and this seems more likely given the historical crisis of leadership faced by the Palestinian movement), the creation of a ministate were to lead to a decline in the struggle, a demobilization of the Intifada—on the mythical basis that a substantial victory had been achieved—it would prove to be a tremendous blow to Palestinian aspirations for self-determination. A Palestinian ministate formed as a result of collusion between the nascent Palestinian ruling class, represented by Arafat's Al Fatah organization, and the Zionist state would almost certainly be little more than a reserve of cheap labor for Israel, with little economic viability

of its own. Its national rights would be severely curtailed in the interests of "Israeli national security" demands. Arafat has hinted more than once that he would be receptive to such a "solution," though he cannot say so openly given the present sentiment in the Palestinian community.

Shimon Peres, leader of Israel's Labor Party, has not been blind to such nuances in the line of the PLO. Indeed, there are indications that he is willing to capitalize on this development even to the extent of breaking the political taboos of generations.

Recently Peres was quoted as saying, "If Hussein wishes, we'll talk with him; if the Palestinians wish, we'll talk with them" (*Middle East International*, No. 331, August 5, 1988). In apparent response to the Likud hardliners, he said in April, "Whoever refuses to talk with Hussein will ultimately have to talk to the PLO" (*ibid*). *L'Express* of Paris reported in its July 22 edition that a secret meeting had taken place between representatives of Peres and, of all people, Arafat. "Contacts are being maintained," according to the paper.

This is obviously a development with tremendous potential importance. It seems that a split may be developing within the leadership of the Israeli state on the question of how best to deal with the Intifada and the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, while still maintaining the security of the Zionist state. Obviously, on the basis of the facts, at least a part of the Israeli ruling class is willing to consider cooperating with the most privileged section of the Palestinian leadership in the formation of a rump Palestinian state on a part of the occupied territories.

Although such a move is not probable in the immediate future, it should certainly not be ruled out. Either this option or a continued growth of the strength and power of the Intifada despite King Hussein's move would be a tremendous blow to Jordanian plans in the region. ●

September 26, 1988



NEWS FROM WITHIN is an independent political newsletter published by the Alternative Information Centre, POB 24278, Jerusalem, Israel. Tel.: (02) 241159. Publisher: Assia Rosenthal. Signed articles represent the opinions of the authors, and not necessarily those of NFW or the AIC. We welcome readers' contributions and responses. Special subscription offer: (US) \$25 for 10 issues of NFW. Cheques, made out to NEWS FROM WITHIN, should be sent to the above address

Warshawsky Trial Begins October 19 in Israel

On February 16, 1987, Israeli police raided the offices of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Jerusalem, arresting the center's director, Michael Warshawsky, and other staff members. Although charges were later dropped against most of those arrested, Warshawsky and the AIC itself are scheduled to go on trial beginning October 19 under indictment for "service to an illegal organization," "possession of written material of an illegal organization," and "support for a terrorist organization." The possible penalty, if Warshawsky were convicted on all counts, would be 23 years in prison.

The AIC has functioned legally for many years, getting out the truth about conditions faced by Palestinians living in the occupied territories through its newsletter, *News From Within*. It is this activity which is the real target of Israeli authorities. Virtually all of the "evidence" which is scheduled to be introduced at the trial consists of testimony from secret service agents, or by police from the special section.

The Warshawsky trial takes place in the context of an increased repression in Israel against any citizen suspected of politically or materially supporting the Palestinian uprising. Sentences of 18 months, including six in a closed prison, have

recently been inflicted on four peace activists who publicly met with a PLO delegation in Rumania.

Warshawsky is a well-known Israeli left-wing figure. He is a leader of the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL) of Israel—Israeli section of the Fourth International. After his arrest he was held in solitary confinement for two weeks and denied access to reading and writing material. He was later released on bail—largely as a result of an international defense campaign.

An international solidarity effort is being relaunched in light of the upcoming trial. It is to focus on the following slogans: "No to political trials against Israeli-Palestinian cooperation!" "No to restrictions on the freedom of information!" "Drop the charges against Warshawsky and the Alternative Information Center." As of this writing we know of picket lines which are being planned for October 19 in New York and San Francisco. Activists are urged to help with a campaign of telegrams and petitions—demanding the dropping of the charges—addressed to the Israeli Attorney General, with copies to the Israeli RCL (P.O. Box 22434, Jerusalem, Israel).

October 5, 1988

Mark Curtis Convicted in Rape Trial Stepped-up Defense Effort Projected

On September 14 Mark Curtis, a union militant and political activist in Des Moines, Iowa, who is a member of the Socialist Workers Party, was convicted on frame-up charges of third-degree sexual abuse and first-degree burglary. His trial lasted three days. The prosecution claimed that Curtis raped and beat a 15-year-old Black woman, Demetria Morris, in her home.

Curtis says that he was at the Morris residence as a result of a request from another woman for a ride home. Moments after he

How you can help

● Mark Curtis faces a second trial on October 10 on charges of assaulting cops who brutally beat him. Send messages to Polk County Attorney James Smith demanding that those charges be dropped and cops who beat Curtis be prosecuted. Address messages to Polk County Attorney James Smith, Room 408 Courthouse, 500 Mulberry St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

● To get defense committee materials, including fact sheets, petitions, buttons, and assistance on setting up a Curtis defense committee in your area, contact the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines,

Iowa 50311. Telephone (515) 246-1695.

● Funds are urgently needed to cover legal expenses and to continue the campaign to get out the truth about Curtis' fight for justice. Contributions should be sent to the Des Moines defense committee. Checks for tax deductible contributions may be made out to the Political Rights Defense Fund, Inc.

● Write to Mark Curtis. His address is Mark Curtis, Marion County Jail, Knoxville, Iowa 50138. Copies of the letters, as well as protest messages to Smith, should be sent to the Des Moines defense committee.

Box is reprinted from September 23, 1988, *Militant*

arrived—more than 40 minutes after Demetria Morris says she was assaulted—police came running up, pushed him into a back bedroom, and pulled down his pants. They also opened his car, which contained protest literature. After his arrest, Curtis was so brutally beaten by cops at the county jail that his cheekbone was shattered. Curtis now faces charges of assaulting the cops who beat him. That trial is scheduled to begin on October 10.

Testimony was heard at Curtis's trial by eyewitnesses who were with him in a bar and restaurant with co-workers from the Swift meatpacking plant at the time of the alleged assault. Vital facts—including the beating Curtis received at the hands of the police and other evidence that the charges against Curtis were a frame-up—were kept from the jury as a result of decisions by the trial judge. ●

Sesquicentennial, Trail of Tears

This article is reprinted from the Rising Sun News, Vol. 13, Issue #7, published by the Southwest Missouri Indian Center, 322-A East Pershing, Springfield, Mo. 65806.

Located between Rattlesnake Springs, Tennessee, and Tahlequah, Oklahoma, is some of the most beautiful country in America. This 900-mile trek marks the Trail of Tears, where up to 4,000 Native Americans died in 1838 and 1839 as the United States government forced the Cherokee from their ancestral homelands in Tennessee and marched them to Oklahoma. One-quarter of the Cherokee Indian tribe died on the Trail of Tears as a result of this forced march. Today it is difficult to imagine such horror taking place in the serene countryside of this area.

The government's Indian Removal Act of 1830 led to the removal of Native Americans from the southeastern United States to Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where the Cherokee tribe is now headquartered. The Act established a policy whereby whites, pushing westward in the 1800s, could take tribal land.

Many of the Cherokees had adopted a number of the traditions of the white settlers prior to being forced off their land. They had learned English, invented a written language for Cherokee, accepted Christianity, and some even maintained plantations and owned slaves. This did not stop the white man's migration and the taking of Cherokee lands.

In 1837 and 1838 U.S. government soldiers herded the Cherokee people into stockades in Tennessee, and in 1838 illegally forced approximately 3,000 of them to migrate to Oklahoma by way of river water routes.

During the winter of 1838-1839, 13,000 more Cherokees were forced to march over a land route—the Trail of Tears. They traveled on foot, by wagon, and on horseback. It is es-

timated that up to 4,000 of the group died due to the severe winter, lack of food, clothing, and medicine. The route has truly earned its name.

The Trail has been made a part of the National Trail System through legislation signed by President Reagan in December 1987.

To commemorate the Trail's 150th anniversary, a wagon train will leave Red Clay, Tennessee (near Rattlesnake Springs), September 17, and will travel over the Trail of Tears, passing through the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas, to its destination in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Each of these six states and the five Indian tribes of Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Cherokee have been invited to participate by entering an official wagon in the train. There will also be riders on horseback as well as walkers.

The train will camp overnight in the Nianqua area on November 14 and the Northview area November 15. It will proceed on into Springfield and follow the Trail of Tears on to Tahlequah.

Walkers, horseback riders, and wagons are encouraged to join the train for either long or short distances. All participants must be registered and wear the Official Registration button. You may contact the SMIC office to register and obtain your button. Cost is \$5.00, which will go toward covering costs of the official Missouri wagon. For more information please call the SMIC office—(417) 869-9550. ●

MEXICO

ON JULY 6, the political potential of the Mexican people was fully revealed. Working people in the countryside and the cities dealt an impressive blow to the PRI. This vote expressed the level of mass discontent provoked by the anti-democratic character of the regime and the attacks on living standards. In this respect, there should be no mistake about the reasons for this vote. A series of political commentators have analyzed it as the expression of a desire to vote for change without violence. And this assessment seems confirmed by the small vote won by the PMS and the PRT.

However, the Cárdenas vote reflects a diametrically opposite evolution. In the first place, it reflects a dynamic of political independence. It is true that the policy proposed by Cárdenas by no means poses the need for political independence. But for significant sections of the Mexican people, it means a political break with the PRI.

Secondly, those who voted for Cárdenas did so because this seemed to be the best way of dislodging the PRI. In this sense, for the first time in Mexico, a dynamic of "tactical voting" has emerged. Thirdly — and this is a fundamental point — they voted for Cárdenas as the best way of advancing the fight for democracy, seeing this not only as fight in the electoral arena but also centrally in the social arena. They wanted to bring about a change in the relationship of forces.

Mass demonstrations against election fraud

This is why, immediately after the elections, masses of people came into the streets to demonstrate their desire for change and transformation. They gained confidence and were no longer afraid to express themselves politically.

When the masses are no longer afraid of the regime and state policies, possibilities abound for the realization that they must take their fate into their own hands. Possibilities also loom of situations in which classes can organize politically in order to win definitive solutions to this crisis.

Since last November, we stressed the possibility of the PRI losing the elections. However, we did not think that this situation would be accompanied by the big mass mobilizations that have occurred and which have deepened the crisis of the PRI. But we are still at the beginning of this crisis.

Throughout the election campaign, we saw Cárdenas gaining ground as Salinas lost it. While sections of the old political bureaucracy were convinced that it was necessary to maintain the old policy of crude election fraud, others thought it was necessary to come up with a more "respectable" sort of fraud, which could also be a basis for a future deal. This explains the contradictory statements on election night.

Everything was set up for the proponents

“Within this reformist avalanche, the masses need a socialist reference point”

IT TOOK the Mexican authorities ten days to announce the results of the July 6 presidential and parliamentary election. Everyone expected the usual electoral fraud of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has held all governmental power for 60 years.

The PRI candidate to succeed Miguel de la Madrid as president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, was accorded 50.4% of the vote. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the candidate of the National Democratic Front (FDN), supported by the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS, a coalition including the CP), was credited with 31.1%. The National Action Party (PAN, the traditional right-wing opposition party) was credited with 17%.

The Revolutionary Workers' Party, PRT, the Mexican section of the Fourth International, and its presidential candidate, Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, were credited with 0.38%, and thus lost their representation in parliament.

Officially, then, the PRI won, even if Salinas' score looks dismal by comparison with the 70%, 80% and even 90% of his predecessors. Most of the population considers that he was not really elected. In the aftermath of the vote, gigantic demonstrations swept the country.

On July 9, at a press conference including all three opposition presidential candidates, Rosario Ibarra for the PRT said that the popular will should be respected and Cárdenas recognized as president. She called on workers in the countryside and the towns to mobilize against the fraud.

The election has created a new situation in the country and posed new and difficult tasks for revolutionaries. These were analyzed in a report adopted by the PRT Central Committee meeting of July 22-24, large excerpts of which follow.

of crude election fraud to have their way. That is why the action conducted by the three opposition candidates on the evening of July 6 was so important. The occupation of the Ministry of the Interior by FDM-PMS, PAN and PRT activists and the sharply worded confrontation between Bartelett [the chair of the Board of Elections] and the opposition candidates blocked this crude fraud.¹

A few hours later, the PRI president announced that the PRI had won a "crushing" victory, explaining that Bartelett was going to proclaim Salinas the victor in a few minutes. But nothing of the sort happened. One the following day, Salinas had to explain

that we had experienced the closest elections in our history, and that the opposition had achieved major victories.

From that time on, it was clear that the line that was going to win out was the one for "respectable" fraud. That reflected the contradictions that were being expressed in the PRI. When Camboa Pascoe's defeat

1. The FDN is the Cárdenas organization. The PMS is a coalition dominated by the Communist Party, which supported Cárdenas. PAN (National Action Party) is the traditional right-wing opposition party.

2. Camboa Pascoe and Fidel Velasquez are leading figures in the union bureaucracy linked to the PRI. Velasquez is the general secretary of the Mexican Workers' Confederation (CTM).

was announced, Fidel Velásquez refused to accept the defeat of his candidates.² It is very significant that Fidel was only one of leaders of the various sections of the PRI to be absent when the election results were announced by Salinas. The division caused by the massive vote for Cárdenas was already evident.

In this regard, the fraud that was committed was not what was expected by the more retrograde sectors of the PRI. In practice, in the coming months, we are going to see a settling of accounts among the various currents within the party.

Divisions in trade-union bureaucracy

However, the most important aspect of the political struggle in the PRI will be seen in the trade-union bureaucracy. For a long time, our party has believed that the divisions within the PRI would show up first in splits in the union bureaucracy. This explains why we did not pay much attention to the emergence of the Democratic Current in the PRI. This view of possible splits in the union bureaucracy is based on two ideas.

The Miguel de la Madrid regime's economic and social policy affected fundamentally the mechanisms for controlling the mass movement, and we thought that this was going to lead some sections of the union bureaucracy to react and take the lead in some mobilizations. Secondly, in observing the development of the ripening political crisis, we thought that it would break out in all its dimensions if there was a split in the union bureaucracy, since this apparatus is the backbone of the regime's political stability.

While it is true that the crisis within the PRI did not start with the union bureaucracy, there is no doubt that the expression, development and conclusion of this crisis are entirely dependent on the future of this apparatus of domination. During the Salinas campaign, the divisions between the various sectors of the trade-union bureaucracy and the PRI candidate appeared in different forms.

All of this unfolded in the midst of the struggle to succeed Fidel Velásquez. For a long time, we have been pointing out the importance of this battle. The various currents preparing themselves for this fight have been considerably shaken up by the election campaign. It is clear that the hardest hit has been the Gamboa Pascoe current in the Federal District Workers' Federation, which has about 700,000 members.

Today, we are more convinced than ever that the problems in the union bureaucracy are so great that it is no exaggeration to think that a series of breaks are possible in

the short run. Such a development will be even more likely if, as everything indicates, Salinas carries the policy of "modernization" and industrial reconversion further. The trade-union bureaucracy's deeply cowardly character has led it into dangerous waters by forcing it to pursue a policy that is not its own.

Facing imminent attacks from the bosses and the government, sections of the trade-union bureaucracy are getting ready for a fight. Quina's actions and Romo's statement³ are a warning to the modernizers about what the response will be if they persist in trying to touch the bureaucrats' share of power. Today, it will be easier for these bureaucrats to react because there is a new political force challenging the modernization policy — Cárdenas.

We are undoubtedly on the eve of a split of major sections of the trade-union bureaucracy from the PRI. What is keeping Quina in the party today is obviously not his loyalty to Salinas but the fight over succession in the CTM. If he sees that there is no chance of becoming Velásquez's successor, or if Velásquez dies and he is not crowned the new czar of the CTM, then his evolution toward Cárdenas will be more rapid.

In this situation, the closest circle of Salinas' collaborators took on the job of carrying out a "respectable" fraud. In fact, they had to deliver more than 50% of the votes cast in order to be able to govern with so-called legitimacy. However, the vote for the PRI was so low that they had no other solution than to push up the abstention rate.

This sort of fraud implied the idea that a deal was necessary. In this respect, the

at not getting a favorable response to their proposals for consensus. They even used the attorney general, who enjoys a certain sympathy in some sectors of the Cárdenas movement, to make a speech in which he insisted on the need for such consensus. Most journalists played up this appeal, but without saying this implied the "minority" recognizing the PRI's victory. The way things are going, the most probable thing is that Salinas will be the next president of the republic but that the government that he wanted to look strong and democratic will instead be weak and anti-democratic.

Salinas will be the new lonely man in the presidential palace, not only because of the desertions from the PRI but fundamentally because from the start of his term in office he will have to confront rejection by the people. It is probably under the Salinas administration that we will see the end of the present mode of domination. The man who wanted to be the modernizer of the PRI will be its grave-digger.

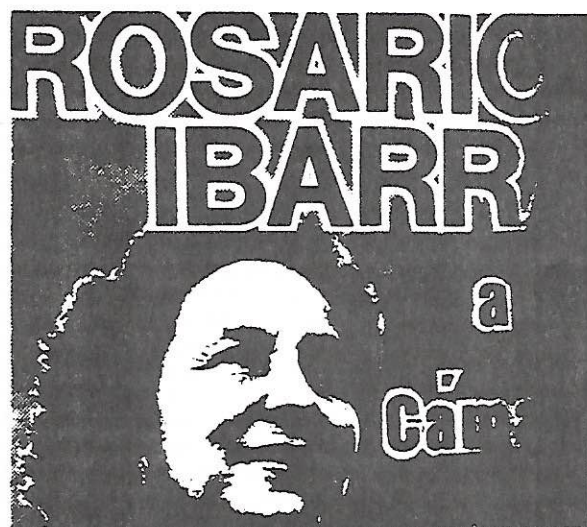
Cardenas' political project

A few hours before the polls closed, some prominent Cárdenas people proclaimed that the PRI had won, that the vote for Cárdenas had been very high, and that the Cárdenas movement has established itself as the second political force in the country. In this connection, the socialists who supported Cárdenas were the first to be surprised by his triumph. A little later, at the time of the demonstration at the Ministry of the Interior and in faced with the scope of the reaction of the people who gathered there, they exhibited uncertainty about how to follow up this action.

