

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

No. 65

July-August 1989

\$3.00

UPHEAVAL IN CHINA!

Chinese Students Change the Course of History by Tom Barrett	1
Bloodbath in Tiananmen Square	1
Call to Form a Coalition of Self-Governing Workers' Organizations	7
For a Thorough Antibureaucratic Revolution Letters by the Chinese Revolutionary Communist Party	8
Political Revolution in China? by Steve Bloom	9
Solidarity with the Chinese Students by Jerry Gordon	9
Mexican Hunger Strike Gets Results Free the Upington 26!	10 10
The Latest Threats Against Panama by Tom Barrett	11
Brazilian Workers Party Presidential Candidate Speaks in New York by Roger Kraft	14
From <i>International Viewpoint</i> on Brazil: Lula for President!	15
General Strike by 35 Million Workers	16
The Strike and the Political Crisis	17
Victory in Los Angeles Teachers' Strike by Evelyn Sell	19
Union Activists Discuss Political Action at Labor Notes Conference by Dave Riehle	22
200th Anniversary of the French Revolution The French Revolution and Bourgeois Ideology by George Plekhanov	25
Congress of People's Deputies Widens Cracks in Bureaucratic Rule by Marilyn Vogt-Downey	31
Unrest Continues in Caucasus by Marilyn Vogt-Downey	35
Notebooks for the Grandchildren (continued) 31. Russian Patriots (continued) by Mikhail Baitalsky	36
Letters	40

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. 65, July-August 1989

Closing date June 5, 1989

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

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

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

To subscribe to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, send \$24 for 12 monthly issues or \$15 for 6 issues to Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. Back issues are \$3.00 each.

Chinese Students Change the Course of History

by Tom Barrett

At this writing it is unclear how the massive protests which have rocked the People's Republic of China will end. As it stands now, the student rebels have decided to continue their occupation of Beijing's Tiananmen Square until June 20, when the National People's Congress is scheduled to meet. Only about 10,000 students remain in the square, a fraction of the number which occupied it at the protest's beginning three weeks ago, but they are still able to mobilize demonstrations of 100,000 or more in the streets on short notice.

Though it appears that few, if any, short-term goals will be accomplished, the Chinese democracy movement has already won a great victory, whose impact has not only changed the course of Chinese history, but has changed the world's history as well. Even if Prime Minister Li Peng's conservative faction retains power in the Chinese Communist

Party—as it now appears that it will—its power will never be as great or as unquestioned as it has been in the past. The Chinese students, workers, intellectuals, and even rank-and-file soldiers have seen in action that they have real power, that they can defy the authorities. That can never be taken away from them.

The Chinese events, especially combined with the pro-democracy groundswell occurring in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, provide the socialist movement with unparalleled opportunities—if it responds correctly. The Chinese masses, with the students at the lead, have struck blows against pessimism and feelings of powerlessness. They have undermined the foundation of whatever support for anticommunist militarism still lingers among workers in the imperialist centers. Students and workers around the world,

Continued on next page

Bloodbath in Tiananmen Square

The normal news deadline for Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is the fifth of the month prior to our publication date. The article by Tom Barrett on this page dealing with the events in China was submitted on the first, just before the military crackdown, which dramatically transformed the situation in that country. Because of the extreme importance of the events which took place on and after June 3, we have extended our deadline one week so that Tom could file this update.

On June 3, 1989, the most inspiring mass struggle in many years, the Chinese student sit-in in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, ended in a bloody massacre. The worst fears of everyone who is trying to build a humane society on this planet were realized as about 10,000 soldiers in tanks, armored personnel carriers, and on foot moved in to occupy the world's largest city square. They shot everything that moved.

In order to carry out the attack, the bureaucracy had to bring in the 27th Army from Inner Mongolia, a division which is personally loyal to Yang Shangkun, an 82-year-old conservative military leader who holds the ceremonial post of president of the People's Republic. Military divisions which have, over the past six weeks, refused to carry out attacks on the students reportedly clashed with the 27th Army troops, even raising the specter of civil war for a period of time. As of now, the government seems to be in control of the situation. Very little is clear, however; things still change from day to day, indeed, from hour to hour. The only conclusion one can draw with certainty is that the June 3 massacre failed in its mission to put an end to the struggle for democracy.

In China's unhappy twentieth century, there have been many massacres; it is possible that 1989's may rank as far from the worst. That is of little consolation to the families of the 500 to 10,000—no one really knows—who have been killed, or to the hundreds of millions who saw in the student protest the hope for a democratic future in China. The criminal gang which holds power has added hundreds, possibly thousands, to the list of martyrs for social justice, a list which includes the Boxers of 1895, the workers of Shanghai and Canton in 1927, the victims of the Japanese terror in the 1930s and World War II, the Chinese Trotskyists whom the Stalinists murdered, and the victims of Mao's Red Guards in the 1960s. They died as heroes, in a country where heroes are not forgotten.

Can anyone now deny the true character of the bureaucratic dictators who have imposed their rule on the Chinese workers and peasants, a gang which proudly calls itself "Stalinist"? Do they deserve any more political support than those who carried out the suppression of the Hungarian

Continued on page 6

hearing the Chinese people's complaints, are thinking that the issues in China are not so different than the issues they face in their own countries. Inflation and unemployment, government corruption, official indifference to the people's concerns are all problems of which working people throughout the world are conscious — in massive numbers.

What can they conclude? Only one thing: if the people of China can stand up and fight their government, for democracy and against corruption, so can we. If the Chinese students have the guts to stand up to their government, which truly is tyrannical, what on earth are the rest of us afraid of? One responds to their youthful and maybe romantic dreams and aspirations not with cynicism but with admiration. One can say without embarrassment that the Chinese young people have set an example for the world, that they are an inspiration to oppressed people everywhere, and it no longer sounds like hollow phrasemaking.

What Are the Issues?

Though U.S. president George Bush called the Chinese upsurge evidence that "communism is a failed system," there are no grounds for celebration in Washington and Wall Street. There have been no calls for the Guomintang's return to power. (The Guomintang is the bourgeois party which was headed by the late Chiang Kai-shek and defeated in the Chinese revolution of 1949. It continues to hold power in Taiwan.) No one has suggested leveraged buy-outs of China's state-owned industry by U.S., Japanese, or Hong Kong banks. There have been no unfavorable comparisons between China and the cheap-labor centers of the Pacific Rim, such as South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. In fact, the only non-Chinese model which the students seem to be emulating is the "people power" movement in the Philippines, the movement which overthrew the pro-U.S. dictator Ferdinand Marcos. (Marcos's overthrow in 1986 was widely covered by the Chinese news media.) As the students marched into the square, they sang the *Internationale* to demonstrate their continued belief in the promise of socialism.

The composition of the student-led protest movement is revealing, and in some ways surprising. As in most developing countries, only a very small number of Chinese young people have the opportunity to attend university. Just as in those developing countries where capitalist power has not been broken, the Chinese students are in their majority the sons and daughters of the privileged elite. In China, however, that privileged elite is the Communist Party and government bureaucracy, rather than the class of bankers and businessmen. A great many students are pursuing careers tied to China's economic modernization — careers in technology, management, medicine, and similar areas. Many hope to work abroad after their studies are completed. What is surprising is that the protest leaders, especially those who have played central roles at turning points in the struggle, have not come from these departments, but instead have been those young people being educated for top roles in the Communist Party and the Chinese state.

According to Lee Feighon, a professor of Chinese history at Colby College, the early leaders of the pro-democracy

movement were students from the Party History Department at People's University, which is about two miles from Beijing University. The *New York Times* quoted Feighon as saying, "These kids have all been carefully screened before they are admitted to the Party History Department. Everybody knows they are well-connected and are being groomed to be the future Communist leaders of China. . . . They are traditionalists in the Chinese sense, seriously interested in Chinese history and the Party."

Party History students organized the wreath-laying ceremony in Tiananmen Square after the death of reformist CP general secretary Hu Yaobang; two days later they boycotted classes demanding a reappraisal of Hu's career, which ended in his abrupt removal from power early in 1987 on orders from Deng Xiaoping. The massive demonstration on the occasion of Hu's funeral was again initiated by Party History students from People's University. They led in the defiance of police authority. Many called their parents or grandparents who hold positions of authority to warn them, "If the troops fire on the students, I just want you to know they'll be firing on me."

Why should students who would seem to have so little to gain and so much to lose be taking to the streets in protest against a government in which their own families are prominent? The answer lies in their firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of the Chinese bureaucracy and their recognition that the bureaucracy-dominated Communist Party can no longer be seen as fulfilling the socialist ideal. The Chinese people no longer recognize the CP as the legitimate representative of the working class and peasantry. They consequently believe that it should no longer control a government which is supposed to belong to the workers and peasants. The Party History students do not want to be put in the role of defending the privileged bureaucracy against the people's socialist aspirations.

The demands most commonly raised are "democracy" and an "end to corruption," and the two are often seen as inseparable. Some writers in bourgeois publications in the United States have said that the students do not really understand what "democracy" means; in fact, they probably understand it better than the bourgeois "experts." To the students, "democracy" means the right to express a dissenting opinion without fear of arrest or harassment by the police. It means responsiveness by the Communist Party and government to the people's needs and desires, as the people themselves express them. It means a leadership chosen by the masses of people, not through a process of nepotism and horse-trading, which the students label as "corruption."

Unfortunately for the smug spokesmen for U.S. imperialism, the Chinese students would not recognize politics in the United States or other capitalist powers as democratic if they had the chance to become intimately connected with them. They would react to the scandal which has brought down the Takeshita government in Japan or the scandals leading to the resignation of California congressman Tony Coelho and U.S. House speaker Jim Wright (who was, of course, third in line to the presidency) with the same indignation that they feel toward corruption in their own country. They could hardly fail to understand that the political machinations within the city government of Chicago or New

York have very little to do with the needs and desires of those cities' people.

Surprisingly, economic demands have played a very small role in the current wave of protests, for China has serious economic problems. Since limited private enterprise and foreign investment have been allowed for over a decade now, the ills which routinely affect capitalist society have made an appearance in China. Inflation is running at about 30 percent, making it nearly impossible for workers and peasants to take advantage of the increased availability of consumer goods. Unemployment and underemployment are also afflicting the Chinese working class. There is widespread awareness and concern about these problems, but there is as yet no consensus on what to do about them. The democracy movement has taken no stand in opposition to government economic policies beyond protesting against mismanagement. Deng Xiaoping is the architect of Chinese economic liberalization, and Li Peng completely supports Deng's economic policies.

The Power of Mass Action

What has so completely captured the world's imagination has been the sight of unarmed students paralyzing the government of the most populous country on earth. The Chinese People's Liberation Army remains one of the world's most powerful military forces; on a conventional battlefield it is a match for the Soviet or United States army. However, its leaders have been unwilling to risk attempting to capture Tiananmen Square from the student demonstrators.

Mikhail Gorbachev's historic visit to China to end the thirty-year cold war between the two workers' states was all but overshadowed by 3,000 hunger strikers sitting-in in the square outside the Great Hall of the People. A million people marched in the streets to support the hunger strikers. Gorbachev quipped, "I come to Beijing, and you have a revolution." In general, the students were urging China's leaders to follow Gorbachev's example, as they understand it, and they have not yet raised the idea of the overthrow of the entrenched Chinese bureaucracy. However, when political revolution happens in China, it will not look very different than the Beijing "May strike" of 1989.

The hunger strike began on May 13 and revived the protest wave which began with Hu Yaobang's death in April. The Beijing working class continued to give not only moral but concrete support to the students. In order to prevent the police from moving in and arresting them, workers parked buses in the streets leading into the square and deflated their tires. They continued to place their bodies between the police and the students, and attempted—many times successfully—to persuade the police not to move against them.

The government reinforced army garrisons outside Beijing and on May 20 declared martial law. Working people went out to the soldiers and "patiently explained" to them what the students were trying to accomplish. The soldiers, who were for the most part peasant boys no older than the student demonstrators, began to recognize that they had more in common with the young people in Tiananmen than with the old bureaucrats who had ordered them to take ac-

tion. The world saw the spectacle of fresh-faced soldiers, many with tears in their eyes, shaking hands with worker and student demonstrators and turning back from their forward attack positions.

On May 23, seven top army commanders, recognizing that their men would probably refuse an order to attack the protesters, sent a letter to the government demanding that troops not be used to suppress the sit-in. The signers, among them a former defense minister and a former chief of staff, wrote: "In view of the extremely serious situation, we as veteran soldiers demand that the People's Liberation Army not confront the population, nor quell the people. The army must absolutely not shoot the people. In order to prevent the situation from worsening, the army must not enter the city of Beijing."

Communist Party general secretary Zhao Ziyang opposed the imposition of martial law and offered to resign. That night he himself visited the hunger strikers in the square. With his eyes welling, he said, "I have come too late." He has not been officially removed from his post, though he is rumored to be under house arrest at this writing. When martial law was imposed, student demands began to focus more on personalities, demanding the retirement of Deng Xiaoping and the resignation of Li Peng. The 60-year-old Li is something of a symbol of corruption and nepotism in China. Li was orphaned as a child and was raised as a son by China's first prime minister, Zhou Enlai. It is widely believed that he owes his powerful position to his connection with Zhou rather than to his own efforts or ability.

There is nothing uniquely Chinese about what has happened over the past six weeks. It has happened before, at other times and in other parts of the world. In some cases it has caused governments to fall. When masses of people take political action in their own name and for their own interests it is a force more powerful than "the might of armies magnified a thousand-fold." *Mass action* is what translates the *potential* power of the working class into its *real* power. Even the fear of what *might* happen is often enough to force the class enemy or the bureaucratic enemy to cut its losses and make concessions. That is how mass action prevented the United States from continuing to escalate the military force with which it was trying to defeat the Vietnamese revolution. That is how mass action forced the Philippine bourgeoisie and their American advisers to withdraw their support from the dictator Marcos. That is how mass action forced the Portuguese generals to overthrow the fossilized dictatorship, grant independence to the African colonies, and allow democratic rights for the first time in Portuguese history.

When the people have a leadership which can present an agenda for *taking power* from a bankrupt old regime, mass action can be translated into revolution. Such a leadership is not yet present in China; however, the experience of mass action in the unfolding events of 1989 will be invaluable in the formation of such a revolutionary leadership.

There can be no doubt that a bit of experience—some of it likely to be quite traumatic—will be required before a significant layer begins to draw conclusions about the need to replace the present Chinese government with a new one. In the early stages of a revolution the masses, and the leaders thrown up spontaneously by the struggle, often tend to treat

it almost as if it were a festival, as if the problems posed by the conflict will be easily resolved—even that they will be resolved in collaboration with the old regime, or elements of that regime. It takes time before the masses come to terms with the real necessities of the situation. But the character of the actions by the Chinese students and workers, combined with the whole history of struggle of the Chinese people, give every indication that the development of the present movement to a still higher stage of revolutionary consciousness is a genuine possibility.

China and the World Capitalist Economy

U.S. president George Bush's overall response has been remarkably restrained and cautious, consistent with his long relationship with the current Chinese leadership (he served as head of the U.S. mission in Beijing during 1974 and 1975). The fact is the United States is only interested in "democracy" to the extent that it opens the vast Chinese market to trade and investment. Consider how interested George Bush is in "democracy" and "ending corruption" in South Korea, for example, or the Philippines.

The truth is, Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng are people whom Bush knows and with whom he can work. Bush and the Chinese leaders understand each other; they have been able to establish a mutually beneficial relationship. Over the ten years of Deng's reforms, China has more often than not supported U.S. foreign policy, especially against the Soviet Union. The relaxation of military tensions in the Far East has made possible the Pacific Rim industrial phenomenon, one of the biggest "gold mines" in the capitalist world economy. Labor bureaucrats may call the "export of jobs" to these cheap-labor havens a sign of the U.S.'s decline; in fact, American banks are reaping handsome profits from the "Asian miracle."

Economic growth in the People's Republic of China is at present equal to that of Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, at about nine percent annually. The increased foreign trade is providing the Chinese people with consumer goods which were simply unavailable before the Deng Xiaoping reforms began. However, continued economic growth depends on the agreement of two groups: the working class and the students, precisely the two groups in society which are most dissatisfied with the current Chinese leadership.

The Chinese economy cannot continue to grow without continued modernization in technology and management. Those who will take on that responsibility are today university students. In order for them even to do their jobs in Chinese society—leaving aside the broader moral questions of bringing about social justice—an expansion of democracy is absolutely necessary. When party loyalty and bureaucratic maneuvering, rather than ability and dedication to getting the job done, is the way to career advancement modernization is stifled. When a young manager or technician cannot suggest necessary improvements for fear of offending an entrenched superior it is demoralizing for the individual involved and a hindrance to China's development. Of course, this problem is in no way unique to China or evidence that "communism is a failed system"; ask anyone who has worked

at AT&T or a similar multinational corporation in a technically responsible capacity.

Allowing freedom of thought and expression, of course, cannot be limited to the running of the economy. It is only a small step from expressing one's opinion on the running of an industrial enterprise to expressing one's opinion on the running of the country, especially when industry is state-owned. The modernization of China's industry, which is vitally necessary to the Chinese people, thus carries with it the threat of death to the bureaucracy's power.

One of the broader questions of social justice which must immediately arise as free expression is permitted is the effect of new industrial policies on the working class. There should be no mistake: China remains a workers' state, organizing production for human need rather than for profit, though in a distorted way. The Chinese workers live at a far higher standard of living than their brother and sister workers in South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or the Philippines. Nevertheless, they are dissatisfied with their share of China's economic growth, as well they should be. Inflation is making it difficult for them to buy the consumer goods being made available. Privatization of agriculture and free-market exchange of farm products has benefited a section of the peasantry and increased availability of meat and produce, but it has made food considerably more expensive in the cities.

One of Deng Xiaoping's greatest fears was being realized when a group of Chinese workers in Tiananmen Square raised the idea of forming an independent trade union along the lines of Poland's Solidarity. Such a development, which would be an inevitable result of increased democratization in China, would scare off the foreign investment which Deng hopes will increase. North American, Western European, and Japanese bankers will not invest their money in an unstable economy. They like class peace. An open-shop dictatorship like Singapore is a far better place to make profits than a powder-keg like South Korea.

Reform or Revolution?

Inevitably the current groundswell has been compared to the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, which was directed against the same segment of the bureaucracy which is in power today. That mobilization, however, was organized by one wing of the Chinese bureaucracy, headed by Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, and the "Gang of Four" against the other, which included Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. Mao played on the young people's discontent with the bureaucracy, but he used them simply as factional pawns against his opponents, not to further any improvements in the Chinese state or society.

It is widely recognized that the democracy movement of today is qualitatively different than the Red Guards of over twenty years ago. This movement originated outside the Communist Party and state. There is no personality cult around any individual leader. As is perhaps natural, the students are expressing support and solidarity with those officials who have run afoul of Deng and Li, such as Zhao Ziyang and the late Hu Yaobang. They are not the students' puppets, however. They have argued that compromise, rather

than repression, is a better way to deal with discontent within Chinese society, and around that issue the Chinese bureaucracy has become divided. There is no section of the bureaucracy, however, which wishes to put itself out of power.

