

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

No. 62
April 1989
\$3.00

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Who We Are

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

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

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

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

BULLETIN in Defense of Marxism, No. 62, April 1989

Closing date March 5, 1989.

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

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In Defense of Salman Rushdie

by Tom Barrett

I have not read *The Satanic Verses*, nor do I have any immediate plans to do so. What I might hypothetically consider to be the literary merits or deficiencies of Salman Rushdie's novel are, however, completely irrelevant. Because I have spent twenty years defending the Arab people against the last fashionable form of overt racism (i.e., Zionism), because I have traveled a bit in the Middle East, including Iran, and because I have made a habit of saying what I think even if my opinions might be unpopular — on campus, on the job, in the radical movement, and even within the Socialist Workers Party — I feel a personal obligation to speak up in defense of Rushdie against any and all attempts to keep him from writing or to keep people from reading his book.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini has put out a \$1 million (\$2.5 million for an Iranian) contract on Rushdie's life, but Rushdie is not the real target: the real target is the Iranian people, whom Khomeini would like to intimidate and prevent from speaking or acting against his reactionary tyranny. Khomeini has never in his nearly ninety-year life been one to make idle threats. He has in ten years killed a considerably greater number of Iranian leftists than his predecessor, the hated shah, did in twenty-five. Rushdie is in serious danger.

The campaign against Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses* has put enemies of imperialism in an uncomfortable position. Islam has more adherents than any other religion in the world, and nearly all of its followers are in countries dominated by imperialism. Moreover, the Western powers achieved this domination by sheer brutality, and in most cases they were the cultural inferiors of their victims. This was certainly the case in Iran and in Rushdie's native India. Of course, for centuries anti-Islamic prejudice has been widespread and intense throughout those countries where Christianity is the dominant religion. It remains so today, unfortunately. The hysteria which the Carter and Reagan administrations were able to whip up against Iran and Libya demonstrates this. No defense of Salman Rushdie will be effective without rejecting any and all forms of racism or prejudice against Arabs, Iranians, or Muslims as a whole.

One aspect of imperialist oppression is depriving the victims of educational opportunities and cultural advancement, and maintaining antiquated methods of production and social organization. The word we use to generalize this form of imperialist domination is "underdevelopment," and as former colonies achieved their independence after World War II their goal has been, in nearly every case, to break out of underdevelopment. Rejecting any and all notions of European cultural superiority is not the same thing as romanticizing poverty and ignorance, especially when one comes to the realization that the poverty and ignorance in

the semicolonial world has been imposed on them by Europe and America. My own experience, traveling in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iran, is that the stronger the American (or Western European) imperialist presence in a particular area, the worse off people are — not only economically, but in intangible terms as well, such as people's self-esteem and social cohesion. The hysterical mobs which have taken to the streets in India, Iran, and Pakistan demanding Rushdie's head are not defending their culture against imperialist domination; they are, rather, *reflecting* imperialist domination. They are the victims of generations of deprivation of educational opportunities as well as "divide-and-rule" colonialist tactics, which consciously pitted Hindu against Muslim in the Indian subcontinent, Christian against Muslim against Druze in Lebanon, Shona against Ndebele in Zimbabwe, Catholic against Protestant in Ireland — the list is endless.

Socialists defend press freedom as a victory won by the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the past, and we fight for it in those parts of the world where it does not exist. The only exception to its unconditional defense is in cases of military security against counterrevolution. The Socialist Workers Party reluctantly — and correctly — parted company with many militant feminists over women's understandable demands that pornography be outlawed, specifically in the case of Larry Flynt's *Hustler* magazine. That was a clear-cut case: there is no question that pornography in general, and *Hustler* in particular, degrades and insults women. There is no artistic merit in it; it has no positive value. However, to allow the United States government — the same United States government which is attempting to deprive women of abortion and contraception rights and to roll back affirmative action gains — to decide what can and cannot be printed and distributed, would only be giving it the right to suppress publication of any ideas which threaten its rule, including those presented in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

The case of *The Satanic Verses* does not at all parallel the *Hustler* controversy. Rushdie has attempted to create a work of literary substance, whatever its merits or demerits might be, a claim which the pornographer Flynt cannot justly make. Moreover, Rushdie writes about Islam from the inside. He considers *himself* a victim of what is in his opinion a reactionary system of superstition. He is not writing as an ignorant and arrogant outsider, but as one who has been under Islam's influence since his earliest years. If there is a literary parallel to Rushdie it would likely be the Irish novelist James Joyce. Joyce, like Rushdie, was from a country dominated by British imperialism and in which religion remains a power-

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Building for April 9 Abortion Rights March

by Sarah Lovell

It now appears certain that we will have a massive demonstration in Washington, D.C., on April 9 to safeguard women's right to choose. The National Organization for Women (NOW), which issued the call for a March for Women's Rights/Women's Lives in support of legal abortion and birth control, is predicting that this will be the largest women's rights demonstration ever held.

Three years have gone by since the last NOW-sponsored demonstration in Washington, March 1986, which drew 150,000 to the capital. During this three-year absence of mass protest, there has been an accelerated barrage of attacks and threats on abortion rights which has aroused indignation on the part of women's rights supporters and a determination to take action.

About two hundred organizations representing a broad variety of causes and commitments almost immediately endorsed NOW's call for a demonstration in defense of reproductive rights. Early supporters included the American Civil Liberties Union, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU). The Association of Flight Attendants, as expected, rallied to the cause, along with other labor unions such as the United Steel Workers and the American Federation of Teachers.

In addition to the established women's and pro-choice formations which welcomed the call, ad hoc coalitions appeared, dormant coalitions were activated, and thousands of women joined in to agitate and organize for the event. Many reports remark on the predominance of young women who, having had the right to a legal abortion, are rallying to its defense.

New York City NOW has reserved 100 buses compared to the 30 it chartered in 1986. Planned Parenthood took a bloc of train seats. The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), promoting April 9, has run full-page ads in the *New York Times* that show a coat hanger, a chilling reminder of pre-abortion rights days. Pro-choice groups and NOW began early spreading the word by flyer distribution and tabling. And a new group, the Reproductive Rights Coalition, reaching out to poor women, added street theater to its program to publicize the effort. NOW has emphasized outreach to the colleges and high schools. Campus clubs, women's studies departments, and radicalizing students have been tabling and signing up for Washington.

The Labor Coalition for April 9, sparked by the Communication Workers of America, is coordinating participation of labor contingents from locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, District 65 (United Auto Workers), etc. It has produced an excellent educational leaflet for reaching out to unionists everywhere.

In Pittsburgh a citywide coalition which includes CBTU and students has been building April 9. A campus women's coalition at the University of Pittsburgh, inactive since the 1986 demonstration, emerged and grew. The university was the site of a two-day teach-in on abortion.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO sent a letter to its 800 affiliates on February 24 stating: "The National Organization for Women and the Twin Cities Coalition of Labor Union Women have requested that the Minnesota AFL-CIO share with its affiliates information about the most important

**PRO UNION
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demonstration for women's rights in this decade." It asked for support, money, and encouragement of membership participation in the march. In the Twin Cities, Action for Abortion Rights, Planned Parenthood, and NARAL have all cooperated in organizing for April 9.

San Francisco pro-abortion rights supporters are having a mass demonstration in their city on April 2, a companion to the Washington march. The April 2 Committee, a coalition of 15 organizations, has carried on an energetic campaign. The California Teachers Association and California Federation of Teachers are part of the effort. Originally projected for April 9, it was moved up a week to allow women on the West Coast to attend the Washington demonstration. Ten planes have been chartered, and a jumbo jet to Washington will be taking off from Los Angeles.

The January issue of the *National NOW Times* gave a limited bus report from a number of cities: 50 chartered in Philadelphia, 30 in New Jersey, 2 from Arkansas, and 5 from Missouri. In that state the Reproductive Health Services, a litigant in the Missouri abortion law case that is pending before the Supreme Court, has been organizing supporters and promised additional forces.

National NOW Times has also reported that a solidarity demonstration for abortion rights is scheduled in Paris on April 9. A delegation plans to fly to Washington to join the demonstration here, and efforts are being made to arrange delegations from Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Quebec.

The immediate threat that places abortion at risk is the Supreme Court review of the Missouri case, *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services*, in April or May. If the Bush administration has its way, that decision would overturn the

1973 *Roe vs. Wade* case, in which restrictions on a woman's right to choose were declared unconstitutional. This victory did not come out of the air. It was won through organization and action by the feminist, pro-choice movement that burgeoned in the decade of the '60s.

Among the many amicus briefs being presented to the Supreme Court is one by the Center for Constitutional Rights, which argues that "banning or restricting abortion will have a greater impact on low-income and working women, particularly Black, Latina, Native Americans, and Asian women." The restrictions on abortion that have already been imposed have done exactly that. The Hyde amendment that Congress passed in 1976, for example, outlawed the use of federal Medicaid funds for abortion. State

legislatures have added additional restrictions, including those applying to teenagers.

The massive outpouring that will take place on April 9 will demonstrate beyond question that the majority of the people in this country reject any tampering with *Roe vs. Wade*, that we reject a return to the barbarism of the back-alley abortion. It will express the anger that has built up against the restrictions that have been enacted and against the attacks on and hostility to women's rights beyond the abortion issue. It will strengthen our movement for the battles that lie ahead, and can be a harbinger of action by the labor movement and all the victims of the reactionary political forces in this country.

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Rushdie (Continued from page 1)

ful force in society. Moreover, Joyce's literary career coincided with the emergence of the Republic of Ireland as a formally independent country, albeit six counties short. Joyce's dim view of Irish Catholicism made enemies for him among his own people, and one may justifiably criticize his abstention from Ireland's liberation struggle. Nevertheless, his artistic achievement has withstood the test, not only of time, but of censorship as well.

Iran-bashing is a popular participation sport among politicians and other high-profile types. However, their self-righteousness is thoroughly without justification. The lynch-mob mentality which threatens Rushdie now is very much alive in the United States. The demonstrations of 1988 which brought Roman Catholics and Fundamentalist Protestants together to protest Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ* proved that religious intolerance knows no borders. Honest schoolteachers in Tennessee are still fighting for the right to teach the theory of evolution in their classrooms, over sixty years after the Scopes "Monkey" trial. One could see in John Cardinal O'Connor's pitiful statement the Roman Catholic Church's own guilt in the matter of suppression of free expression. O'Connor "deplored" the death threats against Rushdie but in the same breath called on Catholics not to read the book. Equally pitiful was the decision by bookstore chains B. Dalton and Waldenbooks not to display, or in some cases even to stock, the book, though after pressure from the literary community they reversed themselves.

The Iran-bashers of course have conveniently forgotten that there have been few greater enemies of press freedom than Khomeini's predecessor, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shahanshah of Iran. The shah did not threaten writers with million-dollar prices on their heads: he sent his secret police—the SAVAK—out to arrest them or simply to kill them in the streets. The shah was put in power and kept in power by the United States, and the agency responsible for doing it was the Central Intelligence Agency. During the height of the shah's power in the mid-1970s the CIA's director was none other than George Bush. The United States

government and its current president are complicit in crimes which make the threats against Salman Rushdie look like a children's game. I would add a note from my own experience: a book which is read by many (including myself) attempting to learn the Farsi language (the majority language of Iran) is a short story called *The Little Black Fish*. It is an allegory about the struggle for freedom, written in the form of a children's story to escape censorship. Its author, Samad Behranghi, was murdered by the SAVAK and left floating in the Arras River.

Of course, not all those prominent people who have spoken out for Rushdie are hypocrites. Many of Rushdie's defenders today, especially his fellow writers, have spoken up for press freedom whenever it has been threatened, whether those threats have come from governments friendly or unfriendly to Washington. They have spoken out against the shah's repression, against the attacks on *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and against the imprisonment of dissident writers in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Honest defenders of press freedom, like Susan Sontag, Erica Jong, Russell Banks, and Kurt Vonnegut, are to be commended. Norman Mailer was absolutely right when he said that press freedom is *always* in danger, and that it must be defended *constantly*.

Though the oppressed people of the Middle East have a clear right to feel proud of their culture and heritage, the program of Islamic fundamentalism is ultimately a dead end for the anti-imperialist struggle. It can only reinforce ignorance, underdevelopment, anticommunism, and, as a consequence, further dependence on the imperialist metropolises. That reality has been made clear by the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*. Revolutionists have to explain this truth in a straightforward way, regardless of the short-term consequences. The responses of George Bush, Sir Geoffrey Howe, and Cardinal O'Connor demonstrate that without doubt the political and "spiritual" representatives of imperialism have no interest in defending a genuinely free artistic expression.

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March 4, 1989

The History of Anti-Abortion Laws in the U.S.

by Gayle Swann

The following is the text of a talk that was presented to a forum on "What Next in the Struggle to Defend Abortion Rights?" held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on January 27 of this year.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe vs. Wade* did not give us legalized abortion. The impact of this decision was to remove the prohibition and consequently *reinstitute* a woman's right to choose abortion.

It was just a little over a hundred years ago when abortion was decreed illegal by the states and a sin by the Catholic Church. Prior to that time, abortion was accepted in this country, condoned by the church, and recognized as legal by the states.

No doctors, or judges, or churches condemned abortion before quickening of the fetus. It was considered to be a medically safe as well as a socially acceptable procedure.

Our laws and traditions, our social norms, came directly from English common law which was based on the ancient traditions and laws from the Greek and Roman cultures. Collectively, throughout history, these laws and traditions did not recognize the existence of the fetus until quickening. Abortion, before quickening, was never illegal.

In the year 1800 there was *no* legislation, *no* law against abortion in the United States.

In 1812 the Massachusetts Supreme Court asserted: Abortion in early pregnancy would remain beyond the scope of the law . . . abortion was not a crime. This would be the ruling precedent throughout the first half of the 19th century.

Not only was the procedure legal, American women had access to a wide range of information on methods and procedures of abortion. They had books, pamphlets, available medication and instruments, and the knowledge of practicing midwives. Abortion was truly accessible to the women of this country. One could even say abortion was the first specialty in American medical history. It certainly was a firmly established practice in the United States by the 1860s.

The first law passed in the U.S. concerning abortion occurred in 1821 by the state of Connecticut. The issue in this law was the method of using poison to induce abortion, and the focus of concern was on safeguarding the health of women. In actuality this was an antipoison law and did not interfere with or alter the common law as it related to abortion. It declared one method to be illegal in the state of Connecticut, and only the person who administered the poison was subject to punishment, not any woman who was seeking an abortion.

All abortion laws passed in the first half of the 19th century dealt with safeguarding the health of women. None of these laws held women responsible for any crime. The only ones held responsible for a crime were those who endangered the lives of women. It is evident the states were interested in protecting the health of women from dangerous

medical practices. The states were not interested in making abortion a crime. In fact, in 1828, New York passed a law providing for therapeutic abortion (abortions past quickening) for the sake of the health of the mother.

What Happened to Change the Laws?

The most significant campaign against abortion is tied to the history of the medical profession in this country, specifically to the formation of the American Medical Association.

As late as the 1820s medical doctors, that is, those who graduated from medical schools, were looked at as a *menace* to society. Medical schools were commonly known as degree mills for rich kids. These graduates had no real knowledge of medicine and basically were unable to help sick people, much less cure them. They were, however, known to maim and to kill their unfortunate patients. Consequently these doctors did not have much influence in their communities, and they did not have very large practices. It is important to note that for the most part they did not perform abortions.

Thankfully, the American public had other choices for medical care. During the 19th century Americans chose folk-practitioners, osteopaths, homeopaths, and midwives for their health care and medical advice. These doctors also performed abortions.

The American Medical Association was formed in 1847 by graduates of medical schools as an organizational attempt to discredit all other medical practitioners. The obvious reason was to build up their own practice. The AMA's first act was to label themselves regular doctors and to refer to all others as "irregulars."

It wasn't until after the Civil War that the American Medical Association began to seriously organize against abortion and to attempt to put the procedure under AMA jurisdiction and regulation.

Horatio Storer, an AMA doctor, and Walter Channing, a Harvard professor, are two names to remember in the formation of this anti-abortion campaign. It was Storer who laid the groundwork in this campaign and Channing who wrote much of the literature. At the 1857 AMA convention Storer urged his cohorts to take a stand against abortion; he reaffirmed this position at the 1859 convention. It wasn't until the late 1860s, however, that Storer's proposition became active reality.

The postwar period presented social, political, and economic conditions which became fertile soil for Storer and the AMA's developing campaign against abortion.

Eastern Airlines Strike

Just at our deadline for this issue of the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism the International Association of Machinists at Eastern Airlines began a strike, supported overwhelmingly by members of the Airline Pilots Association. General solidarity from other unions has been strong. In our next issue we will carry an in-depth analysis of the Eastern strike and its impact on the U.S. labor movement.

- There had been a sharp rise in abortion between 1840 and 1870 (some sources quoting that from 35 to 50 percent of all pregnancies ended in abortion).
- Those who were keeping track could no longer deny that white, *married* women were actively using abortion to limit and postpone their families.
- The first wave of feminism was being felt. Young women were leaving home, and not to get married but to educate themselves and to work in their own behalf.
- Huge profits were being made by those specializing in performing abortion and by drug companies like Parke/Davis that were providing drugs and instruments.
- Advertising for abortion had become extremely competitive and very public.
- There had been a steep decline in the population exactly when abortion information and services were the most available (1840-1850).
- The country had suffered a huge loss of life in the war.

The cumulative effect of these conditions not only gave ammunition to the AMA but also teeth to their propaganda against abortion.

Armed with arrogance, the AMA launched a speaking tour and a barrage of written material aimed at the American public. They made claim to three persistent points: abortion was murder, abortion was a sin, and abortion was an unsafe medical procedure.

The AMA attempted to recruit those doctors they had labeled "irregulars" to the campaign against abortion, even publishing special literature and making special tours for this effort. Those "irregulars" that refused to be converted were from then on called quacks.

Prior to the Civil War the AMA and organized religion were uncooperative towards each other. The AMA accused church leaders of valuing abortion, accepting abortion because they were afraid to criticize the practice. As the AMA gained momentum they challenged the churches to join in the moral trend-setting.

One of the first public statements by a church leader was in 1869 by Bishop Spaulding who condemned abortion as murder of an infant before birth, adding "no mother was permitted the death of an infant . . . not even to preserve her own life."

Let it be noted that the religious communities of America put more effort into the temperance movement than they ever put into the crusade against abortion.

The AMA tapped on the shoulders of their friends and relatives in state legislatures. The state governments had a vested interest in an expanding population, a population needed to develop the land and to fill the factories and mills

of industrializing America. (It was also true that these same state governments were pressured by drug companies to protect their interests in practicing abortion.)

The AMA at this time was also opposed to contraception. For this reason they joined forces with Anthony Comstock, the Joe McCarthy of the 19th century. Comstock's general obsession was obscenity and he dabbled everywhere he imagined sex could be implied. Mr. Comstock prosecuted abortionists by citing their advertising as obscene.

The *New York Times* endorsed the AMA's campaign and began writing stories sensationalizing deaths from abortion. Eventually the paper no longer allowed abortion services to advertise.

And, unfortunately, the leaders of the feminist movement of the day joined the AMA in the fight to outlaw abortion.

