

# Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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## Who We Are

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

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

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

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*“All members of the party must begin to study, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to study both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else’s say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand.”* — V.I. Lenin, “The Party Crisis,” Jan. 19, 1921.

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EDITORIAL BOARD: Naomi Allen, Steve Bloom, Laura Cole, Paul Le Blanc, Sarah Lovell, Bill Onasch, George Saunders, Evelyn Sell, Rita Shaw, Jean Tussey.

INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Göte Kilden, Sweden; Daniel Libreros, Colombia; Ernest Mandel, Belgium; Manuel Aguilar Mora, Mexico; Steve Roberts, Britain; Barry Weisleder, Canada.

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# New Challenge for Polish Working Class

## Government and Solidarity Agree to Negotiate

by Tom Barrett

On January 18 the Polish Communist Party's Central Committee adopted a resolution calling for the legalization of Solidarity, the independent trade union which has been outlawed since 1981, if Solidarity agreed to a number of conditions. Those conditions include support to government economic reforms, obedience to Polish laws, and the refusal of aid from foreign organizations. The resolution also called

for discussions between the government and Solidarity on Poland's economic future.

The Solidarity National Commission (KKW) met in Gdansk for two days immediately following the Central Committee's decision. On January 22, at a rally at St.

*Continued on next page*

## James Kutcher

### 1912-1989



James Kutcher, America's most effective agitator for socialism during the "McCarthy era" in the decade of the 1950s, died February 10 at Veterans Administration Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. He was 76 years old.

Kutcher was the celebrated World War II veteran who lost both legs to mortar fire in Italy in November 1943 and lost his job at the Veterans Administration to witch-hunters in this country in August 1948. He was fired because he was a member of the Socialist Workers Party, an organization on the attorney general's "subversive list" at the time. He had joined the Trotskyist movement as a member of the Socialist Party in Newark, New Jersey, in 1936, was a founding member of the SWP in 1938 and of the Fourth International when it was founded later that year, and he remained a member of the SWP until October 1983 when he was expelled. For the rest of his life he remained a supporter of the Fourth International as a member of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

The story of his fight for justice against the McCarthyite witch-hunt is told in his book *The Case of the Legless Veteran* and in the documentary film of the same title. He won his job back in 1956, and two years later he won back pay. For almost ten years Kutcher campaigned tirelessly against the political repression of the time. He became the most public and best known representative of socialism in that decade. He spoke to millions of workers and their allies in union halls, at meetings in defense of civil liberties, to civil rights rallies, on radio and television, and through the press. He was the only victim of "McCarthyism" who tried to expose its roots in the capitalist system and he won back his right to think freely and speak his mind. Kutcher's long fight in defense of socialist ideas and the SWP's right to function legally as a revolutionary Marxist party was a setback for the witch-hunters, a victory for civil liberties and for the labor movement and oppressed minorities. This son of immigrant workers was a true hero of the American working class. The next issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will carry more on the proud life of Jim Kutcher along with details for a mid-April memorial meeting. ●



Brigida's Church, Janusz Onyszkiewicz read Solidarity's response. The five-point statement expressed willingness to "act according to the legal order," but it did not specifically agree to any other conditions. The statement said, "The KKW acknowledges the resolution by the plenary session of the Central Committee concerning union pluralism and re-legalization of Solidarity as a substantial step toward social dialogue. . . . On our side, we express the will to act according to the legal order and the statutes of our union in the spirit of the superior interest of Poland."

The KKW specifically rejected any concession on the question of Solidarity's independence and integrity. It continues to refuse to be subsumed into the CP-controlled official trade unions. As well, it placed the entire blame for Poland's severe economic crisis on the government. Though it is willing to cooperate with the government in "turning the economy around," it warned against any attempt to solve economic problems by lowering working people's living standards—it is well known that price increases are a key feature of the government's economic reform plan.

The Central Committee's concession to Solidarity is clearly a byproduct of the spring strikes in Poland's steel and ship-building industries. In spite of the handicaps imposed by illegality, Solidarity was able to stage strikes involving thousands of workers in basic industry. In some cases the strikes were broken up by military force. In others, settlements were negotiated. Though in no case did the strikers win all or even most of their demands, the Polish Communist Party leaders recognized that the independent trade union retains the loyalty of thousands of Polish workers and that the use of brute force to suppress it carries unacceptable risk. In spite of the sacrifices and frustrations, the 1988 strikes left Solidarity in a stronger position than before.

Though the government is making a concession, there is no question that it has its own agenda in negotiations with Solidarity. Their most important consideration is to buy time for their own plans for "perestroika," or economic restructuring. They are having trouble putting this into effect. The government would like to be able to impose price increases without being faced with crippling strikes throughout Polish industry. Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski, in an interview with West German television, made clear that one of the preconditions for Solidarity's legalization (though it was not included in the Central Committee resolution) is a two-year no-strike pledge.

Furthermore, the government is attempting to exploit contradictions that exist within the independent trade union for its own purposes. Solidarity's program includes more than simply a defense of working people's living standards. It is heavily committed to Polish patriotism and, partially as a result of that, is strongly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. The union's stated commitment to act in the "superior interest of Poland" is certainly open to interpretation in a way that cuts across its ability to fight austerity measures. The Polish bishops and archbishops have pressured the working class to make compromises in the spirit of "peace" and "national unity." Within the union's rank and file this has led to some serious dissatisfaction with Lech Walesa's leadership.

The more conservative wing of Solidarity, which includes Walesa, also wants to buy time. Walesa would like to impose stronger control over the union and restrain its more militant activists, but it has been difficult for him to do that over the past year. It can be done much more easily if Solidarity is legal and above ground. (Those rank-and-file workers who are committed enough to risk arrest by working for an illegal organization tend, in general, to be the less compromising types.) Furthermore, if communication and transportation by Solidarity's leaders are easier, they believe they will have less trouble bringing the radicals to heel.

Jaruzelski and other Polish CP leaders who supported his insistence on the relegalization resolution are aware of these tendencies. They hope that through their maneuver they can buy off and further conservatize a portion of this wing of the Solidarity leadership. That is the meaning of the preconditions they laid down. If Solidarity's leaders can actually be convinced to make such a trade-off, to act as a prop for the government's economic program, then the CP bureaucrats will have an additional buffer, a way to shield themselves from the anger of the Polish workers.

Whether the government's maneuver will be successful depends on a wide variety of factors. And if it is not, it may well prove to be a stimulus to the renewed growth of a militant and uncompromising Solidarity movement. That is why more cautious elements within the Polish CP opposed the legalization proposal. Walesa has been getting some negative feedback from union activists who fear just that kind of "sell-out" to the government's austerity plan, and he has been forced to give assurances that this will not happen. Such pressure is a real factor, and it denies Solidarity's more conservative leaders a completely free hand in the negotiations, whatever their subjective intentions might be.

Regardless of what Walesa may hear from Cardinal Glemp, the real authority he enjoys does not come from above; it comes from below. Solidarity's strength comes from the breadth of its support in the Polish working class, on which Poland's economy depends. Walesa's leadership position rests entirely on the trust which he has won among the workers. If he loses that trust, all the "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" in the world won't help, and he could forfeit it very quickly if he capitulates, or even appears to capitulate, to any austerity plans masquerading as economic reform. If that should happen the more radical leaders of Solidarity will rapidly gain in influence.

The actual legalization of Solidarity would represent a major victory for the Polish working class, despite the hidden agendas of the government and the conservative wing of the union's leadership. Legalization will enable many workers to join and be active. While they would represent a more cautious layer than those committed enough to work in the underground, they would still have the exact same objective material interests as their more militant sisters and brothers. In fact, the broader Solidarity becomes, the less acceptable price increases or wage cuts will be to the union membership. An independent trade union whose membership is drawn from the most basic grassroots levels of the working class is far less susceptible to domination by priests and politicians in the long run. ●



# Palestine at a Turning Point

by Tom Barrett

May 1989 will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It is undeniable that the PLO has changed the Middle Eastern political landscape considerably from its earliest years. Yet the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) has accomplished more in less than two years than the PLO's commando raids did in over twenty. Though the *intifada* leadership is community-based and more or less independent, it is loyal to the PLO; the *intifada*'s successes have brought the PLO to a political crossroads, and it has been forced to make some vital decisions. At the November 1988 meeting of the Palestine National Council, the PLO determined to pursue the goal of an independent Palestinian state, under PLO control, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip by diplomatic, rather than military, methods.

What that decision means, however, cannot be predetermined, for it depends entirely on the course of the mass uprising currently taking place. The continued mobilization of the Palestinian masses, and the extension of the uprising to the Arab communities within the pre-1967 Israeli borders, will determine whether the Palestinian revolution is to go forward or to stagnate. It remains to be seen whether PLO chairman Yassir Arafat's diplomatic maneuvering will demobilize the young fighters in the West Bank and Gaza (as many Western governments hope), lead to *increased* mobilization, or have little effect at all. The crucial factor in the Palestinian equation today is the *intifada*, not Arafat's proposals and compromises.

## The Class Character of the PLO

The U.S. State Department has maintained the position that it would not talk to the PLO until it (1) renounced "terrorism" and (2) recognized Israel's "right to exist." At the Palestine National Council Arafat agreed to both of those conditions, and, reluctantly, the U.S. State Department agreed to begin a dialogue with the PLO. At the same meeting of the PNC, the delegates voted to declare an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza and to attempt to win recognition for it. Presumably, this point will be on the agenda of any future talks between the incoming Bush administration and PLO representatives.

How big a concession did the PLO make? Is this a betrayal of the struggle? Will the revolution be set back? These questions defy easy answers. When dealing with the question of "concessions" or even "betrayal" it is important to recognize what the PLO is and what it is not. Most importantly, it is necessary to understand its class character, and the limitations which that class character necessarily imposes.

The PLO is not in any way a proletarian organization in program or composition. Programmatically it remains within

the limits of bourgeois nationalism. Though some of the organizations within the PLO are consciously socialist, the PLO as a whole is not, and al-Fateh — Arafat's own organization and its largest component — consciously rejects a struggle for socialism at this time. The PLO's leaders are drawn from the ranks of Palestinian bourgeois intellectuals, and they reflect *primarily* the Palestinian bourgeoisie's aspirations.

We in the West usually think of the Palestinian people as poverty-stricken and oppressed residents of refugee camps or slums. That is as it should be, for that is an accurate view of the Palestinian masses and the reasons for their struggle. However, this poverty is, to a great extent, the result of Zionist theft of the Palestinian Arabs' land. Before 1948 Palestine had a vigorous economic life, with wealthy families tied to government, commerce, and the professions. The Zionist slogan, "a land without people for a people without land," is a racist lie from start to finish. Though pre-1948 Palestine was not an economically advanced, or even independent, country, it had a native bourgeoisie. Throughout the Middle East there is today a dispersal of Palestinian intellectuals and professionals who are the sons and in a few cases the daughters of these bourgeois families. It is from this layer that the PLO leadership is drawn. The PLO's goal from the beginning has been to return these families to the power and prominence which they once had.

The PLO at no time had the potential to become a revolutionary socialist party or a substitute for one. Revolutionists obviously must make a distinction between the ranks of militants who have joined the PLO to fight their Zionist enemy and PLO's bourgeois leaders. By mobilizing Arabs to fight against Israel and, by extension, imperialism, the PLO has played an objectively revolutionary role. But its class limitations mean that it is only willing and able to carry a policy of mass mobilization so far. A different leadership, a revolutionary socialist leadership, will be required to further advance the Palestinian struggle; the existing PLO leaders are incapable of doing that. On the other hand, as long as the PLO contributes to mobilizing the Arab masses in struggle, it will attract the kind of radicalizing young Arabs who can be won to socialist revolution and to building a Marxist party, and it will be making a contribution, whether intentionally or not, to socialist revolution.

## The 'Terrorism' Smokescreen

Arafat's renunciation of "terrorism" is not new but a re-statement of his, and al-Fateh's, position of twenty years. The tactics of individual terrorism carried out by some Palestinian organizations have not made a positive contribution to the struggle, and Arafat understands that perfectly well.



They have not contributed to mobilizing masses of people, and they have diverted attention from the real issue of Zionist oppression to a false debate around the morality of some fighters' tactics. Consequently, Arafat has not in reality made a serious concession on the terrorism issue.

However, as Arafat himself has made clear, the U.S. and Israel's "anti-terrorism" is hypocrisy from start to finish. For Ronald Reagan, who enthusiastically supported the carpet-bombing of Vietnam and who provided money and weapons to out- and-out terrorist formations such as the Nicaraguan contras and the Angolan UNITA, to denounce terrorism is a complete fraud. Even more ludicrous is the self-righteous posturing of Yitzhak Shamir, whose Herut party (the largest component of the right-wing Likud coalition) is a direct descendant of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, the organization which bombed the King David Hotel and massacred the entire village of Deir Yassin in 1948. The PLO would be totally within its moral rights if it refused to renounce anyone's "terrorism," regardless of its tactical opposition to it, until Israel and the United States did the same. The question for the PLO leadership, however, is not moral rights but political objectives, and it is precisely there that the questions become sticky and tangled.

### Palestinian vs. Arab Nationalism

There is a famous story about an exchange between Jordan's King Hussein and Suleiman Nabulsi, his prime minister during the 1950s and early 1960s. The king, speaking informally, asked Nabulsi, "What does the future hold for our Jordanian nation?" to which Nabulsi, who was himself a Palestinian, replied, "Sire, I know of no Jordanian nation. I know only of an Arab nation."

Nabulsi's reply summarizes the dilemma facing Arab nationalists throughout the twentieth century: how to overcome the Arab world's divisions, which are mainly the result of interimperialist competition combined with imperialist "divide-and-rule" tactics. Since its earliest years the organizations which have come together within the PLO have been debating the question of the liberation of Palestine from Zionist occupation as opposed to a general pan-Arab anti-imperialist revolution. Arafat has consistently supported the first of these ideas, whereas George Habash, the founding leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, has supported the second.

Though Habash has always claimed that his position is consistent with Marxism—and on a superficial level he is correct—the truth is that the destruction of the Zionist settler-state and the liberation of the Arab world from imperialism are dialectically interrelated and in the long run inseparable. It is true that the Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese, and native Jordanians do not constitute separate and distinct nationalities; however, the Palestinians face something which the other groups do not: the occupation of their lands by a foreign settler-state, which has either forcibly expelled them or reduced them to second-class citizenship and the jobs which the settlers consider too menial. For the Palestinian the oppressor is visible and identifiable, and consequently the Palestinian is much more ready to go into action against that oppressor. Revolutions cannot be built

solely on abstract goals: they must grow up as a result of active struggles. The struggle against Zionism is indispensable to the broader Arab revolution; an organization which focuses its activity and program on the destruction of the Zionist state and not on the overthrow of proimperialist Arab governments is not necessarily a brake on the revolution.

As we have stated, the PLO is not and never will be a substitute for a revolutionary Marxist party, but its activity has, especially in its early years, moved the revolution forward. Because of its class composition and program it has not achieved all that was possible, and it has suffered a number of costly and preventable defeats. However, those defeats are not the result of the character of its struggle; rather, they are the result of a leadership which is incapable of breaking free of its bourgeois nationalist ideology.

It is absolutely true that even the overthrow of the Zionist state would not mean final victory for the Arab revolution. The Arab revolution will not be completely victorious until the liberation of the entire Arab world from imperialism. How that liberation will progress, however, cannot be predetermined. Revolutionary Marxists are in complete agreement with the goal of a united Arab socialist republic and with the struggle against Zionism. It would be a fatal error to counterpose either one of these goals to the other. The struggle against Zionism is absolutely indispensable, but not sufficient. The Arab revolution must continue until *all* Arabs are free of imperialist domination.

### The Question of an Independent Palestinian State

The Israeli state has for twenty-one-and-a-half years illegally occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem (the Old City). It seized them, of course, in the 1967 war and has since proceeded to colonize them, and even to annex parts. (The Sinai Peninsula, which Israel also seized in the 1967 war, was returned to Egypt as part of the "Camp David Agreement" in 1979.) Israeli settlers have forcibly established communities, mostly in the West Bank but a few in Gaza, and the Arab residents have become the menial laborers for the Israeli economy. The famous United Nations Resolution 242 calls for Israel to relinquish control of the occupied territories in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel and its "right to exist."

Revolutionary Marxists have always opposed UN Resolution 242 and continue to do so today, recognizing that the *entire* Israeli state, whether within the borders defined by the 1947 Partition Plan or the pre-1967 borders, is an occupied territory, seized forcibly by a foreign invader from the original inhabitants, in the same way as the territories illegally occupied since the 1967 war. A state based on the supremacy of one racial or religious group over another, which, moreover, acts as world imperialism's local military force, has no right to exist. Marxists support unconditionally the struggle of the oppressed indigenous people to overthrow the oppressor settler-state. We recognize that in the case of Palestine, the struggle is not against the Jewish people but against the *Zionist state*. The Palestinian Arab people have no quarrel with those Jews who are willing to live in peace and equality with their Arab neighbors. This



revolutionary objective is summed up in the slogan of a "Democratic Secular Palestine," which we continue to support today.

Within the context of Resolution 242, the imperialist powers and their friends in the Arab world have had to consider to what authority the West Bank and Gaza should be turned over (they seem to have forgotten completely about East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights). Until 1988 the United States and the more conservative Arab regimes agreed with King Hussein that the West Bank should be returned to Jordan. Egypt, which had previously administered the Gaza Strip, did not ask for it back as part of the Camp David Agreement. The Egyptian government has been a leading proponent of the idea of an independent Palestinian state in the territories of Gaza and the West Bank, as a solution to the conflict between the Zionists and Palestinians.

Such a state is not and cannot be a solution to the conflict. It ignores the reality that Israeli society has become. The Israeli economy is today totally dependent on Arab labor to do its menial jobs. Ironically, Jewish philanthropies in the U.S. are supplying money to aid Jewish immigrants from Arab countries who are unemployed because they are unwilling to do the work which Palestinian Arabs are brought in from Gaza and the West Bank to do. Furthermore, the independent state plan does not address the issue of the Arabs within Israel's pre-1967 borders, who continue to be treated as second-class citizens in their own country. It does not address the refugees' demand that they be allowed to return to their communities of origin within the Israeli state.