As yet there appears to be no section of the student movement which is raising the call for putting the bureaucracy out of power either. As is, again, probably natural, especially considering that core of the leadership which comes from the People's University Party History Department, the students in general identify the Communist Party with the Chinese revolution of 1949, one of the greatest victories for the workers and oppressed in world history. The objective which has been expressed is *reform* of the CP. No one has as yet suggested the formation of an opposition political party, let alone the overthrow of the bureaucracy-dominated CP and government.

Their experiences will prove to them that their goal is out of reach. In the 1960s young Americans who took seriously President John F. Kennedy's rhetoric attempted to reform American capitalism, and by 1968 they even forced President Lyndon Johnson not to seek reelection. The reality they ultimately encountered was police clubs in Chicago and National Guard bullets in Kent, Ohio. Remarkably, the Chinese authorities have so far acted with considerably more restraint, which is an important victory for the protest movement. However, the students will not win their demands this time around. It appears that Li's faction has defeated Zhao's compromise faction; more importantly, even if Zhao had prevailed, he would in the long run have been forced into a more hard-line position as the bureaucracy proved unable to fulfill the people's aspirations. Whether ultimately dispersed by force or simply by their own volition, the students will eventually have to return to their homes and campuses to rest, regroup, and assess what they won, what they didn't win, and why.

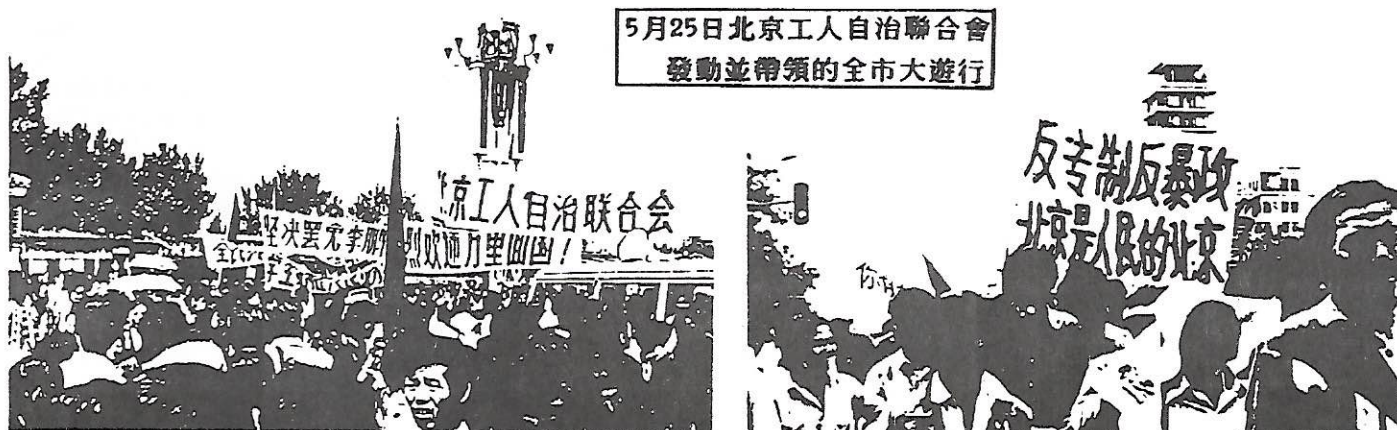
What must come out of that necessary period of discussion and evaluation is the coming together of young militants who recognize that the Chinese Communist Party and state are beyond repair and that an alternative must be presented to the Chinese people. A political agenda which brings the workers, peasants, intellectuals, and students to the realization that they have the right not only to speak and be listened to, but to rule China, will make the difference between a groundswell which shakes the foundation of bureaucratic rule and a groundswell which topples the structure. Even a

small group which organizes itself to put forward such an agenda can have a great impact, especially in a period of radicalization such as is occurring at present.

For revolutionists in the United States and other countries this should not be a subject for parlor discussion. Revolutionary socialists organize themselves internationally not only to express comradely solidarity but to provide concrete help to groups of militants who need it. Deng Xiaoping's reforms over the past ten years have given Chinese young people the opportunity to travel abroad and to get news and information from other countries. Socialists have the responsibility to meet and discuss with those who are actively making political change in China, to do what we can to aid their struggle, and to exchange ideas and experiences. The works of Leon Trotsky, who wrote extensively on China as well as on the problems of a bureaucratically degenerated workers' state, would be of invaluable benefit to the young militants in Tiananmen Square. Getting Trotsky's books into their language and into their hands can be done and must be done. Of course, the new experiences in struggle which these young fighters can convey will only enrich our understanding of politics, strategy, and tactics.

The one course which can fulfill the promise of the 1949 revolution is the overthrow of that party which, because of special circumstances in the post-World War II period, led that revolution. A *political* revolution, which turns power over to the elected bodies of the workers, students, and peasants but nevertheless retains the socialist economic foundations on which Chinese society has been built for forty years, can combine economic modernization and social justice. The impact that a political revolution—in a country which contains twenty percent of the world's population—would have, tests the imagination. Workers who have identified "communism" with Stalinist tyranny could no longer be convinced to support Grenada-style counterrevolutionary interventions. "Rambo" rhetoric would be shown to be completely hollow. Other workers, who have identified their own interests with those of the Soviet or Chinese leaderships, are even now becoming convinced that the parties which they have followed in the past hold no promise for the future. Most importantly, workers in the imperialist centers, in other bureaucratically dominated workers' states, and in countries dominated by neocolonialism would realize that if the Chinese people can take power for themselves, so can they.

June 1, 1989



uprising in 1956 or the Czechoslovak "Prague Spring" in 1968?

Future generations, who will look at history in its broad sweep rather than its minute detail, will regard them as *reactionaries* and *counterrevolutionaries*, whose similarities with George Bush, Margaret Thatcher, and other imperialist leaders—in terms of their contempt for basic human rights and disregard for the needs of the people in whose name they claim to be ruling—represent their principal characteristics. History will judge harshly all those who hold back human progress, regardless of whether they represent a ruling bourgeoisie, or a privileged bureaucracy which has usurped power from a proletarian revolution.

There can be no quibbling about theoretical fine points: the Chinese workers, peasants, and student youth have the right and obligation to remove the Communist Party from power by any means necessary and replace it with a party and government of their own creation, which represents their own interests and aspirations. The fact that they do not have a ruling capitalist class which they will also have to confront and expropriate means that their struggle can be accomplished simply through a *political*, rather than a *social*, revolution. But it should now be obvious to every thinking proletarian fighter in China and beyond that a genuine revolution—that is, a mass, armed insurrection—will indeed be required if they are to accomplish their goals.

The overwhelming majority of the students who protested in Tiananmen believed in reform of the Chinese CP and government. It is certain that many, and perhaps most, have already changed their minds—just as many young Americans, myself included, changed our minds about reforming the American political system in the summer of 1968. They have learned a harsh lesson, and in the future they will never again underestimate the measures which the bureaucracy will take to defend its power. The ruling elite in China will not be persuaded by logic, or by moral arguments. It must be removed from power by force.

What may be a consolation to the families of the hundreds who have died is that Deng Xiaoping and his gang may very well have hastened the day when the Chinese people settle accounts in such a political revolution. The Tiananmen massacre has enraged the Chinese masses, whatever the immediate affect may be in terms of intimidation. The democracy movement may be driven underground for a period as the regime moves to round up all those suspected of leading the demonstrations, but it will be back, and it will be that much stronger for having gone through this experience.

It is inevitable that young people who are confronting authority for the first time will make mistakes, especially when a more experienced leadership is not available. During the last week of May the demonstrators had decided to abandon their protest on May 30; it was perhaps a tactical mistake to reverse that decision. One can also question the building of a statue resembling the American Statue of Liberty. Did that promote, or cut across, support for the democracy movement among rank-and-file soldiers? But it is only by making mistakes and learning from them that this movement, or any other, can begin the absolutely essential

task of building their own, genuine revolutionary Marxist party. The most astute and dedicated of the young rebels will now begin to work toward such a formation. And it is the responsibility of revolutionaries throughout the world to give them whatever help we can. That is a special responsibility for the Fourth International.

What is needed now is an international campaign, not only to protest the Beijing massacre, but to demand an end to the wave of arrests throughout China and freedom for those political prisoners who are already incarcerated. Workers and progressive activists throughout the world should demand a general amnesty for all those who have worked to bring about democracy in China, including dissident leader Fang Lizhi, who has taken refuge in the U.S. Embassy. Such a campaign has actually been in progress since January of this year (see "The Signature Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners in China," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 64). It is a good beginning; it now needs to be intensified and broadened throughout the world. Our demand for an end to violence and repression against those who question the bureaucracy's authority must be militant and uncompromising. There can be no equivocation on this issue.

Carrying out a political revolution in the second most powerful workers' state and the world's most populous country is an undertaking far beyond the capabilities of even the most heroic university students. To accomplish it will require the mobilization of the workers, peasants, and rank-and-file soldiers in their great majority. There is no doubt that the regime cracked down precisely because that mobilization had already started, especially among Beijing's industrial workers, who had begun the formation of an independent trade union (see "Call to Form a Coalition of Self-Governing Workers' Organizations in the Capital" on page 7). In spite of the great defeat suffered on June 3, that mobilization is likely to continue. Yes, the democracy movement lost the battle of Tiananmen, but the war is not yet decided, and the gains in self-confidence and self-organization of millions of Chinese students, peasants, workers, and soldiers which have already been won before the murderous repression cannot be so easily undone.

The young rebels will necessarily take some time to regroup themselves and rethink their strategy and tactics in view of the enormity of the task before them. Most importantly, a political alternative to the bureaucracy must be organized. It is not enough to remove the bureaucratized party from power—a political formation which democratically represents the workers, peasants, and students must be assembled which can *receive* the power from the victorious people. The antibureaucratic fighters will now be better able to see the size and seriousness of the struggle ahead of them. But they are unlikely to be discouraged on that account. Mao himself said, "Even a small spark can light a prairie fire." The original student protests in China provided that spark, and the millions marching in the streets of Beijing and other cities in the past weeks represented the fire. The bureaucracy has dampened the flames for a time, but the fire still smolders beneath the surface and is likely to erupt again at any time. ●

— T.B.

June 12, 1989

The following is the text of a leaflet distributed in Beijing on May 20, 1989. One hundred thousand copies of this leaflet were distributed in Hong Kong on May 31 by October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. Translation is by the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

Call to Form a Coalition of Self-Governing Workers' Organizations in the Capital

Since the middle of April the majority of Chinese workers have demonstrated their strong desire to participate in the national democratic movement led by students. At the same time they recognized that we have yet to form an authentic organization to represent the working class.

Because of this we consider it necessary to build a self-governing organization through which workers can express their needs. Therefore, we propose to form a workers' self-governing coalition in Beijing, based on the following precepts:

1) The organization should be a voluntary formation of workers, and should guarantee free and open participation in the democratic decision-making process. This means that it will be completely self-governing, free from control by others. It will coexist with other organizations and will participate in joint actions.

2) The basic purpose of this organization must be to advance the economic and political needs of the working class, as formulated and agreed upon by the majority of workers. It is not merely a welfare organization.

3) One of the functions of this organization will be to oversee the activities of the Chinese Communist Party.

4) This organization seeks guarantees that the worker will be the real master of industry, that industrial workers will elect their representatives and control all managers and supervisors. In the nationalized sector, under collective ownership, the above applies. In the private enterprises, independent organizations of workers (unions) will negotiate with the employers for the protection of workers' rights.

5) The self-organization of workers is essential to

establish and protect the legal rights of all workers, under the constitution and the laws.

Workers Speak

- The working class is the most advanced class.
- Workers must be in the leadership of the movement for democracy.
- The People's Republic of China must be led by the working class of China.
- Workers are essential to production—no workers, no production. We understand the importance of technology. Students are essential to technological advancement. Therefore, we must not allow students to stand alone in the fight for democracy. We must defend and protect them.
- Our strength is in our numbers and our solidarity!
- Our success is guaranteed by our firm belief that in the democratic movement we have only our chains to lose and a world to gain!

Rallying All Workers

This afternoon Beijing Workers' Self-Governing Committee convenes an emergency conference to take up our tasks in the present crisis.

We must elect leadership groups: a secretariat, propaganda department, liaison committee, executive committee, reserve leadership, etc.

This self-governing committee is the spontaneous response to the present situation. Its aim is to function legally and democratically in order to lead the new democratic and patriotic movement.

It welcomes the participation of all work units of factories and mines.

Emergency Conference of 10,000 decides:

1—The task of workers' defense groups is to work closely together with students to protect the lives and safety of the students.

2—To maintain social order in Beijing, we must provide material needs such as food, transportation, shelter.

For a Thorough Antibureaucratic Revolution

These letters, written by Chinese Trotskyists, were received here from Hong Kong. Translation is by the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.

Letter to All Citizens of China

by the Chinese Revolutionary Communist Party

May 21, 1989

Dear Citizens:

Chinese Communist bureaucrats are suppressing the great mass with military force. The masses, particularly the students, workers, and citizens in Beijing, are now in a courageous struggle. A political revolution against the bureaucracy has begun! We strongly condemn the Chinese Communist brutality, and firmly support the fight of the people against the bureaucratic strata of the Chinese Communist Party.

For a long time the people have been dissatisfied with bureaucratic tyranny and corruption. Lately, the savage and unreasonable demagogy and actions of the bureaucracy have aroused the indignation of all citizens. They no longer trust the CCP leadership. The more isolated it becomes, however, the more the CCP leadership wants to exercise control by any means. They have become the enemies of the people by announcing the military suppression. The people, therefore, have no alternative but to mobilize themselves to overthrow this bureaucratic monopoly.

The students have formed a self-governing coalition from more than a hundred universities nationally. The movement led by the students has rapidly developed into a national movement for democracy. Intellectuals, teachers, and journalists were the first to respond; the working class has also begun to mobilize and strike. On May 20, a committee to form a coalition of workers' self-governing organizations called on the workers to resist the suppression. It suggested three actions:

- 1—A general strike on May 21, with the exception of electricity, water, gas, letters, and telegrams.
- 2—All the armies should leave Beijing.
- 3—Workers should form defense committees to protect the people's movement and safety in the city.

The working class has mobilized. They have pushed forward the democratic process in China. We call on the workers in the whole country to organize just as the workers in Beijing have done to form a national coalition of workers' self-governing committees for a general national strike.

We call on the people of all classes to form a self-governing organization against the bureaucratic suppression and to seize political power for the advancement of socialism in China.

Letter to the Members of the Chinese Communist Party

by the Chinese Revolutionary Communist Party

May 21, 1989

Dear CCP Members:

In its 40 years of governing the new China, the Chinese Communist Party has become a bureaucratic dictatorship over the people. The latest events have completely exposed this monopoly of power which does not hesitate to use brutal force to suppress the defenseless students and citizens, thus becoming their enemy.

We call on all CCP members who are real fighters for communism to resign from the CCP, to join in the people's struggle, to assist in the organization of the people, and in this way to build a new political party which will lead China toward the advancement of socialism.

Political Revolution in China?

An Open Letter to Members of the SWP

June 10, 1989

Dear Comrades,

I was glad to see, in the June 16 issue of the *Militant*, a clear line of support to the democracy movement in China, and a statement that “the slaughter by government troops of many hundreds of students and other people in Beijing has aroused the justified outrage of working people all over the world.” Until then the best that your newspaper had been able to do (besides news stories) was to squeeze out a few lines in an editorial in the June 2 issue, stating that the student protests were “progressive” and “deserved support.”

That impressed me as a bit understated at the time, given the political earthquake that was shaking China. Perhaps the latest statement is still a little mild – it’s hard for me to sense within it the same feeling of outrage that your editorial writer identifies as coming from working people around the world – but at least the paper has come down squarely on the right side.

Still, I sense that something is missing. If the Chinese masses are going to win their basic democratic rights, how is this to be done? Will they be granted by the Communist Party bureaucracy as a result of mounting protests? Not at all. Our

movement has a long-standing position calling for a political revolution to kick out the bureaucrats and establish a government which will be genuinely representative of the Chinese masses. That is the only possible solution to the crisis.

It seems clear to me that after what happened June 3, many in China will probably be drawing similar conclusions. Isn’t it appropriate – in fact, isn’t it absolutely incumbent – for a revolutionary newspaper in the U.S.A. to help explain this to its readers? Why has there been no mention in the pages of the *Militant* of the need for the Chinese workers, peasants, and students to overthrow the bureaucracy and establish their own government?

I would personally be interested in knowing what your reactions are to this problem. But more important, I think, it would be appropriate for you to let the editors of the *Militant* and the leadership of your party know if you think the political revolution is on the agenda in China, and that Marxists in the United States should say something about this fundamental question.

Steve Bloom

Solidarity with the Chinese Students

The following brief talk was made by Jerry Gordon, a well-known trade union activist, at a rally in Public Square, Cleveland, Ohio, June 10, 1989.

My name is Jerry Gordon and I’m with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. I’m here to express support and solidarity to our Chinese brothers and sisters.

When workers struggle for higher wages and better conditions, they are often violently suppressed by the bosses and the bosses’ government. So when the students were attacked at Tiananmen Square for wanting basic democratic rights, workers instinctively were on their side.

Some people who claim to support the pro-democracy movement in China are acting out of pure hypocrisy. I’m talking about the Bush

administration, which claims to favor freedom in China, but supports the brutal, racist apartheid regime in South Africa, the dictatorship in Chile, and reactionary and repressive governments around the world.

Some people say that when workers come to power in a country and take the land, mines, mills, factories, and banks out of the hands of the millionaires and billionaires, and make it the property of society as a whole, that freedom vanishes. They point to China as proof.

But China does not have a workers’ government. A workers’ government does not massacre students!

The best ally that the students have is the workers. Students and workers and other oppressed groups, by joining together, can create a new society where people have economic security and a decent standard of living, and where they also have democratic rights.

For unity of students and workers!

Support the struggle of the Chinese people for democratic rights!!

Mexican Hunger Strike Gets Results

by Bill Onasch

A major human rights victory has been won by the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Revolutionary Workers Party—Mexican section of the Fourth International). After a month-long hunger strike by most of the PRT political committee, the Mexican government has agreed to release political prisoners, including PRT members, not covered under a previous amnesty. The government also agreed to establish a new commission, including PRT members, to investigate the disappearance of José Ramon Garcia Gomez, a PRT member missing since last December. (See *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 61.) Previous “investigations” by the Mexican government have really been investigations of, and attempts to intimidate, the PRT.