By 1880 the AMA had effective control over medical education: one result was evidenced in women's health manuals, all stating opposition to abortion. They too were calling abortion a crime against nature, an evil, murder, and an unsafe medical practice.

By 1890 virtually all the states had enacted anti-abortion legislation.

Abortions did not stop throughout the whole period it was under attack. It went underground . . . a little deeper with each new law that was passed.

It is ironic, a hundred years later, to find the American Medical Association defending the right of women to choose safe and legal abortion. They, after all, have a professional and financial investment in keeping it legal. The AMA, however, remains a conservative and self-serving organization which has an equal investment in childbirth. We must not have false confidence in the AMA organizing any campaign *for* abortion equal to the campaign against abortion of the 19th century.

We cannot look to the political parties and their politicians to organize a massive campaign to keep abortion safe and legal. Organized religion, for the most part, is not our ally on this issue. The media continue to sensationalize the subject.

We need to keep in perspective: during the 19th century the AMA never convinced the majority, the working class, that abortion was wrong. Women continued to practice abortion regardless and in spite of laws or taboos against it. And many women died a needless and painful death. Unless we are willing to accept a return to home remedies, coat hangers, quinine water, knitting needles, and the like; unless we are willing to accept ruinous futures for unwanted children, or the fate of possible criminal charges, or death for women; we, the majority, the working class, must organize and lead our own independent campaign to demand abortion remain safe and legal. ●

The Jamaican Masses Search for a Way Out

by Lloyd D'Aguilar

One of the primary concerns of the international focus on the February elections in Jamaica was whether they would be as bloody as those of 1980, and whether the anticipated victory of the People's National Party (PNP) led by Michael Manley would usher in a new round of conflict with the United States. Interest was further heightened by the fact that the new president of the United States, George Bush, was coincidentally director of the CIA at a time during the 1970s when the CIA was believed to have been involved in attempts to destabilize the previous Manley government.

As far as the violence was concerned, 13 people were killed and over 100 wounded. That was the price poor Jamaicans paid for the right to change their government, this time from the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP), led by Edward Seaga, to the People's National Party. In 1980 when the results were the reverse, the price was much higher, as nearly 800 people were killed.

Election-associated violence has become an integral part of the Jamaican political process because of the role played by the state via the politicians in the distribution of scarce benefits. The reality in poor communities is that only those who are known supporters of the winning party stand a chance of possibly gaining a job, a scarce government house, or a simple handout.

And given the fact that 25 percent of the workforce is unemployed, there is no lack of candidates for the job of enforcer—which carries the prospect of easy access to the politician, first pick at the spoils, not to mention the personal power of owning a gun. Communities thus become organized along party lines with more than enough perceived grudges to remain tinderboxes ready to explode at election time.

This tendency to keep poor communities divided along party lines and under the threat of the gun is symptomatic of the fear the Jamaican ruling class has of revolt and of their own impotence in relation to the chronic economic problems besetting the country.

Co-author of this extralegal form of state terrorism, the PNP was in this election campaigning to put "people first." But even if this was only campaign rhetoric, the fact is that the economic situation in the country is so desperate that the PNP must somehow begin to address a host of accumulated social problems.

The people may well be expecting it to match the mid-1970s record of reforms when the PNP introduced things like a minimum wage, maternity leave for women, public works programs, land reform, etc. There is every indication, however, that such popular expectations will not be met. The PNP has signaled that it intends to be "fiscally responsible," and to do nothing to antagonize local and foreign capital—i.e., the U.S. State Department.

This fiscal conservatism of the PNP is rooted in the lessons it claims to have drawn from the experience in power between 1972 and 1980. Manley now argues that the national income cannot be redistributed unless it is expanded, and that economic growth is unlikely if there is any antagonistic relationship with Washington. Reinforcing this view is a stagnant economy, as characterized by the decline of the bauxite industry—now eclipsed by tourism as the chief earner of foreign exchange. Export agriculture has also been severely affected by the destruction of Hurricane Gilbert, and the country is saddled with a huge foreign debt.

A quick review of the previous experience of PNP government shows that its program of reforms was halted when a fiscal crisis forced it, in 1977, to sign an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The reforms had actually been financed by deficit spending, rather than by seeking control of the capitalists' economic surplus. In a few instances where private companies were nationalized, this was done with generous compensation. The imperialist-controlled sector of the economy was left intact except for the imposition of a levy on the bauxite companies—which responded by cutting back on production. Local capitalists took advantage of the PNP's *rhetoric* about dismantling capitalism by sending their money out of the country and in some cases closing down their businesses. The country's foreign exchange position was further affected by the quadrupling of the price of imported oil, and the general deterioration in the terms of trade for exported versus imported goods.

With the country's foreign exchange reserves soon depleted, the PNP—rather than deepening the struggle against the capitalism it talked about dismantling—chose instead to go to the IMF, knowing full well that they would have to swallow some bitter medicine. It was not helpful either that U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger expressed the State Department's displeasure at Manley's open support for Cuba's involvement in the Angolan civil war.

Manley was thus forced to carry out drastic devaluations of the Jamaican dollar, and cut back on subsidies, especially for basic food items. This produced an uncontrollable inflation rate, especially hurtful to the poor as most basic food items are imported. Disaffection thus set in amongst the masses and the stage was set for Manley's defeat by Seaga in 1980. This experience—combined with the U.S. invasion of Grenada and the contra war in Nicaragua—have left an indelible impression on the PNP psyche that struggle against imperialism is futile. The real lesson, of course, is that the masses were never mobilized to struggle in their own interests and the PNP was terrified of taking any decisive action against private capital.

Seaga for his part attempted to raise hopes with his claim that it was "socialism" which had failed under Manley, and that since he was a friend of the West—and of Ronald Reagan in particular—he would be able to bring prosperity to Jamaica through "restoration" of the forces of a market economy. Indeed, for the first two years Seaga was able to skillfully create the impression that he could succeed in this, through a restocking of goods which had previously been in short supply but which now could be imported due to a massive infusion of loans from the U.S.

But reality eventually caught up with Seaga. The productive base of the economy did not expand; the international balance of trade did not improve. Despite the loans he received and the friendship of Ronald Reagan, Jamaica only sank deeper into debt. The IMF soon decided that it was time to rein things in once more. The same bitter medicine that had been imposed on Manley was once again prescribed. This time it was even more severe. But whereas Manley had difficulty in carrying out its full implementation because it conflicted with his liberal image, Seaga seemed to take delight in doing so. The cutbacks in social spending, the massive layoffs in the public sector, were for Seaga a necessary part of "restructuring" the economy and a first step towards "turning the economy around."

Needless to say the masses hardly saw things the same way. Within two years the polls were showing a very unpopular JLP, which was headed in the direction of becoming Jamaica's first one-term government. The fact that it survived until February 1989 is due to the sheer good fortune that the PNP did not contest snap elections held in 1983—in protest against the nonimplementation of agreed electoral reforms designed to protect against vote fraud.

While the JLP has not abandoned its red-baiting tactics, it has been somewhat chastened by its experience—that being a friend of Washington and having easy access to loans is not in itself a recipe for economic development. It is therefore unlikely that when the PNP does reestablish diplomatic relations with Cuba (broken by the JLP soon after it came to power) that this will of itself create the basis for any anti-communist hysteria. The PNP has said that it will reestablish diplomatic relations as a matter of principle, but Cuba will not play the role that it once did, such as building schools, and providing doctors.

The immediate concern of the PNP government is the question of debt and the continued role of the IMF in directing fiscal policies. According to a recent World Bank report, Jamaica, with a population of 2.3 million, is among the 17 third world countries that are most in debt. Although Jamaica's debt is only \$4.5 billion as compared to the \$120 billion owed by Brazil, its per capita debt ratio is much larger.

The current IMF agreement which the PNP has to abide by for the next year at least prohibits wages from being increased by more than 10 percent. The trade unions are restless about this aspect of the agreement and the PNP will soon have to respond to their demands on the issue. What the PNP is counting on to blunt any immediate offensive is the customary "honeymoon" period and the personal appeal of Michael Manley, who hasn't lost his charisma. It should be pointed out, however, that it was this very issue which led the

unions to declare their first general strike against the Seaga government in 1985.

Seaga stuck to a policy of no concessions to the unions during that strike. Instead, he applied pressure to one of the unions affiliated to his party—the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU)—to back away from the strike. The BITU complied and the strike collapsed. This political blow, combined with a reduction of membership due to massive public sector layoffs, has left the unions on the defensive. The political climate will have to be radically altered before they are likely to become militant once again.

Another factor which the PNP will conceivably try to take advantage of is the fact that the Moscow-oriented Workers' Party of Jamaica (WPJ)—recently weakened by the resignation of key members—is also likely to play a moderating role in the political arena and will not attempt to outflank the PNP. The waning fortunes of the WPJ date back to the defeat of the PNP in 1980. Though critical of the PNP/IMF relationship it maintained support for the PNP at all critical junctures. The WPJ condemned, for example, the mass demonstrations which broke out in 1979 against the PNP's decision to hike gas prices. So when the PNP lost the 1980 elections, the vote could be interpreted as an equal rejection of the WPJ's class collaborationist policies because of the close identity between these two parties. In the face of glasnost and perestroika in the USSR, the WPJ has for all intents and purposes ceased to pay lip service to Marxism-Leninism. At its congress of last year, a call was made for "Jamaicanization" of the party, which should be read as a further retreat from the politics of class confrontation.

For the immediate future, therefore, the PNP seems set to continue with the fiscal austerity program and there is no reason to fear any significant opposition from either of the two parties. Manley has already set in motion the machinery to placate Washington. So the only contentious issue will perhaps arise when the PNP takes a position on the regional debt crisis. Realistically one has to expect that any position will be in keeping with domestic political considerations. (Certainly the PNP is watching the situation in Venezuela very closely, remembering previous riots in Jamaica when gas prices were increased at the behest of the IMF.)

The final test as to how closely the PNP takes up where the JLP left off should come on the question of curbing police abuses, and what is to be done about the Suppression of Crime Act which gives the police powers of search, arrest, and detention without warrant. In legal circles this is widely regarded as unconstitutional. The most that has been promised thus far is a "review." If the necessary pressure is not brought to bear on this issue it is likely that the PNP—in seeking to curry favor with Washington by participating in the so-called war against drugs, and to keep its promise to the Jamaican middle class to get "tough on crime"—could well reintroduce draconian police measures as it did during the '70s (the State of Emergency, Suppression of Crime Act). This would allow the lawlessness of the police to continue.

The so-called fight against crime is of course a double-edged sword. One prominent businessman who has been asking for a repeal of the Suppression of Crime Act sug-

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James Kutcher (1912-1989)

The Man Who Never Gave Up

by Frank Lovell

James Kutcher suffered more than his share of misfortune and adversity, but he never stopped fighting against injustice. He met every challenge with quiet determination to win. His life was more willful than accidental, more satisfying than frustrating. The decisions he made distinguished him from ordinary men, even though he described himself as an ordinary man "in most respects."

He came of age during the Great Depression. There were no jobs for a young man of 19 in 1932. He had hoped to become a teacher but the family had no money for his education. He thought himself lucky to get hired as a butcher's delivery boy, but that didn't last because he was soon replaced by a relative of the boss. After a succession of low-paid temporary jobs, he began first to question his own ability and then the capitalist system that divides society between a few rich people and the poor. He recalls in his book, *The Case of the Legless Veteran*, how he began to solve this riddle. "I heard there was going to be a symposium at the Y [in Newark, New Jersey, his hometown], and I went there. H.V. Kaltenborn, the radio commentator, defended capitalism; Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party's candidate for president, defended socialism; and Scott Nearing defended communism. A lot of what they said went over my head," he wrote. "But when Kaltenborn said it wasn't fair to judge capitalism by what it looked like during a crisis because that was not its normal condition, and Thomas poked fun at this, my sympathies were with Thomas." Jim began to read about these questions and in 1935 joined the Socialist Party. His basic education began there when he was introduced to the political writings and organizational work of Leon Trotsky. He became a Trotskyist in 1936 and remained so for life.

Tragedy and Challenge

In retrospect Kutcher said his life was shaped by three man-made catastrophes: the depression, the war, and the cold war, each with consequences both tragic and challenging. The depression cut off his right to work but it gave him a new outlook on the world. World War II cost him his legs. He had to learn to walk again on artificial legs, like a child learning to use stilts. "But," he

said, "it also brought me a job I expected to keep for the rest of my life, and for the first time, I got a sense of personal security." The cold war cost him his job because he was a member of the Socialist Workers Party and decided not to renounce his socialist principles. The day he was notified by the Veteran's Administration that he was slated to be fired was when his illusory sense of security vanished. He felt it as a personal blow but he understood it as a blow to civil liberties in this country. He said it tore him out of a self-centered routine and reawakened his interest in the world and his relation to the political repression of the time.

From 1948 when he was fired from his clerk's job at the VA in Newark until 1958 when his case was finally settled and he was securely back on this job, Kutcher conducted a tireless campaign against the government's unconstitutional blacklist. During that decade he became the most prominent



Kutcher Memorial Meeting

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witch-hunt victim, and the only completely vindicated champion of civil liberties in this country at the time. He attributed his success mainly to the mass support of the CIO unions, to the Kutcher Civil Rights Committee, which was organized by the Socialist Workers Party and endorsed by all major civil liberties organizations, and the able staff of attorneys headed by the civil libertarian, Joseph L. Rauh. But Kutcher himself made the major contribution.

On Tour

He made two national tours. The first began early in June 1949 in Minneapolis, went west to Seattle, down the coast to San Francisco and Los Angeles, and back through the industrial cities of the Midwest. It ended with a meeting at the Capitol Hotel in New York on December 15—the 158th anniversary of the Bill of Rights.

Many highlights of this trip and some excerpts from Jim's talk at the New York meeting are recounted in his book. He talked about what he had learned on tour. "Of course, it wasn't only the unions that helped me, although they took the lead," he said. "In addition there were scores, hundreds, of liberal, civil liberties, veterans, civic, religious, student, old-age, Negro, Jewish, Japanese-American, Slavic-American, fraternal, academic, political and social groups and organizations who came to my aid morally and financially, although the overwhelming majority of their members disagree—and sometimes violently—with the social and political views for which I was purged from my job." His conclusion: "... the people are on our side. And if we redouble our efforts and reach them with the truth, they will come to our aid and guarantee that the liberties won in the Bill of Rights will never be destroyed in this country."

More than ten weeks of this tour was spent in Los Angeles. Upon arrival he was greeted by a large delegation and some examples of advance publicity, including an editorial in *Crossroads*, the Nisei weekly, which linked Kutcher's case with the victimization of West Coast Japanese during the war. The editor, Masamori Kojima, later spoke at a banquet in Kutcher's honor, reminding those present that, like Kutcher, "A public hearing is what we Japanese-Americans demanded to decide our case [during the war]—but we didn't get it." Instead, they got concentration camps for the duration. The SWP was one of the very few organizations to expose and denounce this brutal totalitarian-style government operation at the time.

While in Los Angeles Kutcher was invited to address the national convention of the NAACP, the only speaker who was not an NAACP official or a government representative. "Next to the labor movement," he noted, "most of our support here is coming from the minority groups: Negro, Jewish, Japanese-American, and now I've been invited to talk to the Community Services Organization (Mexican-American)."

The Second Tour

Jim left from Newark May 17, 1954, on his second national tour. Driving alone from city to city he made his way across the country and back, returning to Newark on November 8. One purpose of this six-month journey was to sell his book

and get the widest possible distribution of it. It had been published in England the year before because he was unable to find a publisher in this country. This was the first edition. It explained the case of the legless veteran during the first five years. It brought the story up to June 16, 1953, the actual date on which Kutcher's name was removed for a second time from the rolls of the VA. He attached significance to that date, "which will be better remembered as the date when the workers of East Germany began their inspiring political uprising against their Stalinist rulers." As for the Kutcher defense case: "Our next steps were back into the federal court." He was not optimistic. "One thing I have learned," he said, "is how hard it is for someone in my position to get even a hearing from the Supreme Court, let alone a favorable decision."

Kutcher's Log Book

Among Kutcher's personal effects "A Log of Journey Across Country" has been found. It consists of places he visited, miles he drove, people he saw, meetings he addressed, books he sold, and the treatment he received. It is clear from his log notations that the political climate in early 1954 was noticeably different from the time of his first tour in 1949.

His opening tour stop this time was Buffalo where he spent 17 days, from May 18 to June 5. He received a warm welcome from members of the SWP branch, spoke before several local union meetings, made a trip to Toronto and spoke to meetings there and ended his stay with a big public rally at the Hotel Statler which was well advertised, including an ad in the *Buffalo Evening Express*. At the rally 34 books were sold and \$120 collected.

Altogether, while in the Buffalo area, he distributed about 100 copies of his book. He did so much driving that one notation says, "Getting to know my way around Buffalo a little bit." In general Jim enjoyed his stay, but there were signs of new problems with the case and some extraneous aggravations. His car had been driven about 65,000 miles and had to be repaired. The FBI paid a visit to the house where he stayed, and tried to intimidate the elderly occupants. A conference of the International Union of Electrical Workers on civil liberties denied Kutcher admission to speak and sell his book. No explanation given.

His next stop was Detroit. He had a series of successful meetings at union halls, mostly at UAW locals and other CIO affiliates. An entry in his log for Sunday, June 6, says, "Tour starts with a bang, sold 64 books first day. . . ." He stayed in Detroit through June 20.

An Accidental Discovery

While in Detroit Kutcher began to learn more about shifts in popular attitudes as conditioned by and reflected in the daily press. He held a news conference upon arrival. His log notation for June 5 reads: "Had press conference—reporter from *Times* [probably the *Detroit Times*, a Hearst publication]—wise guy. But I did all right." The following evening he drove to Grand Rapids and spent the night there, expecting to attend the opening session of the CIO convention,

The Case of the Legless Veteran

A Letter to James Kutcher

by James P. Cannon

This letter first appeared in the Militant, January 11, 1954. It also appears in the collection of Cannon's writings, Notebook of an Agitator, published by Pathfinder Press, New York.

Dear Jim:

Your book moved me profoundly, and I would like to tell you why. In my opinion the story you tell about yourself in *The Case of the Legless Veteran* is even more important than the case itself. The dramatic incident of your war injuries in Italy and the shabby payoff from the Veterans Administration in America are well worth a book for their own sake. But they are only a part—one might almost say an incidental part—of the book you have written about your life as a whole.

When you started to write the story of your case, I suppose it never occurred to you that your life, being very little different from that of millions of others, would have any special interest except as background material. In your opening chapters you seem to be hesitant about introducing personal matter into the account of a celebrated political case, in which you just happened to be the man in the middle.

You begin with the remark, "I am an ordinary man"—as though ordinary men are not supposed to talk about themselves, which as a rule, they don't. But as I see it, just because your life has been one of many; because you have seen and felt and lived pretty much the same things as the others—in speaking of yourself you have spoken for the others too, with their own thoughts and feelings and in their own language.

In this book, which is so completely American, and yet so purely free from national pride and arrogance, so personal and yet so objective, you have unknowingly given the movement a model example of the right way to explain socialism to those who need the information most. The socialist revolution is a worldwide affair, but the man who will make it in this country does not live all over the

globe. He lives right here; he is the American worker as he is, and as he will change, without ceasing to be what he is. He is the man who will decide everything, and for that reason he is the one we have to talk to. Those who don't understand that, who talk "over his head," are in reality talking only to themselves. Nobody is listening, and they might as well shut up.