However, since the original proposal for an independent Palestinian state, there has been one crucial change: the *intifada*. The mass uprising of Arab youth in the West Bank and Gaza has completely altered the political reality in Palestine, and if there is any one demand on which the young fighters have a consensus it is the demand for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in those territories. The *intifada* has forced King Hussein to relinquish his claims to the West Bank and has made the establishment of a PLO administered state a definite short-to-medium-term possibility.

The achievement by the *intifada* of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and the establishment of a PLO-administered state in those territories would be a victory. It takes no extraordinary insight to see that, in comparison to continued Israeli occupation or return of the territories to Jordan and Egypt (which is no longer on the agenda), a PLO state is a better alternative. It is *not* a final solution to the Palestinian problem, but then a democratic secular Palestine is not the final solution to the Arab problem either. Socialists support the demand for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. We are *for* it, immediately and unconditionally. We support the right of the West Bank's and Gaza Strip's inhabitants to choose their own government, immediately and unconditionally. That is no concession to Zionism, not in the least.

Mass mobilizations and revolutions are built on victories, not defeats. If the *intifada* results in Israeli withdrawal from

Gaza and the West Bank, that will show to Palestinians in Israel proper and in the refugee camps that mass struggle works. It will encourage more widespread mobilization, and the Zionist leaders know it. That is the reason for their intransigence. While liberals in the United States and in Israel itself don't understand why Shamir and Peres are united in their refusal to trade "land for peace," the Likud and Labor leaderships know very well that there will be no peace for Zionism without totally defeating the Arab uprising. The *intifada* has already spread to the Galilee; if the Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza succeed in their objectives, it is only a matter of time before the same battle is being fought in the Arab towns within pre-1967 Israel and then within Israel's major cities.

Though the PLO may achieve its objective of an independent state by virtue of the *intifada*, it did not initiate the uprising, nor does it understand it. The methods of mass struggle are completely alien to the bourgeois nationalist PLO leaders, who would prefer either diplomacy or conventional military means to achieve their goals. Its concession to accept UN Resolution 242 and to acknowledge "Israel's right to exist" are, without question, detrimental to the Palestinian cause. However, the U.S.'s new willingness to engage in a "dialogue" with the PLO is *not* the result of the PLO's concessions. Without the *intifada* the U.S. would not negotiate with the PLO even if Arafat were willing to make all kinds of concessions. The U.S. has been forced to take diplomatic steps toward the PLO in the hopes of heading off a mass struggle which may already be out of control. The PLO leaders may be unable to stop it even if they wanted to do so.

Regardless of Arafat's concessions, regardless of his willingness to make further deals with imperialists and to Zionism, the creation of a West Bank/Gaza Palestinian state in the present context would be a step forward, a victory for the entire Arab revolution. Socialists throughout the world should demand that their governments recognize it immediately and unconditionally, as a basic democratic demand of the Palestinian people themselves. Whether it leads to further victories in the future, or to a demobilization and retreat of the Palestinian movement will depend on future struggles.

Once an independent Palestinian state is actually created the present unity of interests between the Palestinian bourgeois forces and the masses — both of whom desire an end to Israeli occupation of their lands — will become considerably more tenuous, and the class contradictions within the Palestinian community will inevitably play an even larger role than they do today. But the outcome of these struggles is not predetermined. Proletarian revolutionary forces — within the "occupied territories," within the Israeli state as a whole, and internationally — can participate in the process of determining their outcome. But we can do so only if we are part of the struggle and support it. Revolutionaries can never abstain from real struggles simply because the present demands of the mass movement fall short of socialist revolution, or because its present leadership is inadequate. ●



# New Democratic Party Fiasco Sparks Debate in Canada

by Barry Weisleder

The New Democratic Party (NDP) blew it—and now an unprecedented debate on election strategy is under way in the party and its affiliated unions leading up to the NDP federal convention next August in Winnipeg.

Over a fifteen-month period the social democratic, labor-based NDP tumbled from first place and over 42 percent popular support, according to opinion polls, down to its traditional third place and 20 percent in the November 21 federal election in the Canadian state.

The party's lackluster and timid performance allowed the scandal-plagued Progressive Conservative Party to form a second consecutive parliamentary majority government. Despite a 7 percent decline from their 1984 results, the Tories captured 169 of the 295 seats.

The NDP's slide particularly benefited the Liberal Party which rose from a nearly paralytic internal leadership crisis to grab second place and double its parliamentary representation to 82 seats.

Although the NDP vote showed a 2.4 percent increase and elected 43 members of parliament (its largest-ever caucus), this result fell far short of all preelection projections. In fact, NDP gains, which were concentrated in the western provinces, were largely the product of a shift of Tory votes to far-right-wing parties (like the western separatist Reform Party and Confederation of Regions Party and the anti-abortion Christian Heritage Party).

So how did the NDP manage to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory? How did it fail to make the much-anticipated historical breakthrough, especially in Québec?

Labor leaders, social democratic commentators, and bourgeois pundits have not been shy to offer explanations. Unfortunately most of them miss the mark; worse, they would point the NDP in the wrong direction for the future.

## False Debate

The public soul-searching for New Democrats began at the Ontario Federation of Labor Convention in Toronto on November 28 where United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Canadian District 6 director Leo Gerrard complained that the NDP downplayed its opposition to the recently negotiated Canada-United States trade deal during the election campaign.

The pact, which was ratified by parliament early in January, aims to eliminate most tariffs and duties on goods crossing the border over a ten-year period. It became the central issue in the election, evoking both chauvinist anti-Americanism and legitimate concern about the future of social programs and government intervention in the economy.

A week later Robert White, president of the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW) and a vice president of the federal NDP, issued a seven-page letter that bitterly attacked party electoral strategists for ignoring labor's ideas and leadership. Seen as the opening salvo in White's bid for the NDP leadership (leader Ed Broadbent is expected to step down after leading the party to four third-place finishes), the letter accuses party officials of structuring the NDP's campaign so as "to distance itself from the labor movement, both in appearance and issues."

Significantly, there's much truth to what White wrote. Canadian social democracy has consistently sought to downplay the NDP's identity as a labor party and appeal instead to supposedly classless "average Canadians." This election was no exception.

But the kind of leadership White has in mind offers no genuine alternative. It puts "nation" ahead of "class." He would line up workers behind their Canadian imperialist bosses and favor inflationary protectionist policies, rather than correctly portray the so-called free trade deal as part of an international employers' offensive (led by Thatcher and Reagan) to drive down wages, social benefits, and working conditions in the interest of profit maximization—an offensive that can be defeated only by the mass mobilization of the working class.

Class collaboration, rather than class struggle, is the logic of the position of Bob White and his colleagues in the Pro-Canada Network, an umbrella organization of anti-free trade groups including Canadian businessmen and Liberal politicians.

Consider one of their major postelection criticisms. White and the Network took the NDP leadership to task for focusing their attacks on Liberal leader John Turner in the final weeks of the campaign. "All we did was move votes to the Tories," wrote White.

But the opposite is true. NDP leader Broadbent stressed his party's opposition to the trade deal both before and during the election campaign. Next to the rather vacuous demand for "honesty and integrity in government," opposition to the trade deal was *the* major plank in the NDP campaign.

The problem was that the NDP's position was barely distinguishable from that of the Liberals, who reverted opportunistically to a left-nationalist stance reminiscent of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau in the late 1970s.

NDP and labor leaders simply echoed Liberal claims that the trade deal would lead to a U.S. takeover of Canada (Canada is itself one of the seven leading imperialist countries in the world), and with it the loss of Canadian



sovereignty and culture. To this was added the usual social democratic prescriptions for band-aid tax reform and "fiscal responsibility." The Liberals actually promised to spend much more to meet social needs than did the "responsible" NDP.

### Plugging the Holes

NDP strategists had to scramble to salvage their traditional bases of support in the face of a Liberal resurgence following the televised leaders' debate. This rescue operation could be carried out only by attacking the Liberals as one of the twin parties of Canadian imperialist big business. Of course Broadbent should have been doing this from the beginning, instead of promoting the possibility of a coalition government with the Liberals (even with the Tories!) which he did "in the interests of parliamentary stability."

But the NDP shift in tactics was too late to reverse the trend to the Liberals by mid-November. The Pro-Canada Network (including the arch-reformist Communist Party of Canada which fielded fifty candidates, few of whom received even 200 votes) helped to create an "anyone but Brian" (Mulroney) atmosphere among working people. This was bound to benefit the Liberal Party, the traditional party of government this century, with its superior apparatus and regional bases. The NDP, as a social democratic labor party, couldn't hope to beat the Liberals at their own game — campaigning on a liberal-nationalist platform.

Unfortunately, much of the left was lured down the same blind alley. For example, several editors of the respected independent socialist magazine *Canadian Dimension* explicitly called for an NDP-Liberal alliance to defeat the Tories and the dreaded trade deal — a classic case of a cure that's worse than the disease!

### Québec the Key

More Canadian nationalism would not have helped the NDP campaign. But a little Québécois nationalism (the ideology of the oppressed, French-speaking, working class majority in Québec) wouldn't have hurt.

Instead, Broadbent publicly attacked his own candidates in Québec when they spoke out in defense of pro-French language Law 101 (subsequently ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada on December 15). He also disowned them when they criticized federal Bill C-72, legislation to authorize the expenditure of millions of dollars to promote the use of English in Québec, which, to its disgrace, the federal NDP caucus voted for.

By once again demonstrating its hostility to the national aspirations of Québécois workers, the NDP squandered a truly historic opportunity to make a breakthrough, despite having dozens of well-rooted, francophone candidates and, also for the first time, the active support of the Québec Federation of Labor. Such is the price of abject loyalty to the Canadian state.

A more strongly Canadian nationalist campaign would have gone nowhere for the NDP in Québec. The Liberals tried it and fared miserably there. But the Tories, who campaigned openly and proudly for the trade deal with the U.S.,

did better in Québec than in any other province (53 percent of the vote and 63 out of 75 seats). They even had the support of the Québec provincial Liberal government, much to the chagrin of federal Liberal leader Turner.

### No Major Shift of Voters to the Right

Another, albeit indirect, indication that a less Canadian nationalist, a more independent, working class-oriented campaign would have better served the NDP is to be found in the results of the city of Toronto municipal election held November 14, one week before the federal vote. There the NDP, the only party to openly and independently field candidates, captured a slim majority both on City Council and the Board of Education.

So the federal election results cannot be attributed to a marked shift to the right by voters. As we pointed out, the Tory vote fell 7 percent, the NDP's rose, and 53 percent voted for parties claiming to be opposed to the free enterprise-oriented trade deal.

(The fact that the Tories can claim 57 percent of the parliamentary seats while winning only 43 percent of the votes demonstrates how anti-democratic the Canadian electoral system really is; it makes a compelling case for proportional representation — a reform socialists advocate as an extension of democratic rights, along with, for example, abolition of the appointed Canadian Senate, but without any illusions in the capacity of such reforms to transform the capitalist state.)

For the NDP the election was a missed opportunity, a debacle to put it bluntly, but not a product of a right-wing drift in the electorate.

The party put personality in command. The leadership hoped to coast to power on the basis of Ed Broadbent's personal popularity (and the continuation of scandals and infighting in the bourgeois camps).

The NDP brass took working people for granted. It overlooked the gains made by the party in the wake of the 1986 strike wave. It tried to comfort conservative petty bourgeois opinion by distancing itself from NDP anti-NATO policy, by advocating increased expenditures on Canada's armed forces, by attacking Québec's language law, and by promising to be a willing partner in a capitalist coalition government. The only positive aspect of the NDP campaign was its promise to preserve social programs like medicare, which unfortunately only the elderly can recall were first established provincially by the NDP or its predecessor party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.

Frankly, this approach didn't work because it couldn't work. That's not what people who would newly consider voting for a labor party are looking for.

Bourgeois commentators, like the *Globe and Mail's* Jeffrey Simpson, resolve the dilemma for the NDP by urging the party to sever its ties to the labor movement. "Unless the NDP breaks out of that rut, it's going to remain with its trade union friends at the margin of Canadian politics," wrote Simpson.

Of course, if the NDP took his advice, the party would simply wither and die, for its *raison d'être* would be gone. The Canadian bourgeoisie doesn't need three strong federal parties. Then again, Jeffrey Simpson realizes that.



To the contrary, workers need to strengthen the NDP as a labor party, not only by affiliating more unions to the party, but by actively taking part in its internal life. As workers we can assert our class interests in the party, even though they are bound to conflict with the procapitalist, Canadian nationalist and protectionist policies of Broadbent and White. We should promote socialist policies that correspond to our needs. We should organize support for our struggles, both within and without the NDP, demanding that the party become an activist, fighting force that campaigns on the side of all the oppressed and exploited.

This will be part of the process by which we take control of our class destiny by forging a revolutionary leadership capable of leading the working class to the seizure of state power and the construction of a new social order based on justice and equality. Without thinking for a moment that the NDP will play such a leadership role, we know that a majority of the workers who support the NDP today must be won to such a perspective if it is to be realized.

Helping to win workers to a revolutionary perspective, and working to construct the necessary revolutionary organization to lead workers' struggles is the aim of Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste, whose members promote these ideas in the unions, the NDP, movements for women's rights and international solidarity, and other social protest movements.

### Social Democracy and Reaganomics

More serious, and therefore more worrisome than Jeffrey Simpson's free advice, are the observations of former NDP national secretary Gerald Caplan.

A "realist," and an open advocate of NDP- Liberal coalition, Caplan doesn't question the NDP's vital labor link. He's even made his peace with the party's foreign policy. . . . "Fiddling with its NATO policy persuaded no new target groups, yet distressed party loyalists."

Caplan's point of departure is economic policy — from the right. Favorably citing austerity-minded social democratic governments in Spain, New Zealand, France, Australia, and Sweden, he urges the NDP to be more concerned with creating wealth, rather than with redistributing it (as if wealth is created by attacking workers' incomes and benefits). In Caplan's view, "That means moving well beyond outdated Keynesianism as well as discredited left-wing panaceas of wholesale nationalization." (As if the NDP ever advocated the latter!)

So Bob White wants the NDP to be more nationalist than the Liberals, and Gerald Caplan wants the party to embrace economic policy that will crowd out the Tories to the right. Both prescriptions are a deadly diversion for workers.

The main result of the November 21 federal election, yet another Tory majority government, gives the Canadian ruling class the green light to step up its antiworker offensive. What forms will this take?

Implementation of the trade deal is just part of it. Five or six years down the road, unemployment insurance, medicare, regional development grants, or minimum wage laws may be declared "unfair subsidies" and outlawed. But that will take time, and provoke fierce social struggles.

In the meantime, plant closures and plant down-sizing are taking place (three shutdowns, involving the loss of over 1,000 jobs, happened just days after the election), and whether these occur because of the anticipated terms of the trade deal or for other factors inherent in capitalist accumulation, the loss of jobs and incomes must be fought.

Waiting in the wings is the new federal sales tax, which Tory finance minister Michael Wilson wouldn't outline during the election, but promises to be a substantial redistributor of wealth from workers to government and corporations. The fight over this new tax could prove to be the next major test of class forces.

The Tory agenda of privatization (Air Canada, Petro-Canada, Canada Post Corporation, etc.), deregulation of industry, and social expenditure cutbacks will forge ahead. It must be stopped.

An attempt to impose a new, antichoice, antiwoman abortion law can be expected too. And instead of a much-needed expansion of child care services, we can anticipate a bigger budget for the military (complete with multibillion dollar nuclear-powered submarines).

Following the Supreme Court ruling on language Law 101, the Québec Liberal provincial government showed that it will bend to the pressure of the privileged anglophone minority with respect to commercial signs within places of business. Meanwhile the federal Tories will continue to drive for ratification by the provinces of the Meech Lake constitutional amendments which fail, despite appearances, to guarantee Québec control over its own language and culture, while weakening federal social programs and blocking future progressive reform — just like the trade deal.

Labor and the NDP should take the lead in defending Law 101 and stopping Meech Lake for these reasons, and build cross-country working class unity by combating antifranco-phone bigotry. The challenge is clear. The employers' offensive on all levels can be effectively halted only by mass action resistance.

The focus of the labor movement, and the NDP for that matter, must shift from the parliament of elections to the parliament of the streets. To wait four years for the next election is to court disaster. Now is the time to act, to organize our resistance as working people.

The Tories do not have a mandate to destroy workers' rights and benefits, yet that is precisely what they intend to do. The labor movement's leaders say we should monitor the government, hold it to its promises to preserve social benefits, demand measures that will help workers to adapt to economic change. There'll be no concessions bargaining, say the bureaucrats.

But if our response is truly to be *no concessions*, labor should serve notice that we intend to fight back. Plant closures are not effectively fought by demanding more shutdown notice, and retraining for jobs that don't exist.

We need to demand public ownership of runaway plants. We need to defend workers who are forced to occupy their plants to protect their jobs. Production should be organized for social use not private profit. We should demand, "Open the books. For workers' control."

In 1981 over 100,000 unionists marched in Ottawa to oppose high interest rates. A massive popular coalition worked



to rally forces from across the country. In 1975 prime minister Trudeau introduced wage controls (after promising not to do so in the 1974 election). The labor movement responded in October 1976 with a general strike in which over one million workers participated.

Is today's Tory agenda less threatening than Trudeau's? Can we afford to respond to it in any way less militant, less

massive, less determined than our fight against wage controls?

Labor should place the governments and employers on notice that we will defend jobs, rights, and services with mass protest actions, up to and including industrial action.