The hunger strike, conducted at the National Cathedral in central Mexico City, won wide support and publicity. Thousands visited the strikers and signed petitions and millions of pesos were collected for the defense fund. The PRT leaders were visited by former presidential candidate

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, probably the most popular political figure in Mexico, who expressed his solidarity.

Amnesty International called for urgent action around the Garcia Gomez case in January and there have been many mass protests organized in Mexico and around the world. On May 17, a delegation of Socialist Action, Solidarity, and Fourth Internationalist Tendency members met with a representative of the Mexican consul-general in New York to express their solidarity with the struggle to extend the amnesty and release Garcia Gomez.

The Mexican comrades continue to urge that messages demanding the release of Garcia Gomez be sent to:

Carlos Salinas de Gortari
Presidente Constitucional, Estados Unidos Mexicanos
Palacio Nacional
Mexico D.F., Mexico

As always in such cases, the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* would like copies of protest messages and any other news of efforts in this important case. ●

Free the Upington 26!

by Bill Onasch

Fourteen Black South African political prisoners have been sentenced to hang—and 12 more await sentencing—in a case resulting from an incident during the 1985 mass upsurge in South Africa. Here is an outline of the facts:

On November 13, 1985, 3,000 residents of the Black township of Paballelo, in the West Cape region, gathered at the local soccer field to discuss high rents and other complaints about their situation. There is evidence that the police suggested the meeting site—but only to set them up for attack. The meeting was in fact brutally broken up by the cops, using tear gas.

A part of the crowd went to the house of a Black cop who had participated in the entrapment/attack. There is understandable rage among the South African majority against Blacks who work for the white oppressors. The cop opened fire on the protesters with a shotgun, wounding a small boy. He then tried to flee but was disarmed and beaten to death in a nearby field.

Of the 26 defendants, only one is alleged to have participated in the actual fatal beating of the cop—an action which in any case, considering the context of the day’s events, could well be considered self-defense, or at least extenuating circumstances, not murder. The others are determined guilty under the apartheid regime’s doctrine of “common purpose.” This is a version of collective guilt which holds

anyone present at a demonstration or picket line to be guilty of any crimes which may be committed as part of the action.

This case is very similar to the Sharpeville Six case which received international attention. Even the U.S. and British imperialist governments called for the sparing of the lives of the Sharpeville victims, and the government did commute their sentence to lengthy imprisonment.

The South African regime is vulnerable to world public opinion. In addition to the partial victory around the Sharpeville case, there is the recent example of the acquittal of Moses Mayekiso, South African auto workers leader, and his fellow defendants. Mayekiso is a free man today mainly because of the efforts of the labor movement around the world, especially the UAW in this country.

An important first step in saving the Upington victims of apartheid “justice” is to get messages from trade unionists, clergy, academics, and other prominent persons, protesting the hanging verdict and demanding their release, sent to the South African embassy. Telegrams and letters should be sent to:

South African Embassy
3051 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20008

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

The Latest Threats Against Panama

And the Latest Example of Arrogant Hypocrisy in Washington

by Tom Barrett

Were it not for the Panamanian people's suffering under General Manuel Antonio Noriega's dictatorship, it might be possible to feel a certain gratification as he makes a fool of the most powerful government on earth. Of course, such a feeling might be short-lived, for the United States has a history of not responding kindly to even the smallest threats to its power, especially within the hemisphere which it considers its own. Though there may be a good deal to laugh at in George Bush's finger-wagging at Noriega, the threat of war in Panama is one which working people and antiwar activists should take very seriously. The seriousness was demonstrated in real life when Bush ordered an additional 2,000 U.S. troops into Panama in the aftermath of the May 7 Panamanian presidential election. Widespread vote fraud in favor of Noriega's candidate, Carlos Duque, led to street violence, as Noriega's goon squad, called the "Dignity Battalion," physically attacked protest demonstrators — and opposition candidates — in the streets.

The United States has no business interfering in Panama, though, to be sure, it has done little else since that small republic first came into existence — in 1903 — through a war of independence from Colombia which, evidence suggests, was organized by the Theodore Roosevelt administration in the interests of gaining the right to build the canal. The crimes of which Noriega is undoubtedly guilty are, however, irrelevant: only the *Panamanian* people have a right to charge him, try him, convict him, and punish him, as other Latin American peoples have done with their military dictators.

In fact, George Bush's greatest fear may be that the Panamanian people will do just that with Noriega, as the Cuban people did with Batista and the Nicaraguan people did with Somoza. The last thing the U.S. government cares about in Panama is democracy. Bipartisan foreign policy in the region shows that very clearly, and George Bush has played an active part in it since the Ford administration. The truth is that the U.S. government created Noriega as Dr. Frankenstein created his monster. Now, just as in Mary Shelley's classic novel, the monster has turned on its creator.

Just Who Is General Noriega?

In his book *Veil: the Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-87*, which was published nearly a year before Noriega's name became a household word, *Washington Post* reporter Robert Woodward wrote the following, reporting a meeting between CIA Latin American Division chief Duane R. Clarridge and Vermont senator Patrick Leahy, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee:

The strongman leader of Panama, General Manuel Antonio Noriega, the former head of Panamanian military intelligence, has for some time been a key provider and facilitator for the CIA, Clarridge explained reluctantly. But Noriega plays both sides and has cozy relations with the Cubans — an advantage and disadvantage to the CIA because sometimes Noriega provides good Cuban intelligence. Of course, there's no telling what he's providing the Cubans. In all, this is a deadly game. Nonetheless, Noriega is going to allow the CIA to set up a contra training facility here [in Panama].

Noriega holds no official government post. He heads the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF), and as such he has the final say over who *does* hold government posts, and what they may and may not do. In Panama there is no sugar-coating over the fact that the state consists of "bodies of armed men."

In 1984 Noriega presided over an election which was just as fraudulent as this year's. Jill Smolowe, writing in the May 22, 1989, issue of *Time*, writes: "Tabulation sheets vanished, vote counting was suspiciously slow, and when citizens stormed through the streets in protest, soldiers fired on the crowds with rifles. Through it all, the U.S. remained silent." It has been charged in Panama that the candidate who "won" the 1984 election was not only favored by Noriega, he was hand-picked by George Shultz, at the time the U.S. secretary of state.

There is no question about it: the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency have known and done business with Noriega for many years. As long as he was an asset, it did not matter to them what crimes he committed — against the civil rights of his own people, against the U.S. narcotics laws, or against the sovereignty of Panama's neighboring countries. Noriega is not motivated by any concern for the well-being of the Panamanian people nor for the liberation of Latin America. He is interested in his own wealth and power, probably in that order. He deserves no political support from working people, either in his own country or any other. He *should* be overthrown; the question is, by whom?

Bush's False Embrace of Democracy

On May 13, Bush told reporters that, "the will of the [Panamanian] people should not be thwarted by this man and a handful of Doberman thugs. They ought to do everything they can to get Mr. Noriega out of there." It is hard to keep a straight face listening to him say such things. It's just possible that Bush's vice president, Danforth Quayle, is ignorant enough not to know about Noriega's past relationship

with the United States or about American acquiescence in his stealing of the 1984 election. But George Bush is not. That is becoming especially clear in the Iran-contra scandal testimony, now coming out in criminal court. The relationship between the United States and democracy in Panama and every other Latin American country has been an adversarial one since the time of Simón Bolívar.

The U.S. Marines have gone into many Latin American countries to make sure that the “will of the people” *should* be thwarted. They did it in Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s, eventually murdering the revolutionary leader Augusto César Sandino; they did it in the Dominican Republic in 1965; they did it in Grenada in 1983. The CIA engineered the bloody overthrow of the People’s Unity government in Chile in 1973 and the populist military government in Bolivia in 1974. George Bush supported every one of these interventions during his political career.

Pro-U.S. Latin American dictators have developed a science of stealing elections. One can cite no better example than the 1988 Mexican presidential election, which was won handily by the liberal candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Nevertheless, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari is now the president. He stole the election. Afterwards, thousands of Mexicans demonstrated in the streets, demanding that Cárdenas be sworn in as president, since he was the true winner. Included among the demonstrators were members of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), the Mexican section of the Fourth International, who had opposed both Cárdenas and Salinas with their own candidate, Rosario Ibarra de Piedra. Not included among the demonstrators’ supporters was then-U.S. vice president George Bush. In Mexico it is commonly said, “We have democracy—you can vote for whomever you like, but the PRI decides who wins.” Apparently, that is enough democracy for George Bush in Mexico. Why does he apply a different standard to Panama?

The Real Problem with Noriega

The causes for the eighteen-month U.S. campaign to force Noriega’s ouster can only be subjects for speculation, since there can be no question that Bush’s “good reason”—to promote “democracy”—is an outright lie. Two other possible causes have been cited: fear for the security of the Panama Canal and Noriega’s complicity with the traffic in cocaine.

As mentioned earlier, the United States practically created Panama in the interests of building the Panama Canal. Concern for the ability of U.S. naval and commercial ships to pass through the canal has dominated U.S.-Panamanian relations ever since. However, the canal’s importance has been waning for the past forty years. Since World War II the United States Navy has become a power in both the Atlantic and Pacific, with no overriding necessity to transfer ships from one ocean to the other, and the largest aircraft carriers are too big to pass through the locks anyway. Only about five percent of international sea traffic passes through the Panama Canal today. Modern supertankers are also too big to navigate the locks, and overland transport has

become cost competitive because of oil pipelines and containerization. To be sure, the canal remains useful, but the world economy would not collapse if it were closed. Of course, Noriega has in no way threatened it, either, so it can be concluded that concern for the canal does not motivate the U.S. in its war threats against Panama.

The so-called “War on Drugs” could—and should—be the subject of an entire article in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Up to now the most effective weapons against drugs have been TV spots with rap musicians saying, “Crack is wack,” and flags on public school flagpoles reading, “Just Say No”—and this is what the U.S. government calls a “War on Drugs”!

There is no reason to doubt that General Noriega is involved in the international cocaine trade. He has in the past shown no scruples on how he “earns” his money. There is also ample evidence that he is hardly the only Latin American dictator involved in the traffic and that his removal would not make a significant difference in the amount of cocaine which is imported into the United States. This kind of righteous indignation over the drug trade is a departure from past U.S. foreign policy: the anti-Soviet rebels in Afghanistan were financed in large measure by the opium trade; the Nicaraguan contra leadership is implicated in cocaine traffic just as Noriega is; the connection between the anti-Castro Cuban terrorists and organized crime is well documented over the past thirty years, and the list could be continued. The CIA and State Department have had no problem supplementing these outfits’ drug earnings with contributions from American taxpayers. So what’s the *real* problem with Noriega?

The most likely explanation has been offered by Noriega himself. It rings true. If it’s a lie, it’s a very good and believable one. It is a well-known fact in Washington that Ronald Reagan made a personal vow not to leave the White House with the Sandinistas still in power in Nicaragua. However, the tremendous anti-intervention sentiment in the population, mobilized in the streets even by a poorly organized leadership, forced him to use covert means to attempt to bring about a counterrevolution, as the Iran-contra trials are exposing. But the contras proved incapable of militarily overthrowing the Sandinistas, no matter how much money the administration threw at them.

In order to carry out a U.S. invasion in the face of growing domestic opposition, Reagan needed the cover of a Latin American alliance. The plan was to follow the successful precedent of the 1983 Grenada invasion—have the leaders of neighboring states “request” U.S. military intervention in response to “threats” from the “communists.” Noriega claims that he was approached by U.S. representatives and told to make exactly such a request, and that he refused. It was then that a Florida grand jury indicted him on drug trafficking charges and the Reagan administration began its campaign to oust him from power. The problem with Noriega is, therefore, that he is unwilling to be an instrument of North American foreign policy when it does not suit his purposes. Of all the explanations which have been offered, this is the most plausible. Of course, this explanation shows most clearly why Bush’s war threats must be opposed.

Opposing Bush Does Not Mean Supporting Noriega

It does not follow, simply because the leader of a dominated country stands up to an imperialist power on a given occasion, that he or she represents the interests of the country's people. The relationship between the imperialist metropolis and the dominated country is a complex one, involving domestic and international class interactions, colonial relationships often dating from preimperialist periods, and most importantly a world economy which transcends all national relationships. It is simply not true that the leader of a dominated country must be either a subservient puppet of the "mother country" or an anti-imperialist revolutionary. The world is just not divided into imperialist and anti-imperialist "camps."

Some in the U.S. left, however, are defending Noriega as just such an "anti-imperialist." That, in itself, is not very significant; what is worse is that the Cuban and Nicaraguan leaderships are doing the same. That ultimately is a prescription for isolation from the workers and farmers of the entire hemisphere and the consequent strengthening of Bush's attempt to roll back revolution in the Americas. Noriega's crimes are real; attempts by Castro and Ortega to deny them only make them appear complicit. It makes it easier for Bush to get money to counterrevolutionary forces like the contras; it makes it easier for Bush to reinforce U.S. garrisons stationed in Panama and other Latin American countries; it makes it easier for Bush to divide and disorient working people who instinctively oppose North American intervention in Latin American affairs.

We know, for example, that Bush is not serious about any "war on drugs"; however, the drug traffickers are commit-

ting a crime against the Black and Hispanic communities in the United States. The suffering caused by drugs in the United States is *real*, and Noriega is complicit in that. That is a fact, and it will not go away. If Bush demagogically attempts to use the drug issue to promote continued domination of Latin America the left must respond *effectively*. Blindly *defending* Noriega is the most ineffective response we could make.

More importantly, we know that Bush is not the least bit serious about promoting democracy in Central and South America. He is, in fact, serious about promoting right-wing dictatorship. We know that. The left, however, must be serious about promoting democracy—real democracy, turning power over to the workers and peasants. Noriega and military dictators like him are the enemies of democracy, and they must be removed from power. An organization of the left which politically defends Noriega is acting against revolution in Panama.

Until a year-and-a-half ago, the Reagan-Bush administration got along quite well with Noriega, and it would be hard to believe that they were unaware of his suppression of democracy and his involvement in the drug trade. Faced with the alternative between a government of the workers and peasants and Noriega's dictatorship, there is no question that even today Bush would stand with Noriega. The two questions which workers and anti-intervention activists must be completely clear on are these: first, only the Panamanian people have the right to settle accounts with Noriega; second, no one should stand in the way of such a settling of accounts. ●

May 22, 1989

C.L.R. James Dies in London

C.L.R. James, a supporter of Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the 1930s, died in his London home on May 31. He was 88 years old. James was author of the well-known book on the Haitian revolt against French rule in the 18th century, *Black Jacobins*, and many other works dealing with both political and other topics.

The next issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will carry an account of James's life, plus, as our "Arsenal of Marxism" feature, an article he wrote for the December 1939 *New Internationalist*, signed with the name J.R. Johnson, on the question of Black liberation.

Brazilian Workers Party Presidential Candidate Speaks in New York

by Roger Kraft

Speaking before a largely student and middle class audience on May 2 at the Interchurch Center on Riverside Drive in New York, Luis Inácio da Silva, the Workers Party (PT) candidate for president of Brazil (popularly known as Lula), outlined some aspects of his party's electoral program and expressed his attitude on some acute economic and social problems in his country. The meeting was organized by the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA).

His opening remarks reviewed the current electoral scene in Brazil and listed the major political parties representing right wing vs. "progressive" forces. He predicted that the final round of the electoral contest in November will be waged between one of several right-wing politicians and an authentic representative of the working class and its allies. Included among the "left parties" were the Greens (environmentalists), the Communist Party of Brazil, and the Socialist Party. He thinks these parties will endorse the front runner among them in the final round of the election. For his part, he explained, he believes that the emphasis in the campaign must be on party organization and program, not on the individual talents of candidates.

Anticipating the question period, he explained that the two questions he is most commonly asked are: What are his qualifications? And can he be elected without support from the military? In answering the first he asserted that his leadership in the resurgent unions of the early 1980s, his struggle against the military dictatorship in those years, and his 1986 election to parliament testify to his political qualifications. He disposed of the second problem by explaining that the Workers Party did not consult the army in selecting its candidates, and that the business of the army is to guard the national borders, not the internal affairs of the country. He did not discuss any plans he might have to impose civil control over the reactionary officer corps after a PT victory at the polls. Today, under the presidency of José Sarney who took office in 1985 after 21 years of military rule, the Brazilian armed forces continue to enjoy prerogatives and influence over important governmental decisions.

In response to questions from the audience Lula discussed the extensive violence in the Brazilian countryside which is perpetrated by heavily armed thugs hired by landowners to intimidate rural communities. Amnesty International reported 298 killings in 1987, and the number of these atrocities is rising. Lula explained that the police and army search peasant huts for arms and take away farm tools and hunting rifles; but they are unable to find the large stores of heavy weapons that the landowners are keeping in their arsenals. He sees land reform as a key to the solution of problems such as poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition.

Lula said that his administration will suspend payment of Brazil's foreign debt, and then begin negotiations with the creditors. He hopes that all the countries of Latin America, which share this problem, can agree upon joint negotiations with the creditor nations. It is futile to negotiate with the banks, he says, but negotiations should be conducted between governments. Capital investment should be encouraged, subject to regulation by the host country as in Cuba and China.

Along with other members of his delegation, who also responded to questions, Lula affirmed the ideological identification of the half-million member PT with the central labor federation representing ten million workers. The two organizations are united in the conviction that only the working class can solve the problems of society. Lula added that it is economically necessary to defend and regulate private investment.

When asked about their attitude toward Nicaragua and Cuba the delegation responded that they are sympathetic and support the right of all people to determine their own form of government and regulate their economies. Lula said the PT shares the aspirations of the international working class to emancipate itself from exploitation and oppression.

In an interview taken in São Paulo prior to his visit, and published in the *New York Times* on Sunday, April 30, Lula was reported to have changed his thinking on the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism — as a result of a recent trip to Spain and Italy. "Backing away from a previous vow to nationalize Brazilian banks, he said he would impose controls on them." This revised position was repeated at the New York meeting. Some radical students and others familiar with the rise of the labor movement in Brazil were obviously hoping that Lula would explain and defend the official position that "the Workers Party does not struggle to reform capitalism, but instead is a party committed to the construction of socialism." Implicit in this, of course, is the idea that the capitalist government and all its present institutions of oppression — including the military — must be replaced by a workers' government and new governmental institutions. This constitutes a social revolution.

Still to be determined is how that social revolution will occur in Brazil. At the present stage of political development in the country the contending class forces are engaged in struggle in the parliamentary arena, but not only there. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on May 5 that the political struggle had already shifted from the electoral contest to street battles: "With strikes escalating despite tough new legislation, businessmen lambasting the government, and political

violence emerging, the country's run-up to its November presidential elections—the first in 29 years—appears more treacherous than ever.” The article went on to reveal (partly by implication) that right-wing paramilitary groups are on the prowl—protected by the police—assassinating working class political activists, sabotaging production, and bombing public monuments. This signifies that the ruling class has lost confidence in its ability to govern through parliamentary channels.