Cárdenas himself was more at ease. All the statements that he made and all the political activity he undertook showed him to be a very adept politician with a clear idea of what he wanted. Most surprising was the capacity he showed for getting everyone to bow to his positions.

Some of us thought that Cárdenas' reformism would show itself by rejecting mobilization. If he never accepted Salinas' victory, that did not mean that he would mobilize the masses to defend his own victory. But Cárdenas did mobilize hundreds of thousands of Mexicans, and not only in Mexico City. In many places in the provinces the mass mobilizations were impressive.

This should lead us to make a more accurate assessment of Cárdenas' political project. The most important thing is to understand his political strategy. An initial response has to lead us to get an overall view of Cárdenas' policy. It seems clear



amount of ink spilled by journalists advising Cárdenas that he should be satisfied with his victories and participate in a consensus government was significant. These statements indicate the open or veiled fears of the PRI about the dynamic that could open up if Cárdenas did not recognize Salinas' victory.

Salinas' supporters are despondent today

3. Two union bureaucrats who came out for Cárdenas.

Violent attacks against the PRT

ATTACKS suffered by our comrades in the PRT during the election campaign were not limited to verbal abuse — far from it. Physical attacks, rape and murder were the methods employed by PRI thugs in their attempts to silence the PRT and sow terror among its militants.

- June 9: Jean McGuill de Conde, a PRT representative on the Election Commission in Morelos state, was attacked and raped at her home.

- June 17: Melitón Hernandez Velasco, a PRT peasant activist and member of the executive committee of the peasants' union, UGOCF, in the state of Puebla, was assassinated.

- June 18: another PRT peasant activist was murdered by two members of the Antorcha campesina group, a group linked to the PRI.

- June 21: Fatlma Flores Palacios, PRT candidate for deputy in 1982, candidate in the 1985 federal elections and presently on the federal Election Commission, was also attacked and raped at her home.

- August 21: four young people aged from 16 to 18 years were found murdered by bullets fired at point blank range. The bodies of two of them showed traces of torture. Two of the four were respectively the son and nephew of a PRT militant, who had stood as a candidate for deputy in the previous July 6 elections. ★

that he is not looking for a negotiated solution to the present situation. We are convinced that his project was modified as his strength increased.

While it is true that in the first part of his campaign he envisaged the possibility of salvaging the PRI, he now has a radically different view. What he wants to do is to divide the PRI more. He intends to refashion the mechanisms of the relations between the masses and the government, between the masses and a party different from the PRI. On many occasions, we have seen that Cuauhtémoc is fully aware of the history of our country, and especially of the form of domination set up under his father.⁴

Cárdenas' project is to create a new Party of the Mexican Revolution, with the same vision as his father, but with a difference. While the general built up the party based on the state apparatus, his son wants to build the party in order to reorganize the state apparatus, starting from the firm conviction that it is impossible to carry accomplish this task with the sort of politicians the PRI has today.

Cárdenas' conviction on this is based on another assumption: unless the social pact that came out of the Mexican revolution is reformulated, a social and political crisis of historic dimensions may break out. From this standpoint, the policy conducted by Miguel de la Madrid and the one that Salinas

wants to pursue is the best way to shatter the system as a whole into a thousand pieces. Cárdenas is trying to avoid this eventuality, and in order to do that he has to take very radical positions against Salinas.

In order to achieve his objective, he is extending a hand to sectors breaking with the PRI and independent left sectors. He is trying to transform the FDN into a political instrument (not necessarily by transforming it into a party initially) to structure the mass support that he has gained. The next step, undoubtedly, will be to organize this support in accordance with the various social categories. It seems that he has called on the three most important leaders of the University Student Council (CEU)⁵ to work in all the country's universities toward forming a Cárdenas youth organization.

Building a movement from above

Obviously, he cannot call now openly for forming a new party, but that does not mean that he is not going to take the first steps in that direction. During the present struggle against the election fraud, he does not want to be accused of diverting energy. But then he has to prepare his forces, those that will be with him in this project.

Cárdenas has a vision of building this political instrument from above. In a meeting he had with the associations of the earthquake victims, he was faced with a flood of proposals about how to organize anti-fraud committees, with the traditional democratic discussion in the associations. Cárdenas responded by saying that all this discussion was pointless, that the fundamental question was to organize a single authority that would make the bulk of the decisions. Most of the associations accepted this point of view.

Our starting point is that Cárdenas' victory and the illusions it has created inevitably pose the possibility of moving forward in a process of reorganizing the mass movement. Of course, the workers in the cities and the countryside are not going to limit their democratic aspirations to the electoral arena. They want to democratize their social organizations, especially the unions. In accordance with what we have said before, forming a democratic front or a national democratic movement from above is not the same thing as something that comes out of the self-organization of the masses.

His project of restructuring the political mechanisms to help recompose the Mexican state and its relations with the masses can involve a certain corporatist attitude toward social sectors. It is clear that he is going to try to build such an organization, especially in view of the extent of the Cárdenas' movement's contradictions. In the same sectors, we find Cárdenas people who have nothing in common with each other.

In the trade-union movement the question is even more delicate because in al-

most every sector there are Cárdenas people both in the bureaucratic leaderships and in the democratic currents that are fighting them. With such a heterogeneous foundation, Cárdenas has to build a political organization from above, with an undisputed unity of command, in order to control the whole process and not let anyone get in his way.

In any case, Cárdenas is determined to fight Salinas. He knows that there is not much chance of keeping Salinas from taking office. But the same time, he is creating the conditions to prevent him from finishing his term. Precisely as a result of this project, his opposition to the current that Salinas represents is irreconcilable. Today this involves no end of dangers.

Gaining confidence in itself, the mass movement and its political expression will become more and more radical. This dynamic will inevitably combine demands for democratizing social organizations with those for a substantial improvement in living standards. The mass movement's need for democracy concerns not only its channels for expression but also encompasses the conduct of economic policy. The word "crisis" and a series of economic questions are beginning to lose their taboo character for the masses.

Struggles for wages and jobs will be central

It is inconceivable that the Mexican workers will confine themselves to fighting to democratize their unions, or more generally, their social organizations. At the same time, they will fight to improve their living conditions. In this regard, the wage and job struggle will be key, along with the struggle for democracy. And this is precisely where the limitations of Cárdenas' project appear. Its democratic struggle is restricted fundamentally to the fight for the presidency of the republic.

Significantly, the speech that Cárdenas gave at the July 16 rally clearly revealed his intentions. During it, he made not the slightest reference to the people's most urgent material demands. Nor did he talk about the wage and job fight or about better labor contracts.

Nor has the need for extending the fight for democracy to all areas of society received any attention. The speech did not mince words about Salinas de Gortari, who was called a usurper more than once. But there was not a word about the people's demands. This speech, written as a protest by a new president, was not intended for the people who massed on the Plaza de la Con-

4. General Lazaro Cárdenas was president of Mexico from 1934 to 1940. He was the one who worked to get the bulk of the workers' and peasants' organization to come into the party that he created at the time, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). On the nature of Cárdenism, see *Notebooks for Study and Research 6*, "Populism in Latin America".

5. The CEU led the student movement during the mobilizations that took place in the winter of 1986-87.

stitution, but rather for those who were not there — the bourgeoisie, the army, the Yankee embassy.

The PRT has formulated a political line based on the need for maintaining a pole of class independence in this election campaign. Some political opportunists, such as Marcos Rascon of *Punto Critico*⁶, try to judge this decision on the basis of the election results. Obviously, this is not our way of analyzing the correctness or incorrectness of a given policy.

The importance of a long-term vision

In recent months, our party and still more our political project have been constantly attacked. Moreover, it has to be stressed that this is only the beginning. We are going to experience much stronger attacks. The attacks and harassment that we have been subjected to spring from the fact that the independent existence of the PRT is a thorn in some people's side. They would like to see the entire Mexican left proud supporters of Cárdenas.

When our party decided to maintain its organizational independence and its independent line, it showed a great political firmness. And this takes on a still greater significance today when we realize that our party had been enjoying an ongoing series of political successes. What is more, we were a party where the ideology of engaging in big-time politics, breaking the sectarian schemas of the past, had become a kind of false consciousness. Some people left, and there is no doubt that we, who were the pioneers in the development of this false consciousness, bear a share of the responsibility.

In a few years, we had achieved so many successes that we lost the perspective involved in a vanguard project for society. We educated our members more in terms of short-term successes than in the long-term vision our socialist project represents. For this reason, we are right to be proud of our party, which has emerged triumphantly from this first great test without losing its revolutionary and socialist profile. It is true that in this trial, some comrades — many of them good comrades — have taken another road and broken with us. That was the price that had to be paid for maintaining a line of class independence.

Whether our decision was correct or not cannot be judged on the basis of our election results. Some comrades think that the decline in our vote reflects a drop in the level of consciousness of the masses. That is totally wrong. Those who argue that way do not seem to realize what our election results were before. The PRT did not get 30% or even 10% of the vote, and now, according to the government, our vote has fallen to 0.38%. The truth is that our party got about 3% of the vote in 1982 and about 2% in 1985, and in reality in these last elections we got about 1.5%. This is what has

led some commentators to say that socialism is a minority current in Mexican society. But that is obvious. It was not only the case in 1988, but for many decades if not always.

These elections have not shown a decline in the level of consciousness of the masses. To the contrary, the defeat that the working people in the towns and countryside inflicted on the PRI government reflects a higher level of consciousness. It is true that this consciousness expresses itself in contradictory ways, but that could not be otherwise. Our tasks cannot be to adapt to the circumstances but to fight to raise this consciousness to a higher level.

Our policy has demonstrated a considerable coherence in this situation. Those who feared that we would be pushed to the political sidelines or even be rejected because we did not call for a vote for Cárdenas have to recognize now that this has not been the case. The masses have understood our position, even if for the moment they are not entirely in accord with us.

The socialist project, the class independence that our party represents, have to be pursued even more today. In crisis situations, revolutionists always face more sharply the problem of being a minority. But this cannot obscure the meaning of a strategic project. It is not the same thing to be a minority in a period of social calm and at a time when we see the masses gaining confidence in themselves and mobilizing in an impressive way. This is the truth that we cannot fail see.

We have maintained our independent socialist project, not out of any narcissistic need for self-affirmation. We have maintained it, and will maintain it because it is necessary for the mass movement of our country, no more and no less. In the reformist avalanche that we are experiencing, the masses need a socialist reference point, and they are seeing it as a point of view that is necessary for understanding what is going on in our country.

Reorganizing the mass movement

As we said earlier, what is fundamental today for our party's perspectives cannot be perceived in terms of the present intentions of the leadership of the mass movement, but rather in terms of the dynamic that this movement is opening up. Our objective must not be to wait until a betrayal, or until the masses shed their illusions, in order to intervene. Our task is not to shatter the illusions of the masses but to channel these hopes toward other objectives. We have to insert ourselves into the dynamic of the masses today and participate with them not in something limited to elections, but rather in a process that offers the possibility of reorganizing the mass movement.

In the first place, we have to participate actively in building committees against the election fraud.

In the broader political arena we have to understand that, without having an orientation of outflanking the leadership, we have to throw ourselves entirely into the democratic struggle. Cárdenas has the view that in his fight to overturn Salinas' victory it might be possible to get the deputies to walk out of parliament. In view of this, we have to pose the need, once the Electoral College has ruled on the validity of Salinas' victory, for the congress to declare itself sovereign, to reject the president's authority and call new elections.

In the Electoral College, in which we have to participate, it will be necessary to fight first against a recognition of Salinas as president of the republic. But then we have to pursue a policy that will advance the crisis of the institutions. By calling on the Congress to act in a sovereign way, we will oblige the Cárdenas deputies to demonstrate whether they are really ready to defend the victory that Cárdenas won in the elections.

PRT must continue fight for legal registration

At the same time, we should not act as if we were no longer a legally registered party. It is clear that the PRT was also a victim of election fraud. We have to go into the Electoral College to fight for our legal registration, and at the same time to campaign politically. Obviously, in this defensive fight there many limitations because of the small number of our party's representatives at the polls. Nonetheless, it is necessary to gather together all the evidence we have, together with other parties, in order to be able to compare these results with those announced by the government.

Once again, the government is trying to tame our party, thinking that we will give up our political profile in exchange for a handful of votes.⁷ Once things were clear for the authorities and for the slanderers on the left who were eager to accuse the PRT of lending itself to election fraud, they did not push the point any further. And, of course, they decided to take revenge by giving us a lower overall score in order to minimize our place in society.

The PRT came through this test. But that is no reason to rest on our laurels. If the PRT loses its registration, it will not be because of its electoral score but because of the government's decision to victimize us for our political positions. Therefore, our fight for our registration is not over, and in all the general mobilizations against the fraud, we must press to ensure that the defense of the PRT's registration be included in the demands. ★

6. An independent left group that has become a component of the FDN.

7. In some places, the PRT was credited with more votes than it actually got as a maneuver against Cárdenas. In those cases, the PRT refused to recognize the excess votes the authorities accorded to it.

Why the Central America Movement Must Focus on Central America

by Samuel Adams

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, no objective was more important to his administration than overthrowing the revolutionary governments of Nicaragua and Grenada, while preserving in power the puppet regimes of the other Central American countries. Reagan, of course, was pursuing the bipartisan policies of previous administrations dating from the turn of the century. From Franklin Roosevelt's classic statement that "Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch," to John Kennedy's Bay of Pigs invasion, Lyndon Johnson's sending troops into the Dominican Republic, Jimmy Carter's initiating the war against Nicaragua and the popular liberation movement in El Salvador, and all the other Democratic and Republican administrations in between, U.S. policies in Central America and the Caribbean have remained consistent. They are based on protecting U.S. investments and spheres of influence through propping up "friendly" governments and overthrowing unfriendly ones.

The U.S. government has spent billions of dollars in implementing its Central America policies. It works nonstop to erode the resistance of the people of the U.S. to the war it wages against revolutionary Nicaragua in the hopes it can escalate that war and topple the Sandinistas.

Central America is a focal point in the global struggle of oppressed peoples to break free of the imperialist system. *Nicaragua poses the single sharpest challenge to U.S. imperialism today because if it is able to consolidate its revolution, it will inspire others in Latin America and throughout the world to take a similar course.* If the Yankee superpower cannot control its empire in its own backyard, how will it continue its domination of subject peoples hundreds or even thousands of miles away?

Yet in spite of what is so clearly at stake here, sections of the U.S. left continue to resist establishing an independent and unified anti-intervention movement focused squarely on Central America. Curiously, some radical groups run banner headlines in their publications calling for mass mobilizations to defend the Nicaraguan revolution against U.S. war policies. Yet when it comes to planning anti-intervention demonstrations, they oppose focusing the demands on Central America. They want disarmament, the Middle East, jobs and justice, and an assortment of other issues addressed as well.

Arguments of the Multi-Issue Proponents

Some activists distinguish today's anti-intervention movement from the Vietnam antiwar struggle on the ground that

U.S. troops are not fighting and dying in Central America. These activists have concluded that it is impossible to build a mass anti-intervention movement around Central America on the same scale as was done during Vietnam.

That may be true, at least for the present. But it does not negate the need today to build a movement as large as possible to counter U.S. aggression in Central America and permit the peoples there to settle their own destiny.

Of course the claim is made that the movement can be broadened and acquire a more massive character by adding demands around other issues. But the movement's experiences prove that while this may be the case at times—for example when Central America and anti-apartheid demands were joined in the April 1987 demonstration—the more common experience has been that adding issues diminishes the movement's impact and its ability to affect and deter U.S. intervention in Central America.

The best example of this was in the fall of 1986 when demonstrations were held in a number of cities around Central America demands and a multitude of other issues, such as anti-apartheid, disarmament, the Middle East, racism, sexism, gay rights, and a host of others. With the exception of Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., where the demands were limited to Central America (or, in the case of Washington, Central America and South Africa), the turnouts at those actions were small and ineffectual.

Needed: A 'Multi-Issue' Labor Party

Revolutionary socialists, and progressive thinkers generally, do not need to be convinced of the need to link all issues affecting workers and the oppressed in a single comprehensive program that reflects their common needs. The question is what kind of organizational vehicle is most effective for fighting for that kind of program. We say this is uniquely the role of a political party and that establishing such a party, based on the unions, is sorely needed and long overdue.

While the effort to establish such a labor party continues, there are any number of progressive social movements that independently seek to address this society's myriad social evils. Where such movements have *defined, specific, and limited* agendas, they have the greatest capability of conducting united meaningful activity. Where they attempt to substitute themselves for a political party on the basis of a multi-issue program that seeks to take up all the issues, they are generally ineffective.

Divisions in Today's Central America Movement Over the Multi-Issue Question

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and some key independent activists led the fight during Vietnam to keep the antiwar movement's focus firmly fixed on its immediate withdrawal demand. Here is how Fred Halstead explained the party's position in his book *Out Now!*:

The movement was a united front of a special type, not between mass organizations of the working class for a concrete set of demands, but between diverse and multiclass elements whose sole bond of unity was to oppose the war. It had to confine itself to implementing actions around that central purpose in order to hold together. It could not have become a political party, as some wished, that could develop a program or set about to solve the fundamental problems of American society, not to mention bidding for state power. All that was beyond its capacities because of its class composition and heterogeneous character. The components of the movement, let alone the average American, were not ready to take unified action on a host of other questions, no matter how important. Despite repeated attempts along that line, only the specifically antiwar protests involved masses of [great] size (pages 725- 726).

That was the SWP speaking during the Vietnam war. But the party has abandoned the clear single-issue strategy of that period and instead embraced a multi-issue line for today's anti-intervention movement. It is joined in this position by almost all other left political parties and currents active in the movement. The major anti-intervention organizations are, of course, influenced by the multi-issue bent of the organized left tendencies. Despite this, the disposition of the overwhelming majority of those active in the Central America movement is to concentrate on Central America. This has been demonstrated by their actions in beating back challenges to this perspective at critical points along the way.

There are noteworthy examples of where this occurred. One was at the convention of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) in May 1985, attended by 500 delegates. When a proposal was made to change the organization's focus away from El Salvador so that it would have become a peace and justice formation, the proposal was decisively defeated.

A second example involved the organizing of the April 25, 1987, demonstration around Central America and Southern Africa demands. The leadership of the sponsoring coalition correctly rejected pressures from multi-issue backers to add other demands.

In addition, a number of local coalitions, such as those in Los Angeles and Cleveland, have repeatedly resisted proposals for multi-issue actions, choosing instead to build demonstrations limited to Central America themes.