These are some of the ideas that revolutionary socialists will raise for discussion in the unions and the NDP as working people confront the continuing Tory offensive. ●

## Ontario Federation of Labor Retreats

by Barry Weisleder

It was a very somber gathering. Most of the 1,400 delegates from the many unions that make up the 650,000-strong Ontario Federation of Labor (OFL) were still stunned by the Conservative electoral victory in the November 21 federal election. NDP federal leader Ed Broadbent didn't even put in an appearance at the OFL convention, held in Toronto, November 28-December 1. And who could blame him, given the fiasco of his party's campaign?

But faced with the second consecutive Tory parliamentary majority government, the labor movement must prepare for the difficult battles against plant closures, privatization, deregulation, and cutbacks that lie ahead.

This is precisely the challenge from which the OFL leadership retreated.

Two policy papers, both submitted by the leadership, signaled the retreat. The first, a Composite Resolution introduced early on the first day, stated that the OFL would hold prime minister Brian Mulroney to his promises: to provide retraining, relocation, and reemployment to victims of the U.S.-Canada trade deal; to preserve social and regional development programs; and to increase living standards. In short, make the Tories accountable; but how?

The second paper, a document titled "Economic Restructuring and the Unequal Society," pointed to the employers' drive to privatize, deregulate, and deunionize the economy and to increase the number of part-time jobs at low wages and no benefits. But the adopted document's solution is to pressure capitalist governments into "channeling of investment resources into the expansion of high value-added manufacturing and greater investment in our social infrastructure."

Although there is some reference to the need for public ownership, it is posed as a last resort and solely in the context of a Canadian nationalist bid to "regain national sovereignty" and curtail foreign ownership. There's no reference to Canadian imperialist investments abroad or the high interest debt rip-off of developing countries by the big Canadian banks.

The other major proposal made in the document, as a kind of trial balloon, is the creation of a "development fund," similar to the Solidarity Fund established by the Québec Federation of Labor in 1983. This class collaborationist venture of government, employers' association, and share

buying workers, invests in stocks, bonds, mortgages, and loans, and helps to bail out medium-sized businesses that face bankruptcy. It is nothing more than an ideological diversion (to get workers to think like capitalists) and a utopian scheme that can't possibly compete with, or counteract, trends in the economy as a whole.

The paper concluded by calling for an Ontario Jobs Budget, retraining for displaced workers, and antiscab legislation. But in terms of action to achieve these goals, much less to stem the existing threat to jobs and attacks on social benefits, no plan was proposed.

To the contrary, Gordon Wilson, acclaimed OFL president for a second term, echoed NDP member of parliament and trade critic Stephen Langdon in suggesting that the solution lies four years down the road. "The next election campaign begins tomorrow."

The left-leaning Action Caucus, completely dominated at this convention by Communist Party supporters, went along with this perspective and spoke only at the "pro" microphones. This demonstration of "loyalty" helped to keep United Electrical Workers president Dick Barry on the OFL executive official slate.

Contributions from delegates, led by supporters of *Socialist Challenge*, calling for mass action, up to and including a general strike to defend jobs and services, received significant applause. But the CP bloc with the top bureaucrats prevented any effort to gather momentum that could translate this sentiment into action.

The only other positive developments at the convention were the adoption of resolutions demanding more Canadian government aid to war-torn and hurricane-battered revolutionary Nicaragua, affirmation of the right of Palestinians to form an independent state, and passage of a major paper on the fight for women's equality.

The document, "Still a Long Way From Equality," linked, in unprecedented fashion, abortion rights, equal pay, and child care. It called for a rise in the provincial minimum wage to \$8.30 an hour from the current \$4.75, access to affordable, high quality child care for all parents, and strong opposition to "any legislation that would recriminalize abortion." ●

(Barry Weisleder is president of Local 595, Ontario Public Service Employees Union and was a delegate to the 1988 OFL convention.)



# Mexican PRT comrade kidnapped

**JOSE RAMON GARCIA GOMEZ**, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International) in the state of Morelos, was kidnapped from his home on December 16, 1988. His wife and his comrades have launched an international appeal for his safe return. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Rosario Ibarra, both candidates in the July 1988 presidential elections, as well as Monsignor Mendes Arceo, Bishop of Cuernavaca, many federal deputies, and thousands of workers and young people have already signed this appeal.



*To Amnesty International, human rights organizations, political organizations and unions in Mexico and in the world:*

**C**OMRADE José Ramon Garcia Gomez, former mayoral candidate for the town of Cuautla in Morelos state, organizer of the People's Defense Committees created after July 6, 1988, and leader of the PRT in Morelos state, was kidnapped on Friday, December 16, 1988, at 5pm.

The kidnapping took place when he left his house at number 56, calle Privada de las Palmas, in Colonia San José on his way to a meeting of the Cardenas Front of Morelos, scheduled to take place downtown.

He was traveling alone in a black 1976 Volkswagen, license plate UPW 272, registered in the state of Quintana Roo, which is also missing.

On the day of his disappearance, his house was under surveillance all morning by six undercover agents, stationed in two automobiles, a Ford Fairmont and a Volkswagen, both white and neither having a license plate. The police had spent the morning questioning neighbors about the personal and family life of the kidnapped comrade.

We also know, through statements by the local police, that other illegal detentions of this kind have taken place by order of the secretariat of the interior in the government. No judicial procedures are underway involving this comrade. He has committed no crime, unless his political activity in working against electoral fraud can be considered as such.

For our part, we have met with the country's minister of the interior and with the governor of the state of Morelos, who both deny any knowledge of these facts, and deny having him held. To the contrary, oddly, they assert that they know for a fact that at the time of his kidnapping, the dis-

appeared comrade was on his way to a meeting in an entirely different state of the republic — Guerrero state, to Atoyac, known as a center of guerilla activity.

We refute this police statement which has as its only goal the cover-up and justification of a brutal repression of our leading comrade.

We wish to state that at this very moment,

given the seriousness of the facts that we are announcing, we are in the process of demanding that the national Chamber of Deputies constitute a commission of inquiry on these serious events.

We demand of the Salinas de Gortari government the immediate liberation and safe return of our comrade.

This is why we are addressing the international community to ask for its immediate solidarity with our cause — purely and simply the defense of human rights in Mexico — and we ask that there be organized demonstrations and rallies by solidarity groups in front of all embassies of the Mexican government, plus telegrams sent to Salinas de Gortari (see box), so that our comrade reappears alive and well and is immediately released. ★

**T**HE REACTION to the disappearance of José Ramon Garcia Gomez was immediate and massive, a reflection of the strength of the popular movement in the state of Morelos. Simultaneous demonstrations were held on December 16 in both Cuautla and Cuernavaca, the capital of the state.

From December 19 to 23, other leaders of the popular movement went on hunger strike. Members of the Church Base Committees sent a petition to the Bishop of Cuernavaca asking for his intervention.

A mass rally with his wife, Ana Santander de Garcia and presidential candidates Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Rosario Ibarra, brought together 4,000 people on December 24 to demand his immediate freedom. In the days that followed, members of the PRT in Cuernavaca were harassed by the police who wanted to force them to abandon their activities, and the PRT headquarters in Cuernavaca was ransacked, all of the campaign material on Ramon Garcia being destroyed.

In Mexico City, the PRT called on the deputies. Four parliamentary factions presented a motion to the Chamber to ask that the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights take charge of the affair. This commission sent letters to the Ministry of the Interior and to the governor of Morelos state demanding an inquiry. Faced with popular pressure, on December 29 the secretary of the Interior requested the presence of the governor of Morelos and the Federal Procurer General. The next day, the governor named a special inspector to look into the matter.

Hundreds of union activists, activists in mass organizations, left political parties or Indian organizations "disappear" every year in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Today, the estimates of the disappeared in Mexico are near 800.

To demand the safe return of José Ramon, telegrams should be sent immediately to:

- Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Presidente Constitucional, Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Palacio Nacional, Mexico D.F., Mexico;
- Fernando Gutierrez Barrios, Secretario de Gobernacion, Bucareli 99, Mexico D.F., Mexico;
- Antonio Riva Palacio Lopez, Gobernador Constitucional, Estado de Morelos Palacio de Gobierno, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. ★



# Hugo Blanco Abducted in Peru

by Bill Onasch

As we go to press we have just learned of the abduction of peasant leaders Hugo Blanco and Luis Tuesta de la Torre by the Peruvian police on February 9. The men were seized at a communal kitchen operated by the Peruvian Peasant Confederation (CPP) in Huacali. The CPP has been conducting a strike by peasants in the region for higher prices and affordable bank loans since January 25. The police have carried out two violent attacks on the strikers, claiming the lives of at least 28 peasants. More than 200 strikers have been jailed. Blanco is organizational secretary of the CPP; Tuesta is general secretary of the CPP's Huacali federation.

Witnesses say the police, armed with machine-guns, attacked the kitchen at meal time, arresting Blanco and Tuesta. The cops shaved and then covered Blanco's head before removing him. Initially the government denied any knowledge of the incident but later admitted Blanco had been arrested. However, as we go to press, the interior ministry refuses to disclose where Blanco and Tuesta are being held. Of course they have been unable to contact their families, friends, or attorneys.

"Disappearance" is a frequently used tactic by repressive governments and vigilante death-squads throughout Latin America to murder worker, student, and peasant leaders. International protests are urgently needed to save the lives of Blanco and Tuesta. Prompt responses were organized in

several countries. In France a delegation from the human rights organization Ligue des Droits de l'Homme met with the Peruvian embassy staff in Paris the day after the abductions. In Sweden a vigil has been organized outside the embassy in Stockholm. Members of parliament from Britain, West Germany, and the Netherlands have addressed questions to the Peruvian government.

A long-time leader of the Fourth International, and an almost legendary figure among the Peruvian peasantry, Hugo Blanco is no stranger to repression. In the early 1960s Blanco was imprisoned and threatened with execution but won release after an intensive international defense campaign. Later he took refuge in Chile, where he escaped death during the 1973 coup only because of the intervention of the Swedish ambassador who arranged asylum in Sweden. During a period of democratization, Blanco was able to return to Peru and for a time served as a deputy in parliament.

Protest telegrams and messages, demanding the release of Blanco and Tuesta, should be sent to:

Peruvian Embassy  
1700 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* would appreciate receiving copies of messages sent. ●

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## State of Human Rights in Jamaica

by Lloyd D'Aguilar

The Jamaica Council for Human Rights was recently represented by one of its officers, Flo O'Connor, at a conference in New York City celebrating the 10th anniversary of Human Rights Watch, a U.S.-based organization. This celebration also coincided with the 40th anniversary commemoration of the signing of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At the New York studios of WBAI radio station where this interview was conducted, the question was posed to Flo O'Connor as to whether there had been any improvement in the conduct of the Jamaican police force and, in particular, whether there had been any reduction in the number of questionable killings that they are noted for committing each year.

This area of police abuse was the subject of a 1986 report by another American human rights organization, Americas Watch, which accused the Jamaican police force of carrying out summary executions of alleged suspects, and with killing a yearly average of 217 persons between 1979 and 1985. With a population of 2.3 million, this figure is estimated to have been higher than the number of people killed by the South African security forces in 1985.

Americas Watch also accused the Jamaican police of detaining people without charge for unnecessarily long periods of time and with beating detainees.

While acknowledging that there might be a reduction in the number of killings for 1988 O'Connor pointed out that the incidences of police killings were still high, and people were still being killed for allegedly attacking well-armed policemen with icepicks and other such implements.

Declaring that it is the rights of the poor which are constantly being violated, she accused the "political directorate" of refusing to acknowledge that these abuses exist, and refusing to deal with the offenders in a "decisive manner." She said that even when policemen are tried in the courts and found guilty of brutality they were still kept on the force and it was the taxpayer who had to compensate the victims.

Asked to explain why it was that successive governments did not have the will to discipline the police force O'Connor said that this had to do with partisan political considerations. The police, she said, play a key role in the electoral process — safeguarding ballot boxes, providing security, etc. — and this potentially gives them a certain political leverage when they carry out their duties in a partisan way.

In addition, the majority of voters are poor, and as their discontent increases over their lack of a decent standard of living, it has become the duty of the police, she said, to "literally terrorize low income areas to keep the people

docile, and in their place, in case they are thinking of protesting."

The Jamaican economy, as is well known, has been in crisis for the past decade with the IMF maintaining a tight rein on the fiscal policies of successive governments. The unemployment rate hovers around 25 percent and steep budgetary cut-backs by the Seaga government have further undermined the country's health and education services. Housing shortage is now more acute since the destruction wrought by Hurricane Gilbert.

Another contributing factor to systemic police abuse Flo O'Connor believes is the existence of the Suppression of Crime Act, passed in 1974 by the Manley government. This act gives the police arbitrary powers to search without warrant and to detain without charge. This has led to situations where people are incarcerated for months without ever being charged even though the law calls for charges to be brought against them within 48 hours.

This heavy-handed but legal manner of dealing with Jamaican citizens has now become the norm for a new generation of policemen. They know of no other procedure for behavior towards the public and display little skill in crime detection.

With national elections about to be called, and the political parties campaigning, an opportune moment has now been created for debate about how to clean up the situation with the police. But only one businessman, Sam Younis, according to O'Connor, has called for a repeal of the Suppression of Crime Act. Otherwise, no one is talking about human rights issues because "it is a problem of poor people, so human rights issues don't get on the political agenda. Apart from the Jamaica Council for Human Rights there are very few other people speaking out against the abuses."

Another category of victimized Jamaicans are those 185 persons on death row facing capital punishment. Their situation has attracted the attention of Amnesty International. Most of these condemned men are first-time offenders,

*Continued on page 16*

### Coming next month:

Lloyd D'Aguilar will discuss  
the recent election victory  
of Michael Manley in Jamaica



# Mark Curtis Defense Effort Attacked By Workers League

by Stuart Brown

In a slick and slanderous campaign against frame-up victim Mark Curtis, the Workers League, a political organization in the U.S. which claims to be part of the socialist movement, has been urging supporters of Curtis's defense effort to withdraw their names. In addition to articles in its paper, *The Bulletin*, the Workers League has been mailing an attack on Curtis to those who have publicly identified themselves as supporters of his case. The mailing includes a letter signed by Keith Morris, father of the 15-year-old Black woman whom Curtis was convicted of raping. Morris's letter asserts that Curtis is "a convicted rapist, a proven liar and probably a drug user." He states that members of the SWP (and by implication all supporters of the defense committee) "have no problem defending a sadistic child rapist."

But all of these accusations flow solely from the fact that Curtis was convicted in a capitalist court, on the basis primarily of police testimony. This is hardly a reason for anyone with experience in the workers' movement to accept Morris's claims. The charges in his letter reach the truly ludicrous when he asserts, among other things, that the defense committee was responsible for leaves being burned on his lawn in the form of a cross.

Morris says that there has been "a national and international campaign claiming we are part of a police conspiracy to frame up Curtis." But no such claim has ever been made against the Morris family by Curtis or by his defense committee. What has been stated is that a frame-up was engineered by the Des Moines police—who were aware of Curtis's activity as a union militant, an antiwar activist, and in particular as a defender of undocumented workers threatened with deportation. Morris himself may believe the "evidence" developed by the police. That is his right. But his belief cannot be said to constitute proof.

In circulating this kind of diatribe and trying to give it a stamp of legitimacy, the Workers League is simply continuing the scabby role it has played for many years. Represent-

ing absolutely nothing in terms of real support in the labor movement, this sect has made a specialty of attacking the Socialist Workers Party and slandering its leaders. In the early 1970s it launched a campaign against long-time Trotskyist leaders Joseph Hansen and George Novack, claiming that they were agents of the Soviet secret police and

were responsible for Trotsky's murder in Mexico in 1940. When the present leaders of the SWP came to the defense of Hansen and Novack, the Workers League discovered that all of them were, in fact, agents of the FBI sent to infiltrate and destroy the party.

About nine years ago an agent of the Workers League, Alan Gelfand, who had belonged to the Los Angeles branch of the SWP for a time, took the party to court, claiming that while he was a member his constitutional rights had been violated. Though Gelfand's suit was eventually thrown out by a federal judge, it cost the SWP a considerable amount of wasted time and money.

The Workers League and its newspaper do not limit themselves to attacks on the SWP. Many others have been the target of their efforts to slander

genuine trade union militants and radical activists. They are roundly despised by broad layers of the genuine workers' movement in this country.

The Mark Curtis Defense Committee has issued an effective reply to the Workers League's attack in general, and to the Morris letter in particular, in the form of an open letter to Bill Leumer, president of IAM Local 565 in San Jose, California, who wrote to the committee asking about the material he had received in the mail. The defense committee letter is available, along with other material on the Curtis case, by writing to the committee: P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, IA 50311; or calling 515-246-1695.

Meanwhile, despite the efforts of the Workers League, support for the Curtis defense effort continues to grow. ●



Mark Curtis being interviewed by TV at the March 12 rally in the Des Moines Civic center to protest the arrest of 17 immigrant workers at Swift by federal agents March 1. Mark participated in the meeting at the Mexican-American Center March 4 that proposed this demonstration. It was soon after leaving that meeting that the police arrested him.



# Mobilize for Spring Anti-Intervention Demonstrations

by Samuel Adams

In response to an initiative by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) 162 organizations and individuals have joined together to call nationally coordinated actions, including mass demonstrations, focused on El Salvador for March 18-20. This could not be more timely. The same is true for other events set for this spring around Central America, including two demonstrations being organized by a Twin Cities coalition.

In El Salvador, the struggle to overthrow the repressive regime continues to gather momentum. Workers and students in the cities and insurgent forces throughout the country continue to register advances. The headquarters of the National Guard in San Salvador were practically destroyed by FMLN forces in a spectacular attack on November 1. The government of El Salvador, despite massive aid from the U.S. government (well over \$3 billion), is semiparalyzed. A showdown soon in the fight for state power is a distinct possibility.