Problems of this magnitude can be solved only by the working class. But how the working class can act to solve them is still a question that has to be answered. The PT is presently going through an intensive discussion and development in attempting to come to grips with the social crisis. It could become the necessary school in which a broad political leadership of the working class will be educated. Millions of organized workers and their allies must come to understand that they have the right to make the essential social decisions which affect them, and that in order to implement such decisions they will need to create their own popular committees of action. Such a dynamic is a realistic possibility given the social process now unfolding in Brazil. Ultimately, the decisive battles will be fought for control of the factories and the land, and to conserve the natural resources of the country and improve the quality of life—whether or not the PT succeeds in winning the presidency. ●

Lula for president!

PRESIDENTIAL elections will be held in Brazil next November. It will be a tricky test for the ruling class in a situation where successive Cruzado economic plans for stabilizing the currency have failed, inflation is worse than ever, the agrarian question remains explosive, and the debt burden continues to weigh heavily on the exploited.

DANIEL BENSARD

AS IN OTHER countries coming out of dictatorship, the democratic opening, far from being consolidated, remains under threat—the army and the repressive forces have made an orderly retreat to barracks—without being challenged as vigorously as in Argentina or Uruguay.

However, the differences are just as well-known. In terms of dependent countries in Latin America, Brazil is the most advanced in terms of indigenous industrial development. The bourgeoisie there has much greater social solidarity than in the Andean countries and more political agility than in Mexico. As a result of the powerful expansion of the 1970s, an independent social and workers' movement emerged and consolidated itself during the “democratic” transition, finding its expression in the formation of the United Workers Confederation (CUT) and the Workers Party(PT).

Can the PT follow up its municipal victories?

During their terms of office at the head of the municipalities and in local government, the two big majority bourgeois parties and their candidates saw their support decline rapidly. In the November 1988 municipal elections, the PT met with spectacular success, reaching scores of more than 30% in some large cities and winning some city halls such as São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Vitoria, and working-class suburbs in São Paulo (see IVs 157, 158 & 161).

Buoyed up by this momentum, the PT has decided to present Luis Inacio da Silva, known as “Lula”, as their candidate for the



next presidential elections. Opinion polls today give him scores of between 20% and 30%, which would put him in second place, if not in first place in the first round of a two-round system of voting (similar to the French one).

The right has no more than six months to find a credible national candidate. For the time being, Lionel Brizola—ex-governor of Rio and leader of the Democratic Labour Party (PDT), the heir of traditional Brazilian populism, who is affiliated to the social-democratic Second International—seems to be the sole charismatic candidate challenging Lula.

Brizola's handicaps and contradictions

Brizola's handicaps, however, are not minor ones. On one hand, while he has significant local bases in Rio and in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, he cannot rely nationally on a well-oiled and well-implanted apparatus. And in a country the size of Brazil, these things are decisive. On the other hand, Brizola, who was previously exiled by the dictatorship, has some formidable right-wing enemies. So he will have big problems assembling all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle around his candidacy in the second round of the elections.

Brizola claims that he will withdraw in favour of Lula if it is a race between the latter and the right wing in the second round. But, at the end of the day, in order to present himself as a credible candidate against Lula and to offer the necessary guarantees to the right, he will be obliged to take a harder line against the Workers Party and, via the PT, against workers' demands and the social movements. He has already begun to do this in his pre-election campaign, at the risk of paying an electoral price for it.

Having been entrusted with new responsibilities, the Workers Party is also entering an exciting—but difficult—stage of its history. It must simultaneously lead explosive social movements (agrarian struggles and the recent general strike [see following

article], for example), demonstrate a capacity for efficiently running huge municipalities like São Paulo, and wage a determined campaign in the presidential elections with a minimal, but not zero, chance of winning.

The PT can only do all this coherently on the basis of a democratic and anti-imperialist programme that breaks with the bourgeoisie — non-payment of the debt, which is strangling social budgets; a radical agrarian reform; index-linked wages; urban reform and so on. Beyond this, its capacity to resist foreseeable blackmail, threats and sabotage will depend above all on the strength of its links with the social movements and the prestige it acquires in the

eyes of the other Latin American peoples.

Outside of the question of programme, another problem will be whether or not to desist in the second round in the event of a run-off between Brizola and the right (the reappearance of an old hopeful like Janio Quadros is not excluded). In such a situation, there will be a strong temptation to vote for the "lesser evil", including in the PT's ranks — although for the time being the aggressiveness of Brizola's campaign is arousing PT "party patriotism".

All these questions will be discussed and probably decided at a special PT congress planned for June, to give a real send-off to the presidential campaign. ★

General strike by 35 million workers

IT WAS one of the biggest general strikes in Brazil's history. On March 14 and 15, 35 million workers responded to the strike call put out by the two big union federations, the CUT and the CGT. The central demand of the strikers was for a 40% minimum wage rise to compensate for losses in buying power. In the last round of negotiations, José Sarney's government offered a non-backdated increase of 14.6%, while the bosses did not want to go higher than a 7.1% offer.

The latest train of governmental measures to try to stem inflation — called the Summer plan (plano Verão), and popularly christened by workers the "Thieves' plan" (plano Ladrão) — had been barely announced when it began to founder. Sarney's prediction of a 3% inflation rate in March doubled in reality to over 6%. But the general strike, with the participation of around 70% of the country's 50 million workers to defend their living standards, was the biggest single blow to the government's project.

ISAAC AKCELRUD

THE GENERAL STRIKE was a battle on a variety of fronts that was begun even before the two days of work stoppage on March 14 and 15, and which culminated in paralysing the country. And it went on even after the mobilization had apparently stopped. Each of these three phases had its own characteristics. In the beginning, the government tried to prevent the strike. Afterwards, it had to cover up its demoralization and isolation. Finally, it tried to minimize the scope of the workers' immediate economic gains and to limit their political impact.

The government attempted to prevent — or at least to reduce — the dimensions of the strike through a campaign of disinformation, police and military threats and demagoguery about non-existent future "discussions". The generals demanded that President Sarney himself make a televised broadcast to declare his opposition to the general strike. But his self-preservation instinct kept him from sticking his neck out, so he sent his new justice minister, Oscar Dias Correa, instead. The latter, a survivor of a reactionary current, prepared a fire-and-brimstone speech. Sarney then

Brazil paralyzed by general strike

IN THE Northern region of Brazil, the strike paralyzed 75% of the metallurgy and electrical industries, and 85% of civil servants and 90% of transport workers took part. In the North-East, 90% of metal, oil and bank workers joined the strike. Civil servants came out in force in the Centre-West region with 80% taking action, plus a partial paralysis in industry and services. In the South-East most transport and public services were brought to a standstill, with the finance and service sectors also hit. In industry, the most significant strikes took place in São Paulo (60%), and Rio de Janeiro (70%), involving 2.6 million workers.

Metalworkers stopped work in four states — São Paulo: in the suburbs; in Campinas and more than 15 towns; Rio de Janeiro: in the capital, in Volta Redonda (100%) and in two other cities; Minas Gerais: at Belo Horizonte, Contagem and Acesita; Espirito Santo: partial strike in the capital.

In this latter region, the strike was more or less successful among oil workers and electricians, in the chemical, plastics, glass and food industries, and among civil servants in the education, health and insurance sectors.

In the Southern region, those most involved in action were metalworkers (64%) in Porto Alegre, Joinville, Curitiba and Cascavel; and electricians (75%), especially at Electrosul. Telephone lines were almost totally cut off in Rio Grande do Sul.

Nationally, metalworkers came top of the strike chart with an average participation level of over 55% — a million workers! ★

opposed a whole paragraph of it, saying: "the cup is already running over, as it is". Correa's television appearance was delayed for half an hour. This was the first sign of dissension and political divergences inside the authorities' ranks.

Workers mobilized in every corner of Brazil

These manoeuvres were largely neutralized by the militant climate during the final run-up to the general strike. In a number of cities, many categories of workers brought forward the day of action, sometimes beginning unlimited strikes. Metalworkers at Belgo Mineira in Minas Gerais state, for example, occupied their factory for a number of days. In Campinas, São Paulo state, the strike leaders decided to extend the mobilization from 48 to 72 hours. In São Paulo itself, workers in many workplaces also anticipated the movement. In total, half of the metalworkers went on strike.

The figures estimated by the unions confirm the generalized character of the strike,

although its impact was uneven (see box). The strike's success has altered the relationship of forces and changed the political situation to the workers' advantage.

Quantitatively, the general strike affected all the states and territories in the country. It mobilized workers in the towns and countryside in every corner of Brazil. A number of localities that had no previous tradition of struggle and where strikes had never been seen before joined in the mobilization. From the Amazon to the industrialized southern central region — albeit unevenly — a total of 35 million strikers responded to the united strike call made by the United Workers' Confederation (CUT) and the General Workers' Confederation (CGT). Its scope both numerically and geographically — since it covered the whole country — is a clear indication of the merging of struggles at a national level.

A step forward for workers' unity

Qualitatively, the general strike represented a step forward in the building of unity in struggle. This time, unity was somewhat easier to achieve than usual. This was partly due to the weakness of the CGT, which was forced to tag along behind the CUT, and partly because the joint struggle against the austerity plan's wage freeze rattled the reformist and class collaborationist leaderships, who had previously been oriented towards the objective of a social pact. The militant slogans against the "Thieves' plan" — direct, simple and easy to understand, even by the least experienced and politicized workers — made the way forward from the economic struggle to the political level clear. The CUT and those trade unionists sensitive to the vital interests and aspirations of the workers were bolstered during this test of strength.

At the political level, the trade-union movement was able to make use of its broad capacities for initiatives and of the self-confidence built up by the workers' movement after the recent victories in the municipal elections. It took the initiative and began an offensive against the government and the bosses. The March 14-15 action marked a break from isolated strikes and the predominance of the service and civil servants' sectors. It was an audacious united mobilization led by the proletariat in the ABC working-class suburbs of São Paulo, the concentrations of metalworkers from Volta Redonda in the state of Rio de Janeiro and from Vale do Aço in Minas Gerais, shoulder to shoulder with the unions in the big urban centres.

The strike also had important repercussions in the countryside — for example thousands and thousands of agricultural workers from Pernambuco joined the workers' demonstration in Recife. There were many other examples of broad solidarity and sympathy from the population in the industrial regions of São Paulo. ★

The strike and the political crisis

THE GENERAL strike came at a time when the crisis of the ruling classes' political front was intensifying in the run-up to the presidential elections due to be held in November. The following article is from *Em Tempo*, monthly paper of the Socialist Democracy current inside the Workers Party.

DOUBTS were expressed even among the bourgeoisie, not only about the specific issue of the wage freeze. They went almost so far as to justify the general strike.

The most important example was that of the President of the São Paulo Stock Exchange, Eduardo Rocha Azevedo, a supporter of Ronaldo Caiado of the UDR. In substance he stated that many industrialists had made a lot of money out of the price readjustment that preceded the price freeze. They were therefore in a position to pay higher wages without raising prices. It seemed that he had drawn the conclusion that for the time being the capitalists should be cautious.



The group whose interests are most immediately at stake is the commercial bourgeoisie who are at loggerheads with the industrialists over the issue of prices and of the distribution of the surplus value between the two sectors. The president of the Chamber of Commerce, Abram Szajman accused the industrialists of being "backward and obscurantist" and of going after "easy money". The industrialists have promised to reply. Many beans get spilt in the course of these mutual accusations.

The final resort of those who want to condemn the general strike is to claim that it was a political strike. This is close to being a cry of despair. Nobody, in fact, made at any time any attempt to hide the political character and content of the strike. It is obvious that a protest by tens of millions against the economic policy of the government, a massive demonstration against the national authorities, and open denunciation of the way that people's wages are being stolen under the "Thieves' Plan" are all political acts.

This charge against the workers' movement rebounds on the government, since it is the regime's determination to hamstring the workers' movement politically. All this only serves to strengthen Lula's candidacy.

Another "argument" used by the officials and bosses is to claim that the success of the strike was due solely to the fact that transport was paralyzed at the behest of the municipal councils controlled by the PT.

Public transport paralyzed all over Brazil

But, if this is the case, why was there also a transport strike in municipalities such as Rio de Janeiro which are not led by the PT? Public transport was paralyzed by strikes throughout the whole country. Could it be that the idea of depriving these sectors of the right to strike is being contemplated? The press reported that Mrs. Dorotheia from the Ministry of Transport had talked about such a possibility. This comes from someone who wants to revive the defunct social pact!

Even in those parts of São Paulo which are served by the train or metro, which were not on strike, the workers in the big multinational firms went on strike. These firms' own transport services were not working because there were not enough passengers.

Secondly a PT local council is there to support strikes, not repress them. The capitalists are angry because they have found that they cannot buy the PT's elected representatives with offers of government funds. (See IV 161, April 17, 1989.) Olivia Dutra on a picket line, Erundina refusing to send the police to run the buses, Buaziz physically confronting police violence — these are all signs of the changes set in motion by the PT's recent victories. The PT uses its power to support the people. And if the state machine cannot be used

for that purpose then it will have to be replaced by something more adequate.

Another weapon used against the general strike was the role of Antonio Medeiros, the leader of the metalworkers' union in São Paulo. The slanders against the general strike of March 14/15 were in contrast with the praise lavished on the isolated and partial strikes led by Medeiros. He is regularly showered with praise by Mario Amato, the President of the Employers' Federation (FIESP), just as he was previously praised to the skies by the aspirant President Leonel Brizola.

Medeiros was a parasite on the strike

What did Medeiros, who refused to participate in the leadership of the strike as a representative of the CGT, do that was so useful and constructive? He offered the bourgeoisie an alternative. Instead of uniting the workers and concentrating their forces in the general strike, he kept them isolated at the factory level. The effect of this fragmentation is to dilute the strength of the workers and would inevitably lead to leaving them defenceless in the face of a new offensive by the employers. The crumbs gained one day will be lost the next.

Medeiros took advantage of the general strike to increase the number of local and limited agreements. Although he supported the action, he was in reality a parasite on the general strike. The results that he is so proud of are spurious. In reality he lowered the level of wage increase demanded from a minimum of 40% to a maximum of 29%. This was a good deal for the employers frightened by the general strike.

It is thus necessary to patiently explain to the metalworkers of São Paulo in the grip of Medeiros that they are isolated, weakened and vulnerable to the blows of the bosses. But if they were to unite with other workers, and first of all with their fellow metalworkers of the ABC suburbs under the banner of the CUT, then their strength would be multiplied.

In the second phase of the battle, the government ended up by contradicting itself, when it was compelled to recognize the real wage losses of the workers, which it had previously denied. The Employers' Federation for its part has decided to reconsider its previous refusal to pay a wage increase and has also had to recognize that the general strike was justified. This shows clearly who the winners were in this national confrontation.

The independent class-struggle workers' movement now has the responsibility to formulate and spread the lessons of this memorable episode in the class struggle. The bourgeoisie will also be drawing its own conclusions and will return to the fray with fury and hatred.

This discussion will have to take place

in the course of the struggle. We do not have the time to stop and think, and the workers cannot go on a spiritual retreat to meditate on the general strike.

The first lesson of the general strike is the example of mass mobilization around basic economic demands. In order to be a truly general strike, the movement had to draw in new layers of non-politicized workers without any previous experience of the struggle and give them a baptism of fire.

Being general, however, the strike was inevitably political, and this fact raised the working class to a higher level of understanding and action. The level of the class struggle was raised to higher thresholds by means of the most basic economic demands. That is the dialectic of the general strike.

The most responsible union leaderships and the most politically aware workers are involved in discussions based on the clear facts observed in the heat of the struggle. They wonder why, in spite of their aspirations and their dedication, the strike only received its decisive impulse during the last few days of its preparation.

It seems clear that there were signs of a lack of confidence in the strike and in an adequate response from the masses. The final surge was full of energy and vitality. But there was a pause before the big mobilization was launched. Why?

Two facts provide the most likely answer. One is the negative experience of the last attempt to organize a general strike in November 1987. The other is a structural reason, that is to say, the problems in building the CUT and the individual unions, which need to enlarge and improve their grassroots organization in order to measure up to the dimensions of the impending struggles. This also involves the development of a layer of competent medium level leaders.

Weakness of political leadership

A sense of responsibility and a determination to avoid mistakes, dictated a very cautious and moderate approach to preparations for the strike in many cases. Perhaps there was also a lack of political preparation.

But the situation now is very different and much better. It seems that the lack of a middle leadership was the crucial weakness, given that the leadership of a strike of these dimensions could not left to the 14 members of the national leadership.

When there are only a handful of people taking the responsibility for transmitting the overall orientation and instructions, adjusting them to local conditions and transmitting the living experiences of the masses back to the central leadership, these few are overworked. They try to be in several places at the same time and cannot make proper contacts with a whole

series of sectors in the country.

The broadening of the middle layer of union leaders would also ensure the renovation and rejuvenation of the union leaderships.

A criticism should also be made of the largely spontaneous nature of the popular support for the strike. There was not systematic work started early enough to build up the material support needed by the workers in their confrontation with the government. This is a sign that the PT is not sufficiently involved in the great struggle against the "plano Verão". At every level the leadership of the PT took the easy option of leaving things to the leadership of the CUT.

This default reflects a political overestimation of the trade union struggle, which also explains the absence of a serious attempt to educate politically the young workers who are coming to the fore in the workers' movement.

Good grounds for confidence in the future

Despite all this we have been through a stimulating and enriching experience. The response of the workers passed all expectations, just as the masses surprised the leaders in the recent municipal elections.

There are good grounds for confidence in the morale and level of understanding of the people and the workers. The general strike has consolidated this determined and confident frame of mind and rooted it in the political and trade union movements.

A great wave of strikes, sector by sector, spreading contagiously to the more isolated factories until whole categories of workers are involved, is a real possibility.

The wage demands of the working class are more and more clearly intersecting with the struggle for non-payment of the foreign debt. The capitalist government is trapped by the vicious circle of the debt. Whatever it does, the debt gets bigger and cannot be shaken off. The bourgeoisie is powerless to deal with the debt crisis. As a result it tries to squeeze the money to pay the interest and the dividends out of the working class.

The explosive nature of the situation has already been shown by the many important actions that have taken place since the end of the strike in a number of States. A number of militant sectors will be putting in their claims in April and May.

The eruption of a wave of strikes in the second half of April and the first half of May is practically inevitable. This is also when the price freeze on a number of products will end. Inflation may well take off again.

May Day 1989 promises to be intense and exciting, taking place against a background of powerful mass struggles. The lessons of the general strike need to be learned to prepare for what is already looming on the horizon. ★

Victory in Los Angeles Teachers' Strike

by Evelyn Sell

The success of the Los Angeles teachers' strike cannot be measured by simply adding up the dollars won, the improvements in working conditions, and the inauguration of precedent-setting school site councils. To fully appreciate what the teachers accomplished, it's important to look at how the union organized the battle with the school board, the steadfast militancy of the teachers, the outpouring of support from students and parents, and the district's failure to accomplish its goal of breaking the union.