The National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, the anti-intervention labor committees around the country, the solidarity networks, the religious component of the Central America movement, and those activists engaged in material aid cam-

paigns — with relatively few exceptions — center their efforts on the Central America region. When the names of prominent anti-intervention organizations and leaders are listed as sponsoring or endorsing the *actions* of other social movements, it is basically because they want to express their solidarity and maintain harmonious intermovement relations, not because they are anxious to spin off in a number of additional directions.

There are sound programmatic, strategic, and tactical considerations which today militate against adding demands to the Central America movement's agenda. These can most clearly be shown by considering the problems which arise over three slogans frequently proposed for anti-intervention demonstrations.

● 1. "For Complete Nuclear Disarmament"

While the Central America and nuclear disarmament movements can and should relate to one another — through organizing contingents to participate in each other's demonstrations, inviting speakers from one movement to the other's rallies, etc. — there are fundamental divergencies in their programs and orientation which should preclude fusing the two movements into one, or the anti-intervention movement's adopting disarmament demands for its actions.

In the first place, the U.S. anti-intervention movement directs its demands towards one government: its own. The nuclear disarmament movement, with its present program and leadership, addresses its official demands to all governments (the official four demands for the June 11 disarmament demonstration in New York did not even mention the United States government by name). This diverts attention from Washington's imperialist role and dilutes the emphasis anti-intervention activists want placed on Central America.

Second, the anti-intervention movement calls for *specific actions* by the U.S. government: end contra aid, stop funding repressive regimes in Central America, etc. The nuclear disarmament movement today calls for *negotiations* between governments — particularly the U.S. and the Soviet Union — to achieve nuclear arms agreements. It refrains from demanding that the U.S. government act unilaterally to disarm.

Third, the anti-intervention movement defines its conflict in *class* terms. It clearly identifies U.S. corporations and banks as the directing force and beneficiaries of Washington's war against the workers and peasants of Central America. The leadership of the nuclear disarmament movement, on the other hand, obscures the class nature of the arms race. They make general appeals to humanity, the world, and the United Nations to come up with rational solutions for avoiding catastrophic nuclear war. Their approach is peaceful coexistence, not class struggle.

Fourth, the anti-intervention movement seeks to forge a united front around specific and immediate goals which can be achieved before a socialist revolution. The goals of the nuclear disarmament movement, however, cannot be attained under capitalism. Today's leaders of that movement evade this basic truth and propagate the irrational notion that the capitalist rulers of the U.S. can be persuaded to disarm — not only their nuclear but their conventional weapons as well — if only enough people will speak out and demonstrate.

In a letter to the *Bulletin IDOM* (#54 July/August 1988), Dan Rosenshine presents an argument which is typical of the thinking of many radicals today. He agrees that only a socialist transformation will eliminate nuclear weapons. But he argues that the same can be said for ending war, racism, sexism, and economic exploitation. He claims that "this does not prevent revolutionary Marxists from endorsing and building mass actions against these evils." So why not endorse disarmament demands and disarmament demonstrations like June 11?

The fact is Marxists do *not* believe that mass demonstrations to end evils in general are particularly effective. Rather, they try to build demonstrations against *specific wars and interventions* (Vietnam, Nicaragua, etc.); *particular* expressions of sexism (denial of abortion rights, exclusion of the ERA from the Constitution, denial of pay equity, etc.); and *particular* forms of economic exploitation (wage and benefit takebacks, plant shutdowns, strikebreaking, etc.).

It is true that the appropriateness of a demand does not depend on whether it is winnable immediately or even in the long run. The test is whether it can mobilize the working class and its allies in the most massive way possible, bringing them into direct opposition to their capitalist rulers and deepening their political consciousness in the process. Under certain circumstances the demand for nuclear disarmament could become an effective *transitional* demand, mobilizing masses of people *against* a destructive capitalist system. (The British Labor Party, for example, calls for unconditional unilateral nuclear disarmament as part of a program for a working class government in their country.)

Utopian demands calling for worldwide nuclear disarmament are different, however. It is a disservice to the workers' cause to suggest that the U.S. imperialist government is any more capable of disarming than it is able to eliminate depressions. As in struggles against unemployment, revolutionary socialists who want to disarm their government fight for specific demands which can advance working class consciousness and put pressure on the capitalists and their politicians.

Many proponents of disarmament, of course, disagree with this analysis. They believe nuclear disarmament can occur under capitalism. They point to the INF Treaty as a watershed agreement which can lead to the end of nuclear arms (by the year 2000). But the U.S. agreed to the very limited cuts in nuclear weapons (only about 3 percent of its stockpile) in the INF because it fits in with the Pentagon's current strategy of concentrating U.S. military might to prevent revolutions in third world and so-called underdeveloped countries (see my article "Disarmament and Socialist Revolution," *Bulletin IDOM* #52, May 1988).

Meanwhile, even after the INF Treaty goes into effect, the U.S. will have 4,000 nuclear warheads in Europe. It is racing ahead with more Trident II, MX missiles, and B1 bombers. It is developing the Midgetman Missile and nearing deployment of the Stealth bomber. Reagan is still pursuing the star wars madness and Congress recently voted \$4.1 billion to fund it. Most of these weapons bring the U.S. closer to the goal of being able to launch a preemptive first strike against the Soviet Union.

In summary, then, the problems with adding demands like "For Complete Nuclear Disarmament" to the Central America movement's agenda are that such demands do not exclusively target the U.S. government and instead divert attention from anti-intervention demands; they are couched in general, abstract, classless terms; they call for negotiations by many nations instead of action by our government; and they are utopian.

Moreover, there is the basic problem of adding demands on issues which could precipitate disagreement when there is now agreement on a program which unites the Central America movement: against U.S. intervention and respect for the sovereign rights of people fighting for their national liberation.

These are reasons enough for the anti-intervention movement not to add disarmament demands. But there is a further underlying reality about the campaign for disarmament which warrants the closest scrutiny by Central America activists. It involves the conscious attempt by some forces to subordinate anti-intervention demands to what they consider the higher objective of promoting the "peaceful coexistence" foreign policy of the USSR (i.e., the attempt to forge arms and trade agreements with imperialist nations *at the expense of* revolutionary struggles throughout the world).

Disarmament and 'Regional Conflicts'

Negotiations for arms agreements between the U.S. and the Soviet Union take place within the overall framework of the "super-powers" relationship. A key facet of this relationship has to do with so-called regional conflicts, including the one in Nicaragua.

Plainly put, Washington wants Moscow to accept U.S. hegemony of Central America. It wants the Soviet Union to back off from even the limited support it provides the Sandinista government. In return the U.S. will be more disposed to agree to restrain its nuclear buildup.

The leadership of the Soviet Union urgently wants arms control agreements with the U.S. The period 1977-1982 marked the worst economic performance in the USSR since World War II. According to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, "The years of stagnation put the country on the brink of an economic crisis." (Document submitted to the party's June 1988 national conference.) Resources are urgently needed to modernize aging Soviet industrial plants and alleviate the shortage of consumer goods, but they are in short supply because of their allocation for military defense. Treaties with the U.S. to limit arms can help relieve this crushing burden. Gorbachev said in February 1987: "Before my people, before you and before the whole world, I state with full responsibility that our international policy is more than ever determined by domestic policy, by our interest in concentrating on constructive endeavors to improve our country."

To what extent is Gorbachev prepared to abandon Nicaragua in the interests of detente with the U.S.? The government of the Soviet Union, of course, has a long history of abandoning liberation struggles in other countries in order to secure agreements with capitalist nations. (See in particular Ernest Mandel's article "In Defense of the Fourth

International—Against the Split of the Australian Socialist Workers Party,” *International Viewpoint*, February 24, 1986.) This began in the late 1920s, when Lenin’s program of revolutionary internationalism was supplanted by Stalin’s theory of “socialism in one country.” The aim of forging agreements with capitalism—not active support for revolutionary struggles around the world—determines Soviet foreign policy. It is no accident that during the very period that the INF Treaty was being negotiated, the Soviet Union was severely reducing its oil allotment to embattled Nicaragua.

The question comes up: What does all of this have to do with whether the anti-intervention movement should adopt disarmament demands? After all, haven’t the major disarmament groups like SANE/Freeze and the Mobilization for Survival also taken anti-intervention positions? Didn’t the thousands of people who participated in the June 11 action genuinely support *both* the disarmament and anti-intervention causes?

The question here is certainly not the sincerity of those who demonstrate and the tens of millions of others who devoutly support the idea of a nuclear-free world. *The issue rather is the orientation of sectors of the leadership of the disarmament movement, especially the Communist Party, USA (CP), and its milieu, which has historically demonstrated that it is capable of sacrificing revolutionary struggles, like those in Central America, to the interests of “good relations,” “peaceful coexistence,” and arms agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union.*

The CP is occasionally quite brazen in playing down the Soviet Union’s responsibility to assist anti-imperialist governments and movements. Consider this extraordinary statement by top CP leader Jim West:

The Soviet Union has never taken upon itself the responsibility—objective or otherwise—of undermining imperialism (*Political Affairs*, March 1988).

Of course, the statement is patently false. After the Russian Revolution the Soviet Union, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, provided substantial aid to foreign workers’ parties. This was done precisely for the purpose of supporting revolutions “undermining imperialism.” More recently, the aid given by Moscow to revolutionary Cuba, with whatever limitations, certainly contradicts West’s statement. But West and the CP care nothing about such facts. Their statement is their way of kissing off workers’ revolutions today when such revolutions get in the way of the narrow nationalist objectives of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Note also that the CP’s publication *People’s Daily World* suppressed news of the cutback of vitally needed Soviet aid to Nicaragua. When the Sandinistas felt compelled to make concessions to U.S. imperialism—to some extent because of the Soviet Union’s refusal to provide adequate aid (and at a time when Moscow was being far more generous to bourgeois governments in the third world)—the CP paper called these concessions “peace moves.” Since the concessions involved freeing hundreds of counterrevolutionaries, a majority of whom according to Sandinista leader Borge joined the violent resistance, they were hardly “peace moves.”

Some endorsers of the June 11 demonstrations claimed those demonstrations were multi-issue. They were not. They were disarmament actions with an anti-intervention demand thrown in. (That demand—“A firm policy in support of national self-determination and nonintervention between nation states”—could be applied to condemn Cuban troops in Angola. Evenhanded formulations of that type must be rejected and the emphasis placed where it belongs: on U.S. intervention in Central America. One had to read well into the small print of the Call before finding any reference to Central America.) The anti-intervention contingent correctly participated in the June 11 actions with its own signs and banners. But Central America forces were unable to overcome the exclusive focus of the media on the disarmament theme. CBS News, the *New York Times*, and Pacifica Radio’s WBAI Folio all saw June 11 as an action against nuclear weapons, with nothing said about Central America. By contrast, the May 1981 and April 1987 mobilizations resulted in major news stories in the U.S. and around the world about mass protests against U.S. policies in Central America.

The organizers of June 11 extended invitations to Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis and Jesse Jackson to address the rally. Neither accepted. Dukakis was busy choosing Lloyd Bentsen, the strident contra aid supporter, for his running mate. Jackson is loyally supporting the ticket.

Finally, it is hardly surprising that key leaders of the disarmament movement are among the most vocal opponents of an independent anti-intervention coalition. Coordinators of the Mobilization for Survival, for example, condemn the concept because they say it fails “to link all the issues.” The CP denounces the idea as well. It wants anti-intervention demands incorporated into a more generalized “peace and justice” movement which would have disarmament and peaceful coexistence as its central themes. In addition, the party believes it could more effectively manage and direct that kind of a movement than it could an independent anti-intervention formation with a Central America focus. For the Central America movement to pursue *its* anti-intervention priorities, it will have to maintain its separate identity and independence from the disarmament movement. That means maintaining its focus on Central America demands.

● 2. “Self-Determination for the Palestinians—End All Aid to Israel”

Israel’s subjugation of the Palestinians and particularly the brutal repression it unleashed against them in the “occupied territories” has led many activists to urge that Middle East and Central America demands be joined.

Israel is funded to the tune of \$5 billion a year by the U.S. government. It has been an active supplier of the contras. There is a direct and easily demonstrated connection between the struggle of the Palestinians against Zionist oppression and the struggle of the peoples of Central America against U.S. imperialist control.

A problem arises, however, if a demand like “Self-Determination for the Palestinians—End All Aid to Israel” is made part of the call for a Central America demonstration. Apart from the concern expressed above that adding *any* demands dilutes the focus, it would run counter to the

Central America movement's attempt to build unity among all anti-intervention forces. Unfortunately, there are sections of the anti-intervention movement, particularly labor officials, who are not prepared to march — or, what is more important, to mobilize their membership to march — to cut off U.S. funding for Israel. That is the reality of the situation which Central America activists cannot afford to ignore, even though others — whether sincere independents or ultraleft sect groups — choose to do so.

The best approach to this problem is to actively build support in the anti-intervention movement (including among trade unionists) for Palestinian protest demonstrations. At the same time Palestinians and their supporters should be urged to participate in Central America actions with their own signs and banners. Moreover, in light of the atrocities the Israelis have committed over the past several months against the Palestinians, it should be easier than it was previously to win agreement even in broad Central America coalitions to have a Palestinian speaker at such demonstrations to explain links between the Central American and Palestinian situations.

● 3. "Jobs and Justice"

"Everyone in the anti-intervention movement supports the call for jobs and justice. So no one can claim that the issue is divisive. A demand like 'Money for Jobs and Social Needs, Not War' will relate the immediate needs of workers and the poor to a foreign policy issue which is still remote to them. Including such a demand will make it easier to reach out to unions and win their endorsement and participation."

At first glance this line of thinking appears plausible and persuasive. But it is based on an unproven premise: that adding a "Jobs and Justice" demand to a Central America demonstration will bring out workers and the poor, who would not otherwise have participated. "Jobs not War" has been a useful educational and agitational slogan to be raised within the context of struggles focusing on the fight for jobs, or the fight against war. But it has not proven to be necessary as a *central* slogan for mobilizing masses of workers against war and injustice.

The most massive outpouring of trade unionists in demonstrations since Solidarity Day, 1981, was in the anti-apartheid action in New York City on June 14, 1986, and at the April 1987, Washington, D.C., mobilization described above. Both demonstrations had foreign policy demands. Neither had a separate "Jobs and Justice" demand, though that theme was, of course, linked to the demonstrations' unifying demands through speakers and banners.

Of course, there have been numerous demonstrations organized over this same time span which did combine foreign and domestic demands (like "Jobs and Justice") without galvanizing a turnout of trade unionists, unemployed workers, welfare recipients, etc.

On the other hand, demonstrations built specifically around "Jobs with Justice" demands, organized by the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO over the past couple of years, have succeeded in mobilizing thousands of workers.

We are not drawing a rigid conclusion here opposing demonstrations uniting foreign and domestic demands on a co-equal basis. We recognize this as a question of strategy

and tactics, not principle. Indeed, if unions offered to endorse and to mobilize their members to participate in an anti-intervention demonstration on condition that a "Jobs and Justice" demand be added, the offer should be grabbed without hesitation. (Of course, the demand would have to be concretized in support of such measures as a shorter workweek with no loss in pay and a massive public works program.) But we are unaware of this happening anywhere.

The challenge the anti-intervention movement must take up is how to more consciously and creatively relate workers' bread-and-butter concerns to Central America demands. Speaking at union meetings, inviting union officials to speak at demonstrations, and distributing educational materials can be helpful in this regard. Each constituency of the anti-intervention movement builds actions in its own way, highlighting the links between the overall demands and the groups' most immediate concerns. Trade unionists committed to the anti-intervention cause have demonstrated skill in doing this without feeling compelled to add demands to the demonstration's central themes.

But opening the floor for adding *any additional demands* to a Central America action can create severe problems. Suppose a Central America coalition were to decide to add a "Jobs and Justice" demand. Wouldn't activists have the democratic right to propose adding other demands as well? Where would it end? There are so many burning issues in this crisis-wracked society that once a social movement's agenda becomes open-ended, it risks lapsing into a catch-all for all injustice and obscuring what brought its activist core together in the first place.

How to Fight the Bipartisan Interventionist Policies

While some Central America activists debate whether the movement should open its agenda to other issues, the U.S. government continues concentrating on destabilizing the Nicaraguan revolution and supporting repressive regimes in the region. Both the Democratic and Republican parties have made it clear that regardless of who wins the election in November, U.S. intervention in Central America will remain the government's policy. (For example, Dukakis has called for continued U.S. military support for the Salvadoran government.) On the question of this *basic* policy, there is no "lesser evil" between these capitalist parties.

For this reason, the anti-intervention movement must overcome the lull brought about by the November elections, illusions regarding the Arias plan, premature declarations that the contra war is over, etc. New challenges will confront the movement and further mobilizations will have to be organized. Regardless of the course of events in Nicaragua, a showdown between the contending class forces in El Salvador approaches. Given the large U.S. corporate investments in that country, the threat of direct intervention by Washington grows. The same is true in Honduras and Guatemala, where popular insurgencies continue to gather strength.

The objective need today and the experiences of the Central America movement over the past several years underscore the fact that the most effective way to fight U.S. in-

Continued on page 16

Withdraw the Troops

Proclamation by the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of America

The following is reprinted from the April 1911 issue (Vol. XI, No. 10) of the International Socialist Review.

On the 7th day of March the startling news was flashed from one end of the country to the other that President Taft had ordered twenty thousand troops, one fourth of the regular army of the country, to be mobilized and hurried to the Mexican border. At the same time several American warships were ordered to proceed at full speed to ports on both coasts of Mexico.

The order was issued immediately after the adjournment of Congress. It was sudden and unexpected, and caused deep apprehension among the masses of the American people.

What is the object of this formidable military display? What is the meaning of this hurried movement of troops toward a friendly neighboring country?

The earlier explanation that the extraordinary measure was intended as a mere war game was so clumsy and palpably insincere that it was speedily abandoned, and the semi-official explanation now vouchsafed to the people is that our army and navy are to prevent the smuggling of arms to the Mexican insurrectionists and, in case of emergency, to protect the endangered American interests. The explanation is such as to cause every peace and liberty loving American to hang his head with shame.

The people of our sister state of Mexico are in open and active revolt against their government. During his uninterrupted rule of thirty-six years Porfirio Diaz, the nominal president of Mexico, has been the evil genius of his country. He has reduced the republic to a despotism more barbarous than Russia, and has constituted himself the absolute autocrat of his people. He has ruthlessly destroyed the freedom of suffrage, speech, press, and assembly, and has exiled, imprisoned, and assassinated all patriots who strove to restore the liberties of the people. He has ravaged the country, plundered its resources, and enslaved millions of its inhabitants. Since 1875, when Diaz became military dictator of Mexico, there has not been a single free and honest election in the country.