I read your book with great satisfaction; not only for its own interest and merits as such, but also because I found in it a certain justification and support of my own conception of the tasks of the American socialist movement, and what I personally have tried to do about it.

The international outlook, which takes the modern world as a unit and proceeds from that, is the necessary starting point for the orientation of a revolutionary party in national affairs. But the international outlook is only that—the starting point and means of orientation; it is not a substitute for the building of an indigenous national party, rooted in the soil of its own country and articulating the instinctive striving of its own working class. I have always wanted our party to be the most internationalist and at the same time the most American, the most theoretical and also the most practical, of all the political tendencies in the labor movement.

We were animated by this unified conception from the first, in the pioneer days of American communism, when the idea of internationalism, with our help, brought the main core of the radical American workers' movement to the Russian Revolution and the Communist Party. We clung to the same conception during the first decade of American communism, when we fought to Americanize the party; to connect it with the living movement of the

American workers, and to resist the tendency which later succumbed to the fatal theory of "socialism in one country," i.e., in Russia alone.

Again, in the early days after our expulsion from the Communist Party, when we were condemned by the circumstances to preoccupy ourselves in isolation with international and theoretical questions, we never lost our aspiration to find contact again with the mass movement. We regarded our theoretical work as the preparation for a more fruitful activity in the mass movement later on. It worked out that way when the revival of labor radicalism opened the doors of opportunity for us after five years of isolation.

Now we have a new situation, in which our work must be guided by a plan. The combined weight of the artificially prolonged prosperity and the raging witch-hunt again submits the vanguard of the vanguard to the cruel test of isolation. We have to theorize the new situation in order to find a way out. At the same time, a revisionist current in our world movement again obliges us, whether we like it or not, to concentrate our attention on international questions. In these circumstances, once more, we need an occasional sharp reminder of our old unified conception—that theoretical preoccupation is not a substitute for mass work but a means of developing it more effectively; that international ideas and associations are not a substitute for work on the national field.

More than that, the two sides of these combined tasks should not be separated from each other, either in theory or in daily activity. The moment a party begins to neglect its external propaganda, the moment it ceases to search for new people to talk to and to recruit, it begins to die. The national and international, the practical and

the theoretical, ought to be united and carried on at the same time. This, of course, is easier said than done. It requires a conscious effort on the part of some to start the work that may be neglected on one side or the other, and set the example. From that point of view I am especially grateful and inspired by the appearance of your work of socialist propaganda at the present time.

For more than a year our movement has been up to its neck in an internal factional fight, and now has to turn its attention to an international extension of the same thing. This has been the signal for wiseacres, who never do anything for themselves, to begin once again to cackle: "Oh, those Trotskyists, they're at it again; they spend all their time on factional squabbles." At such a time, it is most refreshing and inspiring to see an unpretentious man named Jim Kutcher, who takes a firm stand in the faction fight himself, come forward with a simple and powerful work of socialist propaganda, which shows that he has not forgotten the ordinary American worker and knows how to talk to him about the problems of his life and his socialist future.

Anyone who can do that, Jim, and who likes to do it and thinks it is important, is my brother. Of all the different kinds of work I have done in my time in the movement, that which I have enjoyed most, which gave me the most complete personal satisfaction, was the writing of propaganda pieces in my "Notebook of an Agitator." I would have been content to stay in a corner of the party, doing that kind of work, and let others take care of other tasks. I deeply regretted that the exigencies of the internal factional struggle interfered with the realization of this modest ambition.

But after all, the party is what counts and the party line comes first. None of us can do much by himself if the party line is not straight. If the party's policy is wrong and the leadership is inadequate, the work of individuals comes to naught. We can work effectively only in and through the party. Sometimes that requires a factional struggle to straighten out the party.

But at the same time, we should never get so lost in the faction fight that we neglect the broad constructive work of propaganda; forget to talk to the ordinary worker; still worse, forget even how to talk to him. For my part, I am glad that I didn't forget. Despite my preoccupation with the internal struggle against a crude revisionist and capitulatory current in our party during the past year, I still managed to sandwich in my six lectures on "America's Road to Socialism," which now take their place, in pamphlet form, beside your book in the propaganda arsenal of the party. I feel good about that.

That party will win in the United States which keeps its revolutionary political line straight, and takes time to straighten it out when the line deviates, and yet never ceases to believe in the American workers, and never stops talking to them in their own language. Sometimes this two-sided task requires a division of labor among the people who make up the party. Our National Committee is giving the party an example of this combination of tasks and division of labor.

It has done its full duty on the front of the internal struggle during the past year, and is now doing all it can do to help orthodox Trotskyists on the international field to combat the revisionist tendency. At the same time, the party is bound to note with

approval that the National Committee—without neglecting its international duties—is also sounding the alarm, and leading and organizing a struggle on the domestic field against the manifest emergence of a native fascist movement.

The secret of success for a revolutionary party, I repeat again, is the unified conception of its tasks and the division of labor. Your life story, which you have told so effectively in *The Case of the Legless Veteran*, is a great contribution on your part to the division of labor. You can, and no doubt will, say: "Why, I did nothing but tell what I saw and experienced and felt and thought as the son of a working class family in high school, in the long depression, in the war, and then in the witch-hunt. I'm not much different from the others. I just happened to come into contact with the socialist movement—that made all the difference and changed my whole life."

But that's just the point, Jim. In your book you speak, in anticipation, for millions of others like yourself, who will also come into contact with socialist ideas. That will make all the difference for them too, and with that little difference they will change this country and change the world. Anyone who helps to disseminate these change-making ideas, in a form and language accessible to the American worker as he is, is helping thereby to change this country and the world.

With warm personal regards and thanks from one agitator to another.

James P. Cannon
Los Angeles, California

June 7. His log book shows the following notation for that date: "CIO convention starts today. Wasted trip."

This was his first reaction at not being allowed to address the convention. But the trip was far from wasted. In Grand Rapids he met with Gus Scholle, president of the Michigan CIO. Scholle had been an early supporter of the Kutcher case and admired Jim's courage. Jim wrote in his log, "Meeting with Scholle—said rumor about book going around that royalties were going to party and similar things." This was the first time Jim heard of anything like this. But Scholle was

more specific. He gave Jim enough information to allow the Kutcher Civil Rights Committee to begin immediately to track down the source of these groundless and damaging rumors. Back in Detroit Jim continued to make the rounds of union meetings, church groups, civil liberties organizations, wherever he could get a hearing and sell his book.

He spoke at a National Lawyers Guild luncheon and got a good reception which was somewhat surprising because the Guild was influenced by Stalinist ideology. In the past the Stalinists had tried to block support to his case. He had con-

fronted them on several occasions, most memorably at a meeting in San Francisco of 2,800 longshoremen in the Local 10 hall of the longshore union on his first national tour. In that situation the Stalinists were discredited and humiliated. They were not deterred. In the early stages of his fight they hounded him wherever possible. An entire chapter of his book had to be devoted to their disgraceful slander campaign, "The role of the Communist Party."

By 1945 the witch-hunt had caught up with the CP, with a vengeance. They were finally beginning to realize that their attacks on Kutcher were harming them more than him. Guild members who earlier might have been prejudiced against Kutcher by Stalinist falsification of his case were now ready to listen to him with open minds, and buy his book. That was another side of the witch-hunt pressures.

Fighting on Two Fronts

At this point Kutcher was painfully aware that he was the target of a more insidious and damaging campaign than the crude slanders of the Stalinists, and this new threat was generated within the CIO from a hidden source.

While in Detroit Kutcher worked on the draft of a letter to top CIO officials, hoping to dispel the false rumors against him and his defense committee. His log shows that on June 15 he spoke to a meeting of laid-off Dodge workers at their UAW hall: "Couldn't sell book because CIO is sabotaging sale of book." Later that day, "Had meeting with Rev. Henry Hitt Crane at his home." Reverend Crane of the Central Methodist Church was then the most prominent civil libertarian in Detroit. Nationally known, he was highly respected by Walter Reuther and the UAW bureaucracy. Rev. Crane was a sincere supporter of Kutcher, always helpful throughout the long fight. It may be that Kutcher sought his advice, hoping to gather more information about how his campaign was being undermined within the CIO. The next day, June 16, Kutcher wrote: "Letter to G. mailed out." (G. was either George Novack or George Weissman, both representing the Kutcher Civil Rights Committee at the time.)

Thursday, June 17: "Sent off letter to Riffie in CIO office." (Mr. John V. Riffie, Executive Vice President, CIO, 718 Jackson Pl., N.W., Washington, D.C.) On his last day in Detroit, Sunday, June 20, Kutcher wrote: "Tried my new electric razor [a gift from comrades in Detroit SWP], it was fine. Went to 3 meetings. 2 were canceled—one said they wouldn't sell Trotskyist literature."

Long Trip

From Detroit Kutcher went on to more than a dozen cities: Chicago, Milwaukee, Seattle, Vancouver (Canada), Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Duluth, a one-day stopover in Detroit where he met with his close friend and comrade George Breitman en route to Cleveland, on to the Youngstown/Akron/Warren region in Ohio, Pittsburgh, Pa., and finally back home. His last log entry: "Monday November 8, 1955—leave for home 8:45 a.m. arrived Newark 6:45 p.m.—end of tour & last entry in diary."

It had been a long trip. Kutcher traveled alone, driving more than 10,000 miles. He saw beautiful places in this

country and in Canada, places he had only read about before. He met people in the unions and in the civil liberties movement about whom he had only previously heard or read, both good and bad. He learned about his own political organization, the Socialist Workers Party, in a way he had not previously known it. He had troubles—with his car which several times needed repairs, and sometimes with people who didn't want to hear what he had to say and didn't want others to hear him either. But when it was over Kutcher could look through his log book and be reminded of the good times he had—the picnics and scenic excursions he went on, the people who gave him special attention because they realized that others were beginning to desert him—and he could be confident that his record was clear.

In Chicago he met Ralph Helstein, national president of the packinghouse workers union, who made a hefty financial contribution, ordered a large number of books, and enthusiastically introduced Jim to union members and staff. Out in San Francisco the longshoremen in Local 10 bought his book and welcomed him back, perhaps to read about their first welcoming. His log entry for September 13 records the occasion: "meeting at longshore—They remembered me all right. 124 copies sold."

The Turning Point

After Jim returned to Newark, his second national tour behind him and with bleak prospects of ever getting back his job with the VA, he started to learn the printing trade in the hope of becoming a proofreader. But there still remained a ray of hope in his struggle with the government bureaucracy. The Public Housing Authority was stymied. Its decision to evict Kutcher and his aged parents from their home in a federal housing project had been stayed by court order. The Housing Authority appealed, but the courts delayed for two years. And when a ruling finally came down, the vindictive eviction orders were nullified.

Meanwhile the government struck another blow. Two days before Christmas, 1955, Kutcher's disability pension was bureaucratically terminated. His only income was gone. This focused public attention on the Kutcher case as never before. He later said that at the time this overshadowed the job issue and probably had an important effect on the outcome of his case. Suddenly the newspapers were full of the Kutcher story. Public hearings were held for the first time in a "loyalty" case of this kind. Kutcher's testimony was widely publicized, the baseless charges against him exposed. On April 20, 1956, a federal appeals court ordered Kutcher restored to his job. He went back to work at the Newark VA on June 26; and finally, two years later, on June 4, 1958, he got a settlement for back pay. The famous "Case of the Legless Veteran" was closed after nearly 10 years.

Kutcher retired from his VA job in 1972 and after that worked at Pathfinder Press, the SWP publishing house. During his first year there he completed the story of his long fight against political persecution. The first edition of his book was written in 1953. Twenty years later, in 1973, the second edition appeared, published at Pathfinder. This second edition retains unchanged all the 17 original chapters. It adds two more, "The Second Five Years" and "Sum-

ming Up,” in which some fundamental questions about the witch-hunt of the 1950s are examined from the vantage point of Kutcher’s experience.

What happened in the mid-1950s that caused the witch-hunt hysteria to subside? And why did Kutcher’s long struggle for an open hearing take such a drastic turn in the courts at that time?

Thinking back on those times, twenty years later, Kutcher made the following observation: “It was not a happy time, for me personally, or for civil liberties generally. The witch-hunt became even more rabid and widespread after Eisenhower won the election in 1952. Joe McCarthy was the center of American politics for the next two years, and pretty much had his own way until mid-1954, when the U.S. Senate finally voted to censure him (he had gone ‘too far,’ attacking not only the army establishment but the Republicans too).”

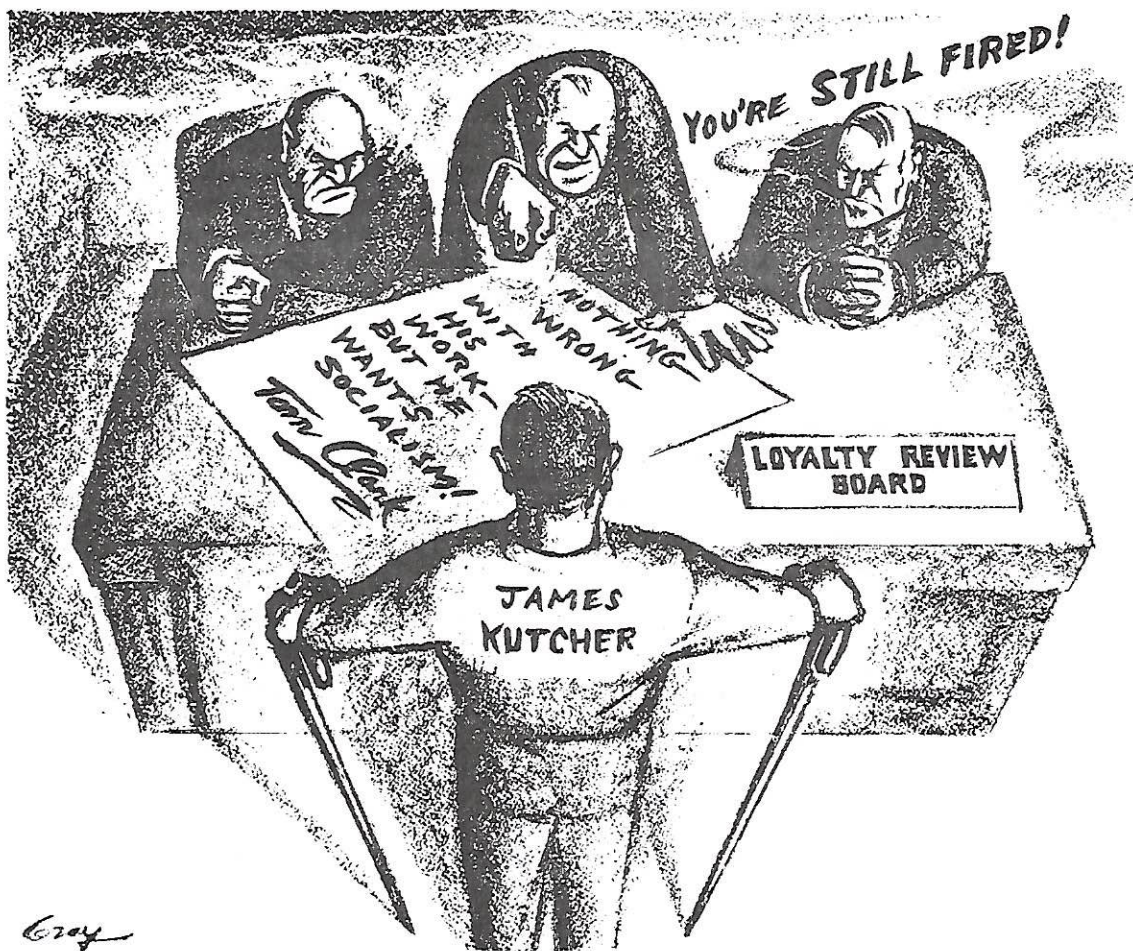
Of course, it was not only a matter of what the ruling class decided to do in its own self-interest at that juncture. Kutcher was certainly keenly aware that his efforts counted for something in the final outcome of his case. “Not to have resisted with every resource at our command would have meant relying in the last analysis on the good will or rationalism of the ruling class,” Kutcher said. “That is not

the kind of ‘realism’ I ever could recommend to anyone, nor the kind that genuine radicals can accept after the experience of the United States government’s role in Indochina.” So he was satisfied that he did what was right, that he would never have regained his job if he and his supporters hadn’t fought for it.

Union Transition

Another unanswered question: What happened in the unions? Why did so many union officials desert Kutcher?

The sad fact is that the union movement during World War II was subjected to government controls, and enactment of the Taft-Hartley Law in 1947 codified and extended those controls. Under these conditions the unions became highly bureaucratized. Bureaucrats do not risk their soft jobs for the sake of principles. Kutcher came to the conclusion that “the unions were in a state of transition, starting around the time my case began.” He said he hadn’t sensed this in 1949 but it was clear in 1954, during his second tour. “Bureaucratization of the unions made enormous strides in those five years,” he said. “That, and the impact of McCarthyism, had frightened some and served as a pretext for



others.” An examination of letters between Kutcher and top officials of the CIO, an appendix in the expanded second edition of his book, confirms this judgment.

In Defense of Marxism

Kutcher’s defense of socialist principles did not end when he won back his government job. After he retired from that job he took up the work of explaining those principles, what it means to defend them, and how best to do this. That was the purpose of the 1973 edition of his book. He participated in the making of a documentary film of his case while still working at Pathfinder Press. The film (released in 1981) took his book’s title, *The Case of the Legless Veteran*. This, too, was a defense and exposition of the socialist principles he espoused as a youth. He thought by that time, after all his experience of nearly half a century in the Trotskyist movement, that he could face any challenge. But even then another challenge, both personal and political, was still to come. It came from an unexpected source and took a more bizarre form than any he had ever before encountered.

In 1983 a new generation of leaders in the Socialist Workers Party, headed by the national secretary Jack Barnes, charged Kutcher with “hitting a comrade” at a party membership meeting (a charge that was later demonstrated to be patently false based on the testimony of the individual allegedly hit) and expelled him on the grounds that he refused to appear when summoned to stand trial (when in fact he was ill and unable to appear, and had merely asked for a delay). Kutcher was not sure at the time what the real reason for his expulsion was, but it soon became clear that he was deemed to be a Trotskyist when the party leadership was seeking to establish its own anti-Trotskyist credentials. Kutcher’s summary expulsion—the renowned defender of Trotskyism unceremoniously kicked out of the Socialist Workers Party—was certainly one means to this end. Or so this latest gang of anti-Trotskyists thought.

At age 71 Kutcher was forced again to defend his socialist principles. He responded in the only way he knew, by demanding an open hearing. In his appeal to the 1984 national convention Kutcher explained in detail the circumstances of the charges against him and the manner of his expulsion, a task imposed on him because his tormentors

refused to provide documents of the charges and mock trial proceedings. He exposed their antisocialist concepts of “loyalty” and “discipline.”