Negotiators for the United Teachers-Los Angeles (UTLA) and the Los Angeles Unified School District began informal meetings on December 1, 1987—seven months before the contract expired (June 30, 1988). Formal bargaining began in mid-February, 1988. In all, over 17 months of preliminary talks and formal sessions took place before the actions by school superintendent Leonard Britton forced a strike on May 15, 1989—almost a year after the 1988-89 contract expired. The strike was the first since the 1970 strike which established UTLA as the bargaining agent.

Teacher Power Demonstrated

Confronted with this foot-dragging, UTLA called for a boycott of all after-school, unpaid activities beginning on September 13, 1988. This first phase of the boycott included faculty meetings, yard duty, athletic supervision, and parent conferencing. Remembering the tremendous success of a similar boycott in 1987, the district instructed principals to cancel all after-school meetings. During the next phase, teachers escalated their boycott by withholding lesson plans and class outlines. When the district persisted in its bad-faith negotiating, the boycott was extended to withholding other records and refusing to supervise recess and lunch. Over 80 percent of the teachers refused to turn in progress reports for secondary schools, and 90 percent handed in blank attendance registers at elementary schools. The district was forced to utilize administrators, aides, and other non-teaching personnel to oversee recess and lunch.

Superintendent Britton hit back by docking October paychecks on the basis that teachers involved in the boycott were not performing their duties. The teachers' strong collective answer took the form of buttons, T-shirts, and signs stating, "Make my day; dock my pay!"

Union Holds Firm

When the ten-week grades for secondary students were due in November, teachers refused to fill out the district's forms and gave students union-issued report cards. Many school chapters reported 90 to 95 percent teacher participation, and many parents said they preferred the UTLA report

card to the district's form. A UTLA advertisement in seven Los Angeles area newspapers resulted in hundreds of phone calls supporting the union's position on disputed contract issues.

UTLA started the new year with a bang by calling a January 11 rally at district headquarters. Over 6,000 chanting, sign-waving teachers marched through the city's Civic Center to the district offices. Picket signs stated: "Kids and Teachers First," "Superintendent's Driver: \$90,733—New Teacher: \$23,000—WHY?" and "You made my day, You docked my pay—But you're *not* going to break me!"

UTLA presented its case to the public through radio ads, media conferences, and bus posters demanding, "Chop from the top!"—a call to cut fat cat administrators' salaries and funding mismanagement by district bureaucrats.

Students Enter the Struggle

In the campaign to win public opinion, the district tried to create community hysteria by claiming there was not enough money to meet union wage demands and student needs. The district stirred up confusion and ill feeling by insisting that withholding grades would keep students from graduating and interfere with college entrance applications. The union effectively countered the district's scare tactics by publicizing the fact that universities unanimously agreed to accept applications and student admissions would not be harmed in any way by the labor dispute. More and more students voiced the sentiments of Monroe High senior Cecilia Galvez who told reporters, "It's the district's fault for not paying the teachers enough."

The January 27 *Los Angeles Times* finally acknowledged widespread support for the union in its front page headline, "Students Widen Protests, Take Teachers' Side." The article described a demonstration of over 1,000 students from two San Fernando Valley high schools, actions at senior and junior high schools in South Los Angeles, and a demonstration of over 200 students from several schools outside district headquarters. In all cases, the students supported teachers' demands.

The article noted, "Students also are becoming media-wise and are dabbling in the art of putting their own interpretation, or 'spin,' on the unfolding events. At Birmingham High in Van Nuys, where several hundred students walked out Thursday morning, about 15 students wore name badges that said, 'Ask Me.' Students said the badges were intended to alert the news media as to who could give the proper explanation for the demonstration. . . . At the district headquarters demonstration, one group of protesters was coached by pro-teacher students on how to respond to reporters' questions." Chuen-Yen-Lau, from Marshall

High, explained, "Our conflict is with the board, not the teachers." When school board president Roberta Weintraub met with students at district headquarters, they told her, "Teachers need a raise!"

By the ninth day of what was called "a widening student revolt," sit-in tactics were added to walkouts. January 27 protests involved about 4,300 students at a dozen high schools and three junior high schools. Newspaper photographs showed student protesters carrying signs reading, "We Support Teachers," and "Teachers Deserve Better." School board spokespeople who had insisted that parents and students were on their side finally began to admit there was widespread disbelief of the district's statements that there was not enough money to meet union demands. Each day brought fresh evidence of student support for teachers. The largest demonstration on January 30 took place at an East Los Angeles high school where about 1,000 students marched in front of the school most of the morning. Students told reporters they were trying to get results for teachers.

During the last two weeks of January, demonstrations involving over 10,000 students erupted on dozens of campuses across the school district. Los Angeles had not seen protests on this scale since the 1968 "blowouts" by Latino students complaining of poor quality education. In 1970 thousands of students picketed with teachers during the five-week strike to gain union recognition and contract demands. In 1989, a new generation of students thrust themselves into a struggle over school issues.

Teachers Cheated Out of Paychecks

Superintendent Britton responded to the mounting crisis in the schools by announcing he would withhold the entire paycheck of teachers who did not file midyear grades on district forms—a sharp escalation from his previous action of partially docking wages. Refusing to be intimidated, on February 3 about 85 percent of the teachers gave students their grades on union-prepared cards but withheld the marks from the district. Teachers gave special letters to parents explaining what they were doing and why. Students continued their protest against the district and continued their demonstrations supporting the teachers. At Hollywood High, for example, the signboard was used to proclaim, "STUDENTS VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION."

With more than 18,000 of UTLA's 22,000 members voting, 89.4 percent rejected the district's contract offer on March 7. The continued stalemate in contract negotiations prompted a strike authorization vote on April 19. Again, the teachers' determination was shown when 86.5 percent cast their ballots for a strike if no new contract was settled by May 29. In a move designed to force the union into a strike, Superintendent Britton ordered teachers to turn in final grades two weeks before the May 29 date (six weeks before the end of the traditional school year). Britton warned that May paychecks would be withheld from teachers refusing to turn grades into the district. That night, UTLA's board of directors unanimously approved an earlier strike date and urged members to immediately cease all duties except for teaching.

The district prepared for the upcoming strike by hiring additional substitutes, canceling administrators' vacations and work-related trips, contacting law enforcement agencies to assist with student truancy, and canceling nonessential school activities such as awards ceremonies. The union had already been conducting strike preparedness workshops and now stepped up the organization of regional strike control offices and school site picketing. UTLA's print shop operated at full steam turning out picket signs and informational flyers. The union announced it had secured about \$40 million in credit lines from banks to provide striking teachers with interest-free loans.

Out on Strike

When the strike began on May 15, participation surpassed both union and district expectations. About 80 percent stayed out on the first day and close to that figure remained on strike until the new contract was ratified on May 25. The district boasted that it would keep the system functioning with administrative personnel, nonstriking staff, and about 500 newly hired substitutes. (These scabs were paid \$67 more per day than regular substitutes!) But the system was crippled by the massive character of the strike. Students were sent home or herded into auditoriums to look at cartoons or given makeshift assignments to pass time. With a student population of 594,000, attendance dropped from 430,000 to almost 260,000 during the first week of the strike.

Community support continued throughout the strike. Many students and parents picketed along with teachers, counselors, school nurses and psychologists, and librarians. TV news programs showed scenes of well-organized students marching out of schools chanting and holding signs.

Teachers went from picket lines to area rallies. At the May 19 rally in Exposition Park, Jaime Escalante (the famous calculus teacher who was portrayed in the film *Stand and Deliver*) told his fellow teachers, "We will not go back to school unless we solve our problems. The strike energizes us. The strike puts together the whole team as a unit. And I'm proud to be a teacher."

The second week of the strike began with steadfast picket lines, a mass rally at the Sports Arena attended by over 10,000 teachers, and demonstrations at the offices of the law firm representing the school board and at district headquarters where ten adults were arrested including five union officers.

State legislators from the Los Angeles area stepped in to help resolve the impasse. They called union officials and district representatives to the state capitol for discussions, and gave assurances that there would be ample state funds for increased wage rates. The district was forced to back down in reaction to this pressure, the lack of community support, divisions within their own ranks, and the unbreakable determination displayed by the teachers.

Teachers Make Substantial Gains

At a May 25 mass meeting in the Sports Arena, attended by about 15,000, UTLA officers presented a contract offer which included key items proposed by the union.

Thunderous cheers and applause showed approval for: an 8 percent pay raise each year for three years (retroactive to July 1988, when the old contract expired); elimination of guard duty; 40 minutes' preparation time for elementary school teachers; contract pay rate for supervision other than in emergency situations; a no-retaliation clause for all strikers as well as all student and parent supporters.

The details of the first-ever school councils were especially significant. Half of each council will be made up of teachers elected by teachers; the other half will be made up of administrators, parents, and classified employees (such as cooks, aides, custodians). No district employee can be elected as a parent representative. The councils will make decisions by majority vote; principals will not have veto power as the district had insisted. Councils will deal with a broad range of important issues including school schedules, instructional materials, staff development, school activities and events, student discipline, and budget matters.

The union's board of directors voted to make no recommendation on the contract offer because of the docked pay issue. UTLA had maintained there would be no settlement unless all docked pay was returned to teachers but the district's offer was to return only 4.5 of the 7.5 hours docked for withholding grades for the fall semester. Teachers would have to work extra hours to make up for wages lost due to other boycott actions such as refusing schoolyard supervision and not submitting quarterly grades.

The docked pay issue prompted a sizable shout of "No" when the voice vote was called. The "Yes" vote was overwhelming and teachers were instructed to report to their schools the next day.

On May 26, many teachers organized beforehand and marched as a contingent into their schools wearing union T-shirts and buttons. Some groups entered singing *Solidarity Forever*. The militant spirit displayed throughout the many months of negotiations and the strike remains strong today as teachers voice their determination to build on gains they won. UTLA vice president Bernstein noted that "We begin to negotiate again in 13 months," and union officers vow to fight for more power for school councils, more preparation time for teachers, and other items.

The impact of the gains won by the strike is already being felt around the country. UTLA president Wayne Johnson reported receiving dozens of telegrams and telephone calls from teachers' groups requesting information and tactical advice about the school councils. The president of the San Jose teachers' union said members were encouraged by the UTLA strike to hold firm in their contract negotiations. The president of the Rochester, New York, teachers' group pointed out that the size and complex problems of the Los Angeles school system automatically focus special attention on what L.A. teachers will be able to accomplish through the school councils. From the Washington D.C. headquarters of the American Federation of Teachers, the research director predicted that what happens in Los Angeles will help solve problems in cities like Detroit and Chicago. As the *Los Angeles Times* noted on June 12, "The Los Angeles teachers' strike is over but the ripples from it are being felt across the country." ●

June 1, 1989

Evelyn Sell is a member of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, and was a participant in the 1989 strike.

Revised Trotsky Bibliography Published

A new and completely revised second edition of Louis Sinclair's bibliography of Trotsky's works represents the fullest bibliography of Trotsky's published and unpublished writings and papers. Since the first edition in 1972 several vital collections of previously unpublished works have come to light, including the "Exile Papers" at the Houghton Library, Harvard, and the archives of Trotsky's elder son Leon Sedov at the Hoover Institution and the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis in Amsterdam. In their combined resources were hundreds of hitherto unknown letters and pieces by Trotsky.

The two volumes of Sinclair's fully updated bibliography of primary sources includes all foreign translations in over forty languages, with transcriptions of all foreign language titles. Completely cross referenced, these two volumes also take into account of holdings in smaller, but no less valuable collections to provide a unique work of reference.

Louis Sinclair is Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute of Soviet and East European Studies, University of Glasgow.

Order from: Scholar Press, Britain — £85.00
Publication: June 1989

Union Activists Discuss Political Action at Labor Notes Conference

by Dave Riehle

Labor Notes, a monthly publication which has sought over the past ten years to give expression to trends in the unions opposed to wage concessions and for greater democracy and rank-and-file participation, held a highly successful national conference May 19-21 in Detroit, Michigan. Over 1,000 unionists and other activists registered for the conference. The size and breadth of the gathering demonstrated the wide popularity and authority that *Labor Notes* has won since its foundation in 1979. Not coincidentally, those ten years encompass the period of the most severe setbacks suffered by U.S. unions since the post-World War I period.

The other side of the picture is the hostility which most of the present union hierarchy have for this publication—because of its consistent support to struggles for union democracy, and its opposition to wage givebacks and class collaborationist cooperation schemes. A backhanded recognition of the effectiveness of *Labor Notes* and the wide audience it reaches was given by several hundred supporters of the United Auto Workers union international leadership. They picketed outside the conference session which heard from Jerry Tucker, director of Region 5 of the UAW. Tucker is an opponent of the UAW leadership's pet projects—the so-called “quality circles” where workers are supposed to organize their own speedup of production in collaboration with management. Most of the picketers who were interviewed by local news media were full-time functionaries dependent on the favors of UAW's Solidarity House.

Although, as in the past, the majority of the conference participants appeared to be from nonindustrial unions, a significant number came from basic industry—including many from the UAW New Directions movement which Tucker leads, and from Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the pro-democracy caucus in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Both groups have received strong support from *Labor Notes* and have a close relationship with the magazine's staff, based in Detroit.

Also present were a number of leaders of the former Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, which was liquidated by the UFCW after it led a militant struggle against the George A. Hormel Co. in Austin, Minnesota. The P-9 strike was a centerpiece of the last *Labor Notes* conference in 1986, and here too the newsletter's uncompromising support of this fight (opposed by virtually the entire U.S. union hierarchy) gained it the support of many union militants.

At the center of this year's discussions was a debate over independent political action by labor, with a generous amount of time allotted to supporters of the formation of a labor party by U.S. unions. Although *Labor Notes* itself has

taken no explicit position on this question, the views of the magazine's editors are outlined by Kim Moody in the June 1989 issue—available at the conference.

Independent Political Action

He explains that it is necessary to support the “new directions” trend in unions today which rests, he says, on a recognition that workers and employers have opposed, rather than mutual, interests. This trend, he continues, is based on support for the broadest kind of union democracy—especially since such democracy serves as the most effective way to mobilize workers for struggle—and for real international working class solidarity—as opposed to the pro-U.S. State Department “internationalism” of the AFL-CIO. Labor's interests cannot be served by competing with other workers to see who can produce for the lowest wages and at the highest rate of production, Moody says. Labor must defend its interests by forming alliances with other organizations of the exploited—Black and Latino communities, the women's movement, and environmental and peace activists, “as an alternative to cooperation with predatory management.”

Moody goes on to explain that this movement must seek to form alliances with the unemployed and raise demands that benefit them. The logic of such broad social and political alliances leads directly to the political arena, he says. What form can political action by labor take?

This was the question placed before the conference, resulting in probably the broadest and most representative discussion of the labor party perspective by trade unionists since the post-World War II labor upsurge. Although there was by no means a consensus on this question among conference participants and speakers—and not even complete clarity on the part of those who were the most prominent advocates of the labor party—the fact that such a debate was placed squarely on the agenda of what is undoubtedly the most important nonofficial forum for U.S. trade unionists today represents a giant step forward.

The most effective labor party advocates were two leading trade unionists, Amy Newell, secretary treasurer of the United Electrical Workers union, and Tony Mazzocchi, secretary treasurer of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers. Newell spoke as part of the opening session Friday evening, a panel discussion on “Labor and Politics in the 1990s.”

Labor Notes editor Kim Moody, who chaired the session, referred to the rapid development of the mass, independent Workers Party of Brazil, led by the popular trade union leader “Lula” as an example of how quickly and unexpected-

ly things can change in the electoral arena. He set the tone by posing the question, "Who here tonight will be the presidential candidate of American labor in the year 2000?"

Joining Newell on the panel were two former participants in Jesse Jackson's Democratic Party campaign for the presidential nomination in 1988 and a representative of the Canadian Auto Workers Union who spoke about the experience of the New Democratic Party—Canada's labor party.

Bill Fletcher, a staff employee of UAW District 65 and an organizer of Boston Labor for Jackson in 1988 made the most explicit argument against the labor party perspective. A supporter of the Freedom Road socialist organization (a grouping of former Maoists), he explained, "We do need a third political party. It is a mistake to see that party as a labor party. We need a people's party."

U.S. capitalism has made throwing away workers socially acceptable. The choice is between a renewed progressive movement and social barbarism.

No social movement in this country looks to labor for answers. Rainbow politics presents the best answer for the labor movement. The movement led by Jackson was the highest level of mass resistance to Reaganism. There was a Black political upsurge in the 1980s. Its high point was Harold Washington's victory in Chicago.

The New Deal coalition is dead. There is no longer any need (on the part of the capitalists) to even include the upper echelon of labor. A progressive Democratic labor coalition is needed, and labor will not play a leading role. There are two parties in the Democratic Party. One, the Jackson/Rainbow movement and two, the Democratic leadership—who should be in the Republican Party.

The idea of trying to realign the two capitalist parties is hardly a novel idea. One of its prominent advocates in the labor movement was Walter Reuther, former president of the UAW, and it is not even unique today to the Rainbow Coalition. In fact, in somewhat modified form, it represents the basic political strategy of the AFL-CIO, the social democratic movement in this country, and the Communist Party.

Fletcher's rejection of the labor party perspective, however, was countered by Newell's talk. "The UE's position is that we have one major party in this country—the party of big business. We need a reliable vehicle of independence for the working class," she said. This drew a big and positive response from conference participants. Then she continued:

We will not see a long-term viable alternative to the big business party unless it is based on the labor movement. Only the labor movement has the stability, money, organization, and membership. Labor unions are the only mass organizations in the U.S. organized along class lines.

If we elect Democrats and Republicans to be our political representatives, then we should elect our employers to be our shop stewards.

We have to send a message that workers and employers have opposed interests. We must reject

quality circles, etc., in the trade union field if we want to build a workers' political movement. The problem with these schemes is that they undermine class solidarity, "class consciousness," if you will.

Newell called for a rejection of the top U.S. union leadership's "Buy American" campaign and pointed out that General Electric is the single largest exporter from Taiwan.

The one weakness in her speech came when, despite her strong call for a labor party which has been the UE's long-standing position, she left the door open for practical adaptation to capitalist politics. At one point she said that the most important thing was maintaining class independence, but then went on to define building a wing in the Democratic Party or labor support for the Rainbow as legitimate independent class alternatives. The UE, in fact, supported Jesse Jackson in 1988. She also stated that "we must reaffirm the basic principles of industrial trade unionism as part of the effort to build a political consensus, regardless of whether we're stuck for now with dismal alternatives."

Sam Gindin, assistant to Canadian UAW president Bob White, started out by explaining, "Michael Harrington said the difference between the U.S. and Canada was that you could talk about socialism in Canada without having to prove it was good for capitalism."