Porfirio Diaz has been able to maintain his infamous rule over fifteen million outraged subjects by aid of his soldiery, police and camarilla, and largely also through the powerful support of the American capitalist interests. Mexico, with its vast deposits of precious metals and other natural wealth, Mexico with its large supply of cheap and uncomplaining slave labor, Mexico with the arbitrary and lawless reign of the Dollar, has become the paradise of American capitalists. It has been invaded by our Smelter Trust and Oil Trust, our Sugar Trust, Rubber Trust, and Cordage Trust. The Wells-Fargo Express Company has acquired a monopoly of the Mexican express business, and the railroads, land, and mines

of the country are largely in the hands of American capitalists. The Rockefellers, Guggenheims, and J. Pierpont Morgan have vast holdings in Mexico; Henry W. Taft, brother of the president of the United States, is general counsel for the National Railways of Mexico, and hundreds of other American trust magnates are heavily interested in Mexican enterprises. The total amount of "American" holdings in Mexico is variously estimated at between a billion and a billion and a half dollars.

These American "investors" have always been the staunchest allies of Porfirio Diaz, his partners in pillage and crime, his confederates in the enslavement of the Mexican people.

A reign of iniquity and violence such as was maintained by Diaz and his Wall Street partners no nation, and be it ever so patient and meek, could endure for any length of time. The people of Mexico have for years been in a state of smothered and smouldering revolt. Their limit of patience was reached after the last presidential election, when Francisco I. Madero, the man who had the courage to oppose his candidacy to that of Diaz, was cast into jail for "insulting the President," the citizens were prevented from voting by violence, and the "election" of Diaz for the eighth term was brazenly proclaimed by his henchmen. Then the people of Mexico rebelled. In all parts of the country the citizens rose in arms, determined to reconquer their liberty or to die, even as our forefathers had done over a century ago under slighter provocation. The insurrection grew in strength and extension day by day; the Mexican people were solidly with the rebels, the Mexican army was wavering in its allegiance to the despot in the presidential chair; even the censored press dispatches reported repeated victories of the rebel forces—the throne of Diaz was tottering, freedom beckoned the people of Mexico after a generation of servitude. Then the president of the United States dispatched a large force of troops to the Mexican border.

The mission of the American army at the Mexican border and the American warships at the Mexican coasts is to save the reign of Diaz and to quell the rising of the Mexican people.

Against this unspeakable outrage the Socialist Party of the United States, representing over six hundred thousand American citizens and voters, lodges its public and emphatic protest.

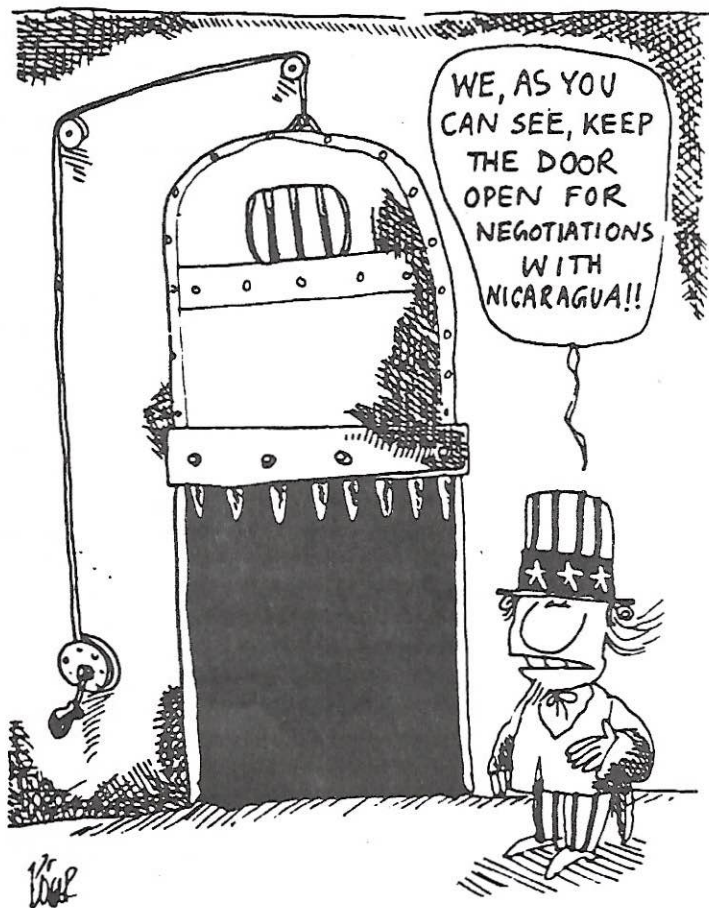
In the name of America's revolutionary past and her best traditions of the present, we protest against the attempt to degrade our country by reducing it to the position of a cosack of a foreign tyrant.

In the name of liberty and progress we protest against the use of the army of our republic to suppress and enslave the people of a sister republic fighting for their freedom and manhood.

In the name of the workers of the United States we protest against the use of the men and money of this country for the protection of so-called "American" interests in Mexico. We assert that neither the government nor the people of the United States have any property interests in Mexico; that the speculative Mexican ventures of a ring of American in-

dustrial freebooters give us no warrant to interfere with the political destinies of the country, which they have invaded upon their individual responsibility.

And we call upon all local organizations of the Socialist Party and all labor unions and other bodies of progressive citizens to hold public meetings and demonstrations of protest against the latest executive crime. Let the voice of the people resound from one end of the country to the other in loud and unmistakable tone: "WITHDRAW THE TROOPS FROM THE MEXICAN BORDER!" ●



Central America (Continued from page 14)

interventionist policies is to form an independent national coalition with a program clearly focused on Central America and in support of the right of the peoples there to self-determination. Such a coalition would be the best vehicle to call and coordinate the nationwide demonstrations which will be needed more than ever.

Although there will be periods when the actions organized by the anti-intervention movement may be of modest size, they must be organized nonetheless. Mobilizations in the streets remain the movement's most visible and effective

channel for demonstrating opposition to U.S. policies in Central America. Such mobilizations are also the best way to reach out and win new people, who can add to the movement's organizing core. The Vietnam experience proved that by consistently and persistently taking to the streets, the anti-intervention movement can grow and involve increasingly larger numbers of people. This will be a critical factor in determining whether the revolutionary wave spreading through Central America will continue to gather momentum or whether it will be beaten back by uncurbed U.S. imperialism. ●

U.S. Radicals and the Trade Union Movement

by Dave Riehle

The following is the text of the trade union report approved on September 4, 1988, by the National Organizing Committee of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

American radicalism's view of the long period of relative quiescence in the U.S. working class after the postwar 1945-46 strike wave was that once the employers challenged the unions directly, and once the workers' living standards began to decline, the trade union struggle would resume more or less at the level where it had left off. This was assumed because the unions remained big and wealthy, and because union consciousness among organized workers was strong.

This view was expressed in, among other ways, the decision of the Socialist Workers Party to colonize basic industry in the middle to late 1970s in response to the recession of 1974-75 and the accompanying cutbacks in social service and entitlements.

The radical movement was made up predominantly not of young people with a background in the organized labor movement, or even of unemployed youth with no prospects for employment, but of students and ex-students with white-collar or professional jobs. Their objective, material position in society was not the same as the industrial working class, and they did not respond to the recessionary trends and the emerging antilabor offensive in the same way.

The workers did respond to these social developments, as they respond to all changes in society. But they did not respond in the way that the radicals thought they should or would. Workers were disturbed and angered by what was happening to them. But the labor struggle did not resume on schedule where it had left off in 1946.

This turned out to have a profoundly demoralizing and disorienting effect on the radical movement. The radicals measured the response to antilabor trends by the workers in two ways — one, the response by workers to their propaganda, and two, the hoped-for appearance of massive labor struggles, 1930s style. Neither one developed to any appreciable degree so, after giving the workers the chance to prove themselves for a year or two, they concluded that nothing had happened.

The Socialist Workers Party

The petty bourgeois solipsism inherent in the conception that, since nobody is responding to your propaganda, nothing is happening has been given full expression over the past decade by SWP leaders.

The Barnes leadership of the SWP told the party in the late seventies that the workers were going to radicalize, were *already* radicalized, as a result of the recession of 1974-75, and

that they were ready to join the SWP. The Barnes leadership is not in the habit of checking its ex cathedra pronouncements against life as it has actually unfolded, but it has become obvious that the recession of the mid-seventies and even the deeper recession of 1981-82 were not enough to lash the workers into doing their duty. So they have now upped the ante. No mere recession this time, but a full scale depression — as predicted in their "Action Program" [see *Bulletin IDOM* No. 55] — will now unfold. As a party member in Minneapolis recently expressed it in a public meeting, "The workers have to learn their lesson the hard way."

The current SWP Draft Political Resolution says: "Hundreds of millions will be thrown out of work, massive unemployment will deepen, waves of ruination will sweep small business, breakdown of roads, bridges and mass transportation, homelessness, malnutrition and outright starvation, disease, infant mortality, this is the future whose imminent arrival was announced by the October 1987 Stock Market crash." "There is no way," the resolution says, "for the masses of working people to prepare for it."

Of course the SWP leaders are not the only ones to whom this idea has occurred. There is a popular book out called *1990*, which says the depression will arrive in that year. However, the authors, unlike the SWP leaders, do offer some ways that the masses of working people can prepare — although they revolve around IRAs and stockpiles of canned goods.

But what is this all about? There is no doubt that capitalism is gestating new convulsions, and, in fact, millions of people in the world already suffer under the conditions depicted in the list of "will be's" in the Draft Political Resolution.

But working people generally encountered by the SWP do not live under those conditions. The party leaders, with the crudest mechanistic Marxism, promise that this prophecy will be fulfilled and the workers will learn their lesson the hard way, and finally listen to them. The resolution says, "It will make a vanguard of them more ready to emulate those who take considered and determined action and, on the basis of new experiences, to listen with decreasing prejudice to political answers they previously discounted."

"Only these conditions," the resolution says, "can lead to revolutionary situations that pose the struggle for power." "Only when" this happens, as the SWP leaders have said repeatedly, can anything be done in the unions. This means that until that time, nothing but propaganda is on the order of the day.

James Warren reported to the SWP convention in July that "Today, union struggles are limited and isolated. While such struggles can't transform the objective situation, they can transform the individual workers involved and help them make the leap from being individual fighters to becoming class struggle fighters."

In other words, don't participate in the unions until the depression arrives, but recruit new members on the basis of your propaganda. Then, *after* the class battles begin, the SWP will come down from the mount and accept the leadership of the working class.

Trotsky once said that "leaders who want to begin only when everything is ready are not needed by the working class." This idea that nothing can be done suffuses the entire radical movement. I only cite the SWP because of our special relationship to it.

The simple truth is, radical organizations can't do much in the labor movement because they're too small -- not because it is excluded by objective circumstances. This is the most favorable atmosphere for revolutionary socialists in the labor movement since the postwar strike wave. But how can you get big unless you do something? Why should these "fighters" join an organization that tells them nothing can be done? Marx once caricatured this petty bourgeois conception that propaganda alone is sufficient this way: "In their everyday lives workers should be the most humble servants of the state, while protesting energetically in their own homes against it and showing it profound theoretical disdain by acquiring and reading treatises on the abolition of the state."

Reasons for Discouragement of Radicals

Why does this pessimism about the trade unions, and underlying that about the working class, permeate the radical movement? The answers to this are interrelated and revolve around class composition and methodology. Psychologically, many radical groups are in it but not of it. All you have to do is read their press. They cannot separate themselves from the attitude that they are participating in some sort of social experiment, with the working class as the object of their investigations.

They do not seem to be capable of objectively analyzing the circumstances affecting the unions independently of the fortunes of their own organizations. They also seem incapable of utilizing a dialectical conception of development as it applies to the class struggle and the unions.

The idea seems to be that it is only a matter of what quantity of misery and economic misfortune must accumulate until the workers explode and straighten everything out. It is assumed, without it even being necessary to say so, that after that everything will proceed smoothly to socialism. The trouble with this idea is that it is simply an *assertion*, based not on analysis but on the unassailable general truth that workers' consciousness is deeply affected by their material conditions of existence. When it goes up, they get conservative. When it goes down, they radicalize. If it was this simple, the big battles would have started at the beginning of the 1980s, at least, when the antilabor offensive really got rolling. But things turned out to be more complex than that. This

latest version, predicated on a Depression with a capital "D," is simply the old version raised to the nth power.

The idea is expressed in the SWP political resolution in the following way: "Only the intensified class battles and deepening political polarization that will inevitably accompany a coming depression can create the conditions under which truly mass communist workers' parties can be built."

Socialist Action now says something similar. Their most recent political resolution says: "We cannot expect, however, to see a major reversal of strategy imposed on the bureaucracy by a new generation of militants until the bosses cut deeper into living standards."

This is an easy solution to the difficult task of party-building -- putting it off until the economic catastrophe arrives. This may provide some consolation for frustrated socialists, but it easily becomes a rationalization for abstention.

Complex Interrelationship Between Being and Consciousness

It has been twenty years since the great Black urban rebellions of 1968. Unemployment, degradation, and misery are higher than they have been for many years in the Black community, especially among Black youth. The Black proletariat is indisputably the most militant and politically advanced section of the working class. Yet the summer of 1988, with its relentless heat, brought forth no new uprisings. If the idea that all it takes to produce explosive struggle is simple accretions of oppression and exploitation is valid, it ought to be demonstrated *first* in the urban African American ghettos. Obviously, the reality is more complex. It is striking that the SWP political resolution, which goes on at length about the unions and the workers in general, has no separate discussion of the Black working class, and this from a party that was once distinguished by its special understanding of the vanguard role of the Black workers in the American class struggle.

Trotsky called the idea that there is an automatic parallel between exploitation and radicalization "childish metaphysics."

"The political mood of the proletariat does not change automatically in one and the same direction," he said. "The upturns in the class struggle are followed by downturns, the floodtide by ebbs, depending on complicated combinations of material and ideological conditions. An upsurge of the masses, if not utilized at the right moment, or misused, reverses itself and ends in a period of decline, from which the masses recover, faster or slower, under the influence of new objective stimuli."

An understanding of this process cannot be obtained by sweeping assertions supported by no evidence, the methodology of the SWP leadership. Unilateral declarations about the unions are quite useless. To understand the class struggle as a living process and not as a slogan, you have to have some conception of its unevenness, and you have to study its actual development and the interplay of the antagonistic forces involved -- and you have to participate in it.

This is somewhat more demanding than simply making apocalyptic prophecies which are successively discredited, but it is more rewarding, and certainly more useful for a

political organization that wants to intervene in the living class struggle.

What is needed are not different estimates of how long it is until the final conflict, but a concrete discussion of what is actually going on. As Trotsky once said, "What is needed are not deductions, but facts."

What this will reveal is a struggle that is extremely uneven and contradictory. The most apparent aspect of the current state of the unions is that the employers can lock workers out, bring in scabs, and largely get away with it. To demoralized radicals, this is simply a fact which is merely necessary to assert. Scabs go in, therefore the workers are losers; or as the SWP says, labor aristocrats who can "only engage in limited isolated struggles which can't change the objective situation." Other people say "strikes don't work," which is the same thing. "We have to find creative new strategies, like corporate campaigns, shop floor strategies," and so on. The only place I am familiar with where workers currently organize periodic slowdowns, wildcat strikes, and other forms of real shop floor action on a consistent basis is a leather factory in Southern Minnesota, where they have never heard of a corporate campaign. Some people say workers are different today, that in the past they wouldn't scab, that unions were more popular, as though union power ebbed and flowed like prime time television schedules, based on Nielson ratings.

More Rounded Appreciation of History

The class struggle was not suspended between 1946 and the present, and it is a gross oversimplification to think that some kind of social contract was signed in 1947 between the bosses and the unions that wasn't reopened until 1980. One of the best verifications of this is to go through the bound volumes of the *Militant* throughout the late '40s, '50s, and '60s.

I would just refer you to 1959, an interesting year when, in response to the 1957-58 recession, a number of antilabor moves were initiated. The Landrum-Griffin bill was passed, the Teamsters union was attacked by Robert Kennedy and the U.S. Senate Committee, a witch-hunting probe into the Packinghouse Workers union was carried out by the Senate Committee on Subversive Activities, the 115-day steel strike was provoked, and the Wilson Co. launched an attempt to break the Packinghouse Workers union. When Wilson decided to bring in scabs in Albert Lea, Minnesota, that year, they got hundreds of them with little trouble. They were met, however, with a *unified* mobilization of the UPWA and the Minnesota labor movement. Even national guard occupation of the town in response to mass picketing did not result in a defeat for the union.

The 1959 antilabor offensive did not lead to a decade like the 1980s, however. The employers retreated after their probe in 1959, for many reasons which we can't go into here. Again, the point I want to make is that this 25- or 30-year period was not some long honeymoon with the class struggle suspended. Most of the major national and industry-wide union agreements weren't finally put in place until the 1960s, for example. When the employers thought they saw an opening to attack the unions, they tested it out. Yes, there were

plenty of unemployed willing to scab in 1959, and yes, the employers were not reconciled to the existence of the unions then either. But the outcome was different than what unfolded in the 1980s. An explanation of this is beyond the scope of this report, but developing an understanding of the continuity and permanent presence of the class struggle, not just in the 1930s but over the past decades, ought to be part of any socialist analysis of the present-day labor movement.

Socialist Action looks at the "simple fact" of scabs crossing picket lines and has a simple solution: mass picket lines. They have just published a pamphlet on the Hormel strike in which they are sharply critical of the P-9 leadership for failing to call mass picket lines, which, they indicate, would have won the strike. They present this as though it was simply a matter of a failure of will on the part of the union leadership that defeated the strike.

The authors of the SA pamphlet give little weight to the fact that there was a mass picket line in Austin that closed the plant — that was what brought in the national guard. That is simply passed over as though it had little further significance. The fact is that once the national guard has arrived, the tactic of mass picket lines is placed in an entirely different context. Mobilizing mass picket lines in the face of military occupation and martial law is not the same as mass picket lines when you are only dealing with local police and scabs.