In this situation it soon developed that Kutcher had not been singled out as a lone example. A list of comrades who remained loyal to Trotskyism had been prepared and Kutcher happened to be one of the first purged, soon to be followed by more than a hundred others. Kutcher was among those victims of the purge who organized the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (F.I.T.) as one current in the U.S. Trotskyist movement and began publishing the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

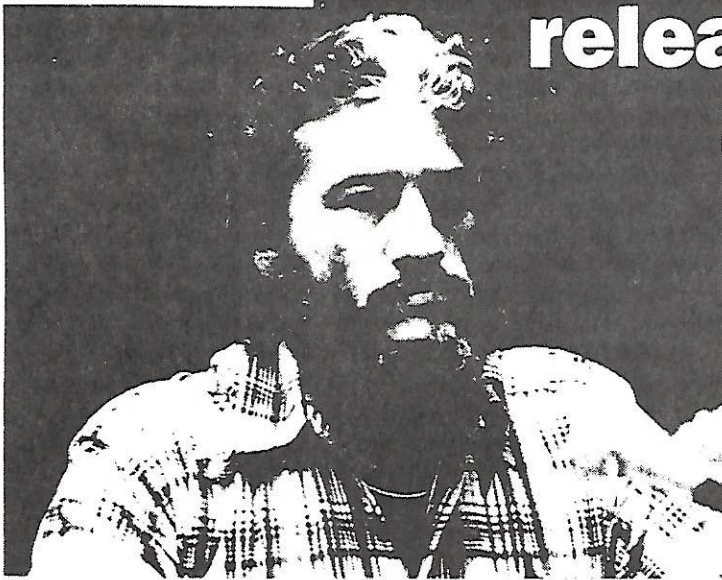
Last Years

Kutcher’s closest friend and literary collaborator in the SWP was George Breitman, also one of the most widely known exponents of Trotskyism and also a founder of the F.I.T. Breitman died in 1986, a terrible blow to Kutcher. He determined that a proper tribute was necessary, and financed the publication of the book, *A Tribute to George Breitman—Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary*. In that book Kutcher’s contribution tells about their friendship and collaboration of 50 years. He said Breitman helped him on two critical occasions, “as no one else could.” The first of these was when he was fired by the VA and the other was when he was kicked out of the SWP. “Shortly after my expulsion from the SWP,” he remembered, “George was also expelled. We had something new in common after that. George was accused by the dishonest and underhanded SWP leaders of ‘disloyalty.’ It reminded me of the charges made against me by the U.S. government, also charges of ‘disloyalty.’”

During the remaining years of his life Jim Kutcher spent his time caring for his personal needs as an invalid, and reading. He never gave up his hope that somehow the SWP could be won back to Trotskyism and the traitors in the leadership exposed.

His body finally gave out a few days before his 76th birthday, December 26, 1988. He was taken to the intensive care unit of the Veterans Hospital in Brooklyn. There he lingered in semiconsciousness until pronounced dead February 10. In his struggle with death, as in life, James Kutcher refused to give up. ●

Hugo Blanco released



THE INTERNATIONAL campaign in solidarity with Hugo Blanco and other arrested leaders of the Peruvian Peasant Confederation (CCP) has achieved its first aim (see *IV* 157). Following the release of the others, Blanco was finally set free on Friday, February 24 and was able to return to Lima the following day to continue his work as organizational secretary of the CCP.

AFTER HIS arrest in Pucalpa on February 9 following the peasant strike movement in the region, Hugo Blanco was taken to Lima. On February 21, the Lima prosecutor had ordered his release. However, the police ignored this order and attempted to forcibly take Blanco back to Pucalpa. A first attempt was prevented by demonstrators at Lima airport, who forcibly stopped the aircraft from taking off. But early in the morning of February 22, Blanco was returned to Pucalpa.

Blanco appeared in court in Pucalpa on February 24. His lawyer demanded the dropping of all charges and his release, arguing that there was no proof whatsoever substantiating the charges of "armed rebellion". The prosecutor again ordered Blanco's release, putting no restrictions on his freedom of movement.

This success is the result of an active international campaign of protests and pressure on the Peruvian government:

- Amnesty International made the Blanco case an urgent international action, thus aiding solidarity actions in many countries.

- In Sweden, where Blanco's wife and children live, a daily protest was organized outside the embassy, which included the classmates of Hugo Blanco's two younger children. Support was also mobilized in the trade-union movement, which led to the president of the trade-union federation sending a telegram of protest. On

February 18 a large meeting brought together representatives of the Communist Party, social-democratic MPs, writers and academics supporting Blanco's release.

- In Belgium, our comrades demanded that the European Parliament take up the case.

- In Switzerland, our comrades contacted the Socialist Party, whose Geneva section demanded a meeting with the Peruvian Embassy.

- In Germany, the Greens also approached the European Parliament, and a number of rallies were planned.

- In Spain, our comrades in the LCR immediately informed the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the General Workers' Confederation and the Workers' Commissions. A public meeting was held on February 13 in Madrid.

- In France, a delegation led by the International Federation for Human Rights, the Human Rights League and Alain Krivine from the LCR went to the Peruvian Embassy on February 13. The LCR organized an embassy picket and a special solidarity poster was flyposted.

- In Latin America and the United States many protest actions have taken place. The Peruvian embassy in Washington told callers that their telephone was ringing non-stop — they even had a call from Senator Edward Kennedy!

Once again an international campaign has helped our comrade Hugo Blanco escape from the clutches of the military. Peruvian peasants will continue to struggle against their conditions of poverty, repression and exploitation, and Hugo Blanco and his comrades in the CCP will continue their work with them. The danger of future repression demands ongoing vigilance. ★

Reprinted from
International Viewpoint
No. 158

PRT Leader Still Missing in Mexico

by Michael Frank

José Ramon Garcia Gomez, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) who was kidnapped outside his home on December 16, is still missing. On the day of his disappearance, his house was being watched by government security agents in cars without license plates. Photos of the cars taken by neighbors were given to the police, but they have refused to investigate the identity of the agents.

Demonstrations demanding Garcia Gomez's release were held on December 16 in Cuautla, his hometown, and in Cuernavaca. There was a mass rally of 4,000 people on December 24. An international forum against political repression was held in Cuautla on February 25. According to the February 27 issue of the Mexican daily *Jornada*, 2,500 people participated, 250 of them representing trade unions, community organizations, universities, etc. The forum was chaired by Rosario Ibarra, Ifigenia Martinez, and Ana Santander, who demanded the reappearance of José Ramon, the release of all political prisoners, an end to all measures of repression, and respect for human rights. The delegations present came from Puebla, Vallé de Mexico, Morelos, Chiapas, Guerrero, and San Luis Potosi. Eighty-two organizations and fifty peasant communities were present.

"Disappearances" have been common in Mexico, though José Ramon is the first under the new government. It is estimated that some 800 peasant and Indian leaders, union organizers, students, teachers, and political activists have been

murdered by government security forces in recent years. A former soldier in the Mexican army, Zacariás Osorio Cruz, testified recently in Canada that he was part of a unit that murdered 60 political prisoners.

To defuse mounting criticism, the Mexican government has announced plans to release hundreds of political prisoners. But Garcia Gomez is still missing. Telegrams demanding his release should be sent to:

Carlos Salinas de Gortari
Palacio Nacional
Mexico DF

Fernando Gutierrez Barrios
Secretario de Gubernacion
Bucareli 99
Mexico DF

Antonio Riva Palacio Lopez
Gobernador
Palacio de Gubernacion
Cuernavaca
Morelos

Please send copies to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

Mixed Decision in Seattle Freeway Hall Case

This article is based on a news release issued by the Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee on February 28, 1989.

On February 21 a three-judge Washington State Court of Appeals panel denied an argument by the Freedom Socialist Party and ordered it to turn over minutes of its meetings to ex-member Richard Snedigar. At the same time the panel overturned a default decision by a lower court ordering the party to pay Snedigar \$42,000.

The organization's appeal had contended that "disclosure would have a powerful chilling effect on open discussion within the party. It would shackle democratic decision-making and deter people from participating in meetings or even associating with the organization." However, the appeals court said the FSP had not proven that releasing its minutes would violate the constitutional rights of its members by constricting freedom of speech or association.

The decision on the default judgment meant that if King County Superior Court Judge Warren Chan chooses to make

the same ruling again, he must state his reasons for doing so. This is what had been demanded by the defendants at the original hearing where Chan imposed his order. Nevertheless, he had refused to explain the basis for his decision.

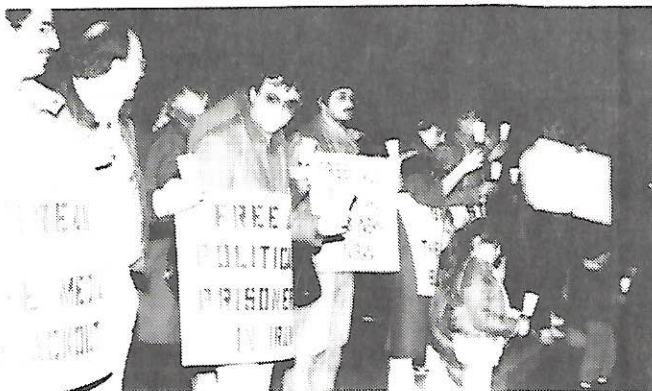
The FSP will now ask the court to reconsider its decision. Support for the case is still needed. Recent endorsers include writer and linguist Noam Chomsky, historian and professor Giovanni Costigan, sanctuary activist Rev. Donovan Cook of Seattle, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 in San Francisco, and the Socialist Challenge group in Toronto, Ontario.

For more information write to: Freeway Hall Case Defense Committee, 5018 Rainier Avenue S., Seattle, WA 98118, or call 206-722-2453.

Mass Executions in Iran Protested

by Gary Kennedy

On December 4, in Dallas, Texas, 80 people gathered at Bethany House in the South Oak Cliff section to hear a program about political prisoners in El Salvador, the United States, and Iran. The Dallas Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), one of the sponsors of the event, has members who belong to both the majority and minority factions of the Organization of the Iranian Peoples' Fedayeen Guerillas. The meeting was successful in educating North Americans about events in Iran and also in getting people from the Middle East in the Dallas area, who had been divided along factional lines for years, to participate in the same meeting. The event gave birth to a new group: the Political Prisoners Defense Network.



On February 10, the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Iranian revolution, the Political Prisoners Defense Network held its first event in the form of a vigil to protest the mass executions of political prisoners in Iran. Fifty-five people gathered in the cold, in front of the *Dallas Morning News* offices hoping to draw attention to the press blackout on the execution of political prisoners in the Islamic Republic.

Last December Amnesty International issued a report on the mass executions of Iranian leftists. It states that the secret killings started in prisons last July, including Evin and Gohardasht prisons in Tehran plus others in Tabriz, Mashad, and Shiraz. At first, Iran denied these charges, but President Sayed Ali Khamenei has recently stated that leftists "are condemned to death and we will execute them." Many of those killed were people held in prison after their

release date, and others had been rearrested immediately after release. Many had been brutally tortured before they were murdered. Victims have included members of the Organization of Revolutionary Workers of Iran, Organization of the Iranian Peoples' Fedayeen Guerillas (both majority and minority factions), the Tudeh (Communist) Party, the

Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, and the Toilers Party of Kurdistan, a sister organization to the Tudeh Party.

Amnesty International immediately confirmed 300 deaths, but estimates that the number could be "in the thousands": "Nobody knows how many have been put to death, just as nobody knows when the killing will stop or who will be the next to die. Our fears are heightened be-

cause many of the executed have been imprisoned without trial or were serving long prison sentences imposed after unfair trials."

A Tehran woman reports that her husband, a communist imprisoned by the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was arrested again in 1985. Convicted at a summary trial where he was barely conscious, his wife found he had been executed when she went to visit him at Evin prison last August. She was not told where he was buried and had to dig in Jadeh Khavaran Cemetery risking her own life because it is patrolled by guards. Later relatives found the shallow grave. "Once I knew where he was, I could leave," Amnesty quoted

Continued on page 36

Socialist Action Challenges California Disclosure Law

The 1988 Socialist Action Campaign Committee is fighting efforts by San Francisco city officials to force it to disclose the names of contributors. California's Political Reform Act of 1974, similar to laws in many other states, requires candidates for public office to file reports which include the names of anyone who contributes \$100 or more. However, enforcing such laws against radical organizations—like Socialist Action—means that contributors are potentially open to harassment and abuse from authorities, employers, etc.

The historical record in the United States demonstrates that this is not a mere abstract fear, but a very real danger. And it can have an intimidating effect on potential contributors, making it more difficult to raise money for minority campaigns. This was recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982, when it ruled that requiring the Socialist Workers Party to disclose campaign contributors would be a violation of first amendment rights.

A federal judge in San Francisco is scheduled to hear arguments March 28 in Socialist Action's request for a restraining order against the San Francisco District Attorney. The case is being handled by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Behind the Struggle in Nagorno-Karabagh

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

On January 12, 1989, by a decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, a "special administration" of the central Soviet government was declared in effect in an autonomous region of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic called Nagorno-Karabagh. This area of the earth, approximately 4,400 square kilometers of land (slightly smaller than the state of Rhode Island) located in the Caucasus Mountain region of what is now the USSR, is populated (or according to the recent historic data was populated) by approximately 160,000 people, roughly 80 percent of whom are Armenian. Since February 1988, the demand raised by the entire adult Armenian population of that region to be reunited with the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic has led to one of the most massive and sustained popular movements in the Soviet Union since the Russian Revolution.

By its actions, the population of Nagorno-Karabagh has made history—for they have shown through their tenacity and through their suffering both the opportunities and the limits of the glasnost proclaimed by the ruling caste headed by Mikhail Gorbachev. They have also brought to the forefront of problems facing the ruling caste in the USSR the nationalities question. Since Stalin's time, this has been dealt with through efforts at "Russification" of non-Russian nationalities in the USSR, with only token gestures toward the nationalities policy of the Bolshevik revolution that was championed by Lenin until his death. In addition to the problems faced by ordinary workers in the USSR—that is to say, Russian workers—non-Russians have faced cultural discrimination, and in some cases attempts at cultural genocide right in their own republics.

Glasnost Opens the Door

Over the past year and a half, as Gorbachev has called for more openness, or glasnost, people in the USSR have become more and more emboldened, and mass movements have emerged among non-Russians, especially in the Baltic republics and in the Caucasus. This, in retrospect, is not surprising from an historic point of view. These were part of the tsarist empire. But they became part of the Soviet Union in the case of the Caucasus only as a result of the civil war fought by the Bolsheviks in the years after the revolution against imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary forces; or, in the case of the Baltic republics, were forcibly incorporated by Stalin in 1940. By then the Leninist nationalities policy was already buried under a heap of Great Russian chauvinism, not to mention the mounds of the bodies of the millions in the USSR who had tried to defend what Lenin and the Bolsheviks had actually stood for.

The situation in the Caucasus region today is a result of the earliest turn away from the Bolshevik program which

took place in the early 1920s. It was over the bureaucratic mismanagement of the situation in the Georgian Republic, the famous "Georgian question," by Stalin and his apparatus in the Caucasus that Lenin began to break with Stalin in the final days of December 1922 just weeks before Lenin, already extremely ill, suffered a stroke that removed him from political life. Lenin condemned the policies being implemented by the apparatus in that region as no more than Great Russian chauvinism and advised that many of these policies be reversed. These included very basic aspects of the Soviet Constitution which was—at the very moments Lenin was dictating his proposals—being ratified by a congress of Soviets. Lenin, unable by then to write due to partial paralysis, was allowed by his physicians to dictate to a secretary for only a few minutes at a time, a few times each day.

Lenin was appalled that Bolshevik Party officials were so alienated from the local Communists that Ordzhonikidze—the most prominent military leader in the Caucasus and one of Stalin's key subordinates—had physically struck one of the Georgian Communists. Largely due to this situation, and its implications, Lenin proposed that an upcoming congress of Soviets might need to take a large step backward and retain the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics only on military and diplomatic levels, while in all other areas allowing the non-Russian republics to control their own affairs. His support for the right of self-determination for non-Russians included supporting their right to secede from the USSR. This was stipulated in the Constitution, though, in typical Stalinist fashion, with additional clauses, stood as an obstacle to the actual realization of this right. Only by bending over backwards to respect the right of self-determination, Lenin argued, could the revolution inspire the oppressed elsewhere who were beginning to step onto the stage of history.

Lenin made these recommendations at a time when the Soviet Union was in economic ruin, having only at great cost beaten back an imperialist invasion and with only the remnants of an economy left over from the backward tsarist period. Can there be any doubt as to how Lenin would view the present devastation which the bureaucracy has wrought on the people of the Caucasus?

History of Nagorno-Karabagh

But what is Nagorno-Karabagh? Why does its population want to be separated from Azerbaijan? And how did it end up as part of Azerbaijan Republic in the first place?

Nagorno in Russian means "mountainous." Mountainous Karabagh is part of a broader region called Karabagh or Garabagh in Armenian, meaning "black garden." The Ar-

menians migrated into this area and into the broader region that is now the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as Eastern Anatolia in Turkey, well before the first century B.C. They had been narrowly preceded in the same region by the Albanians (not, apparently, related to the people called Albanians today). These peoples were Christianized by roughly the fifth century, and church figures in Mountainous Karabagh are credited with having created the Armenian alphabet. By the seventh century the Albanians and Armenians had intermingled and merged as a people and were apparently all called Armenians.

As the Caucasus Mountain region was periodically invaded and plundered over succeeding centuries by outside forces from the south and the east, Nagorno-Karabagh proved to be a refuge. It managed to remain relatively intact, due to its inaccessibility, while the Karabagh plains more frequently fell under foreign occupation. Mountainous Karabagh, for example, managed to escape Arab invaders of the eighth century who converted part of the Caucasus peoples to Islam, as well as invasion and destruction by the Turks in the eleventh century. But it was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1805, and became part of the Elizavetpol Province by a treaty of 1813 between Russia and the Persian Empire.

The Armenian regions to the west, Yerevan and Nakhichevan, were not incorporated into the Russian Empire until later, 1828, when they became the Armenian region. They remained in separate provinces until the tsar was overthrown. After the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, when the Bolsheviks sought to end Russian participation in the war, the tsarist army in that area, already in disarray, fell apart and retreated as peasant soldiers headed home to get some land.

What was the character of this area at that time? The region was predominantly peasant, with poor—in the Turkish Azeri regions or Elizavetpol Province, extremely poor—peasants and large wealthy landowners. The Armenians were dominated by a landlord and commercial class with a radical intelligentsia.

After the Russian Revolution

From November 1917 to May 1918, under the leadership of the Georgian Mensheviks who had fled Moscow as the Bolsheviks came to power, the Georgian, Turkish, and Armenian landowners, commercial sectors, and radical intelligentsia joined together to form a Transcaucasian Commissariat and later the Transcaucasian Federative Republic. There was virtually no proletariat in this region, with the exceptions of the oil center, Baku, and the railroad workers. These workers were not predominantly Turkish Azeri, but included large numbers of Armenians and Russians.