He then referred to the experience with the New Democratic Party that has the support of most of organized labor in Canada, and explained the gains that have been made because of the NDP. These include workers' rights legislation. But he also explained the limits of the NDP: "The party does not see its mandate as the transformation of society—rather that of reform. The NDP wants to be respectable."

Struggles in the Unions

The plenary session of the conference on Saturday was devoted to a review of, and reports from, participants in movements for democracy and rank-and-file control in a number of unions. Jerry Tucker spoke, as well as Diana Kil-murry, the co-chair of TDU; Glenn Berrien, national president of the Mail Handler's Union; and Selwyn Rogers, co-chair of the Black Rank and File Exchange which was founded at the 1984 *Labor Notes* conference. Rogers is also a member of UAW Local 262.

Berrien described his union—recently emerged from a trusteeship imposed by the Laborers International Union with which the mailhandlers merged in 1968—as 50 percent Black, 15 percent women, and "a democratic, class conscious union."

All speakers testified to an emerging new confidence and success on the part of rank-and-file challenges to the union bureaucracy. Tucker recognized the probability of defeat in his campaign for reelection as district director, due to intimidation and corruption on the part of the "administration caucus"—which consists primarily of the international union's paid staff and those dependent on its favors—but he emphasized that the "debate won't go away over an electoral setback."

Referring derisively to *Los Angeles Times* labor editor Harry Bernstein's giddy description of quality circles as "in-

dustrial democracy possibly for the first time in civilization," Tucker said that his candidate for that honor was "Spartacus."

"The rank and file believes that the structures which exist do not serve their needs," he declared. "Reform fights will have to continue so that solidarity can be the banner under which we march once again."

Keynote Speech

The Saturday evening keynote speaker was Tony Mazzocchi, who again argued for the formation of a labor party. Mazzocchi, after eight years out of national union office, was recently reelected in a campaign in which the idea of a labor party played a central role. OCAW, at Mazzocchi's initiative, is circulating a political action questionnaire to local unions polling their members on their political preferences. He reported that the labor party alternative was receiving a decisive majority. Mazzocchi pointed out that the Democratic Party gets 70 percent of its money from big business, and that trade unionists make up only 41 out of 400 members of the Democratic National Committee.

Mazzocchi reiterated his conception of a labor party which would not run candidates for five years or so while building up a mass base in the unions. While it is not so clear how this would come about, or whether there are any realistic prospects for such a method of constructing a labor party, Mazzocchi is clearly getting an unprecedentedly wide hearing for his ideas. This, of course, has great significance independently of his particular tactical proposals.

It is unlikely that any mass-based movement for a labor party that might arise among U.S. unionists would be able to wait five years to put its perspectives into action. In fact, as one union official who supports Mazzocchi's initiative pointed out, people who are dissatisfied with the two capitalist parties are already taking electoral initiatives, and in some cases successful ones. Socialists have been elected in Iowa City, Iowa, and in Burlington, Vermont. And if that is possible, surely independent labor candidates backed by the unions would have a fighting chance to be elected as well.

International Solidarity

The conference's concluding session, on Sunday afternoon, demonstrated one of the strongest aspects of *Labor*

Notes: its forthright opposition to the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department's squalid support of right-wing dictatorships around the world. This official instrument of U.S. labor attempts to prevent U.S. unionists from having any contact with trade union and other groups that oppose such brutal, antilabor governments. Representatives were present in Detroit from mass working class organizations in countries such as the Philippines, Brazil, South Korea, as well as Central America and South Africa. They were able to explain their struggles and to solicit support.

The ability of many *Labor Notes* readers, and others, to carry solidarity campaigns on behalf of these workers and their organizations into union locals and official U.S. labor bodies, frequently gaining substantial support, is another indication of the decreasing ability of the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats to police the union membership in this country, and of the increasing openness of U.S. workers to these struggles. Above all else, this is what is registered by the ten years of steadily increasing success on the part of *Labor Notes*, both in its publications and in the conferences it has organized.

In addition to the main conference sessions described here, there were dozens of workshops where participants were able to go into more depth, and to engage in an exchange of views, about these and other questions. There seemed to be noticeably less inhibition on the part of speakers and others at this conference to talk in traditional class struggle terms rather than to simply pose the problems through generalities such as democracy, decency, and good conduct. This reflects, I believe, the experiences in the labor movement over the past few years of those who participated in the gathering. Based on those experiences, there is an increasing confidence that such language is falling on receptive ears in the broad labor movement. It also represents a continuing diminution in the effectiveness of red-baiting as a tool of bureaucratic intimidation.

In the absence of any radical political tendency with sufficient authority to give expression to the rising discontent and anger of U.S. workers, *Labor Notes* has succeeded in reintroducing basic class struggle ideas to a wide labor audience. Regardless of legitimate differences that may exist with the editorial policies and points of view expressed by this publication, it deserves the support of all serious socialist tendencies in the labor movement. ●

200th Anniversary of the French Revolution

From the Arsenal of Marxism

The French Revolution and Bourgeois Ideology

by George Plekhanov

*George Plekhanov was considered the father of Russian Marxism. A coworker with Lenin for a period in the early 20th century on the journal *Iskra*, he ultimately became a supporter of the Mensheviks in Russia. Here he is polemicizing with Paul Janet, and takes up arguments raised 100 years ago by bourgeois and petty bourgeois historians. These bear a marked similarity to ideas that are being proposed by many in those same circles today. This article was originally printed in *Die Neue Zeit* (Nos. 4 and 5, Vol IX, 1890-91), edited by Karl Kautsky. In 1926 it was published in the *Weekly People*, organ of the Socialist Labor Party, and it is that translation which appears here. Its original title was "How the Bourgeoisie Remembers Its Revolution."*

A year ago [1889] there was celebrated in France, as well as in the whole civilized world, the one hundredth anniversary of that revolution which, quite justly, is called "the Great" because it forms the initial point of a new historic period. Many benefits followed this event — for the entire civilized world generally and, more particularly, for the bourgeoisie, the French bourgeoisie first of all. This revolution put an end to the rule of the nobility and secured to the bourgeoisie front rank in all the departments of public life. All attempts by the Restoration to change back the status of things created by the revolution remained unsuccessful, the more so since the reactionaries did not even try to eliminate the most important, that is, the social consequences of the great revolution. No one even then could fail to see that, in this respect, nothing could be changed any more; that despite all the ever so liberal "indemnification" of the feudal nobility, its leading role in the life of society had come to an end forevermore. With the great revolution began the uncontested rule of the bourgeoisie.

Small wonder then that the bourgeoisie remembered this important event when it celebrated its centennial anniversary. Even some years prior to the celebration of the anniversary of the revolution, the bourgeois press had trumpeted in all possible keys about the coming great festivity. But let us observe a little more closely how the bourgeoisie remembers its revolution. How is this momentous event pictured in its mind?

Before us lies the book of one of the patented scientists of the French bourgeoisie, Paul Janet (*"Centenaire de 1789, Histoire de la Revolution Francaise,"* by Paul Janet, Paris) who is sometimes — he himself does not seem to object — counted among the philosophers. The circumstance that Paul Janet stands in some sort of relation, incomprehensible to us, to the science of philosophy in this case comes in very handy to us, because a bourgeois philosopher, better than anyone else, can enlighten us about the bourgeois philosophy of the great revolution. Let us therefore, with the aid of the aforesaid book, search for this philosophy.

Rebellion and Revolution in England

But first a brief preliminary observation. England passed through her revolutionary storms in the 17th century, and there were then two revolutions: the first led, among other things, to the execution of Charles I, while the second ended with an animated banquet and the rise of a new dynasty. But the English bourgeoisie, in the evaluation of these revolutions, manifests very divergent views: while the first, in its eyes, does not even deserve the name "revolution" and is simply referred to as "the great rebellion," the second is given a more euphonious appellation; it is called "the glorious revolution." The secret of this differentiation in the evaluation of the two revolutions has already been revealed by Augustin Thierry in his theses about the English revolutions.

In the first revolution, the people played an important role, while in the second the people participated hardly at all. When, however, a people mounts the stage of history and begins to decide the destinies of its country, according to its power and best understanding, then the higher classes (in this case the bourgeoisie) get out of humor. Because the people is always "raw" and, if the revolutionary devil begins to pervade it, also becomes "coarse," the higher classes have a way of always insisting upon politeness and gentle manners — at least they demand these of the people. This is the reason why the higher classes are always inclined to put upon revolutionary movements, if prominently participated in by the people, the stamp of "rebellions."

Revolution and Rebellion in France

The history of France is particularly rich in "great rebellions" as well as in "glorious revolutions." Only in France, so far as the historic sequence of events is concerned, matters happened in a manner opposite to the one that prevailed in the England of the 17th century. In England, for instance, "the great rebellion" preceded "the glorious revolution,"

while in France “the glorious revolutions” usually had to give way to “the great rebellions.” This fact repeated itself in the entire course of the 19th century.

Upon the heels of “the glorious revolution” of 1830 in Paris followed the rather sizable “great rebellion” of the weavers in Lyon, which gave the whole bourgeoisie such a great fright; upon “the glorious revolution” of February 1848, glorified even by Lamartine, followed “the great June rebellion,” which prompted the bourgeoisie to seek refuge in the arms of a military dictatorship; and upon the “most glorious” September revolution of 1870 followed, finally, in March of the subsequent year, the “greatest of all French rebellions.”¹ The bourgeoisie now claims that the “great rebellions” have always injured the cause of “the glorious revolutions.” We cannot here consider the correctness of this claim in its application to the 19th century, but must yield the floor to the bourgeois philosophers about the events of the 18th century.

Toward the end of that century there took place in France a “great rebellion” and a “glorious revolution” of 1789; “the great rebellion” played its part largely in 1793. After what has already been said, the reader will now be able to predict with certainty what the bourgeois philosopher, Paul Janet, thinks of those revolutionary movements.

Janet on the French Revolution

In the final chapter of his book, Janet says: “In order to arrive at an objective evaluation of the French Revolution, one must in regard to it differentiate three things: the purpose, the means, and the results obtained. The purpose of the revolution—to gain civic equality and political freedom—was the most sublime, the most legitimate a people has ever striven to attain.” But the means were bad: “only too frequently they were forcible, terrible.”

So far as results are concerned, civic equality, according to Janet, has been fully attained and leaves nothing to be wished for; “political freedom,” however, “obtains in France since the revolution only sporadically, and to this day is more or less endangered.” It will be secure only when the French people shall dispense with all forcible, unlawful methods and shall learn once for all to look upon their revolution as finished, and, finally, when the revolution itself has passed into the historic past as irrevocably as has already been the case with the revolutions in England and in the United States. “The attainments of the revolution should be held fast, but there must be renunciation of the revolutionary spirit and of forcible and unlawful means.”

Very good. But let us not forget that revolutionary means had been employed since 1789, that is, not only at the time of “the great rebellion,” but also during “the glorious revolution.” Is “the glorious revolution” to be condemned by Paul Janet because of its forcible means? But no—on the contrary. In his description, the acts of force practiced during “the glorious revolution” appear fully justified, highly useful, and thoroughly efficacious. He speaks very commendingly of the popular insurrections directed against royalty, aye, he seeks to prove that, without these uprisings, the government would have smothered all the reforms of the national assembly in embryo, and that the great aims of the revolution would then have remained unattainable.

The storming of the Bastille he hails as “the first victorious appearance of the people of Paris on the revolutionary stage”; and in the same approving manner he expresses himself about the second appearance of the same people on the same stage, about the events of October 5 and 6, and also about the storming of the Tuileries. Arrived there, *nota bene*, after Janet has proved the inevitable necessity of eliminating a king who was negotiating with the enemy at the very outset of the war, he adds in a melancholy vein: “France became gradually accustomed to solving political questions with such sorry means.” But he does not tell us with what other means the given and unpostponable task might have been accomplished.

Only after the storming of the Tuileries, that is, after this last necessary uprising, according to Janet, do the people of Paris, under the pen of our historian, gradually become transformed into a mob governed by the lowest passions. Now it becomes clear: a “rebellion” is quite acceptable, only one must not permit oneself to be led astray by low passions—does the bourgeois historian want to be understood in that sense? Not at all. We are at once informed that now, “the glorious revolution” being over, all insurrections lack both sense and justification. Now we have it at last. The king has fallen, the nobility has been destroyed, the bourgeoisie has been lifted on the shield—what more does the heart wish for? Now be quiet, after you have on this earth done all that belongs to the earth. Who, unless it be the common mob, would think of insurrection?

Proletarian Revolutionaries Condemned

Next! As could have been expected, Paul Janet extends his sympathy to all the parties that successively stood at the head of the movement, except the party of the Mountain. Upon the latter he pours the whole vial of his wrath; for this party he reserves all his strong language and epithets.

Between these miscreants and the “manly, generous Gironde,” Janet draws this interesting parallel: “The ones, like the others, wanted the republic.” But while “The Girondists aimed at a free, lawful, mild republic, the Montagnards strove for a despotic, cruel republic. Without attention to liberty, the latter prized only equality. True, both parties favored the sovereignty of the people, but with the difference that the Girondists righteously wanted to include among ‘the people’ all the citizens, while for the Montagnards, in keeping with the perversity still current today, the people consisted only of members of the working class, of persons living by their own labor. Consequently, according to the Montagnards, to rule should be the prerogative of this class alone.”²

Differing Views on ‘the People’

The political program of the Girondists, therefore, differed essentially from that of the Montagnards. Whence this difference? Paul Janet himself gives us sufficient information about that. The difference proceeded from the fact that the Mountain party, as we have seen, conceived of the mutual relations of the then existing social classes in a way different from that of the Gironde. The latter “would have it understood that the people included all the citizens,” while the

former considered only the working class as “the people”; the other classes, according to the Montagnards, were no part of “the people,” because the interests of these classes were contrary to those of the working class.

And, strictly speaking, the Girondists themselves did not include in “the people” all the citizens, i.e., the entire French nation of the time, but only the third estate. Did they include in “the people” the aristocracy and the higher clergy? Not at all. Did not Abbé Sieyès himself, who never went so far as the Girondists, in his brochure “*Qu’est-ce que le Tiers Etat?*” [“What Is the Third Estate?”] set “the people,” that is, the third estate, without compunction against the small aggregation of the privileged, i.e., the nobility and the higher clergy?

The Girondists, who fought the “privileged” far more decisively, no doubt agree with Sieyès about that. If, for all that, their conception of “the people” was so different from that of the Montagnards, this may be explained only by the fact that the Mountain party had gone one step further, in that it classed as “privileged” also such social institutions as appeared to the Girondists sacrosanct and necessary. It was a contested question which classes really should be regarded as “privileged.” But that shows—and Paul Janet’s explanations leave room for no other interpretation—that according to the Montagnards all persons and classes that live by “labor,” but the labor of others and not their own, belong in the category of the “privileged.”

We must now seek to clear up the point of why the defenders of the cause of the working class inclined towards a “despotic and cruel” republic. Why did they not rather appear as adherents of a “lawful, free, and mild” republic? This circumstance must be traced back to two causes, one external, the other internal. Let us turn, first, to the external cause, that is, to the relations then existing between revolutionary France and the other European states.

France Threatened from Within and Without

The condition of France, at the time the Mountain party seized power, was most desperate, aye, it was hopeless. Janet says: “Enemy troops invaded French territory from four sides: from the north, the English and Austrians; in Alsatia, the Prussians; in the Dauphine, proceeding as far as the city of Lyon, the Piedmontese; and in Roussillon, the Spaniards. And all this at a time when civil war raged on four sides: in Normandy, in the Vendee, in Lyon, and in Toulon.” Aside from these open foes there were the secret adherents of the old regime scattered all over France, who were ready surreptitiously to aid the enemy.

The government, which had taken up the struggle against these innumerable inner and outer foes, had neither money nor sufficient troops—it could count on nothing but a boundless energy, the active support of the revolutionary elements of the country, and the colossal courage to shrink from no measure, however arbitrary, illegal, or ruthless, so long as it was necessary for the defense of the country.

Desperate Situation Called for Desperate Measures

After the Montagnards had called to arms the entire French youth, without being able to supply the newly formed

armies even partially with arms and food out of the slender means flowing to them from taxation, they resorted to requisitions, confiscations, forced loans, decreed rates of exchange for the *assignats*—in short and in fine, they forced upon the scared possessing classes money sacrifices, all in the interest of an imperiled country for which the people were sacrificing blood.

These forcible measures were absolutely necessary if France were to be saved. There was no depending upon voluntary money contributions—Janet himself admits that. The iron determination and energy of the government were also necessary to spur to the limit of effort all the fresh forces of France—Janet admits that, too. But he, Paul Janet, would rather have seen the dictatorship in the hands of the “noble and magnanimous Gironde” than in those of the abominable Montagnards. Had the Girondists emerged victorious from the struggle with the Mountain, then, according to the author, “they, too, would have been placed in the same position as was the case with the Montagnards; they too would have been forced to quell the royalist insurrections, beat down the opposition party, repel the invasions, and it may be doubted whether, without the dictatorship, they would have been able to cope with all these evils. But their dictatorship would have been less bloodthirsty and would have given more scope to law and liberty.”

But upon which layers of the population would the gentle Girondists have been able to lean? When, after their defeat in Paris, they sought help in the provinces, they found there only the passive help of—to use Janet’s expression—“the dilatory and lukewarm” middle class and the malignant support of the royalists, which they themselves had to reject. And could they reckon with a more effective support on the part of their adherents in the struggle with the foreign foes? The Gironde never did and never would find favor with the lowest, the most revolutionary layer of the population, least of all in Paris. That part of the population evidently entertained views about “the people” and its interests quite different from those of the Gironde, so vastly admired by Janet because of its magnanimity.

It was just this circumstance which brought about the fall of the Gironde and the victory of the Mountain. The former was almost exclusively confined to the forces of “the dilatory and lukewarm middle class.” Could anything substantial be accomplished with such allies? No, the moderate and liberal Gironde never would have been able to rescue France from the critical condition in which she found herself enmeshed in 1793.

It was the external situation of France that made the dictatorship, the one of the Montagnards, a necessity. And once a dictatorship was needed, all the talk about a “free, lawful, and mild” republic became simply ridiculous. The revolutionary dictatorship necessarily had to be as rigid and as ruthless as the external foes who had called it into being; just like the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, and like the threats of a reactionary Europe against France.

Let us now proceed to the internal causes which made it impossible for the Montagnards to find a “free, lawful, and mild” republic to their taste. Here we must first of all direct the attention of the reader to the famous rights of man and of the citizen. Among these we find many rights which con-

form to the interests of the lowest class of the population; but we also find among them one toward which this class, from the very outset, was compelled to maintain a peculiar and contradictory attitude. We refer to the right of property.

The Proletariat and 'Property Rights'

How would, for instance, a Paris "*sansculotte*" (literally a man without pants [*culottes*], a nickname resembling the English word "ragamuffin") conceive of this right, when his very name shows that he himself is bare of all property? How could he proceed to exercise this wonderful right conceded to him? There was no lack of examples lying near to his hand. The bourgeoisie had taken unto itself many a piece of aristocratic and church property — why should he not now do the same with bourgeois property?