It is interesting to recall that in 1934 the Communist Party attacked the leadership of the Minneapolis truckers' strikes for failing to initiate mass picket lines in the face of national guard troops. The Minnesota CP issued a leaflet in August 1934 titled, "Stabbing the Workers in the Back." It said: "Under these conditions only the proposed program of the Communist Party — to organize mass picketing in spite of martial law — to broaden the strike by calling out the (Local) 574 men instead of letting them go back to work in small groups — and by appealing to the rank and file over the heads of the AFL leaders — only by such a program could the rights of picketing be re-established and the possibility of victory assured." By their failure to carry out this program, the strike leaders, according to the Stalinists, were doing "what the employers and the Citizens' Alliance could not accomplish."

Mass picket lines, like all frontal assaults, are *tactics*, and have validity only insofar as they advance the strategic goal of *mass action*, that is, a strategy aimed at mobilizing in successively greater numbers the ranks of the union and its allies. It ought to be obvious that there are some instances where mass picket lines could result in isolating the union from the broader labor movement, and give the employers an opportunity to victimize the leaders without an effective response, especially under martial law. It also ought to be obvious that mass picket lines in Austin, which would have to rely on reinforcements from the Twin Cities, 100 miles away, where no unified response from the unions could be expected, and under conditions where the labor bureaucracy was able to block the participation of even P-9's traditional allies in its sister local 20 miles away at the Farmstead plant in Albert Lea, were not a tactic which could simply be summoned up by issuing declamatory appeals.

To effectively formulate tactics in union struggles, it is imperative to keep uppermost in mind that the class struggle is

a *process*, not simply a sequence of episodes. This means understanding its *direction, tempo, and dynamic*, which, unlike writing universally valid prescriptions, requires concrete analysis.

In all *five* cases where the national guard was mobilized in packinghouse strikes in Minnesota, there were no further mass picket lines. The sequence of events was virtually the same in 1921, 1948, 1959, and 1986. Yet, the outcome varied. In 1921, the strikes were broken and the unions driven out of the plants. In 1948 and 1959, the union remained in place and eventually a compromise agreement with modest wage increases was negotiated. In 1986, the legitimate union was broken, but another affiliate of the UFCW was created and retained a union agreement, although not regaining the wages cut earlier by the company. In the last analysis, what was decisive was the overall relationship of class forces prevailing at the given time. That, in and of itself, is not an argument for or against any mass picket line, but it ought to demonstrate the *limits* of tactical prescriptions.

The simple fact of scabs crossing picket lines and getting away with it is not so simple, although it is certainly a good starting point for an analysis of the current state of the labor movement. What is this simple reality of unions passively accepting the employers' assault made up of? What are its contradictions?

Bosses Pick Targets Carefully

Why are the employers seemingly so unopposed in their strike-breaking, scab-herding operations? Unlike it may appear on the surface, this expresses not just the power of the employers, but the residual power of union consciousness. One reason the employers meet with so little effective opposition is that they pick their targets carefully, so as not to provoke responses that begin to generate widening opposition and mobilization.

You could ask yourself, for example, why, in the railroad industry where they have created hundreds of nonunion shortlines in the 1980s, they don't just go ahead and shortline everything, and abolish the unions altogether? Because the carriers sense that such a move might soon reach the point where the situation would begin to turn into its opposite, they are pretty cautious. Here they don't deal in speculation, but in facts, so far as they are able. They probe very carefully as they move forward, monitoring the reaction of rail workers as expressed both directly and indirectly. They have taken note, for example, of the fact that rank-and-file dissatisfaction meant that the United Transportation Union international president was reelected last year by only four votes, and that the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees have both replaced their presidents with challengers who pledged to be more militant. The carriers' shortline movement has slowed down to almost nothing in the last year or eighteen months. There have been unfavorable decisions for the carriers on the part of courts and arbitrators. These decisions themselves are recognition of the widening opposition and activity in the rank and file of rail unions. One major financial publication warned of a possible "growing alienation of rail workers," which is their way of saying the same thing,

since they do not concern themselves with such categories of railroad workers' consciousness unless it has some bearing on their profits.

Recent observable trends towards "growing alienation" among rail workers include the numerous initiatives taken against shortline moves, mostly, but not entirely, on smaller, non-Class I railroads. There have been several strikes against Guilford Industries, a group of three New England railroads owned by Timothy Mellon, in response to abrogation of union agreements after so-called shortline sales. In one of them a shutdown of all East Coast rail was barely averted by federal intervention. Some favorable, but not decisive, responses from arbitrators ordering some kind of labor protection, and affirming the right of the UTU to strike over these issues have been issued.

The Supreme Court last year reaffirmed the right of railroad workers to so-called secondary picketing, that is, extending a strike from the primary railroad involved to any which interchange with it. The Supreme Court did this not because it favors rail unions having this right, but because it wants this right restricted through the political process of amending the Railway Labor Act, which they feel will more effectively intimidate the unions from exercising their class power.

Shortline initiatives have begun to generate responses from the affected union locals, independent of the internationals, and sometimes even of the General Committees, setting up community coalitions and pressing for legislative and other solutions. Coalitions of this type were formed in Montana recently, where Burlington Northern RR shortlined a 600-mile section of mainline railroad. The shortline went through, but the more recent attempt to create a phony non-union corporation called the Winona Bridge Co. to circumvent the UTU's crew-consist agreement is stalled for the time being.

The response to *Straight Track*, a rank-and-file rail union newspaper published by the Intercraft Association of Minnesota, a coalition of rail unionists, is symptomatic of what the more farseeing elements among the carriers must take account of. Published in the Twin Cities, the paper has uncompromisingly opposed all shortline and other antiunion schemes. The paper was able to organize a rank-and-file conference of 100 rail workers in Minneapolis last fall, where Lynn Henderson, reporting to the conference on behalf of the organizers, raised the concept of nationalizing the railroads to prolonged applause. The most recent issue of the paper had a circulation of 15,000 and is entirely self-financing, based on contributions primarily from rail union locals which subscribe for their entire membership.

Resistance to concessions also finds an expression in rejection of concessionary agreements, when the workers are allowed to vote. There have been many cases of bureaucratic leaderships forcing second and third votes, or more, until they finally get a favorable outcome. Recent examples include the struggle over ratification of the GE contract, at Northwest Airlines, continuing struggles at other airlines, and others. The proposed compressed workweek at Oscar Mayer, supported by the UFCW leadership, was rejected twice, then finally accepted in Texas, and is still being resisted at the flagship plant in Madison, Wisconsin.

The struggle over the size of train crews, referred to as "crew consist," was originally raised in 1959, 30 years ago, by the carriers. The focus of the carriers' drive to reduce crew size has been on the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad for the past period. The UTU agreement on the CNW still provides for a full crew of a conductor and two brakemen, along with the engineer, on all main line trains. The CNW has attempted to intimidate the UTU into relinquishing this agreement by openly preparing for strikebreaking, hiring and training scabs, and soliciting union workers to cross UTU picket lines. The UTU General Committees on the CNW rejected the carrier's demands. All the delaying provisions of the Railway Labor Act were exhausted over the last year, leading finally to a strike on August 4, which was ordered ended by Congress after two hours. The intransigence of the union reflects *both* a hardening determination of the workers to resist and an escalation of the carriers' demands, posing the question of the existence of the union, not to mention the careers of the officials. The CNW's original demands would have eliminated up to 70 percent of the UTU members' jobs.

This confrontation is the first serious showdown in rail involving a Class I railroad—the CNW is the nation's 8th largest carrier. It demonstrated, among other things, the possibility of a rail strike escalating in a matter of days into a national strike through extension of picket lines to interchanging railroads. Here again, the potential power of organized labor is evident. It is probable Congress will force concessions on the UTU that are not as far-reaching as the carrier's original demands, but will open the door to getting them over a longer period of time.

Government Control of the Unions

An important underlying question here is government control of the unions. Although the rail industry has been almost entirely deregulated, all the regulation of rail *labor* remains intact, to be summoned up when other methods don't work. This ultimate weapon was also demonstrated in the intervention of the federal courts and the NLRB in the P-9 strike, when the workers broke through the bureaucratic barriers to class struggle action and independence for a time.

Given the success of the union bureaucracy in keeping labor struggle in check, in most cases, this is an issue whose significance remains latent. But at the first sign of militant, independent struggle, the whole question of the independence of the unions from the state and the right of workers to control their own organizations will be shoved to the forefront as it was in Austin.

The most prominent example of the inclination to widen even further government control of the unions is the move to place the entire Teamsters International under federal trusteeship. A hint of the motivation behind this is contained in the recent succession of events following the death of Jackie Presser. Even before Presser's death, the proposed Master Freight Agreement was rejected by 64 percent of those voting, although, under the IBT constitution, a two-thirds rejection is necessary to be decisive.

Wendell Mathis, a leading supporter of ratification, was defeated as Presser's successor by William McCarthy, who

expressed opposition to the Master Freight Agreement. The car haulers' contract was just voted on and rejected by 72 percent. The top leadership, under this pressure, has divided into two distinct factions on the International Executive Board.

The Shipbuilders union in Pittsburgh, led by dissident president Darrell Becker, a founder of National Rank and File Against Concessions, has been placed under trusteeship by the international, and the post office, as was done in Austin, is directing the local's mail to the International. Becker, along with Reverend Douglas Roth, has just been sentenced to six months to a year in prison for demonstrating on behalf of unemployed steelworkers outside a Lutheran church, a good example of how bourgeois institutions act in tandem in defense of their class interests.

The simple fact of today's picket lines also partially obscures another important phenomenon. The prolonged character of many strikes, which may today go on for months and years, while the companies are in full production with scabs, while demonstrating the criminal negligence and irresponsibility of the bureaucrats, also shows *deep* trade union consciousness. The strikers do not, in the main, quickly capitulate and go back to work even in the face of overwhelmingly unfavorable situations, and not because they are being supported by generous strike benefits from their defense funds. People make great, irretrievable sacrifices to the struggle, as they did in Austin, and as they continue to do in the International Paper strike. Workers are still locked out at the Chicago *Tribune* and elsewhere.

Other indirect expressions of workers' resistance and differentiation from the leadership include opposition to bureaucratic mergers, such as that proposed earlier between the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and the Mineworkers, the reaffiliation of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union to the AFL-CIO, and others.

Tenuous Hold of the Union Bureaucrats

If the combativity which is inherent in the big spontaneous mass picket lines, the nuances of opposition sentiment which find visible expression in the unions even as they are now, the continuous and unabating resistance to concessions working its way out in diverse ways, and the tenacious strike struggles beginning to independently seek out new allies—and also, the response to the Jesse Jackson campaign—if all this could find a clear field for expression, mass struggle could rapidly be on the agenda. The single significant obstacle to this happening, the union bureaucracy, is not as formidable as it seems. Those of us active in the unions see a startling decline in the ability of the bureaucrats to police the ranks, as independent initiatives that would have been promptly quashed only a few years ago proliferate all over the place.

It is as though the battalions of the unions are only separated from their field of struggle by a thin membrane. What it will take to break through remains to be determined. It would be foolish to lightmindedly dismiss the conservative union bureaucracy which has dominated the industrial labor movement without significant sustained challenge for four decades. Quite the opposite. This encrusted parasitic layer,

interwoven with the state apparatus, is unprecedented in history. Steve Bloom in his article in *Bulletin IDOM* No. 55 (“Is There a Simple Solution to Nicaragua’s Economic Crisis?”) has posed the concept of crystalized transitional forms. This is a most useful insight, I believe. What we call unions today are different from anything in the past. Unions were thrown up along with upsurges of the working class in the past and largely disappeared when they receded. This pattern extended back to the 1820s. Today’s bloated bureaucratic unions express a prolonged stalemate between the workers and the employers, but one that the employers are now moving to alter.

But beyond the formidable apparatus and material resources of the bureaucracy there is another, and immeasurably greater power to be reckoned with—the union rank and file, still in their tens of millions in this country, whose needs cannot be met, and in fact are mocked by bureaucratic mergers, capitalist electoral politics, no-fee Mastercharge cards, and television advertising campaigns by “Mama.”

Need for Conscious Participation of Revolutionaries

What is *not true* is that the obstacle to the mobilization of this power is the backwardness and passivity of the workers themselves, which can only be released by the onset of a devastating economic crisis. To deduce this from the simple fact of the violated picket lines of the present is to be condemned to a paralyzing fatalism. It is a fundamental misreading of the history of the great proletarian upsurge of the 1930s to assume it arrived as the result of an inexorable process set

in motion by the 1929 crash. The great CIO upsurge was the result of a succession of developments, each dependent upon the preceding one, and each of them impossible without the combination of mass discontent and intervention by a conscious minority. The great sitdown strikes of the formation of the CIO, initiated by revolutionary socialists—the most far-reaching challenge to private property ever undertaken in this country—could not have occurred without the precedent of the three great strikes of 1934. The 1934 strikes in Minneapolis, Toledo, and San Francisco, all led by radicals, could not have won without the participation of the unemployed, mobilized in organizations built by radicals. The unemployed organizations themselves would not have been present and available to be thrown into these struggles except for the dynamism of the Communist Party, flawed instrument though it was. The point here is that the whole chain of events was sustained, not simply by the automatism of economic processes, but by the *intervention* of conscious revolutionary minorities *at each stage*.

What can be done today? We know that the class struggle will proceed, that the employers will continue to attack, and that the workers will and *must* respond and resist.

Now is the time to intervene, to initiate, to fight for every inch that can be gained, to associate with every mood of struggle, no matter how transitory it may be. We have to drive this home to every sincere revolutionary with whom we can have a dialogue.

I won’t report to you that the workers are more radical today than they were yesterday, and that tomorrow they will be more radical than they are today. But this is the way forward, and there is no other. ●

Successful 50th Anniversary Celebration Held in New York

Just before this issue of the *Bulletin IDOM* went to the printer, the New York celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Fourth International was held—October 14-15. Over 150 people participated in all or part of the weekend of panel discussions and in the windup rally. Participants came from Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Canada. All regions of the U.S. were represented. A full report will appear in the next issue of our magazine.

Program, Organization, Revolution: Lenin and the Bolsheviks, 1905-1917 (part 2)

by Paul Le Blanc

This is the second installment of a three-part article, based on a talk given in the autumn of 1987. The first installment appeared in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism No. 56. A substantial list of sources will be presented at the end of the third installment.

2. Development of the Programmatic Basis for the Bolshevik Party, 1907-1912

Eva Brando was a revolutionary situated in the left wing of the Menshevik faction of the RSDLP. Years later, still a Menshevik, she provided a succinct yet vivid description of the situation created by the 1905 revolution and its aftermath:

The masses had woken up to political life. . . . And in all these activities of the workers the leadership was firmly in the hands of the Social Democracy. Later, from about the middle of 1907, the pendulum began to swing back. The fighting spirit of the workers subsided, while disillusionment and apathy increased. Tsarism tried to regain the positions it had lost to the workers during their years of relative ascendancy. . . .

There followed an economic crisis with its usual psychological concomitants; the disillusionment and political apathy among the workers, such as usually follows in the wake of a failed revolution, were intensified. On the Bolshevik side some very dubious adventures were undertaken—this was the period of bank, mail, and spirit-shop robberies or “expropriations,” which were meant to provide funds for a revival of party activities. Some of the Mensheviks, on the other hand, reacted in exactly the opposite manner—they lost all interest in underground party work and, intent on holding on to the few legal conquests of recent years, worked only within the narrow legal limits.¹²

If anything, this understates the dark side of the post-1905 situation. In 1906 the RSDLP’s membership had swelled to about 150,000. By 1910 it probably had no more than 10,000—collapsing “like a pack of cards,” as Menshevik leader Julius Martov put it. Years later Lenin recalled: “Tsarism was victorious. All the revolutionary and opposition parties were smashed. Depression, demoralization, splits, discord, defection, and pornography took the place of politics.” Paris became known as “the foreign Petersburg” because of the 80,000 revolutionary refugees who had gathered there from Russia, many of them living in terrible poverty. In what was left of the RSDLP, a three-way split took place in the Menshevik faction and another three-way split took place in the Bolshevik faction.¹³

Among the Mensheviks the three currents included the liquidators (for whom A.N. Potresov and Vera Zasulich be-

came prominent spokespeople), the Menshevik center (headed by Martov and Dan), and the Party Mensheviks (led by Plekhanov). Among the Bolsheviks there were the *Forward-ist* Bolsheviks (named after the paper *Vperyod* and led by Alexander Bogdanov, containing most of the prominent Bolshevik intellectuals), the Leninist Bolsheviks (in which Lenin was assisted by a new leadership layer that included Gregory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev), and the Bolshevik conciliators (also known as Party Bolsheviks, among whose leaders were Alexei Rykov and V.P. Nogin). In addition, there was a separate faction *against* factionalism, led by Trotsky.

To understand the factional divisions and their meaning, it’s first necessary to have some sense of additional developments in Russian society and politics.

Despite the defeat of the 1905 uprising, some real gains were won in the 1905-06 period: a parliamentary body called the Duma was set up; trade unions were legalized; important legislation (involving social insurance, pensions for workers, etc.) was enacted. Then came a severe repression under the tsar’s new prime minister Peter Stolypin, who was in office from 1906 until his assassination in 1911. Also the minister of the interior, and thus directly in charge of the government’s repressive forces, he earned the title “Stolypin the hangman” among revolutionaries. The first Duma had been boycotted by the RSDLP and also by the left-populist Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and so was dominated by bourgeois liberals of the Constitutional-Democratic Party (known as Kadets); even this proved too radical a body, and Stolypin dissolved it in 1906. New Duma elections resulted in an even more radical body—the RSDLP and SRs won 20 percent of the seats; the peasant Labor Faction won 19 percent; the Kadets won 19 percent, and small-party allies of the Kadets won 18 percent. This anti-tsarist majority proved even more unpalatable, so Stolypin had the second Duma dissolved in 1907. The third Duma was based on a new electoral law which gave 51 percent of the seats to conservative and reactionary representatives of the landed nobility. In addition to this, although trade unions were not abolished, they were severely restricted, pushed to be nonpolitical, and many union activists were blacklisted.