Armenians had dispersed throughout the region over time to escape the periodic massacres of Armenians inspired by the Ottoman occupiers, local Turkish chiefs, and tsarist Black Hundreds. There were more Armenians in Georgia and the Elizavetpol region than there were in Armenia. There were more Armenians in the capital of Georgia, Tiflis, than there were Georgians.¹

The Bolshevik organization was very weak. According to one source, in January 1917 there were 15-20 Bolsheviks in Tiflis, and 25 in Baku. By the Bolsheviks' First Congress of the Caucasus in October 1917, there were 8,600 Bolsheviks in the region, but many of them were Russian soldiers garrisoned there for the interim.² But by the early months of 1918, the only Bolshevik stronghold was in Baku.

Baku remained outside the Transcaucasian Commissariat and Federation, which in any case was anti-Bolshevik, and in April 1918 declared itself the Baku Soviet, headed by a leading Armenian Bolshevik, Stepan Shaumyan. In the face of the economic isolation of Baku, and the onslaught of Turkish forces in this period before the Red Army was formed, the Baku Soviet proved unable to survive. Its leaders were forced to flee by July 1918 and in September of that year 26 of them were apprehended and executed by the Social Revolutionaries and their British backers.³ When the Turkish forces occupied Baku after the fall of the Baku Soviet, some 10,000 Armenians, who had backed the Baku Soviet, were massacred.⁴

The Turkish occupiers were forced to retreat as a result of the armistice of November 1918, and the British and German armies, already hovering in the region, moved in quickly to impose their own occupation force. The so-called independent Azerbaijan, Georgian, and Armenian republics that were proclaimed with the collapse of the Transcaucasian Federation at the end of May 1918 proved throughout their existence to be politically (and economically) bankrupt formations—alliances of commercial and landlord interests united only to oppose land reform, suppress worker and peasant struggles, and resist Bolshevik gains. They were backed by a layer of their own nationalist intelligentsia whose nationalism, however, proved to be moribund. It was either swallowed up or overruled by the propertied classes who sought imperialist support against the Bolsheviks' proletarian program. As long as they existed, these republics did so at the behest of outside imperialist powers.⁵

By the end of 1919, when the Red Army had defeated the White counterrevolutionary armies in that region, the British were forced to withdraw, and at the beginning of 1920 the Red Army began its advance to establish Soviet power in the region. The Red Army in the Caucasus was led by Ordzhonikidze and Kirov, with Stalin in command. It reached Baku in April 1920 to support a local insurrection and announced the establishment of an Azerbaijan Soviet Republic headed by Kirov (a Russian), Ordzhonikidze (a Georgian), and Anastas Mikoyan (an Armenian born in Tiflis). The local leadership was made up of Bolsheviks and left Moslems who had filtered back to Baku after the fall of the Baku Commune in 1918. They had organized underground against the Turks, the British, and the White occupiers. Nariman Narimanov, a Bolshevik who had held Soviet posts elsewhere, became chairman of the Soviet.

The important point here is that the local Bolshevik leadership was not indigenous, and it subordinated itself to the decisions of the newly established Caucasus Bureau—the Kavburo, as it came to be called—that had been set up by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in the early months of 1920 to oversee the Caucasus situa-

tion. The Kavburo, which included Ordzhonikidze and Kirov, both military commanders of the region, and Mdivini, a prominent Georgian Bolshevik, was under Stalin's direction. This Azerbaijan Republic was to encompass roughly the area that had been the Elizavetpol Province of tsarist times, and included the Armenian regions of Zangezur and Karabagh.

During the 1917-1919 period, the local leadership of Karabagh had been organized and working to be reunified with broader Armenia. Karabagh's economy centered around agriculture and agrarian industries, e.g., vineyards, orchards; and its political leadership was undoubtedly the landlord and commercial classes. Their voices were drowned out by the British and Turks who persistently occupied the territory and there were periodic massacres of Armenians and others there.⁶

The Armenian region of Nakhichevan which straddles Western Armenia and the Eastern Anatolian region of Turkey was persistently overrun by Turks of either the Ottoman Empire or later the anti-Ottoman, Turkish Kemal forces. This region was to have gone to Armenia as a result of the Treaty of Sevres of August 1920, under which the defeated Turkish Ottoman Empire lost part of its Armenian territory. However, the Kemalists, who refused to recognize the Ottoman government in Constantinople that had signed the treaty, also refused to recognize the loss of this territory and persistently tried to grab it back. A number of prominent Kemalist military figures, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, collaborated with the Red Army against the Whites, or as they viewed it, against the British. This complicated Armenian relations with the Bolsheviks because the Kemalists had been complicit with the massacre of over one million Armenians of Eastern Anatolia in 1915.

Shaky Bolshevik Rule

In May 1920, an Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared in Alexandropol, now Leninakan (just recently half-demolished by the earthquake in Armenia), under the newly formed Bolshevik organization there. Its social base was narrow, many of its supporters unemployed railroad workers who had fled Baku in 1918 after the fall of the Baku Commune.

The local nationalist Armenian leadership, the Dashnaks—landlords and radical or Socialist Revolutionary intellectuals—retook power, signed the Treaty of Sevres, and a military conflict arose as the Dashnaks moved to retake the disputed area of Armenia, as did the Kemalist Turks. The Dashnaks had no treasury and only a poorly equipped army and were in an unenviable position to undertake such a feat. The Kemalists advanced toward Yerevan and were on the verge of occupying it when the Red Army moved west in November 1920 and beat back the Turks, saved the collapsing Dashnak forces, occupied Yerevan, and established Soviet power. By November 30-December 2, the basis was laid to announce the formation of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic in Yerevan, which was immediately recognized by the Soviet government.

It was then—December 1, 1920—that Nariman Narimanov, as chairman of the Azerbaijan Revolutionary

Committee and on behalf of the workers and peasants of Soviet Azerbaijan, telegraphed to Soviet Armenia the following message (after apparently months of hesitation on the question) which was read at formal government meetings and announced in the press: "As of today, the border disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan are declared resolved. Mountainous Karabagh, Zangezur, and Nakhichevan are considered part of the Soviet Republic of Armenia." It was a stirring message. However, this extraordinary historic expression of international proletarian solidarity was to remain in effect only until July 1921.⁷

In February 1921 the Red Army invaded and occupied Georgia and the counterrevolutionary Menshevik government fled to Constantinople, where it belonged. During that same period, while the Red Army had its hands full in Georgia, a rebellion took place in Armenia and the Dashnaks again tried to take power. In the meantime, as if that weren't enough, the Kemalist Turks tried to take the strategic Black Sea port city of Batum from Georgia. With the help of Georgian garrisons there, the Red Army again forced the Turks to retreat. Once that situation was under control, and a Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia was established, the Red Army turned to reestablish Soviet power in Armenia.⁸

The reasons for the Armenian rebellion are unclear. E. H. Carr speculates that its cause was not so much nationalist sentiment as it was dissatisfaction with compulsory grain requisitioning imposed under the Bolsheviks' "war communism" policies. The implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) changed this wartime policy, after which the Armenian rebellion was ended and a Soviet Armenia finally reestablished.⁹

It appears that it was as a result of the March 1921 Treaty of Moscow with the Kemalist Turks that Nakhichevan was removed from Armenia and turned over to Azerbaijan. While some say this was a concession by Stalin to the Turks, it is hard to see why this would have done the Turks any good since Azerbaijan was now Soviet ruled—unless it was seen as a way of weakening the Armenian forces, which might also have served the interests of the Soviets since Armenia at that time was in rebellion against them. The Soviet government did get Batum under this treaty, which the Red Army had taken in any case. But, apparently, the Soviet government agreed also to relinquish certain other occupied territories in Eastern Anatolia and to pay the Turks 10,000,000 gold rubles, a goodly sum even today, as part of the same settlement.¹⁰

It is critical to recall that this was the time of the Tenth Party Congress when the Bolsheviks were being forced to retreat to the New Economic Policy due to the serious financial and economic crises facing the country—following the destruction from the World War, the civil war, with industry and transport largely at a standstill and crop production virtually nonexistent, with the resulting famine and impoverishment. There were peasant rebellions in various regions and, of course, there was the Kronstadt rebellion at the same time. There is no need to speak of the dangers that would have been faced by the revolutionary government if there were further military conflicts or of the necessity on the part

of the Bolsheviks to make concessions to try to avoid this eventuality.

Impact on Nagorno-Karabagh

While Nagorno-Karabagh was “given” to Armenia by the workers and peasants of Azerbaijan on December 1, 1920, and while this situation was confirmed by a plenary session of the Kavburo either June 3 or July 3, 1921, a plenary session of July 5, 1921, reversed this decision. That plenary session resolved: “That considering the necessity of national harmony between Muslims and Armenians, the economic linkage between upper and lower Karabagh and its permanent ties to Azerbaijan, Mountainous Karabagh should be left within the boundaries of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, while declaring it an autonomous region with Shushi as its administrative center.”¹¹

The motives for this sudden change are unknown. However, as subsequent events were to show, the Kavburo was influenced much more by administrative convenience than concerns for the rights of non-Russians.

The Kavburo, that same summer of 1921, announced the formation of the Transcaucasian Federation, a political union of the Caucasian republics. The Georgians protested this move, prompting Lenin, in November 1921, to advise the Kavburo to slow down. It didn't take Lenin's advice, however. In February 1922, the Georgian First Congress of Soviets adopted an independent constitution and declared itself sovereign (much as the Estonian Soviet did November 16, 1918 and the Nagorno-Karabagh Soviet did July 12, 1918). In March 1922, ignoring the Georgians' vote (in the same fashion, by the way, as today's rulers in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR rejected the decisions of the Estonian and Nagorno-Karabagh soviets), the Kavburo decreed into existence a Federal Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia.

However, persistent opposition from the Georgians, and from the Ukrainian Communists, to continuing inroads against local rights prompted the central organs to begin reevaluating the relationship of the Russian Republic with the other Soviet republics. A commission of the Central Committee was established to draft a plan for a union. The commission was headed by Stalin.

In August 1922, a draft of a constitution of a Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic was completed and Stalin wired the Georgians that the Russian executive organs would be taking over the Georgian Republic. On September 15, the Georgian Central Committee, with Ordzhonikidze and Kirov present, rejected (with one dissenting vote) the federated plan under which organs of the Russian Republic became the organs of the central government and therefore ruled over the non-Russian republics. Despite this rejection by one of the three republic leaderships, Ordzhonikidze convened a session of the Presidium of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the party the very next day and got the plan approved, overruling the opposition of the Georgians. That same session of the Presidium advised the Georgians to refrain from informing the rank-and-file membership in Georgia of their negative vote.¹²

Under this new plan, there were to be five border republics as autonomous republics in the larger Russian Soviet Republic: Belorussian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijanian. However, despite this, only the Azerbaijan Republic leadership (firmly in Ordzhonikidze's control) actually approved the project.

Conflict with Lenin

Nevertheless, on September 23, the plan was approved by the Central Committee's commission and forwarded to Lenin for his approval. When Lenin read the draft plan he was dismayed and angered. He strongly criticized a plan for a Russian Republic in which the non-Russians would be subordinates. He counterposed to it a union of equal republics, in which the Russian Republic would be one among equals. He also called for the creation of new, more representative central administrative organs. Stalin accepted these fundamental changes of Lenin's and presented the plan October 6 to the CC Plenum pretending that there had been barely any changes from the plan approved by the commission. The project was approved with Lenin's suggestions. However, it included another change initiated by Stalin: Instead of three Caucasian republics as in the old plan, the new plan had one, a Transcaucasian Republic that would include all three. The Georgians disapproved and protested this clause, demanding the right to enter the Union as a full Soviet Socialist Republic like the Ukraine and Belorussia.

On October 16 Stalin, for the CC, rejected the Georgian demands. On October 20, the Georgians again sent a message to the central leadership with the request that Georgia be allowed its own representation on the All-Union Soviet, a proposal that Lenin also rejected the next day. Lenin, ill and isolated from unfolding events and still unaware of the abuse the Georgian Communists had endured or of the seriousness of the crisis, advised the Georgians to follow the Central Committee's leadership. On October 22, 1922, the entire Georgian Central Committee resigned, their resignation was accepted, a new, docile Georgian CC was appointed, and the projected plan was approved. On the basis of this, the final draft was prepared in November. On December 21, the resigned Georgians' CC was ordered to get out of Georgia.

In the meantime, Lenin became sufficiently troubled by new reports from Georgia that he began his own investigation of what was going on there. Despite the obstacles and cover-up measures undertaken by Stalin and the apparatus, Lenin was able, after several foiled attempts, to learn what had happened—including the incident during which Ordzhonikidze slugged a Georgian Bolshevik who wouldn't toe the line. It was on the basis of these startling revelations that Lenin formulated his recommendations on the nationalities question, described previously in this article, on December 30 and 31, 1922.¹³ In the opening lines of these “notes,” Lenin apologized for “not having intervened with sufficient energy and incisiveness” on this question earlier.

Armenian Protests

The Armenians, undoubtedly, were not consulted in July 1921 before the Kavburo decided the fate of the Armenian territories. Judging by the treatment accorded to the Georgian opponents of Stalin's plans, who had a relatively strong and authentic local organization, any protests of the Armenians would not have been honored, although there had been numerous public protests by Armenians for unification of Armenia and Karabagh since 1917.

We also know that in the 1920s, such protests again took place. Opposition to the system of control by Azerbaijan stimulated demands from Armenian Communists for reattachment of Karabagh to Armenia and many protestors were imprisoned. A "Karabagh to Armenia Society" with numerous branches, including in its membership Bolsheviks, began distributing leaflets by the thousands in Karabagh in November 1927, at the same time as the central bureaucracy was preparing its campaign of expulsions, arrests, and exile of Left Opposition supporters.

A leaflet of that time "condemned as lackeys the current ruling clique in the Armenian republic for failing to actualize Turkish Communist Nariman Narimanov's declaration that 'Karabagh belongs to Armenia.'"¹⁴

There were revolts by mountain peoples in 1929, again including Karabagh and Akhalkalak Armenians calling for unification of their regions with Armenia. Many people were deported to prison camps as a result.

In July 1935, Armenians in Tiflis organized a protest and 150 were arrested. According to Armenian sources, Armenian CP chief Aghasi Khanjian, trying hard to negotiate among all the constituencies, was shot point-blank and killed over this issue during a meeting of the State Committee of Tiflis.¹⁵

Stalin's 1936 Constitution, "the most democratic in the world," increased the means for reprisals and reaffirmed the boundaries of control that had been widely protested. Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan were declared separate Soviet Socialist Republics; however, Georgia still included the Armenian region of Akhalkalak and Azerbaijan still included Nakhichevan and Karabagh.

It is worth noting that Kirov, whose assassination in December 1934 was the signal for the bureaucracy to launch its campaign of terror over the next four years costing millions of lives and culminating in the Moscow show trials, wielded considerable power in the Caucasus, and regions and cities in both Armenia and Azerbaijan still bear his name (i.e., Kirovabad, formerly Elizavetpol, in Azerbaijan and Kirovakan in Armenia). Beria, Stalin's last henchman—the despised secret police head who presided over the third Moscow trial in 1938—got his start in the Caucasus. According to still-unofficial historian Roy Medvedev, the purges and the forced collectivization had particularly devastating consequences in the Caucasus.¹⁶

The corrupt rule of the gangster cliques who derived their power over the non-Russian republican apparatus from the period of the purges has caused special kinds of problems: environmental pollution, economic stagnation, and backwardness. The party chiefs in Azerbaijan (Giedar Aliev) and Armenia (Karen Demirjian) were particularly blatant ex-

amples. Both have been removed in the recent period as a result of popular protests from below and moves from the USSR's top apparatus who have pledged to eliminate corruption as part of the reform measures. Such notorious local chiefs have served as convenient scapegoats for the sorry consequences of overall bureaucratic misrule.

Following Stalin's death and the Khrushchev revelations, the Armenians submitted numerous petitions to Khrushchev and his successors appealing for incorporation of Nagorno-Karabagh into the Armenian Republic. They invoked Lenin's nationalities policy as their point of departure and explained the consequences of the current situation on the economy of their region: economic enterprises and health facilities, when they are established—and few were—were managed in Azerbaijan, not on the site; machinery brought in for projects was removed to Azeri regions; and when an enterprise opened, Azeri workers were brought in. Projected improvements never materialized. In 1964, when one of these protests was written, no roads had been built or repaired in Nagorno-Karabagh since 1924! There had by 1964 been no plan for agricultural development in the region, and watering facilities, badly needed, were erected only to serve the Azeri villages. Existing industries, like cattle breeding and the mulberry tree economy, were either declining or being dismantled. The impact of the policies was to cause Armenians to flee the area in order to survive while outsiders, often Azeris, came in to fill jobs. Similar policies and practices by authorities have had marked consequences in Nakhichevan where Armenians now comprise only 2 percent of the population.¹⁷ In 1918, they had comprised 95 percent. Armenians fear the same fate awaits Karabagh.

Confirmation of Lenin's Views

The history of Karabagh and its Armenian population provides stark vindication of Lenin's criticism of the "autonomization" plan of Stalin as a thinly veiled plan for subordinating non-Russians to the Great Russian centralizers. The Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Region really have no "autonomy" at all. And it is not only the Armenians in Azerbaijan who suffered from the bureaucracy's Russification—the Azeris in Azerbaijan haven't had it so good either, as will be discussed later.

The January decision to impose a "special administration" regime on Nagorno-Karabagh comes at a time when—as a result of official actions, likely also to have been official policy—135,000 of the 170,000 Azeris in the Armenian Republic and 160,000 of 250,000 Armenians in the Azerbaijan Republic have fled their homes, most in late November and early December 1988 while Soviet troops were occupying these regions and curfews and martial law conditions were in effect! Many Armenians sought shelter with relatives in the Armenian Republic—in Spitak, Leninakan, and Kirovabad—and were among the tens of thousands of untold deaths caused when poorly constructed buildings collapsed during the December 7 earthquake. Tens of thousands were injured and remain without homes, jobs, basic possessions, or the rudiments of sanitation.

In January, when the "special administration" was imposed on Nagorno-Karabagh, that region had already been

occupied by army troops for months. They have been deployed in Yerevan since February 1988, numerous cities in Armenia since September, and in Azerbaijan since late November. Under martial law and curfew conditions, strikes and demonstrations were prohibited. Over one thousand curfew violators had been arrested, as had some key leaders of the Armenian movement.

But it was in the wake of the stark earthquake disaster, when all the world sought to help the Armenian victims, that the bureaucracy arrested all the key Armenian leaders who could not manage to go into hiding, and brought months of mass protests to a halt.

Conclusions About the Conflict

What was happening in the Caucasus in the final months of 1988? Was it, as the major U.S. bourgeois media — echoed by much of the radical press — claim, an instance of “the predominantly Christian Armenians” fighting “the predominantly Moslem Azeris”? Or a variation of that assessment, a resurgence of a hatred between the Turks and the Armenians “that goes back for centuries” as was also frequently asserted? Can we be content to accept U.S. historian Stephen Cohen’s assessment made during a television interview with U.S. anchormen at the height of the crisis in December that “these people have been at each other’s throats for years” and that it was only the previous, i.e., pre-Gorbachev, totalitarian governments that have kept them from killing one another? Was this crisis the result of provocations by “nationalist extremists,” as the official Soviet press has claimed?

The facts show otherwise. A genuine proletarian revolutionary policy carried out by Moscow during the past 70 years could have created a genuine collaboration between Azeris, Armenians, and Russians, as a community of equals working together for the mutual benefit of all. Instead, the anti-

Leninist nationalities policy imposed by the Stalinist bureaucrats must bear primary responsibility for the current impasse.