The *sansculotte* at that time had to pass through many hard, albeit many merry days. Often he had to endure hunger in the most literal sense of the term, and hunger, as is well known, is a bad counselor. Thereupon our has-nothing began to exhibit a great nonchalance toward bourgeois property. The bourgeoisie resisted that as well as it knew how.

How this social struggle was bound to affect the political life is obvious. The "mob" gathered in a party of its own and raised the Montagnards upon the shield. The "mob" of that day knew how to fight and soon obtained control. And then there was obviously nothing left for it to do but to use the political power just attained to call into being social institutions under which the right to property would no longer sound like bitter mockery. But for the proletariat of that day, as well as for the modern proletariat, this was possible only under one condition — the total abolition of private property in the means of production and the social organization of production.

But the latter, under the conditions then prevailing, was simply unthinkable for two closely connected reasons: The proletariat of that day did not possess the requisite capacity, nor did the means of production of that day meet even the elementary requirements for socialization. Therefore, neither the proletariat of that time nor its most advanced representatives could even conceive of the idea. It is true that in prerevolutionary French literature we find a few communist utopias, but these, for the reasons stated, could find neither currency nor recognition.

Reasons Behind Terroristic Tactics

Under these circumstances, what was left for the momentarily victorious "mob" to do? If socialization of the means of production was not to be thought of, then private property therein necessarily must continue, and the indigent populace was limited to casual and forcible encroachments upon its realm. And because of such encroachments the "mob" is being blamed by all bourgeois historians to this very day. Forcible encroachments upon the realm of private property made a "lawful" republic an impossibility, because the law was framed to protect just that private property.

No more could the republic be "mild," because the possessing classes naturally did not tolerate, with their hands in their laps, such interference with their property, but, on the contrary, eagerly sought for an opportunity to put an end to such nonchalant "mob rule." The struggle between the proletariat of that day and the possessing classes, fatedly and inevitably, had to be fought with terroristic weapons. By means of terror alone, in a condition replete with insoluble economic contradictions, could the proletariat then maintain its rule. Had the proletariat attained a higher stage of development and, on the other hand, had economic conditions been sufficiently advanced to secure its welfare, then there would have been no need for it to resort to measures of terror.

Reasons for Bourgeois 'Lawfulness'

Let us have a look at the bourgeoisie, praised so highly by the historians because of its penchant for "lawfulness." By no means did it leave its enemies in peace, nor in critical moments did it shrink from decisive measures; but its cause stood then upon such firm footing that it had no need to fear an opponent. Come to power during its "glorious" revolution, the bourgeoisie introduced the social order suited to its needs, and did it with such thoroughness that even the most stubborn reactionaries could thereafter scarcely think of abolishing it. If the latter had essayed an attempt in that direction, they would soon have become convinced of its utter futility.

Under such circumstances it was easy for the bourgeoisie to talk about "lawfulness"; when your cause has won and your enemies are hopelessly defeated, then the order of things most suitable to your interests becomes "lawful" — would you then still resort to unlawful means? You are certain that henceforth your privileges will be amply protected by law. The bourgeoisie strove for lawfulness in politics, because historic evolution had fully secured its triumph in economics.

In its place, the proletariat could not and would not have acted otherwise. That the spokesmen of the "mob," the Montagnards, no less than the Girondists, held on high the principle of liberty and law is proved by the constitution they formulated, the freest ever written in France. The constitution introduced direct legislation by representatives of the people and limited the powers of the executive to a minimum. However, because of the entire external and internal conditions of France, it became impossible for the Montagnards to apply the constitution.

Generally speaking, it may be regarded as a rule permitting no exceptions, that a given social class or layer of the population, having come to power, will the more readily resort to measures of terror if its chances to retain power are small. In the 19th century, it had to become clear to the bourgeoisie that its rule over the proletariat was becoming more shaky every day and, in consequence, it now strives more and more for terroristic subjection of the same. Against the June insurgents it proceeded more ferociously than in 1831 against the weavers of Lyon; and in the suppression of the Communards of 1871 it acted far more atrociously than in June 1848.

The terror practiced by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat overshadows by far the atrocities of the Jacobins which, by the way, have been greatly exaggerated by the reactionaries. Robespierre, when compared with Thiers, looks like a veritable angel, and Marat, put side by side with the bourgeois press cossacks of the bloody May week, appears like a mild, benevolent being. He who looks deeper into the French history of our century must fully agree with the Russian writer, Herzen, when, after the June days, he said that there was no more ferocious government, and there could not be a more ferocious one, than that of the shopkeeper running amuck.

Bourgeoisie Responsible for French Reaction

It was just this shopkeeper ferocity which made impossible a permanent consolidation of political freedom in France. The bourgeoisie must be held solely responsible for the reactionary lapses that typify the history of France in the 19th century. Even during the time of the Restoration the victory of the reactionaries was made much easier because the bourgeoisie, mortally afraid of the workers, for a long time prevented their entrance upon the struggle.

And now, for the sake of tranquilizing the bourgeois writers, who shudder at the mere thought of the Jacobin rule of terror, we shall present a truth which to us seems irrefutable. The victory of the working class, now impending in all civilized countries, is certain not to be marred by cruelty, because the victory of the cause of labor is made secure by the course of history to such an extent that no terror will be needed. Of course, the bourgeois reactionaries will be well advised if they abstain from trying to trip up a victorious proletariat, and are judicious enough not to imitate the royalist conspirators of the great revolution. "*A la guerre comme a la guerre*" (in war act as in war, i.e., as war makes necessary) is a true saying, and in the heat of the fight it might go hard with the plotters. But, we repeat, the entire course of historic evolution guarantees the success of the proletariat.

Conditions Favoring Socialist Revolution

On the occasion of the celebration of the centennial anniversary of the great revolution, the French bourgeoisie has almost purposely proceeded to demonstrate to the proletariat *ad oculos* (to the eyes) the economic possibility and necessity of a social transformation. The world exhibition gave it an excellent demonstration of the unprecedented development of the means of production in all civilized countries, which has outwinged the boldest fantasies of the utopians of the preceding century. In keeping therewith, the emancipation of the proletariat, instead of the noble dream it was at the time of Babeuf, has become an historic necessity.

The exhibition has shown, furthermore, that the modern development of the means of production, under the anarchic conditions governing production, must logically and necessarily lead to industrial crises ever more destructive to world economy. In order to escape the dangerous consequences of these crises, nothing is left for the European proletariat but

to lay the foundation stone for the planful organization of social production which, for the *sansculottes* of the past century, was a thing impossible. Not only do the modern production forces make possible such an organization, but they tend in that direction. Without such an organization the full utilization of these forces is not to be thought of.

In the modern mechanical workshop production has already taken on a social character; all that is now needed is to bring into harmony the different productive functions in these workshops and, in keeping therewith, transform the ownership of the product, i.e., change it from private to social ownership. To attain this aim will be the task of the European proletariat. The International Socialist Congress, meeting in July 1889, did not fail to remind the proletariat of this great task.

And now back to our philosopher, Paul Janet, of whom we have lost sight for a while. Just now he presents himself with the assertion that one "must remain true to the spirit of the revolution, but must reject the revolutionary spirit." In other words, mankind must be satisfied with the results of the great revolution attained by the bourgeoisie, but must not take another step forward.

Need for Class Consciousness Among Workers

But we hold that the very opposite is true. The aims of the bourgeoisie cannot possibly be those of the working class, and the results attained by the former cannot satisfy the latter. And, therefore, the workers go one step further when they reject the bourgeois spirit of the great revolution, but remain true to the revolutionary spirit. To remain true to that means to struggle ceaselessly and fearlessly for a better future, to struggle implacably against all that is old and obsolete.

The bourgeoisie would fain instill into the workers' minds the idea that modern society knows no class divisions, because the foundation of the modern state is the equality of all before the law. But this formal equality can console the workers as little as, under the old regime, the proclaimed equality of all before God satisfied the bourgeoisie; not content with this fantastic equality, the bourgeoisie did not rest until it had come into possession of all possible mundane goods. Small wonder then that the proletariat will not be content with juristic fictions, knowing full well that economic inequality must in real life render illusory all other equality.

In much the same manner the bourgeoisie would make the workers believe that, today, there is nothing more to be done in the realm of economy and that, therefore, one must only indulge in the game of "pure" politics. But "pure politics" means for the workers nothing but kite-tail politics in the service of the bourgeois parties, and the bourgeoisie is fully aware of the significance of this brand of "pure politics," at least such was the case when it was engaged in the struggle with the nobility and clergy.

In the brochure "*Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?*" ["What Is the Third Estate?"] once before mentioned, which must be regarded as the program of the bourgeoisie of 1789, the sophistries of the "pure politicians," then to be found in the two upper estates, were refuted with much talent. Abbé Sieyès insisted that the nation, as a matter of fact, was divided

into two camps, in the one, the privileged; in the other, the oppressed; and that this actual division must be reflected in politics. It was natural and understandable that the privileged should seek to preserve their interests by means of political measures; but the oppressed also must not neglect the safeguarding of their interests, and should appear as a unified party in the newly opened political arena.

To this very day this lesson has not suffered in either sense or importance. Conditions have changed only insofar as the bourgeoisie today occupies a privileged position. And what else is now left for the workers but to close their ranks in a separate party of the oppressed, standing in opposition to the privileged bourgeoisie?

Confused Ideas on the Class Struggle

At the end of the 18th century, at the time of “the great rebellion” of the French “mob,” the class antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat was present only in embryo. For that reason the class consciousness of the proletarians had to be rather unclear. When, in the course of this treatise, we tried to explain the argumentation of Paul Janet relative to the Jacobin conceptions of “the people,” we ascribed to them an attitude antagonistic to all classes living on the labor of others. That was really the only possible meaning of the argument of the author.

However, this is correct only insofar as the Montagnards, in reality and instinctively, always strove to defend the interests of the poorest class of the population. This was so because in their conception there was present a feature which, in the course of further evolution, would have taken on a thoroughly bourgeois character. This feature shows up plainly in the speeches of Robespierre. And through it is to be explained the struggle of the Jacobins against the Hebertists, and in general their struggle against the so-called agrarian legislation.³

But these “agrarian laws,” as their adherents pictured them to themselves, contained nothing that was of a communist character. Private property, and the petty bourgeois purposes closely connected therewith, forced themselves into the programs of even the most extreme revolutionists of the time. Babeuf alone took a different stand; he appeared in the last act of the great tragedy, when the strength of the proletariat had already been wholly exhausted in the preceding struggles. The party of the Mountain failed just because of that innermost contradiction between its petty bourgeois

conceptions and its endeavor to be a representative of proletarian interests.⁴

To the present-day representatives of the working class, these contradictions are foreign, because modern, scientific socialism is nothing but the theoretic expression of the unbridgeable antagonism of interests between bourgeoisie and proletariat. The impending victory of the working class under the banner of socialism is going to be far more glorious than all the “glorious” revolutions of the bourgeoisie put together.

Force, naked force, based upon bayonets and cannon, becomes more and more the only support of bourgeois rule. And candid “theoreticians” make their appearance, who admit without further ado that the prevailing bourgeois order cannot be justified theoretically, and does not require such justification—because the bourgeoisie controls the public powers. Thus, for instance, speaks an Austrian professor, Gumplowicz, in his book “The Political State and Socialism.”

When the representatives of the nobility and clergy, in one of the first sessions of the estates, fell back upon the foundation of their privileges—the historic right of conquest—the theoretician of the bourgeoisie, Abbé Sieyès, proudly replied: “*Rien que cela, messieurs? Nous serons conquerants a notre tour!*”—which means, “Nothing but that, gentlemen? Well, we too shall be conquerors in our turn!”

And the working class must say just that to the advocates of bourgeois force. ●

Notes

1. In June 1848, the working class in France sought to defend and advance the revolution under its own radical banners. In March 1871, the Paris Commune—the world’s first proletarian government—was established. In both cases, capitalists united with reactionaries to violently repress the workers.

2. The Girondists were moderate revolutionaries who sought compromise with the monarchy and distrusted the masses. The Montagnards, also known as Jacobins, sought to rally the masses to completely destroy the monarchy and establish a democratic republic.

3. Maximilien Robespierre was the leader of the Jacobins, who came into conflict with the more radical followers of Hebert after taking power. Robespierre’s regime was overthrown on the 9th Thermidor (July 27, 1794) by more moderate and corrupt elements in the revolutionary camp, which established a repressive regime known as “The Directory.” In this “Thermidorian reaction” many of the more radical policies were ended.

4. Francois Noel Babeuf was an idealistic ex-Jacobin who founded a communist group known as the Society of Equals in the mid-1790s. The Directory crushed the organization in 1796 and executed Babeuf in the following year.

Congress of People's Deputies Widens Cracks in Bureaucratic Rule

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The widespread dissatisfaction with the antidemocratic rule in Armenian regions (see accompanying article on page 35) was the cause of what has been described as a "heated debate" during the Congress of People's Deputies that opened in Moscow's Palace of Congresses in the Kremlin May 25. A controversy over which deputies would represent Nagorno-Karabagh managed to make its way to the Congress floor and "brought throngs into the streets of Nagorno-Karabagh" for much of the week of May 29-June 2 while the Congress met, according to a TASS report. The Congress, in fact, sided with the protesters and voted to annul the elections and have new ones.

The ongoing process of mass mobilization in the Caucasus is only one of numerous pressures from below that were felt by the ruling caste as the Congress opened. The process through which the deputies were elected had guaranteed a predominance of individuals who would not challenge the bureaucracy's policies—86 percent of the deputies were Communist Party members, a higher percentage than in the previous, "rubber-stamp" Supreme Soviet that the Congress was set up to replace. The "reform-minded" deputies numbered somewhere around 400 out of 2,250, and they are a heterogeneous lot. Their ideas of reform covered a wide range of political, economic, and cultural perspectives. Moreover, they had few means at their disposal to organize a coherent intervention.

But despite all these obstacles, the Congress proved to be a remarkable gathering which is likely to have historic significance. It widened the cracks, begun by glasnost, in the

bureaucratic dictatorship's totalitarian grip. The possibility for this to happen came, in considerable part, because of the upheaval of the Chinese students and workers who were taking to the streets to demand democracy during Gorbachev's summit visit to China just prior to the opening of the Congress. And the Chinese demonstrations continued during most of the time the Congress was in session.

The Chinese demonstrations not only upstaged the meetings of two bureaucratic leaderships. And they did more than simply block thoroughfares, preventing Gorbachev and his entourage from attending the ballet, as well as official functions. The actions of the Chinese people must certainly have struck fear in the hearts of these Soviet visitors. Although the protesting students hailed Gorbachev's policy of glasnost as a preferred alternative to the less open political atmosphere offered by his Chinese counterparts, Gorbachev still found it necessary to call the students "hotheads." His real reaction must undoubtedly have been a bit more extreme. Official reports of Gorbachev's Chinese trip offered to Soviet workers and students—glasnost aside—failed to mention the magnitude and depth of what was happening in the streets of Beijing. But Gorbachev and his colleagues could not have failed to notice it.

Official Tasks and Real Events

The tasks of the Congress, as defined by the constitutional amendments resulting from the Nineteenth Party Conference last year, were limited and strictly defined: to elect

Trotsky Published in USSR!

After decades of the suppression of his writings and shameless slander and falsification of Leon Trotsky and his ideas, Soviet readers were finally, for the first time since 1927, allowed to read Trotsky in the official press. The mass weekly *Ogonyok*, that has been one of the foremost glasnost publications, printed excerpts from Trotsky's writings in a four-and-one-half-page feature "Leniniana: Unknown Pages," that included also short excerpts of Karl Radek and Gregory Zinoviev about Lenin.

"The revolution is continuing," declared M.S. Gorbachev. And one should suppose that in its 72nd year the revolution is strong enough to allow references to its long-time activists—former 'persona non grata' of our patriotic history—without the unfailing bilious attacks and total distrust; and what is more, with respect and indulgence."

The article appeared in *Ogonyok's* April 22-29, 1989, edition. More on this and other Trotsky in the Soviet press in an upcoming issue.

a president, a vice president, and the bicameral 542-member Supreme Soviet. It was then to disperse until next year. But that is not all that happened. Here is a summary of some of the high points:

- The Congress was projected to last only around three days. However, upon proposals from reformers, Gorbachev permitted the session to be open-ended.

- Its daylong proceedings were nationally televised, live, across the USSR's 12 time zones. The broadcast reached over 200 million viewers, with an audience 25 percent larger, according to Soviet pollsters, than any previously known there. Nothing of this kind has been seen before in the USSR. (In fact, nothing of this kind has ever been seen in the United States — a vivid reminder of just how rapidly even small steps toward workers democracy can quickly outstrip the bourgeois variety!)

- More than 400 deputies had taken the floor by the end of the Congress's eighth day, with reformers challenging ruling Politburo members — who were seated prominently on the platform in front of the gigantic hall. Speakers raised charges that would have been the basis for arrest and a long prison term if whispered even to co-workers in the pre-glasnost period.

- On Tuesday, May 30, the former Georgian CP leader took the floor and revealed that the attack by central government troops with toxic gas and sharpened shovels on peaceful protesters in Georgia was ordered from Moscow. Dzhumar Patiashvili had taken the rap and resigned in the week following the attack in the early morning hours of April 9 that killed 20 protesters and seriously injured dozens more. Patiashvili stated that the troops' commander, General Rodionov, was carrying out orders from the minister of interior (Viktor Chebrikov), the minister of defense (General Dmitri Yazov), and the ruling Central Committee to forcibly disperse the demonstration. Although Patiashvili had tried to intervene and delay the attack, he said, he was unable to affect events.

General Rodionov himself spoke up to defend the attack on the protesters and asserted that the situation in the USSR today is worse than it was in 1937 — an ominous allusion. He said that "local officials were worried about an insurrection," which is why the protests had to be stopped, and he chastised the local officials for refusing to admit their involvement in the affair. He then cited reports from KGB agents who had infiltrated the demonstrators to support his claim that the protesters were "anti-Soviet, anti-socialist, and anti-Russian."

- This revelation of KGB involvement against a popular movement hit a raw nerve among democratic-minded deputies. The effects were felt the following day.

Former Olympic gold medal winner Yuri Vlasov, whose father — a Soviet diplomat — had been summoned by the security police (then called the MGB) in 1953 and never returned — led a scathing attack on the KGB and its predecessors. He related its history of torturing and murdering millions, and its continuing threats against those trying to exercise democratic rights today. He said that the KGB represented a "menace to liberty," as was shown in the Georgian events. Vlasov scolded those in the auditorium who, in

the same spirit as the KGB, had been heckling radical speakers at the Congress.