At the same time, Stolypin initiated a push for a major package of far-reaching reforms that were designed to advance the “modernization process” in Russia. He explained that “reforms are necessary in times of revolution because the revolution was born to a considerable degree from the

shortcomings of the social system. Only to fight revolution is to remove the results and not the causes." Influenced by the example of Prussia under the "Iron Chancellor" Otto von Bismarck, Stolypin explained: "In places where the government defeated the revolution it did so not by the exclusive use of force but by using its strength to place itself at the head of the reforms."¹⁴

Stolypin's attempt at "revolution from above" included such reforms as these: making the state apparatus more efficient; an agrarian reform that would raise a layer of well-to-do peasants as a bulwark of the regime; tax reform; public education; some modest liberalization for religious minorities; expansion of railways; encouraging the further development of industry; social welfare reforms. Not all of this was achieved. Powerful reactionaries in the Duma and the state apparatus fiercely resisted many of these reforms. But as Lenin later recounted, "victorious tsarism was compelled to speed up the destruction of the remnants of the pre-bourgeois, patriarchal mode of life in Russia. The country's development along bourgeois lines proceeded apace."¹⁵

Lenin remained committed to the programmatic principle of proletarian hegemony in the struggle against tsarism. But how was this to be applied in the dramatically new context? To answer this question it may be helpful to compare Lenin's approach to that of two other currents in the RSDLP, the *Forward*-ist Bolsheviks led by Bogdanov and the Menshevik liquidators.

Here is how Lenin described revolutionary tasks in the new situation:

During the [1905-06] revolution we learned to "speak French," i.e., to introduce into the movement the greatest number of rousing slogans, to raise the energy of the direct struggle of the masses and to extend its scope. Now, in this time of stagnation, reaction and disintegration, we must learn to "speak German," i.e., to work slowly (there is nothing else for it until things revive), systematically, steadily, advancing step by step, winning inch by inch. Whoever finds this work tedious, whoever does not understand the need for preserving and developing the revolutionary principles *in this phase too, on this bend of the road*, is taking the name of Marxist in vain.¹⁶

The *Forward*-ist Bolsheviks who came out against Lenin's orientation included some of the most impressive personalities in the Bolshevik camp. Bogdanov himself was a physician who had some expertise in the fields of science, philosophy, and economics. His popular exposition of Marxist economics (and also some of his left-wing science fiction) enjoyed a particularly appreciative readership among "conscious workers." The engineer Leonid Krasin had been in charge of Bolshevik printing facilities, fund-raising, and also armed groups; in 1905-07 he was—with Lenin and Bogdanov—part of the Bolsheviks' leading "troika." G.A. Alexinsky was a Bolshevik representative in the Duma; Anatoly Lunacharsky was a leading cultural critic; and M.N. Pokrovsky was an important historian. Another luminary in the *Forward*-ist milieu was the great left-wing novelist Maxim Gorky.

The *Forward*-ists harked back to what they felt was the militant tradition of "original Bolshevism," and their orientation contained such elements as these: (1) concentrate on the development of an underground, illegal organization; (2) pull back from compromise with the tsarist autocracy and its "puppet parliament"; (3) renew the commitment to armed struggle, prepare for insurrection; (4) expand socialist educational activity among workers, with a distinctive development of "proletarian" philosophy and culture. They criticized Lenin and others who "have come to the conclusion that we must radically change the previous Bolshevik evaluation of the present historical moment and hold a course not toward a new revolutionary wave, but toward a long period of peaceful, constitutional development. This brings them close to the right wing of our party, the Menshevik comrades." They asserted that, to the contrary, "Russia is moving towards a new revolutionary upswing ... characterized by sharp conflict."¹⁷

Lenin responded:

Quite right! She is only *moving towards* an upswing, i.e., there is no upswing yet—that is what this means, both in logic and grammar! It appears, however, that this still non-existing upswing is "characterized by a sharp conflict," etc. The result is utter nonsense. ... [They] are incapable of characterizing the present. They "characterize" the future, which we are "moving towards," in order to cover up [their] failure to understand the present. ...

The revolution must strive for and achieve the overthrow of tsarism—say the authors of the new platform. Quite right. But that is not all that a *present-day* revolutionary Social Democrat must know and bear in mind. He must be able to comprehend that this revolution is coming to us in a new way and that we must march towards it in a new way (in a different way than hitherto; not only in the way we did before; not only with those weapons and means of struggle we used before); that the autocracy itself is not the same as it was before.¹⁸

Lenin pointed to a mutual adaptation of tsarism and capitalism, creating a new stabilization and a transition period between 1905 and a future revolutionary upsurge. "In order to prepare for the second revolution," he wrote, "we must master the peculiarities of this transition, we must be able to adapt our tactics and organization to this difficult, hard, obscure transition forced upon us."¹⁹

Gregory Zinoviev later spelled out what this meant in practice:

Comrade Lenin's main idea was that we had to remain with the working class and be a mass party and not to coop ourselves up exclusively in the underground and turn into a narrow circle. If the workers are in the trade unions then we must be there, too; if we can send just one man into the Tsar's Duma then we shall: let him tell the workers the truth and we can publish his speeches as leaflets. If something can be done for the workers in the workers' clubs then we shall be there. We have to use every legal opportunity, so as not to divorce ourselves from the masses. ...²⁰

From the standpoint of such critics of Lenin as Marcel Liebman, it could be argued that there were broad areas of programmatic agreement—certainly around fundamental aspects of Marxism and a commitment to proletarian hegemony in the revolutionary struggle against tsarism—between the *Forward*-ists and the Leninists. Was it proper, such critics might ask, for Lenin to insist on agreement around such tactical questions as participation in elections, workers' clubs, etc.? To this it can be argued that—if we accept Lenin's conception of program outlined earlier—the program of a revolutionary party encompasses not only "basic views" but also "immediate tasks" and "areas of agitational activity." If there are substantial enough differences over tactics, this suggests a programmatic divergence. In fact, both sides in this dispute correctly believed that there were profound programmatic divergences on life-or-death questions. This made compromise difficult and logically led to an organizational break.

What about the Mensheviks?

As we saw earlier, a powerful tendency was felt among the Mensheviks to abandon their adaptation to "Trotskyism" and to subordinate, once again, the idea of *proletarian hegemony* to the notion that the bourgeoisie must lead in the overthrow of tsarism. Of course, this wasn't immediately apparent to everyone, because—as often happens—the shift was often fuzzed over with revolutionary rhetoric and Marxist formulations. However, a more far-reaching trend soon emerged within Menshevik ranks—liquidationism. Here is how Trotsky described the liquidators:

They declared the illegal Party liquidated once and for all [in the face of the RSDLP's organizational collapse under the post-1905-06 repression], and the aim to restore it—a reactionary utopia. . . . Entrenching themselves in trade unions, educational clubs and insurance societies, they carried on their work as cultural propagandists, not as revolutionists. To safeguard their jobs in the legal organizations, the officials from among the workers began to resort to protective coloration. They avoided the strike struggle, so as not to compromise the scarcely tolerated trade unions. In practice, legality at any price meant outright repudiation of revolutionary methods.²¹

Of course, Trotsky was always an opponent of the liquidators, and he penned this description in a period when he was defending the Bolshevik heritage. It may be helpful for us, in understanding the liquidators, to consider the friendlier description of an excellent historian who has shown considerable sympathy for the Mensheviks, Leopold Haimson:

The current task of Social Democracy, they insisted, was not to pursue in the underground, under the leadership of a handful of intelligentsia conspirators, now clearly unattainable maximalist objectives. It was [instead] to outline for the labor movement goals, tactics, and organizational forms which, even within the narrow confines of the existing political framework, would enable the masses of the working class to struggle, day by day, for tangible improvements in their lives and to become through the experience of this struggle "con-

scious" and responsible actors—capable of making their own independent contribution to the vision of a free and equitable society.²²

Given the realities of tsarist repression, which required workers' organizations to be nonpolitical in order to be legal, this approach generated (as Martov anxiously confessed in a letter to another Menshevik leader) "moods which negated the old Menshevism" and a "real liquidation of our traditions, real legalism raised to a principle, a fundamental break with our past."²³

What Martov raised privately, Lenin shouted from the rooftops: "Naturally, repudiation of the 'underground' goes hand in hand with the repudiation of revolutionary tactics and—advocacy of reformism." Lenin went on to warn that the liquidators were bending to bourgeois liberals "who advocate only 'reforms' and spread among the masses the highly pernicious idea that reform is *compatible* with the present tsarist monarchy." Even more than with the *Forward*-ists, a fundamental and far-reaching programmatic divergence separated the liquidators from the Leninist Bolsheviks.²⁴

The practical consequences of such divergences were felt in innumerable ways in the daily struggle within Russia. A minor example regarding a workers' club in one city illustrates this point well. Workers' clubs had developed especially in the wake of the 1905 experiences. They were places where members of the working class—male and female—could relax and socialize (in Russia there were few such places outside of churches and saloons), and they offered a variety of educational, cultural, and recreational activities. The tsarist regime chose to permit their continued existence so long as they held aloof from revolutionary activities. The Leninist Bolsheviks in this city favored serious participation in the workers' club and saw it as a place where they could discreetly circulate the Bolshevik newspaper, make contact with "conscious workers," and draw people into the revolutionary movement. The Menshevik liquidators who played a major role in the club were horrified that such activities could make the club a target for repression and sought to impose a ban on the Bolshevik efforts. The *Forward*-ists, on the other hand, saw the very existence of the club to be a shameful diversion from genuinely revolutionary struggle, and they favored activity that would undermine and destroy it.

What about the other, non-liquidator, Mensheviks?

On the one hand there was the "Menshevik center," led by Martov and Dan. They privately worried about liquidationism—but they were even more antagonistic toward the Bolsheviks, especially Lenin. Therefore, they publicly minimized the danger or even denied the existence of liquidationism. Although willing to vote for resolutions condemning liquidationism, they were unwilling to *do* anything that would drive their liquidator allies out of the RSDLP, which would have left them in a clear minority in relation to the Bolsheviks. On the other hand, there were the "Party Mensheviks," led by Plekhanov, who were openly indignant over the effort to liquidate (or justify the abandonment of) the old underground. They not only voted for anti-liquidator resolutions but also were willing to make common cause with the Leninist Bolsheviks in calling for an organizational break with the liquidators. Yet they were not inclined to break organizationally with the Menshevik center on this question.

Given this situation, RSDLP resolutions of 1908 and 1910 condemned liquidationism, but the resolutions remained a dead letter. Party resolutions which are adopted by a substantial majority but aren't even implemented and have no chance of being implemented certainly raise serious questions about the quality of democracy in such an organization and about the quality of the organization itself — especially when basic political principles are involved.

“After the 1908 conference,” Zinoviev later recalled, “and more especially after the 1910 plenum, we Leninist Bolsheviks said to ourselves that we would not work together with the liquidator Mensheviks and that we were only awaiting a convenient moment to break finally from them and form our own independent organization based upon the resurgent workers' movement.” By 1911 the stirrings of such a working class resurgence could be felt, and we will return to a discussion of this upsurge in the third part of this presentation. Here it should be noted, simply, that by early 1912 Lenin and his cothinkers concluded that the time for a definitive split had arrived. ²⁵

Not all Bolsheviks agreed with Lenin's split perspective. These “Bolshevik conciliators” were described by Krupskaya in this way: “With some comrades the struggle for the Party assumed the form of conciliation; they lost sight of the *aim* of unity and relapsed into a man-in-the-street striving to unite all and everyone, no matter what they stood for.” Their position was similar to that of Trotsky's “anti-factional” faction, and they tended to make common cause with him. Trotsky later summarized his perspective in this way:

As long as the revolutionary intellectuals were dominant among the Bolsheviks as well as among the Mensheviks and as long as both factions did not venture beyond the bourgeois democratic revolution, there was no justification for a split between them; in the new revolution, under the pressure of the laboring masses, both factions would in any case be compelled to assume an identical revolutionary position, as they did in 1905. ²⁶

Such a perspective has had considerable appeal among socialists and scholars of our own time. But Lenin believed that rather than wallowing in the factional swamp that the RSDLP had become, he and his cothinkers must get on with the work of establishing a genuinely revolutionary party. As Geoffrey Swain, an historian severely critical of Lenin, has explained: “To Lenin, it was not only safer, but far more principled to split the party and cock a snook [i.e., make an impolite gesture] at those dreamers like Trotsky who tried to suggest that ‘wallowing in the swamp’ was really the cut and thrust of running a democratic party.” It's worthwhile, however, to consider Trotsky's later criticism of his own position:

Certain critics of Bolshevism to this day regard my old conciliationism as the voice of wisdom. Yet its profound erroneousness had long ago been demonstrated both in theory and practice. A simple conciliation of factions is possible only along some sort of “middle” line. But where is the guarantee that this artificially drawn diagonal line will coincide with the needs of objective development? The task of scientific politics is to deduce

a program and a tactic from an analysis of the struggle of classes, not from an ever-shifting parallelogram of such secondary and transitory forces as political factions. ²⁷

In short, the program is decisive and shouldn't be compromised. The revolutionary party must be organized around the program, and the party which isn't serious about its program cannot be revolutionary. This approach explains the oft-noted “arrogance” of the Leninist Bolsheviks as they finally broke away to form their own party. “The conference at Prague [in 1912] consisted in effect of a handful of delegates (some 20 to 25 in number) led by Comrade Lenin,” Zinoviev later recounted, “and took upon itself the presumption to proclaim itself to be the party and to break once and forever from all other groups and sub-groups.” Actually, some of these sub-groups later joined the Bolshevik party five years later — but in 1912 they were horrified and furious. In the same year Trotsky attempted to rally the remaining elements of the RSDLP into a unified organization, but this “August bloc,” as it was called, didn't have sufficient programmatic cohesion to hold together. The Bolshevik conference, on the other hand, proved to be a success. This comes through in Krupskaya's account:

The Prague conference was the first conference with Party workers from Russia which we succeeded in calling after 1908 and at which we were able in a *business-like* manner to discuss questions relating to the work in Russia and frame a clear line for this work. . . . The results of the Prague conference were a clearly defined Party line on questions of work in Russia, and real leadership of *practical* work. . . . A unity was achieved on the [Central Committee] without which it would have been impossible to carry on the work at such a difficult time. ²⁸

This was to have important consequences back in Russia. “The sudden growth of the illegal Bolshevik nuclei was an unpleasant surprise for those Mensheviks who regarded these nuclei as a product of the disintegration of the old pre-revolutionary Party organization and doomed to inevitable extinction,” the Menshevik leader Theodore Dan recalled many years later. He added that “while the Bolshevik section of the party transformed itself into a battle-phalanx, held together by iron discipline and cohesive guiding resolution, the ranks of the Menshevik section were ever more seriously disorganized by dissension and apathy.” ²⁹

The basis for this discipline, cohesion, and growth of the Bolsheviks was: first, as Lenin put it many years before, “the elaboration of a common program for the Party establishing basic views on the character, the aims, and the tasks” of the revolutionary workers' movement; second, the *adequacy* of that program, which was based on a critical-minded application of revolutionary Marxism, integrating practical reform struggles into a revolutionary working class strategy; and third, the clear understanding that the unity of socialists — desirable as that is — can have value only on the basis of principled agreement around a revolutionary Marxist program. ●

An Appeal to the SWP

by John Daniels

This statement was submitted to the August 1988 Socialist Workers Party convention by John Daniels, appealing his expulsion from the Twin Cities branch of the SWP in January 1987. Daniels was not permitted to attend the convention and speak in his own defense. Shortly after the convention he received a one-sentence letter informing him that his appeal had been rejected.

As he explains, he joined the SWP during the period when political opponents of the party leadership were being purged, and he initially was convinced that this was correct. Later, he began to raise questions about the sectarian and abstentionist policies of the Twin Cities branch in relation to the anti-intervention movement and the trade unions. He began to question the characterization of the expelled SWP members in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and Socialist Action as "enemies of the party" and "sectarians" as he saw them play a constructive and leading role in P-9 support work during the Austin, Minnesota, strike against the George A. Hormel Co.

Subsequent to his expulsion both members and non-members of the SWP were told that he had "split" and that he had been holding secret meetings with the F.I.T., SA, and even the Workers League! None of these charges were true. It was only after his expulsion that he came to the conclusion that the cause of the expulsion was not some local aberration, but part of the political degeneration of the SWP leadership and its abandonment of the basic programmatic ideas on which the party was founded. This statement is reprinted with his permission.

I joined the Socialist Workers Party in Dallas in August of 1983, and was expelled by the Twin Cities branch of the party in January of 1987. I will go into my expulsion in detail later, but for now, I'd like to focus on my appeal. According to the constitution of the party, a member has the right to appeal expulsion to "... higher bodies ... up to and including the next national convention." It has now been over one-and-a-half years since I first requested my right of appeal to the National Office, and not one "higher body" of the party has found it necessary to investigate my case. This is shocking! I fear that these same leadership bodies within the Socialist Workers Party are thoroughly inadequate in the task of preparing the national convention for a discussion of my case. Moreover, I feel the present Socialist Workers Party is so lacking in internal party democracy that the only method left to reach the membership is to make an open public appeal. This is not a hasty decision, nor one made without consideration.

On January 21, 1987, I received a hand-delivered letter from the branch organizer. When I asked him what was in it, he merely said, "I think you should read it." It contained charges of indiscipline filed by another member. I said, "This is ridiculous." He replied ominously, "I don't think so." That day, I was relieved of my assignments. Two days later, the organizer handed me another envelope; this time he himself had charged me of three more counts of indiscipline.

One of my assignments was to be caretaker for a house of two comrades who were on assignment out of town throughout the winter. Having been relieved of this assignment, I found an apartment and was moving into it in a matter of days. It was at this time that a disciplinary trial was held. I requested that it be postponed, but the organizer (who was also head of the trial committee) did not agree. At this time, I was understandably disoriented, confused, and cold (it was the dead of winter in Minnesota). No one from

the branch had explained any of my rights or the procedures involved in a disciplinary trial. At the time, I thought it was best not to attend the trial, considering my mood, and thinking that there was something going on that I didn't understand. Indeed, if other comrades thought my behavior undisciplined, and the only way they felt they could tell me was through the trial, I would first have to hear what disciplinary measures they thought were necessary. Little did I know that my being absent meant my expulsion.

After the trial, a letter was sent to me explaining that I had been expelled for refusing to attend the trial. This whole process, from receiving the first charge to receiving the notice of my expulsion, hadn't taken two weeks.

As the months elapsed, my disbelief in what I considered "a nightmare" was only contained by what I regarded at the time to be my active appeal. Certain members of the Twin Cities branch and members of other branches still remained in contact with me, as well as comrades on the outside who had similar experiences to relate, all of which helped me through the initial shock.

I began to acquire a broader, more objective view of the party, and, in truth, it is easier to discern the nature of the forest once you've seen more than the trees.

The charges leveled against me in the disciplinary trial were as follows (I might add that to my knowledge no one has ever been brought to trial in the present or past Socialist Workers Party on charges like these):

- that I failed to attend a union meeting to which I had been assigned (filed by Mike M.);
- that I refused to carry out the work of the forums committee to which I was assigned (filed by branch organizer, Argiris M.);
- that I argued against the party line at a forum (filed by Argiris M.);

● that I disrupted a branch meeting (filed by Argiris M.).