For U.S. profiteers, the stakes are considerable. Big U.S. companies with substantial investments in El Salvador include Standard Oil, Texaco, Westinghouse, Alcoa, Texas Instruments, United Brands, and hundreds of others. They use the U.S. government to protect their investments and to preserve in power a puppet government which also defends their exploitation of the Salvadoran people. The U.S. ruling class is far more united about the need to intervene directly in El Salvador, should that prove necessary, than it ever was about mounting an invasion to overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

And the fate of Nicaragua is closely tied to what happens in El Salvador: "[Nicaraguan president Ortega] said Salvadoran guerrillas might soon approach victory, and he predicted that United States troops would be used as a last resort to prevent that victory. 'Logically, a United States military action against El Salvador would be accompanied by an action against Nicaragua,' he said. 'This is certain. The action would not come alone.'" (*New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1988)

## State of the U.S. Anti-Intervention Movement

The beginning of 1989 saw the Central America movement in the U.S. largely demobilized. Its last major national demonstration took place on April 25, 1987. Many local actions have been organized since then, mainly around the contra aid issue, but with few exceptions—such as the mobilization of several thousand people in San Francisco on March 28 last year when the U.S. threatened to invade Honduras—these actions have been relatively small.

Meanwhile, the national coalition which organized the 1987 demonstrations has long since disappeared. The same is true of nearly all local Central America coalitions, as well as numerous other anti-intervention formations—though many have continued to maintain a modest level of activity and others have simply been placed on hold.

There are two basic causes for the lull in activity and mobilization. The first was the presidential elections. The labor movement and liberals turned their attention to electing Democrats. Quite a few radicals were also desperately ringing doorbells for Jesse Jackson. The election activity extended throughout most of 1988 and it cut into whatever actions the Central America movement did try to organize.

But there was another reason for the movement's decline. The defeat in Congress of military aid for the contras, the winding down of the contra war, the Sapoa cease-fire agreement, the reduced threat of direct U.S. intervention, and the priority given by some anti-interventionists to U.S.-USSR peace negotiations—these factors, all related, took the sense of urgency out of the struggle for many. Some went on to other social causes; others simply took a breather.

But now a new crisis is impending. And just as the acute threat to overturn the *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion is galvanizing the women's movement for renewed mass action, so should the danger of a U.S. invasion of El Salvador propel the Central America movement back into the streets in numbers.

## Building the 'New' Movement

There is no certainty that a "new" or revitalized Central America movement will follow in the direct footsteps of the "old." On the contrary, there is the possibility, and even some hopeful indications, that the struggle will move to a more advanced level, both programmatically and organizationally.

Take the question of *focus*. As we have previously pointed out (see "Why the Central America Movement Must Focus on Central America," *BIDOM* No. 57), the overwhelming majority of activists in the anti-intervention movement want it to focus on Central America demands. Of course, in the spirit of solidarity and maintaining harmonious relations with other social movements, Central America anti-intervention forces want to collaborate with activists concerned with other issues—both inviting them to participate in activities focused on Central America and joining in actions that they call around their own demands. That is as it should be, assuming the demands raised by these movements are compatible with the goals of the Central America forces, and building their activities does not become counterposed to



the building of a strong Central America anti-intervention movement.

Sometimes a situation develops, however, where Central America demands are diluted and subordinated to those raised by others. This occurred, for example, with the June 1988 disarmament demonstration in New York. The result in such a case is not the growth and consolidation of the Central America movement but rather the draining of its resources, confusion over its priorities, and general disorientation of its activists.

There are indications that, at least at present, major leaders of the Central America movement are strongly committed to focusing their activities and the demands of demonstrations more squarely on Central America itself. When the three solidarity networks joined to call for counter-inaugural demonstrations on January 20, for example, all five of their demands had to do with Central America. And the March actions which CISPES and the other forces have called will zero in on El Salvador. This is most appropriate in view of the current political and military situation in that country and the dangers posed by the U.S. government's intent to maintain control over El Salvador no matter what it takes.

It would, of course, be premature to suggest that the problem of divisive multi-issueism is no longer a factor for the reviving Central America movement. But, at least for now, those forces in the movement that have the most authority and the continuity to call actions are making it clear that they want those actions to focus on Central America.

Then there is the question of a national anti-intervention coalition. In February 1988 David Dyson, at a public meeting in Cleveland, made a strong statement endorsing the need for such a coalition. Although he was not speaking for the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, of which he is director, Dyson has substantial authority in his own right in the Central America movement. His call for a national coalition carries weight, especially among anti-intervention trade union activists.

At a Cleveland conference on November 12, 1988, attended by about 150 people, a discussion and debate took place on the future course of the anti-intervention movement. Leaders of the two major solidarity groups, CISPES and the Nicaragua Network, expressed their support for the general idea of a national coalition focused on Central America demands. So did the co-coordinator of Quest for Peace.

Another speaker at the Cleveland conference was James Lafferty, a national leader of the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean (ENC), who also emphasized the need for a national coalition. While organizationally quite small, the ENC continues to be a factor in the developing dialogue taking place in the anti-intervention movement. Its consistent and persistent call for mass action — coordinated by a national Central America coalition which functions democratically and on the basis of non-exclusion — is receiving more and more of a hearing. (See the text of Lafferty's speech to the conference in *BIDOM* No. 59.)

Particularly important is the fact that CISPES is seeking to build the March actions, at least in some cities, through the formation of coalitions. While CISPES still tends to underestimate the importance of genuine democratic decision making for the anti-intervention movement — it made all of the important decisions about the character of the actions this spring by itself, or in consultation with a few groups and individuals in the movement that the CISPES leadership feels comfortable collaborating with — the fact remains that the present approach is a big step forward as compared to the way CISPES previously called and built actions simply in its own name. Concerns about "turf" seem to be giving way to a broader perspective of trying to bring the entire movement together so that the largest possible demonstrations can be built. For this to really happen, of course, the question of democratic decision making will also have to be taken up and acted upon by the movement as a whole.

### Winning Labor's Participation

There are compelling reasons for U.S. trade unionists to help organize and participate in demonstrations called to protest U.S. intervention in El Salvador. Hundreds of union leaders languish in Salvadoran jails. Vast numbers of others have been assassinated or "disappeared." The U.S.-backed regime in El Salvador denies workers basic rights to organize and bargain collectively. There can be no justification in union ranks for supporting such an antilabor government. And it will be worse if the fascist Arena Party wins the March elections, as is widely predicted.

At a time when U.S. workers, the poor, and the elderly are being asked to accept an austerity economy, Washington is sending \$545 million annually to bolster reaction in El Salvador. The U.S. government says the budget deficit at home must be dealt with without further delay and ways must be found to cut spending. Here is a place to cut. Money for jobs, medical care, and housing, not for the death squad government in El Salvador! That is the call that should be sounded around the country.

If U.S. troops are actually sent into Central America, it will be working class youth — especially minorities — who will be doing the fighting and dying, while civil rights laws in this country go largely unenforced. Every effort must be made to reach out to the ranks of labor at all levels to ensure that this sector of the anti-intervention movement plays its rightful role in the emerging struggle. Bringing trade unionists into the planning on the ground floor is key.

Anti-intervention labor committees have a special role to play. Representatives of twelve such committees from cities across the United States met in Oakland, California, last July to assess the state of the labor solidarity movement with Central America and to plan future joint efforts. They formulated a nine-month program, one facet of which is to work toward the creation of a united national organization.

Many international unions have taken progressive positions against U.S. interventionist policies in Central America. The AFL-CIO itself opposes military aid to El Salvador as long as the convicted murderers of its staff representatives — Michael Hammer and Mark Pearlman — are not behind bars and so long as El Salvador refuses to reform its



judicial system. (*AFL-CIO NEWS*, Jan. 23, 1988) So the opening exists for bringing the issue of El Salvador to broad sections of the labor movement. What is needed is planning, organizing, and taking the concrete steps to see that this is done.

### Students and the Anti-Intervention Movement

Students, the driving force of the anti-Vietnam war movement, have also helped to swell the ranks of Central America demonstrations. Reconstituting the Central America movement should include a more conscious turn to the campuses—both college and high school—to increase their participation.

As tuition rates rise and government loans to students decline, adding to the college dropout rate, it should be easier to relate student needs to the demand that money sent to Central America's military regimes and the *contras* be used instead for education and human needs at home.

The anti-intervention movement would be quantitatively and qualitatively strengthened by an infusion of new and younger activists. The campuses today offer the best hope for involving such forces.

### Key International Struggle

Both presidents Kennedy and Johnson vowed that "another Cuba" would not be tolerated in the Western hemisphere. But Carter could not prevent the Nicaraguan revolution. Nor could the Reagan administration overthrow it.

El Salvador's population is double that of Nicaragua. It is far more advanced industrially. A successful revolution in that country would be an inspiration to workers and peasants in other oppressed nations fighting for their national liberation. It would dramatically affect the relationship of forces in Central America. Its reverberations would be felt throughout Latin America and the world.

CISPES should be commended and given support for its initiative in spearheading the call for the March demonstrations. Let the mobilizations in the months ahead renew and rebuild the U.S. anti-intervention movement. ●

### All Out for the Spring Actions!

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### Jamaica (continued from page 12)

having committed what is sometimes described as "crimes of passion" resulting from domestic disputes. She says that "100 percent of them are poor," and "99 percent" of them did not have adequate legal representation. Some have been on death row between 10 and 13 years. In some cases the men claim that confessions were forced out of them by police torture.

Ironically, while the present government holds firm to its policy of enforcing capital punishment, she points out that in 1978 when parliament had a "conscience" vote on capital punishment all the men who are now ministers of government voted against capital punishment. "They are in power now for eight years and nothing has happened."

In summarizing her view of the state of human rights in Jamaica, O'Connor believes that more attention has to be paid to the economic aspects of human rights. She said that due to economic deprivation in Jamaica, there was a widespread feeling of hopelessness, which was reflected in a rise of violence in the family, even amongst children. She cited the case of a 13-year-old high school girl stabbing her 15-year-old sister to death over 75 cents.

In order to stem this ugly turn of events, she says we need to speak to "people's right to a decent living, people's right to housing, people's right to employment, and people's right to education. I think that is where the situation is now heading." ●



# Pro-Abortion Rights Forces Mobilizing for National Demonstration

by Evelyn Sell

The April 9 March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives, called by the National Organization for Women (NOW), has the potential for being the largest women's rights demonstration to date. Originally conceived as part of a renewed campaign to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the abortion issue has been cofeatured in the literature for the action. This is in response to mounting alarm over legal attacks which are attempting to dilute women's control over reproductive choices, as well as to the terrorist tactics of "Operation Rescue" which has blocked entrances to abortion clinics and physically intimidated women seeking counseling and medical services.

Materials sent out by NOW to April 9 organizers define the stated purpose of the Washington D.C. march: "To show the country that we who support keeping abortion and birth control safe and legal are the overwhelming majority. Thousands will march to send an unmistakable message to the Nation that women will not go backwards. Also to show the country the overwhelming support for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment." Demonstrators will march past the White House on Pennsylvania Ave., and then hold a rally at the west side of the Capitol.

The fight to defend abortion rights has been significantly strengthened by the fight of young women who have joined with feminist veterans to protest right-wing attacks and to show their determination to safeguard the rights won in the 1970s. In Boston, for example, demonstrators opposing Operation Rescue have been overwhelmingly youthful.

In the Twin Cities area (Minneapolis/ St. Paul), young women have been playing an important role in the recently formed coalition Action for Abortion Rights (AFAR). To build the April 9 national march AFAR sponsored a January 22 rally at Planned Parenthood and a car caravan to the St. Paul Federal Building. The leaflet promoting this action explained, "Women's reproductive rights are in jeopardy. . . . Support the 16th Anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision, which protects a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion." A participant reported, "The rally was very young, very spirited, with 'April 9! April 9!' as a final chant." It was also reported that leaflet distributions at high schools brought

very positive results. At one school, for example, a female student asked for a stack of leaflets. After giving them out inside the school, she returned with a list of students who had signed up to go to the April 9 march on Washington.

Most of the women at the January 22 rally held in Los Angeles were also young. Organized by the local chapter of NOW, only 100 were expected to attend, but five times that number filled the room, stood outside, and showed their enthusiastic support for a defense of abortion rights. The dozen speakers included a representative from the Campus Student Alliance for a Non-Sexist Society at the University of Southern California. She called for "a broad-based national coalition of women of color, students, working women, and unionists" to fight for the full range of women's needs.

Almost all of the participants at the January 22 demonstration in the San Francisco-Oakland area were younger women. On January 25, the local Pro-Choice Coalition met and decided to hold an April 9 demonstration in the Bay Area to complement the national march.

In Chicago, 500 demonstrated in the Loop in an action put together by an ad hoc coalition.

The examples cited above contradict the message presented by the media during the 1980s that today's generation of women is not feminist and has no interest in women's rights issues. The reality of being female in U.S. society continues to subject women to lower wages, restricted job opportunities, social and legal discrimination, and a host of sexist practices and attitudes. This situation continually creates fresh fighters for feminist causes. Tens of thousands of younger women participated in the 1986 March for Women's Lives held in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles. The April 9 action promises to bring even more into the streets to fight back efforts to deprive women of hard-won victories in their battles for their right to control their own bodies.

Local building efforts are taking place across the U.S. to make April 9 a historic date in the ongoing struggle for women's rights. Supporters of feminist demands are urged to contact local NOW chapters and coalitions to help maximize the turnout on April 9. ●



## More Radical Pro-Abortion Movement Needed

by Sue Smith and Larry Murdock

Dear Editor,

*BIDOM* No. 59 carries an article by Mary Scully, "The Anti-Abortion Offensive and How Women Can Combat It." We felt the need to respond.

Scully writes very well explaining the legal and not so legal forces behind the anti-abortion, so-called pro-life movement in the U.S. She attempts to explain how women will be affected by the possible overturn of *Roe vs. Wade*. She writes about different groups of women that will suffer, but has not one word to say about women who, even with *Roe vs. Wade*, still can't obtain a safe abortion because of social cuts which knock many women off public assistance rolls, or couples who don't want or can't afford a child, but also can't afford the "luxury" of an abortion. And what about Black, Latin, and other women of color? How about homeless women, where do they fit into Scully's understanding of the situation?

Never does she raise the demand for free and safe abortions on demand for all working and oppressed women.

We believe this would pose the fight for abortion and women's rights as a class question, which is something the article only implies but never states. Unless we understand the question of women's right to abortion and women's liberation as a class question, we can't begin to understand how to fight for it.

Never is the pro-choice struggle brought to the international front. Nowhere in the article does Scully explain that in order to fight the anti-abortionists we must connect the struggle for women's right to abortion with struggles around the world — not only struggles that involve women's rights but with workers' struggles in general, gay rights, decent housing, jobs, etc.

What is Scully's plan to fight for abortion rights against the anti-choice, anti-women forces in the U.S.? She says that what must be done is to build the April 9, 1989, action in Washington D.C., called by the National Organization for Women (NOW): "The problem is not the complacency of young women, but the indifference and opposition of the feminist leadership to building a mass movement to defend abortion."

It is not a question of complacency, but a question of revolutionary leadership. Scully believes the April 9 action will "educate thousands of women and draw them into activity in defense of their own rights." She seems to have forgotten what Marx said over 100 years ago: "The educator must first be educated." Obviously, Scully needs some basic education in Marxism. She believes that by putting our confidence in a bourgeois feminist organization, like NOW, and not much in the working class, we will bring better conditions for women.

Scully has nothing to offer as a revolutionary alternative. This is not to say that revolutionaries shouldn't take part in the April 9 action or other reformist activities. Rosa Luxemburg put it well: "Revolutionaries are the best fighters for reform." But the decision is as much strategical as political. A mass movement can't be wished into existence, it must arise from below.

As was done in the civil rights movement, Black liberation movement, and antiwar movement of the 1960s and '70s, what must be done now is to reach out to the more radical elements of the women's, students', and workers' movement and bring them into the struggle for socialism. ●

## Mary Scully Responds

The most important question raised by Smith and Murdock is how revolutionists — still a small, numerically insignificant minority in the U.S. — can participate in and affect the living class struggle. The answer they give, however, is a wrong one. It leads in a sectarian direction, and represents a far different method from the one applied by revolutionary Marxists.

It is essential for revolutionists to participate in the class struggle and, in this case, a struggle for democratic rights, on the basis of the movement that actually exists. In the process we try to advance that movement in the direction of the broader interests of the working class and its allies. But we cannot invent the conditions of the class struggle nor can we

afford to ignore them by substituting our own attitudes for those that actually exist among working people and the oppressed. Providing revolutionary leadership does not mean setting ourselves apart from and above the aspirations and struggles of the masses, but in identifying with their just demands and advancing them, using the method of mass action — that is, workers fighting in their own self-interests.

The writers argue, for example, that a revolutionary leadership must raise free abortion, rather than legal abortion, as a demand today. But is this really more revolutionary? There is a very concrete problem posed right now for women in the U.S. by the campaign of "right to life" forces and at least a section of the ruling class. The fight today is



not primarily over the *cost* of an abortion, but over its *continued availability*. Only after that battle is won will we be in a position to move the struggle forward to more advanced demands. And, by the way, the mobilization of tens and hundreds of thousands of women in defense of legal abortion is, it seems obvious, a precondition for developing a *serious wing of a real movement* that can then begin to raise the idea of "free abortion on demand." The fight for legal abortion may not seem very radical to Smith and Murdock, but it does correspond to the actual needs of American women, *and it is an issue they are willing to fight for*.

It is useful to look at this question in terms of other struggles that take place in the workers' movement. If a union is on strike for higher wages, for example, should revolutionaries in that union say that this is not enough, we must raise more radical demands like "workers' control of production"? Of course not, and I'm sure that Smith and Murdock would agree that this would be foolish. So why should we raise different standards for the women's movement? Is the fight for the right to choose abortion any less important than a few extra dollars each week in a worker's paycheck? Of course higher wages aren't enough to end capitalist exploitation, but if you can't fight effectively for higher wages you won't, in the long run, be able to fight effectively for anything else, either.