We will return to this question in a subsequent article. ●

NOTES

1. E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-23*, Vol.1, Penguin Books, 1969, p. 344.
2. Richard Pipes, *Formation of the USSR*, Atheneum Press, NY, 1980, pp. 104-105. Pipes cites Soviet sources.
3. For more information on this period see Leon Trotsky’s introduction to his book, *Social Democracy and the Wars of Intervention in Russia, 1918-1921 (Between Red and White)*, New Park Publications, London, 1975.
4. Pipes, p. 205. He cites U.S. Army sources of 1920 who were present in the region.
5. See Pipes’s detailed accounts of this period as well as Carr, pp. 343-354; and the best account by Trotsky in *Social Democracy*.
6. See *The Karabagh File: Documents and Facts on the Question of Mountainous Karabagh, 1918-1988*, ed. by Gerard J. Libaridian, The Zoryan Institute for Contemporary Armenian Research and Documentation, Cambridge, 1988.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
8. Pipes, pp. 234-239.
9. Carr, p. 352.
10. “An Historical Reference, How Nagorno-Karabagh Became a Problem,” unsigned article in *Glasnost*, a samizdat journal from the USSR, ed. by Sergei Grigoryants. Issue Nos. 16- 18, Jan. 1989, p. 33. (Published in English translation by Center for Democracy in the USSR, 358 West 30th Street, Suite 1-A, NY, NY 10001.)
11. *The Karabagh File*, p. 36.
12. *Lenin’s Fight Against Stalinism*, by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, ed. with introduction by Russell Block, Pathfinder Press, NY, 1975. See also Pipes, pp. 266-293.
13. These writings of Lenin were read to the XXth Party Congress in 1956, the same year that they were published in the Soviet Union for the first time!
14. *The Karabagh File*, p. 40.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 41. See also *Let History Judge*, by Roy Medvedev, Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 1972, p. 206 for other accounts of Khanjian’s death.
16. Medvedev, pp. 204-206.
17. Of the population of 250,000, only 5,000 are Armenian according to *The Karabagh File*, p. 73.

Marxism and Liberation Theology

Michael Löwy



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Marxism, the National Question, and the Crisis of Stalinism

by Haskell Berman

Gorbachev and the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are being confronted by the demands of numerous ethnic and nationality groupings in the USSR that have felt the economic and cultural oppression of Stalinism. This oppression flowed from Stalin's commitment to the ideology of "socialism in one country" (i.e., defense of narrowly perceived Russian national interests instead of proletarian internationalism) and the requirements of a centralized bureaucratic rule, rather than workers' democracy.

The people of Estonia, for example, are demanding the right to locally control their cultural, social, and economic life, independent of domination by the Kremlin. Even the leaders of the Estonian Communist Party have raised their voice in opposition to the new constitution that is being promulgated from Moscow. They have gone so far as to demand the right to implement independent trade with the West.

Latvians and Lithuanians have likewise asked for greater autonomy. Polish citizens of the USSR are making demands for more cultural exchanges and the right to freely travel to Poland. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians have demonstrated and protested the discrimination and oppression of the Armenian population in Azerbaijan, and have demanded the transfer of Nagorno-Karabagh to the Armenian Republic. Soviet troops have been called into both Armenia and Azerbaijan to "maintain order."

This sort of problem is not limited to the USSR. In Yugoslavia the future of the unified state has been called into question by the clash between Albanians and Serbians.

Seventy years after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution, led by an internationalist revolutionary leadership, one must ask: How is it that this wave of national conflict is engulfing workers' states? How could this have happened in countries that profess to be socialist? What is the future for proletarian internationalism and what Lenin called the "culture of workers' democratic internationalism"? What happened to the call of Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, "Workers of the World Unite"?

Back to Fundamentals

It is worthwhile, in trying to sort out the answers to these questions, to review the history of the international socialist movement, and see how the national question has been discussed and how an understanding of it has evolved. In the process, a series of other questions are posed: Is nationalism progressive or reactionary? Should an internationalist socialist movement support struggles for national liberation?

Should support for the right of an oppressed national minority include the right of secession? Does support for this right contradict the evolution of a unified nation state for the majority? What position should be taken on language issues, cultural nationalism, autonomy?

Marx approached the national question from the point of view of his overall historical and socio-political analysis. This was based on the idea that the evolution of the capitalist system destroyed the provincialism and localism of feudal society, that the generalized exchange of commodities ushered in by the bourgeoisie propelled the development of strong nation states and enhanced nationalism as an ideology. This ideology, in turn, fortified the domination and hegemony in each nation state of its own ruling capitalist class.

The same nationalistic appeals which were a means of unifying the nation state were used by the bourgeoisie to *divide* working people — both working people in different nation states, and (most important for our discussion) workers of different nationalities within the boundaries of the same state. The reality of capitalist society soon began to stimulate the development of a socialist ideology within the working class. But that ideology, which stood for the unity of workers of all nations, seemed to stand in stark contradiction to the specific needs of oppressed nationalities for national rights. How to resolve that contradiction has been one of the key questions faced by Marxists from the very beginning.

Marx and Engels resolved it by recognizing the right to self-determination of oppressed nationalities. Marx, for example, warned the English working class of the necessity to support the Irish people's fight for independence from England. If they failed to do so, he explained, they could never free themselves from the rule of their own bourgeoisie.

Lenin's Approach

Lenin began from this same basic approach to the national question, but developed it further, into a rounded set of theoretical ideas. This was one of his most profound contributions to revolutionary Marxism. Like Marx and Engels, he saw the necessity for a working class program to overcome the national divisions created by capitalism. This could only mean the right to self-determination for those nationalities that were economically and socially dominated by others. He wrote: "The national program of working class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language." He called for the political self-determination of oppressed nations, by which he meant, "their separation as states by completely free, democratic methods; . . . any

measure introducing any privilege of any kind for one of the nations and militating against the equality of nations or the rights of a national minority shall be declared illegal and ineffective.”

At the same time, he explained the reactionary nature of nationalist ideology in general: “Every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) . . . of the *dominant* culture.” There is no non-class national culture. “Aggressive bourgeois nationalism drugs the minds of the workers, stultifies and disunites them in order that the bourgeoisie may lead them by the halter.”¹

Through the rise of nationalist movements, the formation of bourgeois democratic society, the collapse of absolutism, Lenin described how the masses of workers and oppressed were drawn into “representative” institutions. This permitted the sharp posing of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the workers. But side by side with capitalist states that developed along these lines, there were those in which development had been stunted because of domination by another, oppressor nation. This posed the problem of national self-determination as one that had to be solved simultaneously with those tasks relating to the struggle for socialism.

Lenin was particularly concerned with this issue because of the situation faced by the Russian revolutionary movement. Russia was a country whose own social development had been arrested as a result of economic domination by the more industrially advanced nations of Western Europe. At the same time it was, itself, an imperialist nation and oppressed many other nations within the tsarist empire.

Lenin maintained that the workers of the dominant countries could not substitute their own experiences, their own ideological development, their own consciousness, for any lack of development in oppressed nations. It was only natural that nationalist ideology would play an important role among the working people of oppressed nations, and it was only through their own experiences—and by receiving support in their national aspirations from the proletariat of the dominant country—that they could be won as allies in the struggle against bourgeois rule.

Different Conceptions

Lenin had to argue vigorously on this question against such forces as the Russian liberals, the Jewish Bundists, and even with genuine proletarian fighters like Rosa Luxemburg. The liberals and Bundists argued for a position of support to “cultural national autonomy,” within the context of a unified Russia, rather than self-determination (i.e., the right to form separate nation states) for the oppressed nationalities. They asserted that it is through the development of a national culture that the workers of any nationality become able to participate in a broader international culture, and the movement of the world working class. This, not political independence, is what the workers’ movement should stress.

Lenin asserted that such a line of reasoning was, in effect, a rationalization which adapted to the needs of the Russian bourgeoisie and to Great Russian chauvinism. He argued that in every nation, although other elements can arise, the

dominant culture is that of the dominant class. As long as an oppressed nation is dominated by some other national culture, it is impossible for it to develop one of its own. The approach of “national cultural autonomy” was completely utopian, and a rejection of any struggle that can actually succeed in winning national rights.

Luxemburg, a Pole, argued against support to the right of Poland to political self-determination. She asserted that self-determination without socialism was an abstraction, since smaller, independent states would always be dominated by larger, more predatory ones. The necessity was to fight for the international proletarian revolution that could do away with national oppression. Lenin countered that there was nothing abstract about the development of national states under capitalism, and profound economic/historical/political factors underlie the urge toward the formation of nation states. He gave the example of Europe’s economic domination of the United States and Russia as counterexamples to the idea that large nations always dominated smaller ones, and asserted that the fact of Europe’s dominance over Russia and the U.S. did not countervene the value of political independence for these nations.

By supporting the right to secession, we are told, you are supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nation. . . .

Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, *in favor*, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its *own* bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation.²

Obstacle to Socialism or Ally of the Working Class?

Up to this point, before World War I and the Russian Revolution, the national question was generally looked at by Marxists as an obstacle on the road to socialism—unfinished business of the bourgeois revolution that had to be cleared away. The discussions which arose concerned the best method of accomplishing this. Later, however, when Trotsky generalized his theory of permanent revolution after the defeat in China in 1927, revolutionary Marxists began to see more clearly the struggle of oppressed nationalities as a positive stimulus to the process of socialist revolution, even when they were at first restricted to purely bourgeois-democratic aims.

Permanent revolution suggested that there was a natural, almost transitional, dynamic which would make itself felt whatever the wishes of the participants in national struggles might be. National democratic revolutions in backward countries would have to move in a socialist direction or be defeated. This was true because the national bourgeoisie itself was too weak, too dependent on its ties to the oppressor nationality, to wage a genuine fight for independence. Only the working class, in alliance with the peasantry, was capable of going all the way in these struggles, and if the working class

was to carry out a leadership role it was absolutely necessary for it to begin a process of dismantling the old bourgeois social institutions and replacing them with proletarian ones.

Participation of the Masses Is Key

Both Lenin and Trotsky understood that resolution of national problems was not something that the workers' movement could simply proclaim. It had to be worked out with the cooperation of the peoples concerned. Lenin explained, before the Russian Revolution:

While, and insofar as, different nations constitute a single state, Marxists will never, under any circumstances, advocate either the federal principle or decentralization. The great centralized state is a tremendous historical step forward from medieval disunity to the future socialist unity of the whole world, and only *via* such a state, can there be any road to socialism.

It would, however, be inexcusable to forget that in advocating centralism we advocate exclusively *democratic* centralism. On this point all the philistines in general, and the nationalist philistines in particular, have so confused the issue that we are obliged again and again to spend time clarifying it.

Far from precluding local self-government, with *autonomy* for regions having special economic and social conditions, a distinct national composition of the population, and so forth, democratic centralism necessarily demands *both*.³

After the Russian Revolution this became an important practical issue for the Bolsheviks. Lenin and Trotsky came into conflict with Stalin on the question of the rights of Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis. As early as November 1921 Lenin cautioned Stalin on the question of the federation of Transcaucasian republics. Although this was in principle correct, "its immediate practical realization must be regarded as premature, i.e., a certain period of time will be required for its discussion, propagation, and adoption by lower Soviet bodies; . . . the Central Committees of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan shall be instructed (through the Caucasian Bureau) to submit the federation question for broad discussion in the Party and by the *worker and peasant masses*, conduct vigorous propaganda *in favor* of a federation and secure decisions to that effect by the congresses of Soviets in each of these republics. Should serious opposition arise the Political Bureau of the CC, RCP, must be informed accurately and in good time."⁴

Trotsky expressed a similar point of view in discussing the contradictions between national demands aroused by the revolution and the need for industry in all parts of the USSR to be subjected to a centralized plan:

The tendencies of cultural autonomy and economic centralism come naturally from time to time into conflict. The contradiction between them is, however, far from irreconcilable. Although there can be no once-and-for-all prepared formula to resolve the problem, still there is the resilient will of the interested masses themselves. Only their actual participation in the administration of their own destinies can at each new stage

draw the necessary lines between the legitimate demands of economic centralism and the living gravitations of national culture.

The Fruits of Degeneration

Trotsky, however, pointed out that the policies of the ascendant bureaucracy in the USSR made such a resolution of the problem impossible: "The trouble is, however, that the will of the population of the Soviet Union in all its national divisions is now wholly replaced by the will of a bureaucracy which approaches both economy and culture from the point of view of convenience of administration and the specific interests of the ruling stratum." He pointed out that "it was upon the national question that Lenin intended to give his first battle to the bureaucracy, and especially to Stalin, at the 12th Congress of the party in the spring of 1923. But before the congress met Lenin had gone from the ranks. The documents which he then prepared remain even now suppressed by the censor."⁵

Here we come full circle. The fight of Lenin and Trotsky against Stalinism failed to alter policy in the USSR on the national question. It is this policy, Stalin's policy, based not on Marxism but on purely bureaucratic considerations, that is responsible for the present predicament of the Soviet workers' state. The response of genuine revolutionary Marxists to this problem must return to the overall approach which Lenin and Trotsky outlined — unconditional support by the proletariat to the demands of oppressed nationalities, and the resolution of any contradictions between those national demands and the requirements of socialist construction through democratic methods.

Such a principled policy requires support for the present movements and demands of those peoples long oppressed by Stalinist tyranny. This does not necessarily mean that we will agree with all of their demands, or think that they are the best road forward for the workers of the oppressed nations or of the USSR. Without question, the developing movements in areas like the Balkans, the Ukraine, Armenia, etc., have contradictory features. All sorts of ideological currents — from right-wing bourgeois, to petty bourgeois, to genuine proletarian revolutionaries — compete for ideological ascendancy within them. It is quite possible for conservative, or even reactionary, elements to gain hegemony for a time.

This should not be surprising after decades of miseducation, which identified the policies of Stalin with "Marxism" and "socialism," and it can only be overcome on the basis of the experience of the oppressed nationality itself. Such problems will not be corrected by opposing the movement for national rights, or by placing preconditions on our support. It is only by supporting these struggles unconditionally (even if not uncritically) that a genuinely revolutionary and internationalist workers' movement can win the confidence of the oppressed nationalities in the USSR today, try to influence their development and create the solidarity which is a prerequisite to overcome the present situation.

Just as in the time of the tsar, the revolutionary proletariat must be the most forthright opponent of all manifestations

Continued on page 31

Conversations in the USSR

Diary of a Trip (part 3)

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.

(This is the conclusion of this report. The first two parts appeared in Bulletin in Defense of Marxism Nos. 60 and 61.)

July 4: The size and degree of organization of the national movements among the Armenians and in the Baltic republics are very impressive. In all cases, there is strong solidarity across the entire nation. This seems to include at least significant parts of the bureaucracies themselves, which perhaps should raise questions, though the movements clearly have an essentially democratic thrust. The Marxist economists take them as a sign of popular mobilization that has not yet reached the Russians. In Moscow, at least, I have not met anyone who disapproves of them, even though the movement in the Baltic will likely lead eventually to independence. In the Marxist-oriented club, "Socialist Initiative," I found no trace of Great-Russian chauvinism. On the contrary, they took the independence or the loosening of the ties between the Baltic republics and Moscow as inevitable and even positive. The media, however, are playing a provocative role in the Armenian crisis, reporting on caches of arms and shadowy underground organizations.

I find the programmatic positions of "Socialist Initiative" very close to my own, except on the woman question, where they don't seem to have much of a position at all. In other words, it is not seen as terribly important. But of late the Soviet media have finally begun to take it up. Most of the authors are women. The articles are very strong condemnations of the double shift, of terrible conditions in those industrial and service sectors where women are concentrated, of massive infractions of labor legislation supposed to protect women, of direct discrimination against women in hiring, dismissals, and promotion, of the "consumerist" male attitudes toward women prevalent in society, the media, and arts. Even the hitherto totally tabu themes of sexual relations, contraception, abortions, the absence of sexual education, are cautiously raised.

If a women's movement does take, it will be explosive in the Soviet context, since it cannot help but go to the very root of the bureaucratic regime and conception of "socialism." Most women I have spoken to are still rather far from the consciousness manifested in these articles, but one can discern a change in attitudes over the past three years. They more readily express the anger that was turned inward before and they seem to believe less that the meaning of life

for a woman is to devote herself unselfishly to a husband and children, though these attitudes are still quite strong. It is ironic, but not surprising, that perestroika has given birth to a "Miss Moscow" contest. After all, it has given birth to Pamyat. I watched a bit of the contest on TV — prize cattle are sold at country fairs with more taste.

July 5: Igor, the club activist in the opportunist wing, came over this morning. I mentioned my talk with L, who had once been his thesis advisor (and who had threatened to disown Igor if he persisted in his study of the meat distribution in Moscow), and L's call for a Cavaignac. Igor shook his head disapprovingly, but then he asked: Well, isn't it true that the reform has to be pushed through forcefully? I recalled an analysis he had written two years ago calling for a strong central authority to carry out reform, but at the time I had dismissed this as a tactic designed to demonstrate his fledgling club's support for Gorbachev and so win some breathing space. Now I see that he really believes in that.

July 6: The lead article of the June issue of the broad-circulation economics journal *EKO* is a translation of an excerpt from the Hungarian economist Janos Kornai entitled: "Efficiency and Principles of Socialist Ethics." Kornai argues that socialist ethics, with their social guarantees and egalitarianism, are nice things and they are the concern of the central authorities under socialism. But they are in conflict with economic efficiency, which can be assured only by competing autonomous enterprises in a market situation. A footnote tells the reader that the translation was originally published last year in the very limited-circulation journal *Economics and Mathematical Methods*. I took a look. It was there alright, but followed by an article by A that offers a trenchant criticism of Kornai's argument. A rejects Kornai's reduction of socialism to a question of ethics and stresses, not the market, but the need above all to democratize planning and management at *all* levels in order to make socialism efficient. Kornai takes for granted the authoritarian nature of the "socialist" economies. Need one ask why *EKO* did not print A's article too?

July 7: Olya, who teaches piano part-time at one of the "secondary professional-technical schools," which furnish

two-thirds of the new recruits to Moscow's working class, says that native Muscovites do not want to work in factories and that those who do go to these schools are often poor students. But Lena, who works at the auto factory, is a Muscovite. She says that some kids are attracted by an interest in machines. Vitya also came through the technical school system, and I have rarely met a more basically honest, articulate, and refined individual. (I say this despite his defense of Solzhenitsyn.)

A recent expose of Moscow's technical school system in the Komsomol weekly *Sobesednik* tends to support Olya. The great majority of the system's students are recruited from outside of Moscow, mainly from the central provinces. Living and learning conditions are terrible, the system is underfunded and the staff largely incompetent. As a result, there is a lot of delinquency among the students, and the average cultural level is low.