I would like to defend myself against these charges even though they were not cited as the reason for my expulsion; it will show current members of the Socialist Workers Party the character of that period in the Twin Cities branch.

As to the first charge, it is my contention that confusion as to who in actuality was supposed to have attended that union meeting was the culprit. I was and am still not sure who was to have attended the meeting. I am sure that Mike M. was not in attendance at the fraction meeting where assignments, if any, would have been made. This is certainly puzzling, since the charge was filed by him.

Regarding the second charge, this is an outright lie known to comrade Argiris M. The head of the forums committee was Janice P. After its latest meeting (at which I personally accepted responsibility for four out of the total five assignments given out), which included four other comrades, Janice P. asked if she could have a short meeting with me. She asked me if, due to her having too many assignments, I would agree to take over the responsibility of heading up the forums committee while she remained its nominal head. I agreed, on the condition that I would meet with the organizer to let him know that I might need to be relieved of assignments in other committees myself in order to carry out this new work. Fine, we agreed. I immediately met with Argiris M., the branch organizer, and explained the situation. He suggested I drop certain other work, in order to handle this additional load in the forums committee. As you see, Argiris M. knew that I never refused work in the forums committee. As a matter of fact, he knew I was taking on a majority of the work — he simply lied when filing the charge.

Thirdly, the charge of arguing against the party line at a forum was itself dropped at the trial (my only guess as to why is that there were too many witnesses).

I'm not clear regarding the fourth charge; either I was smoking when it was prohibited, or was reading during a report.

In three-and-a-half years in the party, I had never been even remotely connected with a trial; it was out of my experience. I had heard of trials in other branches, but they had always dealt with what seemed to be, or were described as, very serious actions. I began to realize what a dangerous threat I was considered to be to certain leaders in the party.

Being shut out of the party didn't mean I dropped out of politics or stopped being a Marxist revolutionary. I maintained contacts and carried out work with unions, solidarity activists, and others, as I always had.

Immediately after my expulsion, however, rumors began to circulate in Minnesota. They were being disseminated by certain members of the Twin Cities branch of the party, as

to the "real" reason I had "split" from the party. Strikers against Hormel in Austin were told that I had been working with the Workers League to disrupt the strike and the party, and that I "... should never have been let into the party" (a comment made by Maggie M. of the Twin Cities branch executive committee)! Solidarity movement activists had been told that I had been holding secret meetings (when I was a party member) with Socialist Action and Fourth Internationalist Tendency. These slanders, and many more, were being spread not only outside the party, but, incredibly, inside as well. As I mentioned before, some Socialist Workers Party members remained in contact with me after my expulsion. They informed me that they had received a great deal of atrocious reasons as to why I was unfit to be a member. Thankfully, most of the slanders went nowhere, at least not with comrades and activists with whom I had worked on a regular basis. While my reputation has suffered little, that of the Socialist Workers Party, and especially the Twin Cities branch, has not fared so well. This is sad and dangerous, and for what reason?

For months, I wrote off my expulsion as merely a mistake. "It happens," I told myself. My appeal would be heard and the situation corrected. However, my appeal was never heard. The party constitution was callously disregarded; a situation I considered impossible, as I know others still do.

When I joined the Socialist Workers Party, there was a crisis going on. I believed the Barnes leadership team when they explained that it was an "... unprincipled splitting operation in our midst." I believed there was a reason to change our theoretical program. I believed all this and more, knowing full well that those who might present different views no longer had a voice in the discussion. That is my crime. I can say this after having read James P. Cannon's letter of February 8, 1966, and after having studied the arguments of the hundreds of comrades purged, yes purged, from the Socialist Workers Party. The Barnes team fooled no one but the majority inside the party, of which I was a member.

I'm proud to have been a member of the Socialist Workers Party. I'm not proud of the fact that while I was a member, I participated in what might become the destruction of the only revolutionary party in the United States.

In conclusion, I would implore those members still inside the Socialist Workers Party to demand that my constitutional rights be granted and an investigation on my appeal be held immediately. There are others who have been expelled as unjustly as I, and your revolutionary duty demands action to correct this error before it irrevocably corrupts the party. Because, when a Trotskyist isn't allowed to be a member of the Socialist Workers Party, what does that say about the Socialist Workers Party? ●

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

25. Butyrka Humanism

The circumstances surrounding Kirov's murder and particularly the preparations for it remain secret to this day. A few facts are known well enough to prove that the Trotskyists and Zinovievists were definitely not involved and at the same time to lead one to conclude: It's the hand of Stalin! It is that same hand that forced Ordzhonikidze and Nadezhda Aliluyeva to shoot themselves, that arranged Mikhoels's automobile accident,¹ and that was endlessly putting to death its own supporters.

The shooting in the Smolny helped Stalin. His fight against Trotskyism received complete vindication; he was elevated to the level of a great political prophet who as long as ten years ago (and according to his autobiography, more than twenty years ago) foresaw all of this and struggled against it. The shooting in the Smolny helped Stalin proclaim a new aim for the struggle against Trotskyism: its total liquidation. Bloody revenge is customary behavior for an Asiatic khan.

The path of bloody revenge is an alluring road but there is no end to it. It has specific features: the need for secrecy, the element of surprise; and therefore it has to wind up in the hands of a special personal guard which it is impossible to recruit except from people prepared to relinquish any of their moral obligations for the sake of duty to the service. They rigorously carry out orders. But so as not to end up being superfluous after the murdered person has been buried, they must shove for their sovereign's signature a new similar order, and another one and another. And they have to be kept in a state of perpetual terror not only of the sovereign's enemies but of the sovereign himself.

An apparatus of massive reprisals cannot be left running idle. And this, I think, is one of the reasons it consistently expands. Such massive repression was impossible without general deception of the people. And for the deception to work, it was necessary to remove from the road everyone who stood in the way: first of all, those who doubted Stalin, i.e., the Trotskyists; later, the witnesses to the past, i.e., the old

communists; and finally, the witnesses and agents of every successive crime: that is, its own people.

The illegalities, the cruelty, the falsification of history, and the daily deceits were inseparably intertwined. It is impossible to properly eradicate all of one phenomenon without discovering at the very bottom another one entwined with it.

* * *

At first, the repression affected only the communists in large cities. In the prison cell that I started to tell about there were several Muscovites. The overwhelming majority of the population of Butyrka Prison were communists who had never belonged to the opposition, but according to various circumstantial signs had been attracted toward Trotskyism: people who had not broken off a friendship with someone who had been disgraced; or who had worked under such a disgraced person's leadership; and most of all those who had never signed anything but had simply on perhaps one occasion "hesitated," i.e., asked a strange question; expressed some shadow of a doubt; did not show the required degree of certainty. All of this was called "links." My young Kharkov friend Arkady as early as the end of 1935 had received five years in a camp for having links with Lominadze, the former great Komsomol and party worker. Lominadze, sensing the threat of imminent arrest, shot himself.

All of us, whether "former" or never "former," had to be reeducated by work in corrective labor camps. We frequently discussed the camps while we sat on our plank beds. What they had to offer, we knew only vaguely. The first grand-scale experiment in their application was the White Sea Canal. They even wrote about the "reforging" of criminals at the canal in a journal — I don't remember exactly whether it was *Our Achievements* or *USSR Under Construction*. On the occasion of Stalin's arrival at this site, a penetrating article was featured with a great number of photos. There was Stalin,

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.

and some prisoner with a piece of bread, about which they said that so and so, a former thief, had earned his "kilo ration" (I remember it exactly, kilo ration) by honest labor. By now, I should have earned my kilo ration. But I will not go into the secret aim that undoubtedly existed when the decision was made to send political prisoners to camps. We will speak about the reason that was officially advanced for their being sent to camp: corrective labor, reeducation.

What does this mean if it is applied not to a thief whose crime is directly linked with his unearned mode of life but to an industrial worker, engineer, or teacher, a working person, condemned for a "crime" that has in common with a "social" crime only the fact that its punishment is included in the same criminal code?

The means for such reeducation are always the same: physically influencing the mentality of the condemned. This does not mean beatings, although they do take place, but the creation of special physical conditions for him. For his reeducation, physical labor is prescribed for him, and it must be particularly hard labor at that (in the formula written HPL—Heavy Physical Labor) and in conditions of nature that are the most difficult. And, most importantly, this is combined with the use of physical incentives: the punishment cell and starvation rations. And if moral measures are called for, they must be exceptionally humiliating and deaden your spirit of protest: hurl you into the midst of criminals or appoint a young but well-trained educator to look after you so that he can ceaselessly drill you and teach you that when you are in the presence of your elders (i.e., him!) you must remove your hat, as the pathetic, lopsided flannelette cap is referred to in regulation language.

This type of reeducation is the purest masquerading. It might possibly make some sense economically, but it does not reeducate; humiliation, starvation, punishment cells, cold, and strict regimentation are all essential features of any concentration camp.

* * *

Days in the camp seemed like weeks. Now, it seems the other way round. Was it so long ago that they led us on walks? We made our way single file in a circle, and passing by the hour glass, we looked to see how many grains were left to our lot.

The walk is over. The warden unlocks the side gate of the little courtyard. We move along the corridors to our cell. Upon entering, you are immediately engulfed by a smell found only in a prison: a thick mixture of ammonia and moldy black bread and something else that it is difficult to define. The smell is unforgettable.

However, Butyrka was not dirty. Everything that could be washed, scrubbed, and cleaned was washed, scrubbed, and cleaned. We were regularly led to the prison bath where they cut our hair close to the skin. They did not shave our beards, but also cut them; beards were allowed to grow but the hair on the top of our heads was not.

Sometimes they arranged a distraction for us which we ignoramuses unfamiliar with proper prison terminology called a dry bath. The real prison name was short: frisking. The door opens, the order sounds:

"Everybody out of your cells with your things. Quickly!"

You hastily gathered up your pathetic odds and ends. Fortunately, they were few: a chunk of bread, two or three gnawed pieces of sugar, a lump of soap smelling of fish. You roll all of this up hurriedly in a towel and rush out into the corridor. The warden drives out those who lag behind, the owners of parcels. They drag out their pillow cases stuffed with a combination of butter, cheap tobacco, and tooth powder.

"Faster, faster! Pour out your powder! You'll figure it out there!"

We already know where "there" is: a special cell on the first floor. They lead us, with relentless haste. Hurry! Hurry! You might think that we were late for a train. No. This is simply the style. Make prisoners hurry. It is standard procedure throughout the world. *Schnell, schnell!* Perhaps the wardens have a quarterly plan of preventive measures and they are rushing to overfill it. Maybe Butyrka is competing with Lefortova Prison.

In the cell where they lead us, we take seats and can smoke. While we wait our turn, we manage to get bored. They lock us in.

The preventive measures begin. One by one they take us to the next room. They order you to totally undress and they feel along all the seams of your clothing. They also empty out and study attentively the contents of the pillow cases, even of parcels that had already been examined when they were received from relatives. They had cut up the apples into little pieces and pierced the butter from all angles with a pin knife. All the same, they do it again. They are looking for knives, razors, needles, pencils, and notes. Anything sharp, written, or pointed is prohibited in prison.

We cut our bread with a cord made of wound thread. But because the thread is also semi-illegal (they give it out with a needle for a few minutes to sew on a button or mend our trousers) we often had to pull threads from our clothing for a bread cord. You could steal a piece of thread while you were sewing on your button but this called for some deftness: after giving you the needle, the warden watches through the peephole in the door every minute so that you don't stab yourself with it.

Some wardens work by frisking you in the search cell while others during that time do their business in the cell from which you were just evacuated, turning over the plank beds, crawling about the floor, and searching the cracks of the window sills.

All the same, the prisoners contrived to make razors. By some unknown route, they would get a fragment of a knife blade and sharpen it on the glazed tile slabs of the lavatory. To do this sharpening took not a day and not two days, but two or three weeks. They would shave themselves on the floor in the farthest corner of the cell where they were not visible from the peephole in the door. I even shaved once. This self-inflicted torture took more than half an hour. The prisoners sustained a proud awareness that they had outsmarted the prison authorities and stubbornly continued to sharpen those blades. And if the blades were confiscated during the search, they made new ones. Why? Only for the joy of carrying on a struggle against the prison and wrenching from it the forbidden freedom to shave. "Your idea of

happiness?" "Struggle," Marx wrote in his answers to the playful questionnaire of his daughters. This line from the questionnaire of Marx's daughters is now quoted rather frequently in our country, but the line immediately after it is never quoted: "Your idea of unhappiness?" "Submission."

I will note that in Stalin's time this entire playful, but very significant, questionnaire was totally suppressed. There is yet another line that is unpleasant to the Stalinists: "What fault do you find most repulsive?" "Servility." And finally, it finishes with a totally unacceptable attack on infallible authorities: "Your favorite motto?" Marx answered: "Doubt everything."

The battle for that peculiar prison freedom lasted for decades and the Fidgets won.² During my second visit to Butyrka, no one any longer tried to make razors. The technology of the searches had improved and Mr. Fidget had better mastered his trade.

Mr. Fidget has been transformed. He now loves to adopt the appearance of an expert on refined philological works. After long practice, he has begun to be able to say *finita la commedia*.³ He does not always wear the uniform assigned to him. You look at him as he reads a homily about the responsibility of literary workers and you marvel: a real literati in civilian clothes. He is convinced that he knows the real thoughts of the people. He is right. Mr. Fidget's correctness was affirmed at all times by the logic securely fixed inside the windows with thickly meshed iron arguments.

Having taken a name — does it matter what it was? — he convincingly proves that we no more need bitter literature than we need literature that glosses over problems. With god as my witness, I am speaking without an ounce of bitterness about those bright summer days when Mr. Fidget searched us bare.

As in a dream, the recent past is intertwined in my memory with what happened long ago. In the 1930s the word Vorkuta sounded unfamiliar and frightening. In all the cells there was talk only about Vorkuta; surely someone wanted to frighten people with stories about it. Finally, after the month or two that were necessary to formulate the long-ago prepared sentences, the critical day arrived.

They summon us, several people, from the cell with our things and lead us away below and there lead us one after the other into an office where some representative presents to you a small slip of paper. There everything is formulated in two lines: the charge and the sentence. The representative suggests that you sign your name acknowledging that you have been familiarized with the given decision. Five years' corrective labor camp. The next one gets three years; the next, five years.

With every year, Themis took greater strides forward.⁴ After the war, they never gave less than a ten-year term under Article 58. They were convinced that the people would bear it and not say a word.

The day of our departure approached and hundreds of people worked on preparations. The locksmiths repaired the convict cars for us; the collective farmers sowed grain for us and our convoys; doctors checked us to find out if we would be able to endure the phase of the deportation process when it was necessary to go on foot. No railroad to Vorkuta had yet been built.

On the night before our departure, we got our first (and last) meeting with our relatives. My mother and brother came. The meeting took place in a big room overflowing with people. Two sets of parallel gratings divided it in two, and between them was enough room for the warden to pass back and forth.

The crowd of prisoners was on one side of the grating and about two meters away behind the other grating was the crowd of relatives. Everyone spoke at once, trying to outshout one another. You couldn't understand a word.

I came to the meeting with a bandaged head; I had slipped on the wet floor in the lavatory and skinned myself a little and they had bandaged me. But Mama thought that they had beaten me up and that was why I was bandaged. She shouted something pointing to her head, and I answered her also in a shout but she did not understand me. She never dared risk asking about the matter in a letter and for five years she was tormented by that question, which I had not answered. Five years later she asked again. I remembered and said: "You were mistaken." She did not seem to believe me.

After twenty years, Mama still asks that same question. She continues to believe that I am covering up.

* * *

Those assigned to transport were taken for a medical checkup. In tsarist times, there was a certain Dr. Gaaz. He worked for the prison but devoted his life to serving the convicts. He spent his salary on them.

The woman doctor who examined me before my departure may have read about Dr. Gaaz. She quickly filled in the official card indicating my name, age, the history of illnesses, and the article of the criminal code (the article under which the patient was convicted was very important for his health). She signed the card and then asked:

"What are your complaints, prisoner?"

"For goodness sake, Doctor, the whole world is organized in such a sensible way. Those imprisoned are guilty. What is there to complain about?"

Dr. Gaaz had it good. In tsarist times, public opinion supported him in his selfless commitment and strengthened his civic courage. He felt — and society shared his opinion — that he was a doctor for the prisoners and not for the prison. But if the woman doctor who filled out my card had made the slightest little step in Gaaz's direction, our public opinion would have condemned her. Her sisters and brothers would have renounced her; friends would have stopped speaking to her. Yes, of course, they would do this not under duress but out of exalted conviction and in solidarity with public opinion as expressed in editorials and angry resolutions at factory-wide meetings: "Death to the Trotskyists!"

"Get dressed. Next!"

* * *

A unanimous resolution of society means a great deal. Having achieved it, Stalin was convinced: Everything is going as it should. Communists have been well enough prepared so that without doubting a single one of his words, and

Continued on page 36

The Transitional Program Today

This is the text of an introduction by Paul Le Blanc to a new collection published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency: The Transitional Program—Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the United States, by Evelyn Sell, Steve Bloom, and Frank Lovell. \$4.00.

The items in this collection are offered as a contribution to a rich discussion opening up among radical activists and revolutionary socialists—in the United States and many other countries—about “where do we go from here” in the resistance to the violence and oppression of capitalism. Socialists tend to agree on broadly defined goals: the need for a society whose resources are collectively owned and whose institutions are democratically controlled, in which the free development of each person is the condition for the free development of all. But how are we to advance toward that goal in the here-and-now, and what is the best way for us even to understand the here-and-now? What is the political *program* that can enable socialists to comprehend and change society? There is disagreement on how to answer these questions, and such disagreement has generated many different socialist organizations and groupings.

In the past, major differences within the socialist movement opened up between reformists and revolutionaries, culminating in a worldwide split between the moderate Social Democrats of the Second International and the militant Communists of the Third International. Later, after the Third International suffered its Stalinist degeneration, the bulk of the world Communist movement became infused with the reformist orientation of the “popular front” period. Small handfuls of militants, mostly regrouped in the Fourth International founded by Leon Trotsky, advanced a revolutionary Marxist perspective in the face of the bureaucratic and reformist orientations of the massive Social Democratic and Stalinist movements. The picture was further complicated with the proliferation of a variety of small, sectarian, often ultraleft groups—and also with the partial decomposition of Stalinism, which gave rise to a strong Maoist current which, in turn, fragmented into a myriad of warring sects. In this context, much of what passed for debate on the left often seemed to have a particularly sterile quality, with counterposed groups claiming a monopoly on Truth and revolutionary virtue.