The same analogy is useful in discussing the question of leadership. Of course the NOW leadership is reformist. So are most trade union leaderships. Unfortunately for revolutionaries the masses of working people in the U.S. today follow reformist leaderships. What attitude do revolutionaries take toward such a leadership when, as happens on occasion, it calls an action that actually corresponds to the needs of the rank and file? Do we denounce them and their action as reformist and refuse to take part? ("We won't have anything to do with this strike until you get yourself a decent leadership.") Or do we try to push the action as far as we can in the proper direction, make proposals which correspond to the objective needs of the struggle, thereby posing concretely the possibility of an alternative leadership; and discuss with rank-and-file activists we come into contact with explaining an overall revolutionary analysis of the situation, including the problem of leadership which has created an obstacle to the struggle? If Smith and Murdock look back at my article they will see that the NOW leadership, and the

reformist leadership of the women's movement in general, was hardly spared criticism for its failure to respond correctly to the problems posed by the right-wing anti-abortion offensive.

What about the argument that Marxists must raise the fight for abortion as a class question? The problem is actually a bit more complex than Smith and Murdock recognize. The fight for free choice is, in fact, a fight for a *democratic demand*. As such it is not a province specifically of the working class. We are in favor of the democratic right of abortion for all women, not just working class women. The only way the working class can guarantee any democratic right for itself is, in fact, to fight for it as something that must belong to *every segment of the population* in bourgeois society. Of course, we recognize that within the context of this fight for democratic rights there are specific concerns of working class and poor women which are different from the overall struggle. These, too, have to be developed by the revolutionary vanguard. But that cannot be done in *counterposition* to the broader democratic struggle, only *as an integral part of it*.

Smith and Murdock object that "Scully's plan" to fight for abortion rights is to build the April 9 action called by NOW. But anyone who reads my article can see that the perspective I present is much broader than that. It involves building an ongoing movement, and projects April 9 as simply a first step in that direction. Socialists have for many years fought within NOW for a mass action perspective, rather than the prevailing approach of that organization's leaders which relied almost completely on "friends of women" in the Democratic Party. Actions like April 9 are just what we had in mind. We agree with activists in NOW who say that this event is what we need now to defend abortion rights. It is also a golden opportunity for revolutionaries to convince the new activists who will be attracted to building the action that an ongoing movement, not just a one-shot mobilization, will be required to defend abortion rights, and women's rights as a whole.

There is no "revolutionary alternative" to April 9. The F.I.T., even the F.I.T. combined with all of the "radical left" in this country, would be unable to create such an alternative. Those who refuse to participate in and build April 9 will end up on the sidelines. They will fail to have any impact on the movement for abortion rights in the U.S. during this period. ●



# Current Events in the Soviet Union

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

*The economic "restructuring" process in the USSR, perestroika, imposed on the Soviet workers by the ruling bureaucratic caste in an attempt to alleviate some of the problems resulting from decades of antidemocratic rule, has failed to produce economic growth or an improved standard of living for the masses of people and in some cases, shortages are worse. Soviet economist Leonid Abalkin, director of the Economics Institute, stated in January that not only are economic conditions worse after two and one-half years of perestroika, they cannot be expected to improve for at least three years. Glasnost, however—the bureaucracy's call for open airing of views and vital statistics—is producing some astounding and inspiring developments as important steps are being taken toward rejuvenating the ability of the Soviet masses to wrest control of their history from beneath the heap of bureaucratic lies.*

*Glasnost has provided an opening for the emergence of historic truth about the roots of the bureaucracy's power in the vast repression of workers' democracy under Stalin's leadership and in the subsequent decades to the present. Through the opening, far-reaching struggles have emerged that, while apparently unconnected, are linked by their common goal for basic democratic rights. Moreover, even now, so early in the process, it is apparent that even a little opening can quickly become a process that unmasks the role of the bureaucracy as the gravediggers of the revolution. Here are some examples of recent developments.*

● In mid-December, Esteban Volkov, grandson of Leon Trotsky, was granted a visa to visit the USSR where he spent five days. The purpose of his trip was to visit his half-sister, Aleksandra, the daughter of Esteban's mother Zina from her first marriage to a man named Sakhar Mogline, a supporter of the Left Opposition who perished in the labor camps in the 1930s. Esteban (Seva) and Aleksandra (Sasha) had not seen or heard from each other since 1931, the year Zina left the USSR to join Trotsky in exile abroad. She was allowed by the bureaucracy to take only one of her two children. Neither Seva or Sasha had known that the other was still alive.

Seva learned his sister was still living and in Moscow from Trotskyist historian Pierre Broué, director of the Leon Trotsky Institute in France. Broué was informed about Sasha after he addressed a meeting calling for the rehabilitation of Trotsky organized in Moscow by the Memorial Committee. (See report of Broué's experience on facing page.)

Seva reported that Sasha still remembered him, five years old, walking out the door that last time. Sasha was then eight. After Zina and Seva left, Sasha lived with her father's parents and was not arrested until 1949 when she was detained for five months in Moscow and then sentenced to a ten-year term and shipped to Balkhash, Kazakhstan. In 1950, she met an engineer named Anatol whom she married. After Stalin's death, her sentence was reduced to five years and she was released. Sasha and Anatol have a 26-year-old daughter Olga who has a 5-year-old son. Like her brother, Sasha is a chemical engineer. But she is suffering from cancer in an advanced stage. In the fall of 1988, she decided to announce that she was Leon Trotsky's granddaughter.

Through a Czech historian, Broué has learned that another of Trotsky's granddaughters has also survived in the USSR, and made her identity known—Raisa Orlova Kopelyeva is her name. According to Seva, when Sasha was informed of this development she said that she and Raisa

had been acquainted with each other but neither knew that they had this in common.

● *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* on January 10, 1989, featured an interview with Lev Kamenev's son. He had changed his name to Vladimir Glebov after serving 18 years in prison camps for being the son of an "enemy of the people." He now teaches philosophy at the Electro-Technical Institute in Novosibirsk. His mother, Trotsky's sister Olga Bronstein, was shot in 1936, the same year as Kamenev.

● While Seva was in Moscow, Sasha joined him for a videotaped interview by the prominent glasnost journal *Ogonyok's* documentation department about their lives and also particularly about Trotsky's experiences in Mexico. One of the interviewers said his grandfather had been a supporter of the Left Opposition and had once heard Trotsky speak.

Seva was also invited to the headquarters of the Memorial Committee at the House of the People. The Memorial Committee, which began as a petition campaign calling for a monument to the victims of Stalin's repression, has grown into a movement with prominent sponsors, broader demands, and an ongoing program of activities.

Seva was surprised to see that the first display greeting those who enter the building is one about Trotsky, with photos (one more than two meters by three meters), texts describing who Trotsky was and his struggle against Stalin, and numerous petitions inviting more signatures for his rehabilitation. While Seva was there, he was invited to address a meeting that was being held, attended by around 500 people. He commended the group for its work in struggling for the restoration of historic truth about the repressions, and urged them to continue. He spoke about his recollections of Trotsky, answered many questions, and was enthusiastically received. Seva reports that there are many young people fighting very hard for Trotsky's rehabilitation.



# Memorial Group Holds Moscow Meeting to Demand the Rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky

The following is an excerpt of an interview with Pierre Broué that appeared in the January 1989 issue of the newspaper Socialist Action published in San Francisco.

S.A.: An article in the Nov. 22 issue of the French daily *Le Monde* gave an account of a meeting in Moscow that called for the rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky. It was the first meeting dealing with Trotsky in the Soviet Union in over 60 years. I understand you were at that meeting.

Broué: Yes. My first day in Moscow I received a phone call from someone who invited me to attend a meeting that was being held the next day—that is, Nov. 15—to demand Trotsky's rehabilitation.

The meeting was held at the Palace of Culture of the National Aeronautical Institute. It was organized by the Memorial group.

Four hundred tickets for the event had been sold in advance, even though no publicity had gone out, only word of mouth. The night of the event, more than 1,000 people were knocking at the doors of the Institute, trying to get in. The hall seated only 400, but 500 were allowed in. I didn't have a ticket but was ushered in and placed in the front row.

At the entrance there were large billboards with photos of Trotsky, Natalya [his companion], and Leon Sedov [his son and close collaborator]. The billboards included information about Trotsky's role in Soviet history and his fight against Stalin. People were literally jumping over each other to read the text.

The event was chaired by a young university student named V. Lyssenko. The speakers' platform included other students, a university professor named S. Dzarasov, a historian named Boulgakov, as well as two children of renowned Bolshevik Party leaders.

One of them was Nadejda Joffe, the daughter of Adolf A. Joffe, a leader of Trotsky's Left Opposition who committed suicide in 1927 after Stalin refused him all medical care. The other was Egor Piatnisky, whose father was a leader of the early Communist International who later disappeared in the Stalinist camps. Both had been imprisoned in the 1930s for being what was called "children of the enemies of the people."

The speakers began their presentations by refuting the current attacks on Trotsky (not the old slanders of the Stalin era), according to which Trotsky was equivalent to Stalin

and would have been as ruthless a dictator as Stalin had he won the "power struggle."

They responded to the countless lies published regularly in the Soviet press, such as the one that depicts Trotsky massacring loyal Soviet Communist Party members while leading the Red Army during the civil war. Their goal was to refute all the slanders and restore the historical truth about Trotsky's role and ideas.

Nadejda Joffe recounted childhood memories of going to school with Leon Sedov and sitting on Trotsky's lap. She remembered Trotsky as a kind and caring man. Egor Piatnisky focused on Trotsky's ideas, giving an excellent presentation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

The audience was very interesting. There were people of all ages and all walks of life. Two rows were reserved for the old-timers, that is, men and women in their seventies and eighties, many of whom were also children of old Bolshevik leaders.

Speakers at an open microphone in the auditorium included Galina Antonov-Ovseenko, the daughter of one of the principal leaders of the Red Army who was executed in 1938. She had been in a Stalinist camp from 1937 to 1953.

Galina spoke with tremendous energy and passion, unable to contain any longer what she had been unable to say all her life. At one point she said: "What is Trotskyism? It is my whole life!" And she continued, "Now it is time for us to demand our history. Give us back our history and the truth, the whole truth."

Others who spoke asked questions, some of them quite naive. One young person, for example, asked if it was true that Stalin allowed Trotsky to take a train car full of gold when he expelled him from the Soviet Union. Other questions were more complex, dealing with past and present political debates. Still others wanted to know why Trotsky was not at Lenin's funeral.

One speaker from the audience said he wished the speakers had more fully taken up Trotsky's role in founding the Fourth International. He also said that he had a copy of Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*, which he urged everyone to read. He gave his name and telephone number so that people could get a copy of the book from him. ●



And, as Broué's report shows, it is not only young people who are involved, but survivors of leading Left Opposition figures. The types of efforts that are being undertaken were explicitly conveyed by various speakers at the November 15 rally.

There is no doubt that activities such as these by Memorial are pushing the bureaucracy toward ever more admissions and revelations of the extent of the mass repression. Prior to the Nineteenth Party Conference held in late June and early July 1988, the Memorial group had gathered approximately 50,000 signatures on petitions calling for the monument. The conference, in response, went on record supporting such a project. However the Memorial activists are striving for more than a hunk of granite. They want a full revelation of history on the premise that an understanding of what really happened is a precondition for guaranteeing that such monstrous crimes will not be repeated.

Since the Nineteenth Party Conference, Memorial has become an organization with a structure that includes sponsors like prominent pro-glasnost periodicals *Ogonyok*, *Moscow News*, and *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, as well as unions of architects, theatrical figures, artists, and others. Its public spokespeople include Yuri Afanasyev, director of the Historical Archives Institute; Mikhail Shatrov, a playwright noted for scripts that bring to life Bolshevik figures slandered and murdered by Stalin; and physicist Andrei Sakharov. Memorial has chapters in 110 cities and has broad support among students and intellectuals.

● In July 1988, Memorial, in collaboration with *Ogonyok* and the Palace of Culture of the Moscow Electric Light Bulb Factory, launched a project called "Week of Conscience" for the week of November 19 through 26. From July, there was an uninterrupted flow of letters and people offering to help. *Moscow News* which also sponsored the event, in an article summarizing what had taken place, thanked a number of individuals and organizations that had devoted long hours to various aspects of the week's activities.

By November 19, *Moscow News* reports, 1,700 documents had been received and 280 photographs, biographies, and "Who remembers?" notices enquiring as to who might remember a particular friend or relative who was taken away a certain night and never returned. Dmitrey Yurasov, a student at the Historical Archives Institute, put together index cards on 128,000 repressed persons and organized an information center. There were thousands of names of victims of the repression on lists lining the walls of a small room along with hundreds of names of investigators. "Many of them had in turn been shot, but opposite several was the notation: 'living,'" *Moscow News* reports.

● That week, *Moscow News* published 45,000 additional copies of a special benefit issue of the paper and raised 18,500 rubles for the Memorial fund sending salespeople into the streets to hawk their press and publicize the "Week of Conscience," which must surely have been a sight to see. That issue featured, for example, an interview with an Omsk executioner from Stalin's time and a centerfold article by historian Roy Medvedev summarizing the devastating data in his still-unpublished-in-the-USSR history of the repression of the Stalin era *Let History Judge*. Medvedev's opening

paragraph reads: "The first wave of mass repressions took place in 1927-28 after the victory of Stalin over the joint 'left' opposition. Its victims then were tens of thousands of Trotskyists and Zinovievists, sent to remote regions of the country, placed in political isolators, expelled from the party and fired from work. Almost all of them, in the period 1930-33, returned to their former professional activities after having gone through a humiliating procedure of 'recantation' and 'pledge of loyalty to Stalin.' In a year's time, through this same route passed tens of thousands of 'right deviationists.' However, in 1936-37, all these people were again arrested and never returned to their families. In the majority of cases, the former oppositionists (or even students or Komsomol members who had supported them in the 1920s) were shot under a special secret order in 1938-39. Only several hundred in this category who were imprisoned survived to be rehabilitated 1954-57."

After enumerating instances of the escalation of the terror in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Medvedev states: "Thus upon an approximate calculation even before the terrible 1937, which many Western authors [and Gorbachev and Khrushchev—M.V-D.] have called the beginning of the 'great terror,' the victims of Stalinism had become no less than 17-18 million people, of which perished or were murdered not less than 10 million." He calculates that from 700,000 to one million were shot 1937-38 during the terror with its secret trials. The 1940 campaign of arrests in the Baltic regions and other areas incorporated in the USSR after the pact with Hitler took roughly two million victims. One million perished during the forced deportation of minority populations from the Caucasus regions during the war. From 1941-46, the number of victims was no less than ten million; from 1947-53, roughly one million. These devastating figures go far beyond what the bureaucracy has hithertofore admitted. (According to the February 4 *New York Times*, *Argumenti i Facti*, a Soviet weekly with a circulation of 20 million, featured a more detailed account by Medvedev conveying the same material.)

● *Ogonyok*, *Moscow News*, theatrical figures, and various organizations each had their "day" of events in the Week, which had rallies each evening where prominent speakers included Roy Medvedev; Yegor Yakovlev, editor of *Moscow News*; eye surgeon specialist Svyatoslav Fedorov; poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko; and Col. Khristian Rakovsky, grandson of Khristian Rakovsky, a leading Left Oppositionist who was a victim of the 1938 Moscow show trial. He was rehabilitated and readmitted to the party in 1988. "People came as they had at one time to the first workers' clubs: in order to be participants in the political life of the country and feel like they were citizens united by a common view of the world," *Moscow News* reported.

There was argument and agreement, the reporter goes on. Children and grandchildren of "enemies of the people" shared their experiences causing those present to "reflect about the past life of the country. The minutes of the affair reflect demands, proposals, refutations, insinuations—the time of undissenting agreement has passed and the time of sympathy and collaboration has come."

The following was proposed by those assembled:



1. To make an exhibit of documents gathered during the Week of Conscience permanent and perhaps mobile; until there is a Memorial historical-cultural center, the exhibit could go from city to city.

2. To continue collecting funds and, even before erecting a monument to those who perished, to spend some of the money to improve the lives of those who survived. Those who survived the hell of the gulag do not even have the privileges that war veterans do.

3. To open all the archives that can shed light on the complete history of the terror, everything, without exception.

4. To publish Khrushchev's report to the Twentieth Party Congress. "All the world has been reading it for 32 years. We are still waiting."

5. The officials should grant access to the material in the cases of all those who have been rehabilitated. The relatives, descendants, and all the rest of us have a right to know everything about each of these squandered lives.

6. To remove the names of Stalin's people from all the maps, streets, and buildings of the country.

The *Moscow News* report ended by saying "A Week of Conscience after decades of terror is so little! But then again, a whole Week of Conscience is so much! Because we now have the possibility to continue."

● To deflect the momentum of activities such as these, and without mentioning Memorial's tremendous efforts and achievements, the minister of culture announced in *Sovetskaya Cultura*, December 27, 1988, that the official cultural establishment and the Moscow City Council were opening a public competition for the design of a monument to the victims of the repression. The announcement, made without any consultation with the Memorial group even though representatives of the effort had met with the minister of culture just days before, aroused anger and suspicion that the government tops are trying to head off the Memorial effort. The Memorial group's plan is to build a museum that would include a publishing house and research archives open to the public, not only in Moscow, but in other cities as well. It has already been considering numerous designs for which it is raising its own funds so as to guarantee that the plan is fully realized.

● Memorial continues to sponsor large meetings. On January 29, it constituted itself a national political force and has taken an active role in advancing Andrei Sakharov and Boris Yeltsin (party leader demoted for his strong criticisms of the bureaucracy's special privileges) as candidates for election to the new national parliament at the end of March. It also announced its goal to work for a public trial of Stalin for overseeing the terror of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s to be held in the Hall of Columns, scene of the monstrous show trials.

● According to an announcement by TASS published in the *New York Times* January 6, 1989, the Central Committee is asking the government for the "mass rehabilitation of the victims of the troikas," the three-member panels that handed out sentences in the 1930s. TASS stated that the Central Committee resolution declares that "all citizens who were repressed by decisions of the aforementioned bodies are to be considered rehabilitated." Politburo member Alek-

sandr Yakovlev is overseeing a special commission to examine the repressions on a case by case basis and hundreds of victims who had some sort of trial have already been cleared.