This is the first time I have come across a public discussion of the "limitchiki," the Soviet equivalent of the West-European gastarbeiter of the '60s and early '70s. These young people are recruited by the ministries and enterprises and given temporary residence permits for Moscow. For five years, until they get the permanent resident permit, they cannot change jobs and, in no small part because of this, are really without rights vis-a-vis management. Moscow was supposed to have been closed a couple of years ago to this sort of immigration, but enterprises need labor and they use all sorts of loopholes, the primary one being recruitment through the technical schools. One can only guess what the effect is on the mentality of the Moscow working class, which is probably rather different from that in the provinces, where the working class is more stable sociologically and recruits mostly from its own children. It would be interesting to visit provincial towns, but as a foreigner this is next to impossible to do legally.

July 8: I visited my distant relatives, Sonya and Alik. This is the first time I have met Alik, who was recently amnestied after spending four years in a labor camp for his activities in favor of democracy and Jewish cultural rights. He is a programmer at a large watch factory. Alik and Sonya were refuseniks, but they seem to have given up the idea of going to Israel, even though now they probably could leave. Alik likes his job. His daughter, despite the discrimination against Jews in higher education, managed to get into an engineering institute. She really wanted to study mathematics at the university but it was not even worth trying. Alik finds what is going on terribly interesting. Life has not become better, he quips, but it is more fun. Possibly, too, Israel has lost its attraction. Sonya, a pediatrician, seems just to want to enjoy family life again and to avoid upheavals. She has a brother in Israel, and she and Alik know what is going on.

According to Alik, anti-Semitism in Russia (i.e., the Russian part of the Soviet Union) has always originated in the political leadership. In its origins, it is not a popular phenomenon, though this does not mean that there are not people, especially in good positions, who do not benefit from it and actively support it.

Because of the years he spent in the camp and his job in the factory, Alik knows workers and expresses himself about them rather differently than most people with higher educa-

tion. They are terribly uneducated, he says, but understand well their interests and are quite capable of rationally analyzing their situation. They want democracy and are far from the passive, semi-fascistic or anarchistic masses they are often said to be. Lyova, a cancer specialist sitting across the table, vehemently objects: they are sheep, slaves. That's the Russian nature. Sounds familiar. I think the intelligentsia should take a good look at itself. The regime has more to fear from the Krishnaites than from all the intellectuals of the realm.

Alik's words remind me of a recent article in the *Komsomolskaya pravda*. The author recalled that whenever elections approached, a banner would appear in their village club: "Long live the bloc of Communists and non-party delegates!" One day, illiterate auntie Pelgeya asked him: "You're in school. Explain to me what this bloc means. . . . I'm a non-party person and Pete-the-brigadier is a party member. So where is this bloc between us? He's a boss, he tells me to throw manure around. And what am I? A muzhik? They order us around, and then when the elections come—we're suddenly a bloc . . . so that they can get elected again and order us around some more."

Alik recounted the lunchtime meeting at his factory with a delegate to the party conference. Like the other delegates, she was sent to report to the people. Most questions were about Yeltsin. A worker asked: "Why was Yeltsin criticized for frequently dismissing functionaries and appointing new ones? Isn't it the case that he had to choose new appointees from the nomenklatura, a pool of candidates that had been constituted largely during the Brezhnev period, when the Moscow apparatus was rotten with corruption? Isn't it obvious that he had to keep trying in order to find at least a few honest and competent people? The delegate hemmed and hawed and finally had to agree with the worker. According to Alik, this shows a real movement of consciousness among the people. It's not so easy anymore for the bureaucrats. A few years back, no one would have dared ask such a question. But even if someone did, he or she would have immediately been shut up and called in for a severe talk, spiced with assorted threats."

We went to see the film *Kommissar*, made in 1967 and released only now. This is the first time I have seen Jews portrayed as Jews in a Soviet film, and sympathetically too. Even the vision of the Holocaust showed the victims as Jews. When we came out of the theater, Lena, who is not Jewish, said to me: "a deeply Christian film. I was surprised. To me, it was a very Jewish film. But, of course, what could she know of Jewish life in the shtetl? Lena couldn't get over the tenderness of the relations between the parents and the children and between them and the pregnant commissar. She had never seen such relations portrayed in a Soviet film. And so she felt it was a very Christian film. That says something about Soviet culture, and perhaps about family relations too. On the other hand, from what I can see, relations among friends are generally much deeper here than in the West."

July 9: I met Pyotr Siuda, the author of an unpublished essay on the worker uprising and subsequent massacre in Novocherkassk in June 1962. The immediate cause of the strike was a price rise and a cut in wage rate. But the back-

ground was the disappointed hopes raised by Khrushchev. Siuda, whose father was an Old Bolshevik, executed in 1938, was arrested for his part in the events and spent three years in a camp, until finally released after Khrushchev's fall. Of late, he has been fighting for the rehabilitation of the victims and for the events to be given "glasnost." So far, he has met no success.

Stalin's repressions are a major theme in the Soviet media. But the criticism of the post-Stalin regimes is limited to the economy and to corruption. There has been an amnesty of political prisoners but no rehabilitations, no apologies for the ruined lives and, in the Novocherkassk case, for the unknown number of people murdered. No one even knows where the bodies are buried. True, the Rostov Komsomol paper published an article on the events. This was essentially a polemic against Siuda's essay, which, however, was not published or even cited. It is a real example of Stalinist journalism: not only does it give a false picture of the events leading to the shooting (portrayed as an accident) but the article's author has the gall to say that Siuda's father would never have acted like Pyotr. I copied a letter that a group of workers in the Urals wrote to Siuda on June 17:

We have read your letter about the tragedy in your town on 1-3/VI-62 and we express our sympathy and solidarity. We want to send this information to some paper, for example *Komsomolskaya pravda*.

The workers, on the whole, believe the account of the facts in your article, but for the good of the cause we would like to receive personally from you a confirmation with a brief account of the course of events. (This will be a document of sorts against the local bureaucrats, opponents of the revolutionary renewal, in whose hands, unfortunately, the real political power rests. This is the treacherous class of exploiters of the toilers, that uses as a cover that which is most sacred to the working class—Marxism—and passes itself off as the true representatives of the party of the working class, of Soviet power, of the people, and against them one must fight skillfully, with their own arms. Of course, after this unprecedented in the history of humanity deception of the workers, a certain amount of time will be necessary for the course to democracy and glasnost to yield fruit—the dictatorship of the working class, its full power in its own organs—the soviets, in the Leninist understanding.

We are sending a letter addressed to Gorbachev, M.S., signed by a group of workers of the metallurgical factory. In this connection we would like to know your critical comments on this letter and your advice on the methods of struggle against the enemies of the working class—the bureaucratic bourgeoisie or sovbours, as Lenin called them.

We await your answer as soon as possible. It is needed for our struggle for the cause of the working class.

With respect and deep solidarity.

Pyotr told me that wages at the locomotive factory are down a third (to 240-350 rubles) compared to two years ago. This is because for the second year the factory has not fulfilled its plan. This in turn is a consequence of management's

failure to renew capital stock, as well as of poor organization and supply. But this coincided with the stepped-up quality control by the state, and so there appears to be a connection with the reforms. So far, the workers are quiet. A price reform could set them moving. The town does have a few activists in the social movement, but they still lack the resources to do serious work among the workers.

I asked him about the low productivity and waste and to what extent one can lay the blame on the workers. He said, using the Russian expression, that the workers are guilty by no fault of their own, i.e., in the past, regardless of the actual results of production, which they have really little ability to influence, workers were sure of a more or less stable wage. Now that the regime has become stricter, they find their earnings down. Again, he said that workers would like to put in a good day's work and receive a decent wage for it.

Pyotr told me of a visit he had made to the Caucasus, where he was a guest of a local party school in connection with his efforts on behalf of the historical rehabilitation of his father. In one large city he was invited to an unofficial Stalin museum—two rooms in a residential building. Most of the items had been collected from what other institutions got rid of after the Twentieth Congress. Next to the curator's desk was a shelf of books, writings of famous people. These inscribed volumes had been sent to the curator by their authors after visits to the museum as a token of gratitude. There was a volume by Zhukov. OK, after all, the war was the central part of his life and he fought it under Stalin. But then came the works of Chernenko and Brezhnev.

Pyotr really won me over when he refused the offer from a British publisher, to whom I had introduced him, to publish his, as yet unwritten, autobiography. Pyotr, a prolific writer of political leaflets, pamphlets, and essays, replied that the present moment is a time for action and he can't waste it writing memoirs. I can't think of many former dissidents or current club activists who would turn down such an offer.

July 11: I've been thinking about the significance of the informal movement for the democratic struggle in the Soviet Union. It seems to me most likely that the workers will begin to move on their own, without any real ties to this movement. This would probably be the case even if the clubs (I'm speaking of Moscow, not Armenia or the Baltic, where there is already a popular movement) were to adopt demands and tactics more adapted to the workers' situation. The clubs are a form of activism not readily accessible to workers. When they mobilize, it will be in their worker collectives, in the enterprises. Of course, the informal movement may have some indirect influence and maybe even establish some contacts in the working class. In Moscow there is a small, almost underground club of workers. I have heard of workers' clubs in the provinces, e.g., in Sverdlovsk. But once the workers themselves mobilize and display their potential, they will draw the best part of the informal movement to them and, one can hope, render the situation in it healthier. The jockeying for power and the playing with the regime are, in large part, a consequence of the absence of a popular base. The clubs will probably not furnish leadership in any direct sense to the workers' movement, but they can help with organiza-

tion — they already have ties across the country, which is immense — and furnish intellectual resources.

A worker, a brigade leader, was being interviewed on TV. He said that the perestroika means good work. The workers want to work, but they won't let us. They tie our hands. You can sit the whole day with nothing to do. I am more and more convinced that the anarchy and waste of bureaucratic management is a major source of worker dissatisfaction. The real political struggle will be over what is to replace it. And this has not yet begun. So far there has been mainly one voice — that of the marketeers. The complication is that within the political leadership itself (not to speak, of course, of the main body of the bureaucracy), there is a faction, led by Ligachev, that essentially opposes the market reform and appeals demagogically to socialist values. In fact, of course, these people are not defending socialism but the interests of the main cohorts of the bureaucracy. But I don't think the workers will bite at this — they understand what Ligachev and Co. stand for.

July 14: It's interesting how history has more than ever become a political football. Bukharin, who defended the market and the interests of the well-off peasants, is the darling. That the inherent dynamics of the economic policy of the '20s might themselves have been the chief source of the crisis that led to the "Stalin revolution" is never entertained. Trotsky has become an historical person again, but he is often portrayed as identical to Stalin, not as the leader of the faction that defended a third, socialist path of development (as opposed to the bureaucratic and — though this is crude — the essentially procapitalist paths). The Stalinist repressions are exposed and analyzed in detail, but I have yet to read anything about Stalin's measures directed specifically against the working class: the draconian labor laws, the catastrophic decline in wages in the late '20s, the smashing of the trade unions, the introduction of a degree of inequality in the wage structure that was unparalleled even in the West. Indeed, it is Stalin who is accused of introducing the "cursed egalitarianism" that is supposedly a main cause of today's economic stagnation.

July 18: Pyotr gave my number to a woman, whom he described as a Stalinist. He said it is important to hear these people firsthand. She has been calling me, proposing insistently a meeting. I warned her that our views are probably rather divergent: mine were close to those of Pyotr. She replied that she and Pyotr had the same goals, only he did not understand the situation and was going about things by the wrong methods. I finally met with her today.

She argues that the current reform aims directly at the restoration of capitalism. She has an elaborate, farfetched story of how a great amount of capital has been accumulated in private hands since Stalin's death, just waiting to come out in the open. The real power is the "technocracy"; the party apparatus is merely its lackey. She says she is for popular power through the soviets. Then comes Stalin. Stalin was not the author of the terror. "They" wanted to kill him too, but he was loved so much by the people that they knew they would never get away with it. I ask what the connection is between this defense of Stalin and the preceding analysis, but she does not give me a coherent answer. Of course, there is

a connection: her "party," which calls itself the "All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)," is the party of the Stalinist intellectuals and the hard-line bureaucrats in search of a popular base. They are playing on the popular hostility to the cooperatives and independents. It is true that a part of the capital that has gone into these enterprises was illegally earned.

I ask her what the social composition of her group is. She says that, for the moment, it is mostly intellectual and "employee" (i.e. functionary). There is little chance of acquiring a worker base with this brandishing of Stalin. Still, a rather frightening phenomenon. I haven't yet looked at the documents she gave me, but I detected no racism or chauvinism in her words. This is perhaps a somewhat different brand of reaction than one finds in Pamyat or the journal *Nash sovremennik*.

July 21: I met with Misha, a member of the Moscow workers' club. I think they maintain contacts with "Socialist Initiative" but they want to retain their separate, worker identity. Misha doesn't have a high opinion of the club movement, at least in its present state. Our meeting was rather conspiratorial as Misha had already been called in for a "conversation with the organs of internal affairs." This conversation had been polite, but they wanted to know what he was doing organizing a workers' club. They are not terribly afraid of an organization of intellectuals and marginals, but workers organizing politically is a different matter.

Misha himself is a worker, though with some higher education, the same as Volodya, the other worker political activist I have met. Both are supporters of "self-management," meaning worker management of independent enterprises functioning in a market environment. Sounds something like Yugoslavia, an experience that is now proving that even such decentralized worker self-management is incompatible with a functioning market. The role of the center, in their view, should be long-term planning and development of new regions. Misha says the center should indeed regulate, but not through commands — rather by compromise and persuasion. He repeats the arguments often heard in the press that the lazy ones are living at the expense of those who work conscientiously and show initiative, but he did not react when I said that the market hardly guarantees just rewards. Misha says firmly that he is opposed to capitalism.

He feels that only the working class has the potential to effect real change. At the same time, he describes the workers as politically unconscious. A successful movement requires a lot of propaganda work. Otherwise, there will be another Novochoerkassk. But Novochoerkassk failed, if I read Pyotr's essay correctly — not for lack of class consciousness but because it remained isolated. This question of organization is, of course, not unrelated to consciousness.

We discussed the December strike in Yaroslavl over the number of "black Saturdays" in the work schedule for 1989 that management had undemocratically pushed through. The workers had proposed a schedule with significantly less Saturdays but with an eight-hour workday, i.e., ten minutes longer than management's scheme. When management pleaded with the striking workers that the plan could not be met without these Saturdays, the workers replied that it was management's job to organize production properly. Misha,

who visited the factory, cites this as an example of undeveloped consciousness. He calls the workers' leader "benighted." The workers should push rather for the right to organize production by themselves and should set to doing it without permission. I offered that this makes little sense when most of what happens at the factory is determined by conditions outside of it, over which the workers have little control.

I found the conversation rather curious. On the one hand, Misha has no illusions about the regime and wants to mobilize the workers. On the other hand, he basically repeats the official position on economic questions and shares many of the views about workers that I have met among the intelligentsia. He is trying to develop a model of the reformed economic system, since he feels this is the key to successful work among the workers. This seems a very abstract approach unlikely to arouse much interest at this stage. So far his group is very small. He attributes this to the low consciousness of the workers and to an absence of technical means.

As for conditions at his factory, whose workers are relatively highly skilled, there has not been a review of skill grades — this is presented as a big favor — but wage rates have

been reduced. If the idea of the reform is to allow the workers to work as hard as they want in order to earn more, none of that has happened.

July 25: I've been sick for the past few days with a very high fever. At first I thought it was flu. The person in the hotel's infirmary attributed the illness to drafts. Russian drafts are the most dangerous thing in the world. If the authorities could harness them for military use, the West would indeed have something to fear. She swabbed my throat, which is raw, with iodine solution. That nearly finished me off. Later I called a doctor from "First Aid." He came quickly and gave me a shot of something, probably for the fever and to make me sleep. I didn't realize this at first and got quite a fright as my vision went blurry. He spent about three minutes checking me and about fifteen filling out forms. Besides the bureaucratic formalities, one simply has to be careful to protect oneself from accusations of malpractice, especially, I suppose, if a foreigner is involved. He didn't order any tests or prescribe antibiotics, another deficit good in the Soviet Union. Before he left, I asked him if anything had changed in his work since perestroika. He dismissed my question with a cynical smile and a disgusted wave of the hand. ●

Jamaica (Continued from page 7)

gested that it should be used only in regard to "terrorists" (which he did not define) and those involved in "sedition" (also not defined) — both euphemisms traditionally used for those involved in workers' struggles.

Many people are anticipating the possibility of the PNP imitating the PNP of the 1970s. But it might be better to focus on the new realities of the '80s, and the realization that as

both the JLP and the PNP draw closer ideologically and programmatically, the Jamaican masses at this point need desperately to find a way to build truly independent organizations that can articulate an alternative to austerity, and help prepare them for the next round of struggle against a neocolonial policy which is squeezing them for the last dollar to pay the imperialist banks. ●

National Question (Continued from page 26)

of national oppression. This is the only way a USSR (and a world) based on the genuine equality of all nations can be brought into being.

There is also a second and perhaps even more fundamental reason that the revolutionary workers' movement must support the struggles of the oppressed nationalities in the USSR today. Their campaign for basic democratic rights — up to and including the right to secede and form separate states if they so desire — helps to promote the general struggle for democratic rights and the fight against bureaucratic rule in the Soviet Union as a whole. This, in the last analysis, is likely to be the most important result of these national struggles. A united front of the Soviet workers and oppressed nationalities in the fight for democratic rights is an

essential element in expanding the present openings that have been introduced as a result of Gorbachev's glasnost policies. It will lay the basis for a genuine, qualitative change in the Soviet Union, with genuine workers' democracy finally being reestablished and the bureaucracy eliminated from positions of power. ●

Notes

1. Quotes are from "Critical Remarks on the National Question," *Collected Works*, Progress Publ., 1964, Vol. 20, pp. 22, 24, 25.
2. "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Vol. 20, pp. 411-12.
3. "Critical Remarks on the National Question," pp. 45-46.
4. "Memo to J.V. Stalin," Vol. 33, p. 127.
5. Quotes are from *Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder Press, pp. 170, 171.

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

29. Different Categories of Criminals*

The improvements at Vorkuta began with the barbed wire. They were delayed because some scoundrel sank a barge full of it. True, a new shipment was issued, but a year had been lost.

Sunk with the barge along with the barbed wire had been the salt. The villain (he was also a prisoner) never imagined that we would be fed saltless gruel for a whole winter all because of him. With a new shipment, we got salt for our soup again; and a fence was built around the zone. Everything started anew. The number of khakis [guards] was increased. They began to search the barracks in the same strict way they did in the Butyrkas of the capital. However, we were able to throw our razors outside into the snow during a search and retrieve them later. But unlike in Butyrka, it was not such hard work to make razors at Vorkuta; our blacksmiths made razors of exceptional quality, and moreover, from the best steel in the world, Swedish ballbearings from SKF. We sharpened them with emery paper and the specialists pretended not to notice. The specialists were imprisoned engineers.

The geological expeditions were also made up of prisoners. No matter how far away an expedition was taken, the politicals never tried to escape. Our officials understood this.

Winter dragged on slowly, and after it the summer flew by. And then winter was upon us again. Each day was like the one before and you ceased being able to distinguish yesterday from a day last year. You came home from work, ate quickly, and jumped onto your plank bed. This was the only place where you could read, daydream, and mainly get lost in another world. And to get lost in another world is the strongest desire prisoners have.

Mother wrote to me. Even though she also had a daughter in the camps, she sent parcels. She never had luxuries like butter.