Since the 1960s, however, a number of different left-wing currents have emerged which have demonstrated a political seriousness that has helped to cut across some of the traditional divisions. In Nicaragua, for example, the revolutionary Sandinistas have come forward as a force defying easy categorization. Writing from this orientation, Orlando Núñez and Roger Burbach have argued that in some countries “an array of left political par-

ties makes it essential to build broad coalitions based on debate of revolutionary strategy and programs.”

In the United States today there is no revolutionary socialist party worthy of the name. But the elements exist for the development of such a party. First of all, there is the injustice, inequality, and institutionalized oppression of capitalism—a system which generates a growing dissatisfaction among the majority of working people. There are struggles not only of workers but also of Blacks, Hispanics, women, youth, the elderly, gays, and others, and of those opposing militarism and war and the destruction of our environment. And there is a growing radical and even socialist consciousness, created not only by objective problems but also through the educational efforts of socialist activists identifying with a variety of organizations and periodicals.

In their book *Fire in the Americas, Forging a Revolutionary Agenda* Burbach and Núñez offer this summary of the situation we face:

Today serious conflicts among the ruling classes are leading to fissures in the system of domination. But this crisis in the ruling bloc will lead nowhere if the popular movements and the revolutionary forces do not act. U.S. imperialism under Ronald Reagan has already set in motion a two-pronged offensive for reconsolidating its rule in the Americas. It involves: (1) an offensive against U.S. working people, including a rollback in real wages and the slashing of social programs, and (2) the use of military force in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the imposition of tough economic measures that benefit U.S. multinational [corporate] interests. The bottom line for the U.S. bourgeoisie is to increase the economic surplus so that it can rebuild its economic base and deal with its accumulation crisis. The success or failure of this program hinges on what the popular classes and the revolutionary movements do in Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States. Left to its own devices, the U.S. ruling class will very likely succeed. Only strong opposition from the lower classes and a redynamized left can stop it. The struggle will not be easy.

Regardless of who follows Ronald Reagan as president of the United States, this will continue to be the reality of the immediate future. The question will continue to be how the left can be “redynamized” into an effective force for social change in the United States. And as Burbach and

Núñez have indicated, an essential part of this process will be “debate of revolutionary strategy and programs.”

Many on the left shy away from such debate around program, fearing that this will create divisions among socialists. This has been a common anxiety in many countries at different points in the history of the socialist movement. As experienced revolutionaries have pointed out more than once, however, such debates don't create differences—the differences already exist. The process of programmatic clarification, ranging from general perspectives to immediate tasks, provides a more objective framework (minimizing petty personal considerations, gossip, etc.) within which the differences can be discussed and often resolved. In fact, programmatic clarity (what is our general understanding of things? what is our strategic orientation? what do we do next?) provides a basis for joint work and, ultimately, for a unified revolutionary party. Nor does this imply the creation of a monolithic organization. Lenin's explanation is worth remembering: “The elaboration of a common program for the Party should not, of course, put an end to all polemics; it will firmly establish those basic views on the character, the aims, and the tasks of our movement which must serve as the banner of a fighting party, a party that remains consolidated and united despite partial differences of opinion among its members on partial questions.”

As we attempt to elaborate a programmatic orientation which is appropriate for the circumstances in which we find ourselves, it makes sense to approach new realities with fresh eyes—but also to do more than that. There are continuities and similarities between the realities of our own time and the realities of earlier periods. Likewise, many of the conceptions of what socialists should do are not new (even when some of their proponents make a show of “newness”) but flow from or correspond to previous tactical, strategic, and ideological orientations in the socialist and communist movements. Some of this earlier experience led to dead ends; some of it proved to be valuable. An immersion in the past can blind us to the realities of the present and the possibilities of the future. A refusal to seriously consider the experience of the past can also blind us. The tasks facing us are immense. In developing a revolutionary socialist program for the United States, we can't afford to ignore the immense resource which is represented by the efforts and experience of previous revolutionary generations.

In 1938, in consultation with revolutionary activists around the world, Leon Trotsky drafted a document entitled “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International.” More popularly known as the Transitional Program, this was the founding programmatic document of the Fourth International, which has continued to exist as an international network of revolutionary socialists down to the present day. This document attempted to summarize the general principles and methodology of revolutionary Marxism, from the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels to the first four congresses of the Communist International led by Lenin and Trotsky, but also applying this orientation to the new realities of the 1930s:

a worldwide economic depression, the rise of fascism and Nazism, recent experiences in the workers' struggle against capitalism and in oppressed peoples' struggles against colonialism and imperialism, the developing of Stalinism, and the approaching Second World War.

This important document is available, along with transcripts of preparatory discussions plus valuable essays by Joseph Hansen and George Novack, in Leon Trotsky *et al*, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977). A searching examination of its meaning for revolutionaries in the United States of that time can be found in George Breitman's “The Liberating Influence of the Transitional Program,” included in Paul Le Blanc, ed., *The Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism* (New York: F.I.T., 1987).

To what extent, however, is this document useful for revolutionary activists half a century later?

The essays in this volume by Evelyn Sell, Steve Bloom, and Frank Lovell discuss the contemporary relevance of the Transitional Program's approach, with a special focus on the current situation in the United States. These three veteran activists are leaders of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, an organization which is committed to the unification of socialists in the U.S. on a revolutionary programmatic basis. Two other items in this collection are recent political resolutions of the F.I.T.—“The Threefold Crisis Facing U.S. Working People” (1988) and “Building the Revolutionary Party in the U.S. Today” (1985), which apply the approach of the Transitional Program to U.S. realities in the 1980s.

None of these items pretends to offer a finished, final statement on what the revolutionary program should be for the United States, nor did the Transitional Program itself claim to do this for revolutionary internationalists when it was first advanced. Revolutionaries are committed to changing the world, but the world itself has changed dramatically and continues to change. Many of the changes involve transformations generated by the struggles of working people and the oppressed. Such a dynamic reality militates against any notion of “the last word” ever being uttered on the question of revolutionary program. Related to this is Lenin's point that “revolutionary theory is not dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement.” The program provides guidelines for action but must continually be refined, reformulated, and further developed on the basis of experience—the experience of revolutionary activists, the working class, and the oppressed as they carry on the struggle for liberation.

A better future will not come about automatically or simply because many people want it. It will only come about if we are able to draw enough people into the struggle to create it. But the effectiveness and success of that struggle are not predetermined. Those who are serious about socialism must be serious about the program to achieve it. That's why this pamphlet and the discussion of which it's a part are so important. ●

February 1988

A Look at 1968

The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968, by George Katsiaficas. Boston: South End Press, 1987. \$11.00 (paper).

Reviewed by John A. Kovach

Over the past year we have seen the appearance of a plethora of books dealing with the 1960s. Many of these, such as Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, or works by James Miller and Hans Koning, represent personal accounts, reminiscences, or sketchy histories of a turbulent era. The tenor of many of these recent arrivals makes the contribution of George Katsiaficas's *The Imagination of the New Left* seem even more significant and meaningful. Katsiaficas provides a serious analysis and critical appraisal, which is missing from most of the current works dealing with the sixties. Most important, this book makes it very clear that the events and movements of the late 1960s were global; Katsiaficas provides a detailed analysis of the interconnection of movements in the U.S., France, and Eastern Europe.

The book shows how international events provided the catalyst for social movements in the U.S. and abroad. In May 1968, student revolt led to a general strike of ten million workers in France and there were demonstrations of solidarity in Mexico City, Berlin, Tokyo, South America, Berkeley, as well as in several Western European cities. Katsiaficas gives a name to this kind of international contagion, the "eros effect," and this becomes the focal point of his analysis. He recognizes that 1968 was a critical conjuncture of world events. It was not accidental that the Tet offensive occurred in the same year as the Prague Spring, the May events in France, the student rebellion in West Germany, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in the U.S.A., the Columbia University takeover, the Chicago convention riots, and the pre-Olympic massacre in Mexico City. Katsiaficas suggests that these events validate Hegel's proposition that world history moves from east to west.

Nineteen sixty-eight made the idea of revolution in advanced industrial societies conceivable. Analysis of this period demonstrates the organic nature of the New Left; it was a movement of global impact which had far-reaching historical significance. Katsiaficas shows how many of the values and ideals of the movement have become institutionalized today, even part of the "common sense" of the current era. From this perspective, 1968 represented a world-historical moment which qualitatively changed the meaning of freedom for millions of people. Also, as much as that year represented the end of an epoch, it also marked what Katsiaficas calls the "first act of an unfolding of species-consciousness" or the emergence of a global culture—a global "we," or an internationalist feeling which is the opposite of Western individualism. As the political and economic integration of the world system continues to be strengthened, the emergence of this global political consciousness can only become more significant.

The analysis of events in France in the late 1960s is especially well done in the book. The extent to which workers made demands which were *transitional* in nature is clearly detailed, along with the chronicling of the new sense of empowerment which accompanied self-management in the factories. Katsiaficas's analysis of these events helps to clarify why no revolutionary party was successful in fusing the demands and concerns of factory workers, students, the women's movement, and ecology movement, all of which had emerged by this time.

Along with demonstrating the real possibility of revolution in an industrialized country, the internationalism of 1968 gave support to groups with an internationalist strategy. The New Left of this time also showed—in a negative sense—that without revolutionary leadership which can fuse the demands and interests of spontaneously generated movements, they will ultimately be defined by the hegemonic logic of the existing capitalist system.

Katsiaficas argues that as this country was faced with the possibility of growing layers of working people—and not simply students—becoming part of the radicalized population, ultimately even posing the possibility of insurrection here, the ruling class closed ranks. Nixon became a scapegoat, so that the popular opposition could be focused on a single individual. The liberal wing of the capitalists, the transnational corporate elite, and the Eastern banking establishment led by the Rockefeller brothers, used his resignation as a vehicle for uniting the country and further suppressing domestic discontent. With domestic opposition pacified, the Trilateral Commission and members of the transnational corporate elite could try to start rebuilding the U.S. as an international power.

Reformist policies followed Watergate to effectively kill what was left of the movement as a mass phenomenon. Carter's human rights policy, affirmative action programs, the suspension of the draft, the 18-year-old vote (which was signed into law less than one month after the student strike), were some of the reforms which helped depoliticize the movement, by Katsiaficas's account. Even seemingly minor reforms—such as a lessening of segregated housing patterns in order to decrease the possibility of future Black rebellions—played a role in this overall ruling-class plan.

It is important to keep in mind, however, a point that Katsiaficas does not stress sufficiently. The rise and decline of the mass movement in the United States was not primarily a result of the presence or lack of clever policies on the part of the ruling class. The causes were much more fundamental. They centered on the racist segregation practiced against Blacks in the South up until the early 1960s, and the war in Vietnam at the end of the decade and early in the 1970s.

These two factors were the primary fuel for the youth radicalization, which in turn spawned the New Left. With the

Continued on page 36

A Voice from the Past on Permanent Revolution

While browsing through some old Socialist Workers Party discussion bulletins recently I came across an item which should be of interest to your readers. In 1971 a discussion took place in the party. During that discussion an accusation was made by a spokesperson for an internal party grouping—the Proletarian Orientation Tendency—who asserted that a resolution being presented for a vote by the majority leadership rejected Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. In response Jack Barnes and Barry Sheppard, the two central leaders of the SWP, wrote a reply in which they declared:

[This] accusation, taken at face value, is the most important political charge raised by any of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency leaders. If it were true, and the convention were to adopt the National Committee draft resolution on Israel and the Arab revolution, then we would have to say that the SWP was plunging headlong into a complete revision of Trotskyism. So fundamental a revision of one of the cornerstones of Trotskyism could not stop at the Mideast but would rapidly have repercussions on the entire program of the party. It would be genuine evidence of the influence of alien class pressures on the party leadership. This would indeed be a rejection of Leninism; and a factional struggle would have to be launched by all those who opposed that course in order to rebuild a Trotskyist party.

These are rather striking conclusions for two individuals who would, only ten years later, become *in fact* the leaders of a "headlong" plunge by the party into a rejection of Trotskyism and Leninism which has had severe repercussions for the entire program of the party. And did they then recognize the need for a factional struggle by those who opposed their course? Not at all. In fact, they denied everyone who opposed the programmatic changes the right to even express their point of view to the ranks of the organization, and then framed them up and expelled them before a discussion could take place. How quickly the lessons of the past are forgotten by those who no longer have any need of them.

A reader
Cleveland, Ohio

Mass Action and Material Aid

I would like to comment on Bill Onasch's article, "Where Does the Central America Movement Go from Here?" in *Bulletin IDOM* No. 54. I share some of the same concerns raised by Dan Rosenshine, though I also share some of your concerns about the June 11 actions. On the one hand, there is a need for political clarity which is sadly lacking in the liberal/Stalinist/social democratic milieu.

But on the other, there is a need for tactical flexibility in the revolutionary Marxist left.

At the end of the article, Onasch lists perspectives for the movement which, in general, I agree with. However, I wish to take issue with some of the rest of the article, primarily his claim that material aid and multi-issue politics are necessarily false perspectives. Material aid campaigns, as he correctly points out, are only incorrect if they are counterposed as a strategy to the development of a mass movement focusing on political action. They need not be, and in my experience, seldom are. Most of the groups that are organized around material aid activity participate in the "mass, periodic . . ." demonstrations Onasch advocates, often with more consistency and less sectarianism than much of the hard left. Not only do the actions of groups like TECNICA, Medical Aid for El Salvador, etc., provide desperately needed and desired aid to those who must have it if their political work is to survive and succeed, but they provide a great vehicle for political consciousness-raising for people the hard left may not reach, such as religious activists. Rather than undermine the political action Onasch calls for, they are complementary to it.

We also need a more flexible approach to multi-issue politics. Some of the same tactical and strategic debates are occurring today as occurred in the antiwar movement in the Vietnam era, but the context today is much different. In the 1960s, most antiwar activists were students. Today's activists are primarily older and more politically experienced, often having begun their political development in the earlier movement. Many are union activists, or the leaders of many other movements. Some come from the organized left, but others trace their roots to the counterculture or liberation theology. One thing almost all of us have in common—we wear several different hats and we usually support each other's issues. This was not the case in the 1960s. The Black movement was counterposed to the women's movement. The environmental movement was seen as antilabor. The majority of union members were not antiwar. The lesbian/gay movement did not even enjoy legitimacy in the organized left, let alone in the unions, etc. Only the organized left was consistently multi-issue, *not* the people it was trying to mobilize. Even capitalist politicians like Jesse Jackson recognize that the 1980s are different. Whatever his opportunist reasons, he was willing to point out the links between different struggles and gained a very positive response by doing so.

My point is: today's activists are not single issue. The Central America solidarity movement draws its supporters from the ranks and leadership of the women's, lesbian and gay, peoples of color, environmental, antinuclear, labor, student, liberation theology, socialist, and other movements. Many individuals are active in several of these simultaneously, and may support all of them. By alienating these constituencies with rigid single-issueism, we may, by winning a battle, lose the war. As Marxists, part of our

goal must be politically pushing the movement forward, encouraging drawing links between movements, not dragging it back 20 years. In this period the problem with "laundry lists" is not so much potential divisiveness, but lack of focus, as Onasch also mentions. Perhaps the solution to this problem would be agreeing not to list everyone's demands on a leaflet, but *publicly* acknowledging and elaborating everyone's contributions. Also desperately needed, as Onasch correctly stressed, is a commitment to

greater democracy (which means respecting differences) and a stronger labor orientation.

Millie Phillips
San Francisco

In Reply: See the article, "Why the Central America Movement Must Focus on Central America" by Samuel Adams on page 10 of this issue, which addresses some of these problems.

Baitalsky (Continued from page 31)

without even raising questions, without hesitation, they immediately vote for the vengeful sentences that have been handed down to their former comrades.

By 1937, Butyrka became even more crowded. There were secretaries of the provincial committees, economic planners, chairmen of executive committees, communists from every different rank. And the bottom floor, where a year ago they had conducted the preventive frisking, was crammed with their wives.

In one of the windows, covered with tall shutters, there was a tiny crack. The women could see a tiny corner of the graveled courtyard and outside, along past the window, their husbands were always being led somewhere. Perhaps, with a bit of luck, a woman would be able to see her husband. In the daytime and in the evening, men were led in one direction, and at dawn they were led back. But very often, they were not led but carried back on a stretcher, doubled up, shaking, covered with a jacket. Blood dripped from the stretcher, and toward morning the pathway along which they led the men somewhere and back became quite red.

The warden came, shoveled up the red gravel, hauled it away and put fresh gravel in its place.

And again all the next day and evening, men were led along it.

[Next month: "Acquaintance with Vorkuta"]

NOTES

1. S.M. Mikhoels. Here is what Roy Medvedev says about this circumstance: "Stalin . . . invited S.M. Mikhoels to play the role of King Lear for him in 1946. This remarkable actor was repeatedly invited to give private performances of Shakespearean roles for Stalin. Each time Stalin thanked Mikhoels and praised his acting. But in 1948, with Stalin's knowledge, Mikhoels was killed in Minsk. A few years later he was posthumously labeled a spy for Anglo-American intelligence." *Let History Judge* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, p. 483.

2. Mr. Fidget is the generic name the prisoners coined for the wardens who were ceaselessly warning the prisoners not to "fidget" and to keep away from the windows of the cell.

3. *La commedia è finita* is the last line of the opera "Pagliacci." (See reference in previous excerpt, "We Know All About You.")

4. Themis is the figure of Justice carrying scales.

New Left (Continued from page 34)

final defeat of legal Jim Crow and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, the objective basis for the upsurge was removed. It became possible for the ruling class to again reassert its undisputed control of political life in the U.S.

This does, of course, demonstrate the limitations of the New Left phenomenon, and Katsiaficas details the failure of the U.S. movement. He shows the process of co-optation by the two-party system, the professionalization of the movement and how it was displaced to the realm of culture. He ends his book with a rather academic critique of "scientific"

and humanistic sociology which the author shows are both ahistorical and incapable of understanding social revolutions. He also criticizes the vulgar mechanical view of reality presented by Soviet Marxism which, he says, "has become a static shell of empty logic universally applicable yet increasingly irrelevant to the liberation of human beings" (p. 253).

In sum, this book has a lot to offer both those who are looking for a vivid re-creation of the movements of those times as well as those who seek serious analysis of the sixties and are willing to apply a critical mind of their own to the author's conclusions. ●

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