The cases tried by the infamous troikas of the 1930s, however, were secret and summary, and often imposed the death penalty carried out hastily and in secret. The resolution, however, excludes those "convicted" by a troika—usually composed of a local secret police agent, a local party chief, and the local prosecutor—for "high treason, being a member of a punitive expedition during World War II, Nazi criminals, nationalist bands and their accomplices, or murderers." Since charges such as these could be arbitrarily raised at such secret "hearings" against anyone the troika saw fit, these exceptions would seem to leave standing a large number of questionable "convictions."

While this announcement on the whole is a step forward and is clearly an official response to the outpouring of letters to the government and press by survivors of victims of these juridical travesties and growing support for the Memorial endeavor, such terse announcements with the matter then considered closed are typical of the way Memorial does not want to deal with the matter. Memorial is based on the proposal that all the materials on these cases must be made permanently public.

● In December 1988, the Soviet press issued a collection of the writings of Nikolai Bukharin that have been banned since the late 1930s. The volume is entitled *Selected Works* and contains 16 articles—all but one from the period of 1923-29—and a 10-page chronology of Bukharin's life. The choice of the period, of course, is no surprise, and coincides with the reform bureaucrats' effort to try to identify their present market reforms with the Bolshevik legacy by evoking Bukharin's ideas (the "Right Opposition") of the NEP period of the 1920s. A Russian translation of U.S. scholar Stephen Cohen's biography of Bukharin is being prepared for publication in Russian, and articles about Bukharin by Cohen have appeared in *Ogonyok*.

● As far as the Left Opposition is concerned, however, glasnost has been yet unable to lift the ban. *Moscow News* reporter Alexander Kabakov followed up a statement by Vladimir Solodin, "a high-ranking official of the Main Department for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press (Glavlit) informed a broad range of readers that there are no longer special stacks in libraries whose books can't be issued to the general reader, and that at the moment there is restricted access to only 461 books." Kabakov went to check out the Lenin Library in Moscow.

"Unavailable to the general reader are all of Roy Medvedev's books published in the West. . . . There were no works by Leon Trotsky whose books were reportedly accessible now," Kabakov reported.

"11,252 books published in this country have been transferred to freely accessible stacks" the deputy library director told the reporter. "All these publications had been in the restricted-access stacks from the 1920s. Things have not moved beyond the transfer.

"The director explained the absence of Trotsky from the general catalog by the fact that weeks or even longer than a



«В связи с высказанными на партийной конференции предложениями Политбюро ЦК КПСС принято решение о сооружении в Москве памятника жертвам незаконных и репрессий, имевших место в годы «культы личности».

«ПРАВДА», 5 июля 1988 г.

# МЕМОРИАЛ

## ВСЕСОЮЗНОЕ ДОБРОВОЛЬНОЕ ИСТОРИКО-ПРОСВЕТИТЕЛЬСКОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО

АДРЕС ОРГКОМИТЕТА ОБЩЕСТВА «МЕМОРИАЛ»: 125319 МОСКВА, УЛ. ЧЕРНЯХОВСКОГО, 2  
телефон 151-92-86



### УЧРЕДИТЕЛИ:

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ЦЕЛЬ ОБЩЕСТВА:  
СОХРАНЕНИЕ И  
УВЕКОВЕЧЕНИЕ ПАМЯТИ  
О ЖЕРТВАХ БЕЗЗАКОНИЯ И

## МЕМОРИАЛ

— СОДЕЙСТВУЕТ  
сооружению в г. Москве мемориального  
комплекса (памятник, общедоступные  
архив, музей и библиотека).

ПОЖЕРТВОВАНИЯ НА СОЗДАНИЕ  
МЕМОРИАЛЬНОГО КОМПЛЕКСА принимаются  
на счет № 700454 операционного управления  
Жилсоцбанка СССР

— В Е Д Е Т просветительскую и  
научную работу  
— С О Б И Р А Е Т и готовит к печати документы  
и материалы о судьбах жертв репрессий

Poster put out by Memorial Committee in Moscow



month must pass between the clearance by the appropriate authorities for a certain book and their official instructions to libraries.” (*Moscow News*, December 18, 1988)

There is strong basis to doubt, however, that the absence of Trotsky’s works from the card catalog or the open stacks is simply a matter of red tape. His ideas are still anathema to the bureaucracy.

From January 1, 1989, however, Soviet readers will be able to buy *The* [London] *Times*, *Le Monde*, *International Herald-Tribune* — “a total of 40 different newspapers from nearly 20 capitalist countries,” according to an announcement by the head of the Central Agency for Foreign Publications. (*MN*, December 25, 1988) But the truth about the fight of the Left Opposition to defend the revolution and a Marxist program against bureaucratic degeneration cannot be concealed forever. The worst slanders against Trotsky emanating from the Moscow trials are no longer repeated. Trotsky’s role as a leading figure in the October revolution and the defense of the revolution during the civil war are now being recognized. However new slanders, or rather warmed-over slanders from the early years of Stalinism, are being advanced to cloud popular impressions of his work — that he was “ruthless,” would have been as evil as Stalin had he defeated him in the “power struggle,” “was poisoned by ambition,” etc. — all of which can be advanced because the historic documents are still unavailable.

However, they are getting ever closer to the surface.

● The *Moscow News* of January 22, 1989, carried a ten-column centerfold spread by its editor Yegor Yakovlev entitled “The Last Incident: Summary of the Drama of Vladimir Ilyich.” The article is about Lenin’s deathbed struggle against Stalin over the nationalities question — the Georgian affair and the nature of the Soviet Constitution. It is a remarkable article that describes how the ill Lenin was deliberately isolated from the rank and file and from the course of important unfolding events by the increasingly bureaucratized apparatus headed by Stalin who deceived Lenin into believing that his ideas were being implemented. The article includes a description of Lenin’s determination

in the final days before his stroke of March 1923, that removed him from political life, to form a bloc with Trotsky on the national question against Stalin and the apparatus at the upcoming Twelfth Party Congress. But, unfortunately, in the sham version of history Yakovlev advances, “Trotsky, referring to illness, reported that he could hardly fulfill Lenin’s request.” And that — ill-informed readers are to believe — was that. It is as if the agreement of Lenin and Trotsky on this and other vital questions and the formation of the Left Opposition that was to emerge publicly in October of 1923 over precisely these same issues never happened.

This admission by the bureaucracy, under pressure from forces like Memorial, points up the common goals of those today who are struggling for basic democratic rights. It is not only a partial restoration of history but a revelation of the source of the oppression of non-Russians in the USSR today. By admitting as this article does that the USSR Constitution of 1924 was in violation of Lenin’s final conclusions on relations with non-Russians, the bureaucracy undermines the revolutionary legitimacy of the incorporation of Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh into the Azerbaijan Republic sanctioned by that Constitution, the defense of which by the current ruling bureaucrats has already caused massive dislocation, suffering, and death in Armenia as well as Azerbaijan. In fact, these revelations vindicate the Armenian struggle for the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

*Moscow News* is not a mass publication like *Pravda* or *Izvestia*. While it is printed in five languages and distributed internationally, its total run in Russian is only 250,000. Thus these admissions in *Moscow News* of these early maneuverings of Stalin and the bureaucratic apparatus against Lenin and the revolution will not directly reach a wide audience in the USSR. But the fact that the heirs of Stalin have felt obliged, under the current pressure, to reveal them at all shows how tenuous is the position of the bureaucracy once it can no longer control access to information. ●



# Conversations in the USSR

## Diary of a Trip (part 2)

by David Seppo

*The following is a slightly edited version of a diary of conversations, observations, and reflections that I kept last spring and summer while on an academic exchange in the Soviet Union, mostly in Moscow. Although the limitations of such a personal record are obvious, I have decided to publish it in the hope that the reader will find it of interest, while drawing his or her own conclusions. I am a Marxist and I teach mathematics. I am fluent in Russian and over the past few years I have made several trips to the Soviet Union.*

*(The first part of this report appeared in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism No. 60, it will be concluded in the next issue.)*

**June 20:** I finally met A and M today, two economists whose work I had accidentally come upon in the periodicals section of the library back at home. They work at one of the central economic institutes.

This turned into a truly joyous meeting when we realized how close our ideas were. That joy reflects the isolation experienced by genuine Marxists in the Moscow intellectual milieu. A and M are not opposed to the use of certain market elements in the economy. But to them, this is a secondary, even technical, question that evades the fundamental issue, which is social and political: the transformation of property relations, the creation of the much-sought-after owner, a collective owner, consisting of the whole nation. This can be achieved only through authentic, thoroughgoing democratization of economic management at all levels, including and especially the central level. The current reform documents envisage democratization really only at the enterprise level. But, according to A and M, most workers see little point in the "labor collective councils" and the election of directors as long as relations between management and the ministries remain the same and the ministries and central authorities are not subject to democratic control.

For them, "democratization" is not merely an external condition to facilitate carrying out the economic reform. Democracy is the very essence of the reform. Unlike most other social scientists I have spoken too, A and M do not fear giving real power to the people. They say that a person does not learn to swim by sitting on the shore for twenty years and watching others perform. It is necessary to get right into the water, maybe swallow a few mouthfuls in the process, but one only learns from one's errors. They reject the widespread view that economic efficiency and socialist ideals are essentially incompatible. The task is to build socialism. Genuine democratization itself would at once yield economic results.

They have no illusions about the present regime's intentions: democracy can only result from a movement from below. M is rather more cautious than A in expressing his views. On the other hand, A, always playing the cynic, suggests it will be another hundred years before the people take power. But he admits that no one really knows the industrial workers, their consciousness. The only workers most people

with higher education come into contact with are in the retail sales and services sector, which are thoroughly corrupt.

These are both respected economists and hold prestigious posts, but so far they have published only in scholarly journals with a limited circulation. They want to begin writing for the more popular thick journals, though they have doubts about their chances of getting published there. They are very curious about the dominant currents in Western social science. When I tell of the decline of Marxism in academia over the last ten years, A quips that we are probably among the last few Marxists left.

**June 21:** Vera brought me into her plastics factory this afternoon. One of the loaders took me around. He thought I was looking for work there and had come to look the place over. I said I was a friend of Grisha and just looking around. He, nor anyone else, seemed surprised at my questions. Everyone told me that nothing had changed with the perestroika. One woman just waived my question away: The perestroika is not for us. That word "us" is something to keep in mind when sociologists say there is no working class. I should have asked whom the perestroika is for.

The loader I walked around with showed me the changing room, replete with shower, that the loaders only recently won. Had they achieved this through their trade union? I asked. No, that is a completely useless organization. The loaders went directly to the director with their demand. Had he refused, they would have gone higher—I assume to the ministry or to the city party apparatus.

All the workers readily spoke of the bad conditions: the absence of machines for lifting heavy loads, the bad air and poor ventilation. Of course, I've seen factories this bad at home, though Igor claims that the industrial health and safety record in the Soviet Union is the worst of any industrialized country. The statistics have traditionally been top secret. I don't know if this is changing. The pace of work did not seem terribly intense, except in the shop where they make briefcases and folders. These are all women, and they can earn up to 260 rubles, if materials arrive regularly, which is far from always the case. In the metal shop, all the workers are men. I was told that this is because the work is hard. It



does not seem harder than that of the sorters, though it is more skilled and better paid.

I was struck by the friendly relations and rather cheerful atmosphere among the workers. This is something I have noticed in white-collar workplaces too. Some people have mentioned this as one of the positive reasons for coming to work. A group of workers I shared a cigarette break with told me that they like their shop director: he is a good man and treats them with consideration. Worker-management relations in the Soviet Union seem much more personalized than in the West, though this should change if the reform is carried out.

In general, my impression is that the reform has not really affected most enterprises to a sufficiently concrete degree for the workers to understand the stakes. But it's a big country. A and M, my Marxist economists, told me that in some enterprises management has been squeezing the workers. Recently the papers have published accounts of conflicts over the arbitrary reclassification of workers, and even entire shops and enterprises, to lower skill grades. The reform calls for raising wage rates, but this is not to occur through larger state budget outlays but rather through savings effected by the enterprises. To show compliance with the reform, some directors found an easy way out: they raised wage rates but reassigned the workers to lower skill grades. In a survey of 120 large enterprises published the other day in *Sotsialisticheskaya industriya*, 31 percent of the respondents said they felt no changes in the wage system, as opposed to 61 percent in 1987. But 14 percent felt the changes were for the worse, as opposed to 3 percent last year, and 15 percent evaluated them positively, as opposed to 10 percent last year. Thirty percent of the respondents are somehow not accounted for.

**June 22:** In an article by economist V, whom A and M mentioned as one of the few people close to their views, the interesting point is made that June 1988 is midway in the current plan. This is when the basic objectives for the next plan are decided. Yet no one outside of the small circle of the top party and government leaders knows what these are, what alternatives have been rejected and why. After a while, the "plan proposal" will be submitted for "public discussion," but all that will be left is some elaboration and balancing. V offers the example of the huge industrial complex planned in Elabug—no one knows what is going to be produced there (it may not even have been decided) or if this huge investment is socially and economically justified. This article appeared in the party theoretical journal *Kommunist*.

Last year a joint government-party decision provided for "glasnost" and public discussion in the process of elaboration of plans, laws, etc. But what could be more crucial than the five-year plan? So far, democratization and glasnost have been diverted into the least dangerous channels.

I saw the movie *Cold Summer of '53*. Two political ex-convicts save an isolated village from a band of amnestied criminals, while the village officials display cowardice and venality. A powerful anti-Stalinist film. Leaving the theater, the audience was completely silent.

**June 23:** I met economist V today, the author of the article in *Kommunist*. Like A and M, he does not hedge his support

for democracy. Nothing, he says, will be achieved if the initiative continues to come from above. He eagerly looks for signs of popular awakening and finds some cause for hope, especially in the movements that have taken a national form, in Armenia and the Baltic. It is also clear that if the Yeltsin affair had occurred in July instead of the winter, there would have been massive demonstrations: things have moved quite a way since then. He explains the dominance of radical marketeers by ignorance rather than any kind of social interest. As for the political leadership, Gorbachev for much of his career dealt with agriculture and is naturally attracted to market solutions. Generally, they are pragmatists on top.

V argues that there never was planning in the Soviet Union, and least of all under Brezhnev. Under Stalin, at least, the basic priorities set for the plans were achieved. Under Brezhnev the major goals of the plans were never achieved. The ministries developed into fiefs, and the plan was more or less a synthesis of the corporatist interests of the different hierarchies.

V feels that if profit becomes the main incentive even in a regulated market system, the contradictions between the general, collective interest and that of the more or less autonomous enterprises will remain unresolvable. The basic problem of the existing system—the center's incapacity to make the various economic actors behave in a way that furthers the centrally set goals (supposedly the national interest)—will remain, and possibly worsen. This contradiction cannot be resolved without the creation of a basic sense of social solidarity, the desire to work for the collective good as a central, though not exclusive incentive, something that can happen only with democratic management of the economy. At the same time, V says, that at present the central state tries to plan and administer too much of the economy. The direct role of the center should be limited to the spheres of health care, defense, technological development, education, ecology, regional development, employment—areas and issues that cannot be dealt with by the enterprises or local government.

V does not see the price reform yielding positive results, though the current price system does give rise to a whole series of negative phenomena. For example, the state purchases meat at a much higher price than what it then sells it for, and this retail price is about half that on the private market. As a result, one can rarely find decent meat in the government stores. The butcher sells it at twice the government price under the table to his own selected clientele. The butcher is not stealing from the state, which the butcher pays for the meat. But the most likely scenario after the price reform is a rapid return to the prereform situation, only at a higher level of prices. And the political costs could be great.

Again, there was a certain joy in finding someone who shares your basic point of view. This is so rare that I sometimes do wonder if I am really not out of touch with Soviet reality. When I half-jokingly called V a dissident, he was at first taken aback, but after a moment he agreed with a laugh.

**June 25:** I have come to Leningrad to a conference on the labor collective councils organized by the *Perestroika* club. Waiting to go in, I saw a long line in front of a newspaper kiosk across the street. The interest with which people devour the press is amazing. It's not unusual for people to



buy four or five papers at a time. They even run out of *Izvestiya*.

The labor collective councils are the creation of the economic reform. They are elected by the entire workforce and formally have broad powers in enterprise management, though a closer reading of the law raises some doubts. Even under Brezhnev the workers, on paper, had a lot of power in the factories. The audience at this conference is very different from the conference of informals in Moscow: the average age is somewhat older and there are many workers, council activists. About 10 percent are women and half are party members, judging by the hands raised in response to a question about political affiliation. Compared to what I have seen of the Moscow club movement, this is an impressive affair: it has a concrete theme and has attracted people who are far from marginal.

Nevertheless, I can't help feeling a certain disappointment. Practically all the speakers say their councils have very little impact in the factories because of managerial opposition and general indifference on the part of the workers. But instead of discussing practical measures to mobilize the workers and make the councils real centers of power, they propose new laws and amendments that are supposed to breathe life into the councils. So again it is a question of petitioning the regime. The theme of the conference is "self-management," but the discussion rarely leaves the enterprise level. What of "self-management" at the provincial, republic, and all-union levels? Don't the people have interests that require at least some economic regulation and decision at these levels? How much autonomy should enterprises have under "self-management"? These questions are not really addressed.

A functionary in the Leningrad provincial trade union committee takes the floor. A dull, untalented speaker, who reads from a prepared text and even loses his place a few times. He says that some of the proposals made here contradict the law. Someone shouts from the audience: But that's just the point—we want to change the law. I am told that such posts are considered a form of honorary retirement for functionaries from other hierarchies.