And I received some news from the children. It was not a letter but a photograph of the two of them together and the inscription "to Papa." The day would come when our hearts would be able to give back the human warmth that had accumulated in it just as the warmth from the sun that had accumulated in the earth emerged to the surface over Vorkuta's river.

As the end of one's term nears, it is more difficult than it was at the beginning. One counts not days, but days and nights. Yesterday was short, but today is very long.

The end of term was approaching for those sentenced to five years, that is, for those arrested in 1935, with Arkady among them. From the experiences of the few who had received three-year terms, we knew what a "counterweight" was, as it was called in the camp. Two or three days before your term ends, you are called before the camp administration and shown a summary from a resolution by a Special Session: five more years. Without being questioned, without a trial, without any red tape. This summary, a typewritten carbon copy, like those which I signed the first time at Butyrka, was a piece of paper about five or six centimeters wide. The name and number of years is inserted in ink. On the back of it, under the typewritten words "I have been informed of this summary," was a dotted line. That is where you were supposed to sign. Five or ten years of one's life are taken away by this simple piece of paper. They never fail to "inform" you of this only on the very last days of your term, in the same way that Grisha Baglyuk was arrested after

*Last month's installment was also listed as 29. This is the way these two chapters are numbered in Baitalsky's manuscript.

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.

having had only two hours of freedom. They gave him a "counterweight" like this, too. The second weight is heavier than the meat pie itself.¹

In the barracks, it suddenly gets unbearably quiet and the domino players stop short with the pieces in their hands when the khaki crosses the threshold, reading from a piece of paper under his nose and shouting out a name. A "counterweight." For whom this time?

It sometimes happened that due to an official oversight, some people left without a "counterweight" — more precisely, they walked away. The Pechora railroad, built with this labor — as were the Pechora coal mine, the Pechora oil wells, the Pechora timber industry, and the new cities on the Pechora — did not yet go as far as Vorkuta. People freed during the winter fixed up a hand sled, tied their belongings to it, and set out on foot over the ice of the river. They hurried, not waiting for a ride, as if fearing that the "counterweight" would overtake them after they had been freed. [The next page of the Russian manuscript is missing.]

* * *

The clicking of the dominoes seems to confirm: "We, former members of a revolutionary political party — double five — have contempt for our past — double one. We are being reeducated and are outgrowing bad habits. And if you let us out — double blank — you can be sure that we will never let them enter our minds. We will talk about women and play dominoes."

Dominoes had supplanted books, which the political prisoners had previously lugged about with them in large numbers. Those who were executed at the brick factory had dragged their books with them everywhere. In 1940, no one in our barracks had books. In the next barracks lived someone who possessed a small but selective library — a Polish Communist named Stanislav-Belsky. After the dissolution of the Polish Communist Party, Belsky was not the only one imprisoned. Polish Communists began to be imprisoned (not only by Pilsudski, but by us as well)² at the same time as the Trotskyists, even though they were members of a foreign Communist party. Stalin took charge of the Comintern, as he had of his home front, of course, in the interest of unity.

Belsky, like everybody now, did not discuss political topics, mindful of informers; the informer system was in full bloom in those years. He and two or three others got packages of books from home, which in itself was grounds for suspicion. Books were examined for a long time before they were turned over to the person to whom they were addressed. Belsky received Russian, Polish, and French books — picture an official of the Special Section with a French book in his hands! Dominoes, sent in a parcel, were handed over without delay. They were encouraged. But the safest conversations of all were about women — the more obscene they were, the safer in the camp reeducation system.

In our barracks, there were a dozen or two criminal elements but only two, as I recall, nonparty "politicals": Mitya Moskvina and my friend Rubashkin. Mitya, a lad from a remote corner of the Kirov Oblast, ended up in the camp for Trotskyism. He pronounced the word Trotskyism incorrect-

ly and had never heard of it until he was arrested. The investigator told him everything that he knew about it.

Rubashkin was practically still a boy. He received a five-year term because his brother had voted for the Opposition ten years ago; Rubashkin himself had never even been in the Komsomol.

All four of us ate soup from the same kettle. Rubashkin, me, the Leningrad Komsomol worker Yura, and an old Komsomol member from Belorussia named Moishe. To eat from the same kettle and share the rare parcels and camp rations is a mark of even greater closeness than drinking from the same bottle.

In camp, no one said "we are friends" but only "we eat together." Despite the fact that you could be separated at any time for long years, and maybe forever, you could with full confidence count on those with whom you ate your thin gruel. He would give you his felt boots if you were unexpectedly called away to a convoy. And if he were called, he could quietly put on the warm cap that you had been sent from home, confident that you would not have it any other way.

People are accustomed to having a family and want to feel that spirit. Two or three comrades who eat from the same kettle are a sort of family for a person whose wife and kids have been torn away from him.

Rubashkin was a serious lad. His eyes rarely smiled, even when his mouth did. He would not let me swear at the domino players who poisoned our life with their impassioned victory shouts.

"Forget them, Misha, let the boys enjoy themselves." (The "boy" Slobogsky was twice Rubashkin's age.) "Let's just lean back and relax a bit."

By "lean back," he meant to sleep. We learned to sleep despite the barracks noise, so as to be able at night to listen to the music broadcast after everything calmed down. The radio and the lights were never turned off; that was a rule.

When Rubashkin heard the music, he furled his eyebrows and his lips closed tight, in the smile of a person distracted by a memory.

Once the announcer said: "What you are hearing is 'Nights in the Gardens of Spain,' by de Falla."³ The loudspeaker was carrying the soft sound of an orchestra and a rather appealing, long, anguished woman's sigh. An unclear, muffled whisper was barely audible amidst the roaring of the basses: somewhere a romantic rendezvous had taken place. And in the sky, the tongues of monastery bells rolled from the wind and tolled dully. One's heart contracts sweetly and painfully. The wind begins to howl behind the cliffs of Gibraltar. The pealing of the bells does not stop. And the night is filled with love and languor and quiet whispering and the strumming of guitars. It is hard to believe I am now speaking this way about a piece I heard around twenty years ago.

The wind howls, a woman sighs in anguish, the chords ring quietly.

The concert ends. The first hour of night has passed. I look around and see two-tiered rows of plank beds, on them people huddled under blankets, breathing heavily in their sleep, and the spots of squashed bugs on the wall.

In a novel you can say about the hero, "he thought." But I do not know what Rubashkin thought; he talked little. And what he did, he did without fanfare. He put together the first

age in the Vorkuta mine, in the shaft that became mine no. 1. I worked under him. He was a highly qualified engineer in shipbuilding in Leningrad before his arrest. The cage we assembled was urgently needed. The shaft workers there used a tub to descend and to surface. Rubashkin worked hastily.

"This cage will carry human beings. A one millimeter mistake could lead to casualties. There will be no *tufta* [lies] here!" he said to the officials. He worked with extreme precision, and did not depart from the blueprint by even a millimeter.

The welder did not get offended when Rubashkin chopped out a joint and insisted it be rewelded and more deeply. "That crank Rubashkin."

"Has the norm been met? It has. Then leave it at that, you miserable sod! Go back to the barracks."

Rubashkin would turn his back and continue to crack the joints apart.

"Just for you, I'll do it! What a bitch! I'll do it out of respect for you."

The welder was a young lad, a common criminal. He had ended up in camp for violating the edict about keeping socialist property: stealing from a collective farm, most likely not out of malice but necessity. During the first years that the edict was in effect, people were condemned under it without the slightest consideration of mitigating circumstances. But once in the camp, constantly in the company of the young camp toughs, Sadyk (that was his name; he was from the Tatar Republic) learned how to really steal, learned all the rules of criminal behavior, and began to say, like an inveterate thief: "Prison is my real home." Now he is called Sashka and says "what a bitch!" At the end of every sentence he would say: "Understand?"

The camp educated a legion of Sashkas without interruption. The older people who ended up in camp under this edict did not so easily fall under the influence of the criminal milieu and could serve their term without once playing cards. But the young kids became real thieves, learned to love *tufta* and hate work, tattooed themselves with obscene pictures, chopped off their fingers, and followed the orders of the *pakhans* [criminal bosses], who wielded power solely on the basis of cruelty: without it, a pack of wolves is unthinkable. A cruel and strict regime sometimes succeeds in getting parasites into the habit of working. But cruelty is not cured by methods of cruelty itself.

The criminals got shorter terms than we did and waves of those released from camp rolled to freedom (but, of course, the route between the camp and prison always goes both ways). And when they rolled on out, they took with them the morality of the criminal world, its language, attitudes toward women, and bestiality.

Our young welder Sashka had not yet learned all the criminal ropes. Rubashkin sheltered him as much as he could but the best educator is powerless when the hungry can win a piece of bread at cards. And you do not eradicate cards by measures of cruelty. They will play for matches, over remarks, or whatever. It is absolutely obvious that the struggle against criminality has to be waged before someone ends up in camp.

It is not out of place here to relate an episode about a group hitherto unprecedented in the camp that was brought into

our camp at the beginning of 1940 (or the end of 1939). When Estonia was made a part of the USSR, the imprisoned criminals there were transferred in for reeducation by work. About forty people were brought to Vorkuta.

These people were not edict violators or petty thieves and murderers but a special variety of criminal, a type that finds fertile ground for growth on capitalist soil—bank robbers, confidence men, large-scale swindlers—in a word, operators. Of course, they did not want to work, and they felt this even more strongly than our "socially-close" criminals, who were certainly not dying to go to work either.

The Estonians quickly mastered the art of "doing a number"—a term for using various means to make sores on your body (most often by rubbing yourself with kerosene) and thus getting the opportunity to stay out of work for a time. The doctors would treat them and they would again rub on the kerosene. Some people missed work for months at a time this way.

But those who wanted to could "do a complete number" on themselves not just with sores but with a blood infection, and die. The Estonian criminals decided to die. And they did. The doctors were not able to save a single one.

* * *

Everything that I know about criminality and about the system of labor reeducation of criminals has been based on a study of this terrible world from inside it. I lived for years there and worked and slept on the plank beds next to them and they revealed themselves to me not in personal conversations with me, an outsider, but in their conversations with one another. The psychology of a person can be learned by watching the person's actions, and better still by the admissions of that person if one can be sure that they are inadvertent and frank admissions. This can rarely be done.

I was able to succeed because they were not self-conscious around me. I was below them on the camp ladder. I did not listen to them. But I remembered what I heard.

Camp reeducation is the direct opposite of the method of Makarenko. He had a collective that grew over the years and was conscious of its cohesiveness.

The camp "collective" was built on sand. Everyone wanted to get out of it, counting the days until the end of their term. You could be shipped out in a convoy at any moment. It was impossible to develop any ties inside it.

Those whose views on the corrective labor system are decisive, who organize and reinforce and improve it, who write articles and books about it—these people know about it only from the *outside*. I consider I have a right to offer some advice: before you start to argue, get to know the criminal world from the *inside*. Take off your suit, forget about the amenities of life. Live in the camp not as an official or correspondent but without any rights, like an ordinary prisoner. Live so the officials won't know who you really are, and will send you out on convoys. And live that way not for a month, but for a year or two. Look and listen. Experience and remember, without taking notes. And when you get out, then write your books.

I am not offering this in jest or derision. Try it. If you aren't sure that you will be able to take it, guarantee yourself a way

out. Leave a sealed text with your wife so she can go wherever necessary and get you summoned.

If you want to be honest in your writings and projects, you must know that world which you want to reeducate not only from letters from hundreds or thousands of reeducated, but from open conversations with those who need reeducation. The criminals are cunning; that is their only form of defense. And a persecuted criminal will never be frank with an outsider.

And what about the problem of crime as a whole? This is even more complicated. Crime statistics are kept secret in our country. But for society to know itself, what counts is not the number of people tried and sentenced. This is only an indirect indicator, and not a precise one, of the public morality. Morality itself, and not the numbers convicted, is the most important social indicator. There are many immoral things done for which no one is ever punished.

To study this problem, it is absolutely inadequate to compare our morality with that in the capitalist countries. We have a whole detachment of legal scholars who specialize in these areas of comparison. They have been especially adept in their comparison with America, like N. Gribachev, for example, who raises this every month.

But true self-knowledge is possible not by a comparison with America. (And by the way, why do the Gribachevs focus on America but not on Denmark, Finland, or France?) Far more convincing and logical would be to compare our society today with our society in specific years in the past — let's say, the present time with the early years after the October revolution. Over half a century there should have been enormous progress. Industrial output grew tenfold, and so did education. But what of the level of morality? When was there more hooliganism, more hypocrisy, more fear of higher-ups,

more "looking the other way," more drunkenness, more juvenile crime: immediately after the revolution or now?

Who is helped by keeping statistics a secret? The most unpleasant figures (honest figures and not a percentage as compared with last year!) mobilize society. Hiding the scope of evil is the major reason for indifference to it.

For all the savagery of the censors, truth cannot always be concealed. In general, success in keeping things quiet depends not only on the zealous service of the one wielding the censor's pen, but on the wish of the readers themselves not to get agitated by knowing too much, and allegedly avoid growing old before one's time. The snow on a city sidewalk melts slowly from the sun all by itself. But scrape a bit of the sidewalk down to the asphalt and the black surface will begin to warm from the sun, and the snow — inch by inch — will begin to disappear.

It is important that a thirst for knowledge be awakened in our youth; and the snow will not last for long.

[Next month: "Vorkuta-Kotlas-Kirov"]

Notes

1. The allusion is to a scale that uses established weights to equal, and thus measure, the weight of the object (the "meat pie") being weighed. On the scales of camp justice, the counterweight (the added term) was usually "heavier than the meat pie itself" (the original term).

2. Jozef Pilsudski (1867-1935), a Polish nationalist, organized his own army to fight against Russia in World War I and was a leader of counter-revolutionary interventionist forces during the Russian civil war. He moved his troops into Warsaw in May 1926 and became virtual dictator of Poland until his death.

3. Manuel De Falla (1876-1946), a Spanish composer, wrote "Noches en los Jardines de España," a suite for piano and orchestra, in 1916.

Moscow News Publishes Interview with Trotsky's Grandson

The February 26-March 5, 1989, issue of the weekly *Moscow News* carried an interview with Esteban Volkov, grandson of Leon Trotsky. Under the headline "An Old House in Coyoacán," Mikhail Belyat, the *Moscow News* correspondent in Mexico City, explains, "Here, in one of the Mexican capital's districts, Lev Trotsky's grandson cherishes the memory of his grandfather. . . . Few know the real history of this house, where Lev Trotsky lived in the late 1930s until his death in 1940."

At one point Belyat interrupts the text of his interview to comment: "I could not dispute the grandson's opinion about his grandfather. Not out of delicacy. . . . Simply I don't have, nor can I have, my own opinion about Trotsky to contrast to Esteban's. Like the overwhelming majority of Soviet people I haven't read Trotsky's works in order to grasp the substance of his errors, and am not aware of his views on socialism and Marxism. The few denunciations of Trotsky in our history textbooks are about as convincing as the legend about the Immaculate Conception."

Moscow News is published in the USSR in both Russian and English. In our next issue the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will carry the complete text of this interview.

Letters

SWP on Iran

A significant formulation appeared in the *Militant* newspaper dated March 10. In a commentary on the Salman Rushdie controversy Margaret Jayko asserts: "Using anti-imperialist demagogy, Khomeini and other figures in the Iranian government try to equate their defense of totalitarian blasphemy laws with the struggles of the oppressed and exploited peoples in the Middle East against racist insults by the rich and powerful of the world."

Unless I am mistaken, this is the first acknowledgment in the *Militant* that the Khomeini government is "totalitarian," and uses "anti-imperialist demagogy." For the last ten years one would have searched the pages of this paper in vain for a single word along these lines, a single statement in defense of the tens of thousands of workers, students, leftists, and others, who have been imprisoned, tortured, and executed by the "Islamic Republic." Even when members of Fourth Internationalist groups in Iran were among the victims, the U.S. SWP and the *Militant* didn't have a thing to say.

Now it is hard to ignore the Salman Rushdie affair. Of course it is to the credit of the *Militant* and the SWP that they have spoken up against the threat to kill the author of *The Satanic Verses*. But it is to their everlasting shame that they have remained silent for almost a decade about the crimes of Iran's present dictator — going so far as to uncritically praise the "anti-imperialist" Iranian revolution, without even a hint that Khomeini's denunciations of "The Great Satan" have been little more than demagogy.

Still, we must acknowledge, better late than never. Now let's see the *Militant* protest the continued incarceration and mass execution of political prisoners who have spent years in Khomeini's jails.

A Reader
New York

F.I.T.'s Attitude to the SWP

I have been thinking about something for a long time. The F.I.T. in its statement of purpose (inside front cover of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*) insists on reinstatement in the SWP.

It is obvious that the Fourth International is not going to force the issue. It is also obvious that the SWP continues

to degenerate — long ago falling beyond a point where any thinking person (fitting Lenin's quote on the inside cover) would consider joining it and submitting to its discipline. The *Militant* has become a gray rag. Political intervention by the party in the mass movement doesn't exist. In short, the SWP has dug its own grave and pulled the dirt in over itself. Who would want to join such an organization, I repeat?

Furthermore, who would join the F.I.T. — in spite of its fine work and great literature — if there was a real possibility that all the F.I.T. has accomplished, and all its possibilities for the future, would be lost by a reintegration of the F.I.T. into the SWP. The Bolsheviks would have just as likely served the Russian Revolution by being reabsorbed into the Russian Social Democrats! No, one would not join the F.I.T. or any other FI group in the U.S. if one thought that this would eventually mean joining the SWP.

I suggest that in place of the current statement of purpose, the words, "Freedom in Discussion — Unity in Action," be inserted.

Jack Bresee
Missouri

In reply: Jack Bresee shares an opinion of many who disagree with the F.I.T. on our orientation to the SWP. We would urge readers in particular to see the "Exchange of Views" in our October 1988 issue between Manuel Kellner, of West Germany, and Steve Bloom. It should be obvious to objective observers that the SWP has continued to attract new people to its ranks throughout the decade of the 1980s who are motivated out of a sincere commitment to socialism internationally and revolution in the United States. A layer of older cadre, from the 1970s, remains loyal to the party for the same reasons. The F.I.T. has also won new members, on the basis of our commitment to the fight to reform the SWP and our demand for reintegration into its ranks. It is important for revolutionists to base our orientation to events on objective measures, not on subjective feelings or one-sided judgments. Before the Bolsheviks broke with the social democracy for example the Second International was guilty of the most monstrous betrayal of the working class by supporting the imperialist powers in the First World War. Jack Bresee's comparison of this with the actions of the SWP in the 1980s is, we believe, a bit exaggerated, to say the least.

Iran (Continued from page 17)

the woman as saying. The lady has fled the Islamic Republic, but refuses to allow the use of her name fearing reprisals against her family.

Members of Marxist organizations are buried in separate cemeteries such as Laanat Abad (Land of the Damned) or Khaiun Abad (Cemetery of the Bolsheviks). Bodies are buried in extremely shallow graves so that the Islamic fun-

damentalists can point with disgust to the "stench of the infidels."

The demonstration in Dallas, Texas, on February 10 was an attempt to get the attention of the press. Even though the *Dallas Morning News* sent a reporter, no article was forthcoming in any subsequent edition. The paper did, however, cover a demonstration by Iranian monarchists the next day. ●

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