A worker sitting next to me, who had to leave early, asked me if I would hand in his questionnaire. I took a glance at it. He is a metalworker, a member of the labor collective council in a factory with 350 employees (small by Soviet standards). He complains very strongly of the opposition on the part of management to the activity of the council, of anti-democratic methods used to subvert the elections. The most burning issues at present in the factory are the review of skill classifications and wages. From his answers, it seems that he would like the council to deal before all else with the questions of social benefits, wages, and the general defense of the workers' interests, i.e., the council should do what the trade union is supposed to be doing but is not. All rank-and-file speakers were unequivocal on this score: the trade unions are useless. Actually, one can read the same thing practically every day in letters and articles in the central trade union paper *Trud*, which has been exhorting the unions to reform themselves. Yet, nothing happens.

According to the metalworker's answers, the council has had little impact in the enterprise. Besides management's

resistance, he complains of the indifference and passivity of the workers in relation to the council. At least in part, there is a vicious circle here: the workers see the council's powerlessness and so refuse to give it the active support that might change this. Of course, this is a big "might," given the workers' past experience. I suppose one shouldn't be surprised at their skepticism. Igor (the club activist) is of the opinion that the trade unions have not become real workers' organizations mainly because the workers refuse to use the powers that they formally have: they have been corrupted by the informal patronage links between them and management that make the Soviet factory so different from its capitalist counterpart. I asked Volodya (who works in the Moscow electronics factory) about this. He said it is mainly a question of repression on the part of management. In his factory there have been a number of blocked attempts to elect delegates who would genuinely represent the workers' interests. At the same time, he pointed out that the workers, even without trade unions, have means of defending their immediate interests.

**June 26:** I attended a rather large legal demonstration—400-500 people—called by the "Democratic Union," the largest of the non-socialist clubs. People were invited to bring their own posters and express their will before the party conference. The posters called for democracy, soviet power, dismantling of the KGB, a return to socialist principles. The demonstration ended up in the park near Smolny. The "Democratic Union" more or less monopolized the speaker's platform. Typically, they organized the demonstration without consulting the other clubs. The main speaker announced that DM had just proclaimed itself a party. Then he began an attack against Stalin and Stalinism that ended with a cautious attack against Lenin. The applause was thin—these people, for the most part, had not come to a DM demonstration. At one point a fight broke out—a couple of people were taunting a Komsomol functionary, daring him to speak to the crowd.

**June 27:** Back in Moscow. *Nedelya*, *Izvestiya's* weekly supplement, has an account of a three-day conference in Novosibirsk on social and economic problems. This gathering of social scientists from all over the Soviet Union was organized by Zaslavskaya on the fifth anniversary of the conference at which she gave her famous report, offering an analysis of what ails the economy and of the divergent interests in Soviet society. When this report was leaked to the West, Zaslavskaya was officially censured. The author of the *Nedelya* article, an economist, notes how timid that report was compared to what is commonly published in the media today.

What first struck me as curious in this account is the term "responsible democracy." But as I read on, its meaning became clear. Summing up the analyses presented at the conference, the author notes that conservative forces in the country can find support in stereotypes, traditions, and prejudices of mass consciousness. A crisis could develop over unpopular economic measures, such as price rises, widespread layoffs, etc. Therefore, economic measures must be acceptable to the people and include social cushions to soften the blows. Who is for and against the transformation?



Unskilled workers and various declassé elements are opposed. Skilled workers are for democratization but distrust economic reform. Enterprise managers are for reform but not democracy. Functionaries in the various hierarchies oppose both. And—you guessed it—“workers in creative labor” and specialists support both democracy and the economic reform.

It's obviously the mistrust of the workers to (*this*) economic reform (I have seen no evidence for opposition to democratization among unskilled workers) that explains the use of the term “responsible democracy.” For, the article goes on, the reform cannot be both “deep and soft.” It requires “harsh and sometimes unpopular” measures. On the other hand, the reforms activate the people, but they mobilize in favor of “democracy of desires.” Unfortunately, “democracy of responsibility” lags far behind. It's the call for Cavaignac again.

I spoke again with A, the Marxist economist, about this. He was at the Novosibirsk conference and he says that the *Nedelya* report was much milder than what actually was said—speaker after speaker called for a firm hand. Well, so much for the democratic traditions of the Russian intelligentsia. (Actually, if one takes a closer look at 1917, these traditions don't appear that democratic after all.) It's not democracy they want but “rule of law” and more or less free enterprise.

As for the workers, perhaps those in trade and services are opposed to change. But A agrees that even these people are sick of the anarchy they find at work and of the contempt in which most people hold them. They would readily, if offered the chance and a decent wage (sales and service workers are paid half the wages of industrial workers), opt to work in normal conditions, without stealing.

The more I talk with workers, the clearer it becomes that the organized anarchy in the factories and the arrhythmic pace of work that necessitates so much overtime and “black Saturdays,” wreaking havoc with family life and leisure, are a major source of dissatisfaction. Vitya, recently promoted to foreman at a large Moscow auto plant, told me that the workers' most important immediate concerns are wages and overtime. The hardest thing he has to do as foreman is to ask workers to stay late. He also told me the following story.

About six or seven years back, when he was working on the assembly line, he became so fed up with the hypocrisy surrounding the so-called “Communist Saturdays”<sup>7</sup> that he refused to come out. The other workers congratulated him on his brave stance. But put under tremendous pressure, he did finally come. Now, these Saturdays are special in that everything is well prepared beforehand and there are no hitches in the production line. Vitya soon gave himself over completely to the satisfaction to being able to work at a normal cadence and to do good work that he completely forgot his anger at being there against his will. And he said that this is true of all the workers—it is not “communist idealism” that creates the special atmosphere of these Saturdays, but the quiet joy of being able to work like human beings, like workers.

**July 1:** I met with sociologist R, the other co-author of the article that argues that the perestroika's goal is a social revolution to finally establish socialism in the Soviet Union.

He says bluntly that people like Shmelev (a radical marketeer, praised by Gorbachev, who is regularly published in the thick and popular journals) want a restoration. They are also ignoramuses. Why do they get published so much, while other voices are scarcely heard? He feels that this is the decision of the editors, who are afraid to publish other views. The position of these economists is close to the official line: they might go rather farther but they are still in the same general direction. Those at the top are also what he calls pragmatists. The editors are afraid to publish other views.

As for sociologist L's call for a Cavaignac, R says that L is more intelligent in his arguments than the others and speaks openly. The intelligentsia is characterized by a mixture of fear and contempt (two sides of the same coin) toward the “people.” This was always true of the educated. The intelligentsia, he says, are only a small part of the educated. Then he speaks of the commissars of the first postrevolutionary years, an incomparable social type. They were of and for the people. When during the civil war conditions became far worse than anything experienced before the revolution and the workers began to turn against the regime, the commissars were able to win them back by speaking honestly to them.

R says that no one really knows anything about working class consciousness in the Soviet Union, at least not consciousness in the deeper sense. All the opinion surveys deal with superficial attitudes. And no one in the Soviet Union is working on this topic. He himself feels that workers don't think of seeking solutions to their dissatisfaction on a political level, the only level on which a solution is possible. After all, they do benefit now, in a way: their informal relations with management get them a higher wage. They receive vacation trips at reduced prices—there are few of these for the intellectuals—and they are supposedly first in line for apartments. I offer that intellectuals have other privileges, especially in the nature of their work. Moreover, the workers' “privileges” are more apparent than real, when one imagines what the living standards could be if even half of the waste were eliminated. Perhaps the workers have not yet mobilized politically because they are not convinced there is a realistic possibility of achieving anything. R answered that no one knows these things.

Why has the introduction of the brigade form of work organization<sup>8</sup> not yielded results? This is because the overall authoritarian framework was left untouched, and so the brigades fit right into the scheme of things, basically playing a disciplinary role for management. Finally on the clubs: he is disappointed. He sees a lot of power-tripping and playing with the authorities—a desire to demonstrate loyalty, to curry favor.

The forcefulness of R's views and his radicalism are impressive, but I think his way of thinking is less rigorous than that of the other Marxist economists. He is fuzzy on the type of economic reform that he supports. I was surprised when he mentioned Yugoslavia as a model—after all, it is in a terrible mess economically and politically. But he agreed that the party apparatus there has usurped power and that the crucial element of any reform is to democratize.

After R, I went to see Tolya, who has an office in the same building. He was talking to a friend, a young economist, who



said he used to work in Gosplan. This friend asked me if I could mail out a manuscript through the diplomatic pouch. Since Soviet publishing has become very liberal, I took a wild guess and asked if it was a treatise arguing for the restoration of capitalism. It was. Since I owed Serezha a favor, I agreed to send it. This person described to me the anarchy he saw in Gosplan, which is little more than the arena of struggle of departmental interests. To me this points to the absence of a planned economy; the feudalization of economic management and planning could be adequately explained as the consequence of the absence of democratic control (or of a terroristic dictator?). But he insists that this is socialism, and socialism is what ails the Soviet economy. As for the manuscript, rarely have I seen so idealized a vision of capitalism. For example, he writes that when labor is scarce, its price goes up, and capitalists will prefer to invest in labor-saving machinery. As a result, labor eventually becomes more abundant, its price falls, and the capitalists prefer to hire more workers instead of investing in machinery, thus absorbing the excess labor. In this way an equilibrium is achieved. Then there is a footnote: for an explanation of why there is long-term unemployment under capitalism, see p.161. Unemployment in this book is not an integral part of the functioning of the system.

**July 2:** Despite the elation in the media, most people I speak with are unimpressed by the party conference. For me, though, the high point occurred when the young party secretary from a factory in Sverdlovsk came to the defense of Yeltsin against the demagogic, slanderous attack by Ligachev and Co. This was an unprepared speech and an act of great courage. You could hear his voice trembling. After that, a high functionary of the Moscow party apparatus again denounced Yeltsin, but his speech was well prepared and read. Characteristically, his main criticism was that Yeltsin terrorized the cadres, constantly firing and appointing people. One "comrade" finally committed suicide by hurling himself out of a window.

Without doubt this was the freest party conference or congress since the late '20s. On the other hand, it was far from a genuinely democratic forum. The election process aside, all the proposals made by the leadership apparently passed unanimously. There was no real opposition at the conference, except perhaps for Yeltsin. Bureaucratic privilege

was not only not condemned, but Ligachev had the chutzpa to deny its existence. The one-party system was reaffirmed in Gorbachev's proposal that party committee first secretaries be elected chairpersons of the corresponding soviet executives. Everyone was expecting the opposite: a distancing of the party apparatus from the soviets, which are supposed to become independent organs of power. Yeltsin, at least, said the proposal made no sense to him. Other delegates, in interviews given after the conference, said that at first they were taken aback and couldn't understand the proposal. But as they listened to the speeches commenting on it, they finally grasped the wisdom behind it. The proposal is wise because the party secretaries will have won a double mandate: both from the party and from the general population. Excuse me if I feel skeptical. Anyway, to whom will this person finally be responsible? Will the party really be democratized? Will the party secretary be running against anyone? And what if the party secretary is not elected chairperson of the Soviet executive? The proposal was also said to be wise because it will serve as a mechanism for Gorbachev to get rid of reactionaries in the apparatus. No one opposing the proposal was interviewed.

Anyway, potentially much more important, though little noticed so far, is Gorbachev's announcement that the retail price reform, which was not supposed to be introduced until the next five-year plan beginning in 1991, will happen during the current plan. I have not met anyone, outside of the social sciences, that supports it. No one believes the promise that living standards will not suffer. This could be the measure that finally drives home to the workers the nature of the economic reform being promulgated. ●

## NOTES

7. "Voluntary" Saturdays, where the wages are donated to the state or to some international cause.

8. In principle, in the contract brigade system, the workers sign an agreement with management to furnish a certain quantity of goods within a certain time in return for which management supplies a total wage bill, distributed by the brigade. If productivity in the brigade allows it to complete the work before schedule, the wages rise accordingly. Although the brigade system now officially covers most of industry, it is admitted that they are more formal than real in most cases.



# Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

## 29. Borya Elisavetsky

Borya Elisavetsky spent his last days in a cell of the Vorkuta internal prison for those condemned to death.

There, in the last circle of hell, every new morning brought the hope that today would arrive the decision to revoke the sentence in response to the appeal; and every successive night brought the expectation of being summoned to execution. But Borya did not expect a response to an appeal because he had never submitted one. The “*religiosniks*”—the “elders” (those still summoned by the “little crosses”)<sup>1</sup>—in general did not write, and refused to sign anything whatsoever, ignoring this entire machine of inhumanity, the entire thing from beginning to end. And Borya, with them, had no desire to appeal the court’s decision which had sentenced them, eight men, to death for sabotage—refusal to work qualified as sabotage, regardless of what motive the refusers used to explain their desire not to mine fuel for the country of socialism.

The trial against the eight religious refusers took place July 17, 1938. Rulev, the chairman of the assizes session of the Supreme Court of the Komi Republic, presided. They were tried under Article 58 for group counterrevolutionary agitation and for sabotage. Two of the defendants up to the moment they were led into the courtroom had never known one another or any of the other six, nor had the other six known these two, until they met at the trial. However, the court decided that they had functioned as a common group united in premeditated criminal collusion that was prohibited under Section 11 of Article 58, meaning a tougher sentence.

And they were sentenced to be shot for group agitation and sabotage.

Among the condemned was one Tolstoyan. Upon finding out that protesting did not violate his convictions, he submitted an appeal, and it was successful. The Supreme Court

of the RSFSR [Russian Republic] threw out the case all the way to the very beginning of the preliminary investigation. Such a formulation means that the Supreme Court admitted not only that the sentence was not justified by the evidence, but that the evidence itself was juridically unsound. Although the appeal was filed for only one of the eight, the abrogation of the sentence was applied automatically to all eight since their case was a common one.

The decision arrived two and a half months later. Chuchelov, the official of the Cheka Operations Division of the camp, called them into his office and announced that their death sentence had been revoked.

The six “little crosses,” returning to the cell, fell on their knees to give thanks to the Lord for this miraculous salvation from death; but Borya Elisavetsky neither made the sign of the cross nor prayed, but lay down quietly in his place on the floor. Nothing changed for the condemned, who had now become suspects: the same starvation rations, the same bare floor to sleep on, still deprived of exercise—everything remained as it had been before.

Not long before this, Chuchelov had for some reason come to the cell with a question: Are there any complaints or statements? They said to him: There is one complaint: in the rest of the world, those sentenced to death are not tortured by starvation. But you see here before you, Mr. Official, that everyone is sick, and they all have the same illness: emaciation because of hunger. Is it impossible at least to add some bread to our rations? Chuchelov answered: “We don’t have the means to do this.”

Hearing that a socialist power lacked the means to give each person condemned to death another piece of bread, one of the prisoners suggested:

“I have to my personal credit 100 rubles that were taken

*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.*



from me during a search. Buy some bread for us with my money."

"Really, you want more to eat?" Chuchelov asked.

"Yes," answered the prisoners. "At first, one may not want to eat here. But your stomach will not understand that tomorrow you will die. Why do you have to put us through additional torture? It doesn't do you any good."

"Well, okay," Chuchelov said. "Submit a written request."

They did. Several days later, their appeal was returned with the decision: "Denied."

All the inhabitants of the cell were ill with emaciation and pellagra,<sup>2</sup> and not only the inhabitants of that cell. But the "little crosses," having become refusers from the first day in camp, had received nothing but penalty rations for years: 300 grams of bread and a bowl of very thin gruel each day. In addition, they observed days of fasting and if it happened that they were served gruel cooked with beef bones on days of fasting, they did not eat. Borya did not fast, but he would not even eat the cod, the main camp food. He was a committed vegetarian. This flowed logically from his moral position.

His religion was not a faith in God instilled from childhood; he had built a temple in his soul rejecting any violence or blood. The foundation of his religion was a deep faith in humanity, in good, and in the rejection of violence. Borya believed that if all people became imbued with the ideas of nonviolence, that would be God's kingdom on earth.

He did not accept shedding the blood of any living being. And he did not want to forsake his principles even if he had to die for them every night. And death crept ever closer. Pellagra is a terrible camp disease which is the inevitable consequence of the system of penal rations. And death crept inexorably toward Borya. Who will count how many people before Borya and after him died from pellagra in the camps?

Borya would eat nothing made with meat or fish. Nothing except the 200 deadly grams of black bread, 13 grams of sugar, and two cups of hot water. "You may be able to fool me into thinking that the soup today has only vegetables in it," he said, "but my stomach knows the truth." And truly, when the comrades could convince him that the soup was not made of meat or fish, but only of vegetables (and what vegetables they were: rotten turnips and frozen potatoes), all the same, after the second spoonful, he would begin to vomit.

Thus, he lay there, swollen, endlessly tortured from all the consequences of a camp disease that is named in no act of legislation nor in any historical or unhistorical book; he lay on bare boards covered by a tattered pea jacket, on its very last legs, having been worn on dozens of shoulders. Refusers did not earn even second or thirdhand clothes, but were issued the oldest and most worn-out rags.

He died in total spiritual isolation. He had a common fate with the "little crosses," but their ideas were very different, even though he and they both considered themselves Christians. He was not so much a follower of Christ as he was Christ's living image, his hypostasis — the Christ of the epoch of Stalin. Jesus of Nazareth would have ended up just as Borya did in the hands of Chuchelov, Kashketin, and the other modern-day legionnaires.

Borya did not invite death, but neither did he fear it. However, he hoped that this time he would be able to beat it. He lived with a strange confidence that the pellagra would

not destroy him and often repeated: "It's nothing. I'll make it. I have a body of steel."

It was not his body that was made of steel, but his spirit. All he had to do was say: "I agree to work." Those three words could have saved his life. But this would have meant abandoning his convictions, his repudiation of violence. It would have been an indirect recognition of the power of the Chuchelovs over him.

To the last day of his life, Borya had a clear mind. He remembered an enormous number of poems. He, himself, had written poems before his arrest and it seems that a few of them had even been published. His voice weak from hunger but still steady, he recited his favorite poets to his cellmates.

But Chuchelov would not retreat from his intention. Even though the higher judicial organs rejected the case he had undertaken against the "*religiosniks*," he would nevertheless bring to fruition the sentence that had been revoked. If he couldn't do it with bullets, then he would do it with pellagra. He would torture them in the death cell with starvation rations.

Three of the "little crosses" died, one after another. Borya's turn came. One night, Borya's brain grew foggy. He suddenly jumped to his feet and with an inhuman scream, he hurled himself at the door and began to bang on it with his fists and his head. Then he fell to the floor in predeath convulsions. By the time the prison doctor got there, he was already dead.

After Borya, two more died. When only two of the eight formerly condemned still remained alive, someone higher up found out that Chuchelov was keeping people whose sentences had been repealed in cells for the condemned and he had to transfer them to a regular area. That same autumn, Chuchelov was taken away and shot, just as were Kashketin and many others.

But the fact that the supreme hangman, at a new stage of his activity, in order to sweep away his tracks, shot his former henchmen and all these Kashketins and Garanins did not mean change. It only meant that things took on a more insidious character, converting all the growing number of murders into a real chain reaction. The chain reaction continually grows, encompassing an ever-wider circle of people, squandered and forgotten millions.

Somewhere out in the far reaches of this great country is the grave of this holy, pure, and unbending man, who by his death conquered the power of violence. This unknown martyr Borya Elisavetsky is lost in the country's far expanses.

The names of martyrs can disappear from the people's memories, but the spirit of resistance is immortal.

\* \* \*

In the late spring, several comrades and I were summoned from our tent to the Usa River. Kashketin and his special crews were now no longer at Vorkuta, and we were not sent to the brick factory. But neither were we sent to the mine. Rather, we were crammed into a small outpost near the Usa. There, we political prisoners numbered about ten among an overwhelming number of common criminals. I worked the saw and the tools and made blades and handles for shovels.



In addition, I did a little work for myself on the side. I carved out wooden spoons and sold them: one portion of coarse barley kasha for one spoon.

My comrades and I did not yet know about what had taken place in March some 30 kilometers from us at the brickworks; otherwise, most likely we would not have risked presenting to the authorities our demand that we be sent to the mine. Thinking about it now, it was a strange demand. Since when do prisoners get to choose for themselves where they are to be confined? In that case, it wouldn't take you long to choose Sochi.<sup>3</sup> But we were naive prisoners.

We were so naive, in fact, that we even announced a hunger strike. We wanted some inspector from the prosecutor's office to come visit us. Of course, none ever did. Where were any inspectors to be found? The administration took its own measures.

To begin with, several guards with dogs were flown in and came to our barracks. The official explained: "We have to search you. You are most likely hiding things to eat so as to fool the higher bodies into thinking you are on a hunger strike." The dogs snarled and the guards ordered: "Lie down!" All this is the usual procedure in such cases.

Then, the official came again and assured us that, all the same, nothing will help us, even if we honestly did have a hunger strike and all of us died. Then they left the ten of us alone in a barracks, but with a guard.

We starved ourselves for nine days and became convinced that there really was no sense in it. In addition, one of us, we discovered, had been able to conceal some sugar and was secretly sucking on it. We no longer had the strength to beat up this weak-willed individual. Crying, he persuaded us that we had to give up, that the hunger strike was useless. So we did. They led us out. We were hardly able to drag our feet along, but we still had to go on foot to the health station close to the Usa — Vorkuta hadn't yet been supplied with horses — and we were very carefully fed for several days. Anyway, they had doctors there (political prisoners) and there were no wardens. Then, they sent us to the mine. There we learned everything.

Our dream came true! We were again at the mine, but the people we were looking for were not there. And we would never see them. But there were new people, hundreds and thousands of them. Throughout the summer, convoys kept arriving from the south. We avidly scrutinized the newcomers, interrogating them about what charges they were here for, how long their terms were, and what the news from outside was. But nothing new — the same old crap, just smeared on a little thicker.

They were giving full sentences, ten to fifteen years. KRDT [counterrevolutionary Trotskyist activity] was no more; a new counterrevolution had made its appearance: spies, terrorists, agents of the West. And what was the news from outside? There was none. From outside, not a sound, not a voice could be heard.

The Vorkuta summer does not last long. The tundra quickly turns green, next there are storms, and then it is covered again with the white blanket of death. The birds had to hurry up and raise their young, teach them to fly and take them away to the south. The raspberries had to hurry up and bloom and produce and ripen their juicy fruits. The berries

were useful to those who suffered from scurvy.<sup>4</sup> At the table, they fed us a liquid made from pine needles; but the ones whose teeth were already falling out were led into the tundra to eat the raspberries. Almost everyone suffered from scurvy except for the newest arrivals. I spat out several teeth; they fell out when they got stuck in the sticky bread.

A cloud of mosquitoes arrived over the tundra. The land was clouded over. It seemed as though the land was in a hurry to get relief from the never-setting sun. It breathed quick and deep. Every piece of it brimmed with activity. And very small rivers, virtually unseen, quietly flowed between the moist and uneven hills, and there was nowhere to step without getting your feet wet. The only rocks were on the shores of the rivers.

Everything that went into constructing the polar city of Vorkuta was torn by us from under the impassable swamps. Under them were the mines and above them along the roads we had built were watchtowers stretching from Kotlas to the Arctic Ocean, for thousands of miles, like high landmarks showing the way to the happy abundant life, as Stalin's people imagined it.

Of my old friends, only Arkasha survived. He did not maintain a friendship with any of the politicals except me. It could be that this is what saved him. He was certainly not an informer. He now worked as a superintendent in the mine. Grisha Baglyuk, Matvei Kamenetsky, Sema Lipenzon, Maksimchik, Vanya Deineka — all lie somewhere in the tundra. Trying to terrorize but at the same time to hide the facts, as was the consistent practice under Stalin, the officials listed barely one-tenth of their victims on orders that would be posted about the barracks. The orders indicated that these people had been shot for counterrevolutionary sabotage. But mixed in with these names were those of common criminals condemned for escaping or committing a murder in the camp. The list included a recidivist whom I had met, a man who was a thief and a murderer. He had expounded to me his views on freedom.

He was on the list next to Baglyuk.

But life went on and the tundra bloomed and stormed and was again covered with a blanket of snow. The prisoners dug the trenches with shovels in the slimy clay and when the clay froze and became hard as a rock, we pounded away at it with crowbars. They hadn't yet begun using explosives. To knock off a lump, you had to chop at it ten times with a crowbar.

Vorkuta grew. It expanded. More barracks went up. Instead of endless plank beds, they put in dividers here and there. Loudspeakers were installed everywhere, and we heard about our vast native land, how many forests, fields, and rivers it has. Maternal rivers, like the Volga, our own mother. Paternal rivers, like our Papa Don. And joining them together were the canals created by the labor of a mass of humanity such as no Egyptian pharaoh could have imagined. Nor could the pharaohs have dreamed of the system of reeducation by means of penal rations. The Bible tells how slaves were fed in Egypt. When the Jews were being led by Moses across the desert and they got tired of constantly moving, of starvation, and of thirst, they demanded to return to Egypt. Moses said to them: "You, slaves, want to go back to your pots of meat?"

*Continued on page 36*



# Milton Genecin

## 1908-1989

*Milton Genecin, a member of Socialist Action and a long-time leader of the U.S. Trotskyist movement, died January 26 in Los Angeles. He was 80. The following message was sent by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency to a memorial meeting held in San Francisco February 4.*

The Fourth Internationalist Tendency and the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, like Socialist Action, are dedicated to the Trotskyist transitional program for socialist revolution, and to the struggle for a working class party in this country based on that program. Our antecedents are in the history of the Socialist Workers Party. It is therefore appropriate for us to pay tribute to the memory of Milton Genecin, an influential leader in the SWP in the post-World War II years until his expulsion for Trotskyism in 1983.

Students of the history of American Trotskyism will benefit from articles by Milt Alvin in the *Militant*, *Fourth International*, *International Socialist Review*, and *Intercontinental Press* (all SWP publications at different times over the past 40 years); and articles by the same writer in *Socialist Action* and most recently in *Cahiers Leon Trotsky*, September 1988, published in Grenoble, France. Alvin also contributed regularly to the SWP *Internal Discussion Bulletin* through the years. Alvin was the pen name of Milton Genecin.

His contributions to the internal life of the SWP are a record of the tasks and perspectives of the party at every juncture in its postwar history. Milt Alvin was known in the party as an able organizer and political tactician. Near the end of the Second World War and shortly after, he was active in the SWP New York local and highly regarded as a leader in the trade union work of the local branches. He subsequently was assigned to the Toledo branch where he was soon elected branch organizer and mobilized additional forces in that region to the SWP auto fraction.

After moving to Los Angeles in the 1950s Milton served in the leadership of the Los Angeles local, also as a member of the SWP National Committee. He was prominent in the Na-

tional Committee, always present at its plenums and at national conventions where he invariably assumed responsibilities on subcommittees and in organizational tasks at those gatherings. His political contributions were equally consistent. He always came prepared with useful reports and observations on party activity and the changing political scene. Never shy in advancing his own opinions about what needed to be done, Milton counted himself among those who took the "long view of history." He was never demoralized by unfavorable turns in the class struggle nor discouraged by some temporary setback in SWP activity in the electoral arena or union field. He was profoundly convinced that the party and its program for restructuring society would surmount all obstacles. His ability to explain and circumvent unforeseen problems is a necessary component of political strategy. But Milton recognized, of course, that this is no guarantee of success. And this is why he was an aggressive proponent of actions he thought most likely to succeed. Consequently he was a prominent participant in all factional and ideological struggles within the SWP.

We in the F.I.T. were disappointed not to have Milton on our side when we were unable to reach agreement with our comrades in Socialist Action for a common strategy to expose and defeat the anti-Trotskyist Barnes current in the Socialist Workers Party. But our different strategic approaches to this problem are subject to the test of events, and whatever the future brings we will continue to help educate the new generation of revolutionary Marxists in the tradition of Trotskyism in the U.S., wherein the contributions of Milton Genecin occupy a respectful place. ●



## A Socialist Dreamscape on Public Television

*A Very British Coup*, screenplay by Alan Plater, producers Anne Skinner and Sally Hibbin, directed by Mick Jackson, based on a 1982 novel by Chris Mullin.

Reviewed by Steve Bloom

Viewers of Public Television's highly successful show, Masterpiece Theater, enjoyed a special treat with the airing of the three-hour drama *A Very British Coup* in mid-January (January 15-16 on New York's WNET and most other stations). The show was about Harry Perkins, a one-time rank-and-file steelworker from Sheffield, a "third generation socialist," and now leader of the British Labor Party, who wins a landslide election and becomes prime minister of England.

What is so remarkable about Mr. Perkins is that, after getting elected, he actually sets out to carry forward the program on which he ran: getting the economy moving through productive investment with worker participation in management decisions, raising the minimum wage, improving public services, unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawing Britain from NATO, dismantling U.S. bases in the country, etc. As Harry himself puts it during his first cabinet meeting, "I assume that we're all agreed that we should honor our election pledges." As one might expect, such an attitude puts the Perkins government in a severe conflict with both the British bourgeois establishment and with Washington.

*A Very British Coup* presents a consistent left social democratic notion of what might happen if an honest trade union militant actually succeeded in winning the leadership of the Labor Party and became prime minister. Chris Mullin, who wrote the novel on which the TV show was based, is himself a Labor MP. The drama unfolds as Perkins and forces which support the British ruling class, aided by the Americans, trade blow and counterblow in a test of strength to see whether the new administration will succeed or not. At the center of this struggle is a collective conspiracy orchestrated by the highest levels of British Intelligence, which is working behind the scenes to discredit and destroy Perkins and members of his cabinet.

What is so much fun about all of this from the point of view of the average working class viewer is that, on the whole, Harry gets the better of them. He accomplishes this through his superior wit, no-nonsense rank-and-file militant style, and a simple application of personal political principles—primary of which is a total commitment to honesty and "open government."

The show makes a series of powerful statements. For example, when the old-line military advisers are briefing the cabinet, explaining the folly of proceeding with the dismantling of Britain's nuclear arsenal on the grounds that it would invite an attack by the country's enemy (i.e., the USSR), Joan Cook, feminist and Perkins's home secretary, takes up a

devastating point by point challenge of the basic premises behind the presentation by the armed forces' spokesman. This episode, like the entire program, is handled with a keen sense of humor and artistic proportion which keeps it from degenerating into a vulgar political diatribe.

The climactic event of the show also has a profound impact on the viewer. The head of British Intelligence, Sir Percy Brown, comes to Harry with unconfirmed "evidence" that he has secretly been getting money from Russia and stashing it in Swiss bank accounts. He hints that this evidence will be "leaked" to the press, thereby causing irrevocable damage to Harry and what he is trying to do, unless Perkins agrees to resign for reasons of ill health. In a confrontation Harry asks, "Do I really frighten you that much?"

He gets a remarkably honest reply, which reveals a great deal about the way in which less principled social democratic politicians are used by the establishment in order to maintain the capitalist system: "Yes, you do. You're a bad dream. I could always comfort myself with the thought that socialism would never work because it's always been in the hands of bungling incompetents, trimmers, compromisers. . . ."

"People you could control from within," Harry interjects.

And Sir Percy continues, "But you, Mr. Perkins, could destroy everything I've ever believed in."

Harry states his acquiescence to the deal he is offered—the "very British coup" of the title. But then, in a dramatic television speech, in which he is supposed to announce his resignation, he turns the tables on the conspirators, tells the story of the entire incident and what was behind it. He states that he is calling for a new election, explaining, "You the people must decide whether you prefer to be ruled by an elected government or by people you've never heard of, people you've never voted for, people who remain quietly behind the scenes, generation after generation."

The show ends on the morning of the new election. The sound of a helicopter is heard, and a sign which reads "Polling Station" is gradually blackened by an ominous shadow, hinting that another sort of coup is in the offing.

Unfortunately, despite the strong dramatic impact of *A Very British Coup*, the show was deeply flawed from the point of view of a knowledgeable revolutionary politician. Its weaknesses flowed from the other side of the same social democratic premises which, consistently applied, had provided its strength. The entire drama unfolds at the governmental level, the working masses are nowhere to be seen, except as a passive crowd that cheers for Harry. This is a far cry from the way real political developments take place.

It is as if Lenin had never written *State and Revolution*, or, more significantly, as if the experience of the workers' movement had never taught the lessons Lenin explains in that essential work. Perkins and his cabinet pick up the old



institutions of the British state and proceed to try to infuse them with new content. The old army, old intelligence apparatus, old bureaucracy, are all put to work to carry out the new, socialist, policies.

While such a thing could, of course, be attempted, what makes *British Coup* totally unrealistic is that, given these self-imposed limitations, Harry actually succeeds in changing things. He does so by being intelligent, uncompromising, and carrying out a series of clever maneuvers that catch the ruling class unprepared. The idea that what is involved in a real process of social change are genuine class forces—i.e., the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the working masses and oppressed on the other—is barely even suggested.

In fact, however, the kinds of changes described in the show—even though far from a real destruction of British capitalism—could not even be contemplated without a massive mobilization of the working population. Even an electoral victory for Harry Perkins like the one that forms the basis for the show would be impossible without a tremendous upheaval.

At one point the leader of the electrical union (obviously under the influence of Harry's procapitalist opponents) calls on workers in his union to resist the government's program to shut down nuclear power plants by calling a job action and sabotaging the nation's power supply. The union membership goes along 100 percent—even though the government has promised that no one will be laid off as a result of the

closures. When that same trade union leader is pressured, as a result of Harry's personal diplomacy, to end the protest, it ends. There is no indication that the electrical workers themselves might have some interest in this business and be discussing the problem among themselves, or that other workers might be able to engage the electrical workers in a debate and explain the broader implications of the situation to them, or that Harry and his cabinet might consider appealing to the masses to actually intervene in the situation. The problem, and its solution, unfolds totally as an event at the top.

This refusal of the story to come to grips with the actual dynamics of social change creates other flaws. For example, Harry is constantly sparring with the bourgeois media, which maintains its monopoly over the reporting of news and information. One wonders, where is the labor and left press which under the circumstances must certainly have a substantial following? Also, even things which are basically realistic—like the dirty tricks against the government—tend to take on an unreal edge, with Sir Percy Brown being a bit too scrupulous about the type of maneuvers he is willing to authorize against Perkins and members of his cabinet.

On balance, *A Very British Coup* was an enjoyable three hours, with its strong dramatic impact outweighing the underlying confusion about the laws of social change. This is especially true since this basic problem was, in all likelihood, hardly noticed by the average viewer. ●

### Baitalsky (Continued from page 33)

To those who had meat at Vorkuta, the camp would seem not such a bad place. and it wasn't the most badly fed nor the most severe of the camps. It should be properly remembered for precisely the fact that it was a typical, average camp, with a bold climate on one of many rivers.

A violent snowstorm rages. It is the pre-May assault<sup>5</sup>  
by all evils—but after all, winter has passed.  
Darkening, the looking glasses cascade downward  
in glistening circles in the snow.  
In them, the dawn-that-never-comes  
looks at itself in all its beauty.  
But a bird circles the zone  
and says quietly to a friend:  
“Haven't we lost our way?  
There were new settlers  
living here last spring.  
One was so big and cheerful;  
he always said 'Hello!'

It has become all desolate this winter.  
Look, the tents have been removed!”  
And the birds fly on by,  
frightened by the eerie silence.  
“But why are the puddles filled with rust?”

[Next month: “Different Categories of Criminals”]

#### Notes

1. The names of those condemned to death were marked with little crosses on the camp administrator's list.
2. Pellagra is a disease of chronic starvation, with skin changes, severe nervous disfunction, and diarrhea.
3. Sochi is a resort city on the Black Sea.
4. Scurvy, from a diet deficient in vitamin C, is marked by swollen and bleeding gums, skin spots, and prostration.
5. The “pre-May assault” in Stalin's time was the push in the weeks before May Day to try to compel workers to put in extra unpaid production time before the “workers' holiday.”



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