Regarding Gorbachev's connection with the violent suppression of the Georgian demonstration, Vlasov said that if Gorbachev didn't know it was going to happen "then what sort of head of state is he?" He should resign if he knew about it and allowed it to happen; and he should resign if he, as head of state, did not know that the plan was in the works. He asserted that the KGB's only job should be to defend the Soviet people from outside enemies and that it must not be used to smash internal dissent. The KGB, he said, should be brought under the control of the Congress.

Subsequent speakers said that not only Gorbachev but the entire executive branch should resign.

- The next day, June 1, an Estonian deputy read from the secret protocol agreement between Hitler's and Stalin's governments to divide the Baltic between them. The Soviet ruling caste's official position has been to deny the existence of this protocol, and claim that the Baltic peoples joined the USSR "voluntarily" — a position that is becoming less and less tenable. Gorbachev responded that he had requested the original of this document from the West German government a few months ago but that they "couldn't find it," which seems to be true. Only copies appear to exist.

- Two well-known prosecutors of corrupt officials — Telman Gdlyan and Nikola Ivanov — claimed to have evidence implicating high-level government officials in crime, mentioning Politburo member Yegor Ligachev by name and asserting that the Central Committee's vice presidential candidate, Anatoly Lukyanov, a Kremlin legal adviser, had squelched investigations to protect his cronies on top.

Election Results

The Congress did perform its assigned tasks but the process was not so smooth from the bureaucracy's point of view. Not only was Gorbachev subjected to a few probing questions about his personal privileges and vast power, but 87 deputies voted against him for president. His vice presidential choice, Anatoly Lukyanov, was questioned for the better part of two days on a number of issues — for example, his role in the suppression of the Hungarian, Polish, and Czechoslovakian uprisings, and his support for the new amendments to the Criminal Code that seriously threaten dissent. (Roy Medvedev, by the way, a leading dissident, motivated Lukyanov's election!) While Lukyanov managed to mumble his way out of his sticky situation, 179 deputies voted against him and 137 abstained.

Not surprisingly, many prominent Moscow reformers failed to make it to the Supreme Soviet, the new legislative body that will meet twice a year to make laws. Boris Yeltsin, the CP maverick who has won broad popular support for attacking the antidemocratic methods of the ruling apparatus and its special privileges, was again the focus of attention. Due to bureaucratic maneuvering and a tactical miscalculation of the reformers, Yeltsin did not get elected to the Supreme Soviet even though he had won nearly 90 percent of the vote in a large Moscow district during the March 26 elections.

Over the Sunday break, thousands demonstrated their anger at Yeltsin's exclusion and the unfairness of the electoral system. Some protesters even called for Gorbachev's resignation. A number of reports put the number of protesters at 5,000, others at 50,000, in the streets of Moscow and at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium. There was a flood of protest phone calls from all across the USSR to the Congress Secretariat. TV reported an opinion poll showing a remarkable rate of people who disapproved of the number of apparatchiks in the new Supreme Soviet, and the small representation of reformers.

But the impact had been felt: on Monday, Aleksei Kazanie, a deputy from Omsk who had been elected to the Supreme Soviet, offered to give up his position to Yeltsin if that were possible. It turned out that it was.

Attempts to Maintain Control

Gorbachev chaired all the sessions. By the second day he had a loud bell installed so that he could more easily interrupt speakers when he felt like it. He seemed to be deciding unilaterally exactly what concessions should be made, and how far to go with them, when challenges were too serious to ignore. He announced that a commission would be set up to study whether there had, actually, been a secret Hitler-Stalin pact; another commission would examine privileges and benefits enjoyed by the top-level rulers. The Congress will meet twice annually, instead of just once. And Congress deputies can sit on Supreme Soviet committees. In his nearly two-hour address May 30, Gorbachev covered a wide range of problems:

- He announced that the next round of elections to local posts would be postponed from this fall until the spring of 1990 (local CP bureaucrats have expressed serious fears that they will share the fate of over 30 percent of the CP heads in the March 26 elections who failed to get elected).
- He revealed the size of the military budget, which was made public for the first time. It had already been cut and would be cut still further.
- He declared that measures were needed to assist the 40 million Soviet citizens living at poverty level or below.
- He acknowledged that the agricultural policy of "get man back to the land" was floundering.
- He admitted that there were "alarming deficiencies" in areas of health care, the environment, and consumer goods.
- He cautioned against turning on the mechanisms of the market economy "full-blast," which "would immediately explode the whole social situation and violate all processes in the country," perhaps having in mind the mass rebellion he had just seen in China.
- He promised that production of consumer goods would be increased by 37 billion rubles this year and 60 billion next year, but he basically offered no other measures to improve the sagging living standard.
- He admitted that the worsening situation could not all be blamed on the previous "stagnation" period. However, he reported that the Central Committee

leadership is of the conviction that despite all the developing problems, "the basic directions are correct."

It seems clear that the Central Committee's conclusions are not widely shared by the Soviet people and, despite the numerical advantage of the bureaucratic forces inside the Congress, pressures for change from outside determined not only the tone of what transpired inside the auditorium, but also the modest gains toward more openness.

On only one day, Friday, June 2, did the apparatus manage to muster any real reactionary strength. This was for a pathetic attack on Andrei Sakharov, who had had the temerity to criticize some of the Soviet military's actions in Afghanistan. The bureaucratic "highpoint" came when a veteran of that war, who had lost both his legs, not only attacked Sakharov but criticized the entire assembly because no one had appealed to the sacred words "country, motherland, and communism." These, he explained, stand above all else for the true Soviet patriot. These remarks earned him a standing ovation, including from the Politburo.

Social Crisis Continues

The Congress did not reconvene June 5 because it had been declared a day of mourning after a leak in a natural gas line that ran one-half mile from a railroad track blew up two passenger trains in the Ural Mountain region. Hundreds of holiday-bound travelers were killed or injured.

On the previous day, the minister of interior sent thousands of troops and declared martial law in several cities in the Uzbek Republic, where at least 42 people had been killed in a "weekend rampage" involving Uzbeks and Meshketians. (Most of the dead were reportedly Meshketians.) It is not clear what caused the incidents. The Ministry of Internal Affairs commander sent to the region was quoted as saying "I don't think you can call it entirely political nor was it purely rowdyism. . . . The conflict has been ripening for a long time." Television reports said that heavy unemployment among young people who have been displaced by mechanization of the cotton farms—the basis for local economies in many regions of Uzbekistan—may have been a major cause for the problem.

Child labor is still widely used in the vast cotton fields of Central Asia, despite laws against it. The illiteracy rate is high, as is the infant-mortality rate, while conditions of sanitation are inadequate. Although Central Asia has witnessed periodic mass mobilizations, that region is one where the new openness appears to have made the least progress. That was evidenced during the March 26 elections when old apparatchiks totally retained their hold.

Bureaucratic mismanagement has caused several tremendous human disasters since Gorbachev came to power. (Previously, of course, they may also have been taking place, but if so they occurred in silence.) These include the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the collapse of hundreds of poorly constructed apartment buildings during the Armenian earthquake, the collapse of 900 apartment buildings in the northern Caucasus in February when their foundations gave way during a flood as a man-made lake overflowed for lack of a drainage system, and now this gas explosion in the open

mountain region. The financial costs of these catastrophes are huge; the human and political costs incalculable.

To this we have to add such policies as the bureaucracy's persistent efforts to expand nuclear power facilities, and its insistence on upholding the Stalinist centralized Russian control over the non-Russian peoples of the Caucasus.

As the democratic openings get wider and as broader sectors of Soviet society come into motion around their own needs, we can expect to see ever more forceful attacks on the bureaucrats and their system of control. As time goes on there will be more and more serious challenges to this system, for which the Soviet people continue to pay a very high price. ●

The following article appeared on page 12 of Moskovskiye Novost (Moscow News), issue No. 13, dated March 26, 1989. MN has been in the forefront of the campaign for more openness, or glasnost, and has become known for offering a greater variety of discussions on a broader range of issues than most Soviet periodicals. Printed in a run of approximately 250,000 in Russian in the USSR, MN also appears abroad, translated into a number of foreign languages.

Contrary to the normal practice, this article was left out of the English-language edition. In what could not have been an accident, the corresponding space on page 12 carried an article entitled, "Why! Siberian Pravda Criticizes MN." The opening sentence of that article reads, "The newspaper Pravda differs, depending on where you read it."

We are indebted to Trotsky bibliographer Louis Sinclair for bringing this article to our attention. —Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Request for Rehabilitation American Delegation Delivers a Petition to Moscow from Trotsky's Descendants

We, the undersigned, the grandson and great-grandchildren of the Russian revolutionary Marxist Lev Davidovich Bronstein, known as Leon Trotsky . . . request that all the slander and false criminal charges raised against him on the direct orders of Stalin be officially withdrawn from our grandfather and great-grandfather, his family, and his comrades in struggle. . . .

We also request that the works of Leon Trotsky, which represent a valuable collection of historic and contemporary Marxist study and thought, be freely published in the Soviet Union.

The letter with this petition, signed by direct descendants of Trotsky who live in Mexico, was brought to Mos-

cow by four members of the Moscow Trials Committee in the U.S.A. that is studying the crimes of Stalinism. Joining them was Vladimir Kibalchich, the son of Victor Serge, a Russian revolutionary well known in the West who was repressed by Stalin for participating in the "Left Opposition."

"In recent months, a whole number of prominent party activists persecuted under Stalin have been restored to a place of honor," said Carl Finamore, a journalist from the radical American newspaper *Socialist Action*. "It seems to us that the time has come to do the same with respect to Trotsky, regardless of what one may think of his political views. All that is necessary is to affirm, for example, that the charge made against him that he conspired to murder the top Soviet leaders was a lie."

"Every person must have the opportunity to independently judge Trotsky's views, after having read his works — which comprise 80 volumes — and become familiar with precisely what he meant by 'permanent revolution.' As it is now, people in the Soviet Union, to a significant degree, are still under the influence of the view of Trotsky that was formulated by Stalin himself," was the opinion of social activist and director of the Campaign in Support of Palestine, Ralph Schoenman.

Members of the American group sought a meeting with Trotsky's granddaughter, Aleksandra, of Moscow. However, they learned that she had died literally on the eve of their arrival.

Andrei Bezruchenko

Unrest Continues in Caucasus

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

On Wednesday, May 31, the Soviet authorities released 12 Armenian leaders who had been arrested following the December 7, 1988, earthquake, to await their trials. They included the 11-member Karabagh Committee. The 12 had been prominent in mass mobilizations in the Armenian Republic and in Nagorno-Karabagh throughout most of 1988, demanding that this predominantly Armenian territory—presently an Autonomous Region within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic—be reunited with the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The original timing of the arrests had been designed by the central bureaucratic apparatus to behead the movement by taking advantage of the Armenian people's devastation, sorrow, and relative disarray after the earthquake.

According to the June 5 *New York Times*, the 11 Karabagh Committee members "were flown to Armenia and freed to a jubilant crowd."

Despite the martial law imposed by the central government on the Armenian Republic since last year, the movement has continued. In mid-May, 300,000 protested in the streets of Yerevan, demanding that the arrested leaders be freed. In January, the Supreme Soviet had placed Nagorno-Karabagh under a "Special Administration" of direct authority from Moscow through Moscow's appointed administrator Arkady I. Volsky who rules by decree. But the *New York Times* referred to a TASS report that the capital of the region, Stepanakert, had been "paralyzed for a month by a general strike intended to bring pressure on the [Congress of People's Deputies] to sever Nagorno-Karabagh from Azerbaijan."

Both *Moscow News* and *Ogonyok*, two of the more open official, glasnost publications in the USSR, have featured reports on what is going on in Nagorno-Karabagh under the Special Administration. The correspondents in both cases—the first in February and the second in April—described grim living conditions, with severe shortages of such basic items as water and electricity. The TASS report stated that rumors of food shortages in Nagorno-Karabagh had prompted people in the Armenian Republic to organize food caravans—not an easy task considering the limited roads that exist through the mountainous terrain, food shortages in the Armenian Republic itself, and severe restrictions on travel into Nagorno-Karabagh imposed by the Special Administration authorities.

In fact, such missions of mercy are undoubtedly against the law. These were precisely the type of self-help initiatives the central authorities sought to neutralize when it arrested Karabagh Committee members just after the earthquake.

The *Ogonyok* report was especially interesting because the journalist, Anatoly Golovkov, made a point of offering a refutation of Gorbachev's repeated condemnation of the Armenian mass movement as one resulting from the machina-

tions and manipulations of local "mafia"-type figures, who have allegedly created it to sabotage the perestroika reforms that threaten their local network of corruption. Golovkov asked Konstantin Karlovich Maidanyuk, "senior investigator of especially important cases attached to the USSR General Prosecutor," who has been in Nagorno-Karabagh "for a long time now," whether he felt "this entire Nagorno-Karabagh stew was cooked up by a Mafia."

"No," he answered. "I don't think so." He continued by explaining that such a conclusion has become a habitual way of interpreting unexpected developments in the USSR. But this approach only obfuscates a true assessment of the problem. "The Mafia? Can you really imagine that local con-artists and extortionists could organize tens of thousands of people in a persistent political struggle only for the sake of catching a golden fish in the muddy waters? As far as I can make out, it was just the opposite that took place—such developments tended to disrupt the normal channels" of local corruption.

Golovkov described the wretched living conditions of many of the refugees, some of those 300,000 or so Armenians and Azeris who were forced to flee their jobs and homes during a series of local pogrom-type events in the two republics in late November and early December 1988. He blamed local officials for their role in sanctioning and facilitating these mass expulsions and sided totally with the popular anger against long-standing corrupt policies of local authorities. Golovkov, however, regretted that the Armenians had failed to understand how they were not unique in being victims of such local crooks. He developed the point further, explaining that this kind of corruption afflicts widespread regions in the Soviet Union including the Russian Republic.

Both the reports in *Moscow News* and *Ogonyok* made a point of declaring how popular the Special Administration was. "And nothing else but the popularity of the policies of the [Special Administration] Committee can explain the fact that during the March 26 elections [to the Congress of People's Deputies], more than 95 percent (!) of the Karabagh electorate voted for A. I. Volsky as a USSR popular deputy." (emphasis in the original)

Volsky ran unopposed. As noted in the preceding article, when the Congress met it was forced, as a result of vigorous protests, to call for new elections. So much for the popularity of Volsky and his gang.

And even Golovkov had to report that there had been a strike in Stepanakert March 6-12 which he claimed came as a "surprise" to everyone. As if he had forgotten the deplorable living conditions he had just described which certainly provide ample basis for militant protests, Golovkov attributed the strike to "rumors" and "lies" on leaflets distributed by "bad hands." ●

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

31. Russian Patriots (continued)

In the 1920s, many Young Communist League members, when asked on a questionnaire to specify their nationality, would either cross out the question or write “internationalist.” Even in 1936, during the Spanish events, we felt like soldiers of the International Brigade, fighting near Madrid. We expected a revolution in at least one country of the West. But from the first day of the war, which began on our soil despite Stalin’s theory, “defeat the enemy on his own territory” (most likely precisely because it began in Brest and Minsk, and not in Konigsberg or Kyustrin), we felt with our total beings: “We are Russians.”

As a Jew, I had scores no less serious to settle with the Nazis; however, I did not really find out about that during the first days of the war but only when my division moved into territory that had formerly been occupied; and moreover, I did not learn it from my commanding officers. In political conversations conducted with us soldiers, not once during all those years did they ever report to us that the entire Jewish population in the occupied regions had been murdered — not even when we were outside Warsaw where the ghetto uprising was taking place.

A genuine explosion of national consciousness took place among the people. It can subside for a long time, but when you come to see that the danger of annihilation hangs over your people and that your children, wife, and parents are threatened with death only because of their nationality, a consciousness of your unity with them springs to life within you. Precisely the threat of general annihilation and not some order from the high command engenders this consciousness. And then the victory comes as a result. This happened not only in our Fatherland War [World War II], but also in wars of other peoples when they were confronted with the threat

of annihilation. They had a choice: either win or die. They defended their land because they defended the right of their people to live. They fought for their Motherland because they fought for the lives of their children. But is it possible to distinguish one’s national feelings coldly and deliberately from patriotism? I doubt it.

The only thing in his whole life that Stalin was able to read in the soul of the people was the rise of national feelings that took place during the war. But only someone who was totally blind would have failed to see it.

During the war, A.N. Tolstoy coined the words “Russian character.” Later on, it was quietly renamed the “Soviet character,” a term devoid of meaning since the character of a people is accumulated not over thirty or forty years but over centuries. As many nationalities as there are in the Soviet Union, there are that many national characters; and it is premature to try to lump them together as one.

In just the same way, the word “patriotism” better agrees with Russian, or Ukrainian, or Georgian than with the concept of Soviet. Soviet patriotism is based on the presumption that the USSR is above all fixed forever (and this contradicts the Constitution); and second that it is somehow in opposition to the other socialist countries. And do the Moldavians turn out to be Soviet patriots while the Rumanians are some sort of Socialist Rumanian patriots? Really now! In a multi-national country, which is the homeland of numerous peoples, national and patriotic feelings cannot fully coincide. And the question is far too complicated to be resolved by simply introducing a newly devised term signifying that a given thing is already a finished product needing only to be labeled and put on the shelf alongside analogous items like Soviet humanism, Soviet character, Soviet morality. There

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.

are many, many things that are purely Soviet, but to try to drag in among them morality, character, patriotism, and humanism serves no purpose.

In introducing into the ideological arsenal of the Communist Party the concept of Soviet patriotism, Stalin was introducing precisely Russian patriotism, and he performed a genuine miracle. Russian — precisely Russian — national sentiment had been aroused in us as a reaction, as a response, and as a challenge. And it was most probably because we learned that the occupiers marching along our streets, where we had grown up, considered all Russians pigs, swine. Well, is that so? Then, all right, we are all Russians and we'll show you who's swine! Such was a natural reaction. Now we were glad when they called us all Russians and we responded as one to appeals to "Russ."

But Stalin always turned something good into something bad. He could not do otherwise. Any upsurge coming from the heart of the people was transformed under his heavy hand into its bureaucratic-administrative antithesis and an act of love became an act of violence. Thus the Russian national sentiment that sustained all the Soviet people during the time of mortal danger was transformed, when the danger had passed, into national arrogance; into the theory of the preeminence of Russian science; into the deportation of the entire population of Kalmyks, Chechens, and still other minority peoples; into the campaign against the "cosmopolitans"; into the case against the Kremlin doctors;¹ into a monument to Yury Dolgoruky; into the thesis that tsarist colonial conquests were progressive; and into many other such progressive developments.

The aim was a Stalinist one: to reinforce Stalin's omnipotence. And the means was a Stalinist one: repression and lies — lies using formally rounded-off, streamlined words to rename a piglet a crucian carp.

Not long ago I met with some folks from home, former residents of Chernovo. We started talking about how things were going, who was still living where, if still alive at all. The overwhelming majority had perished. The invaders had established a Jewish ghetto not far from Odessa in a little place called Domanevka. That is the place where the inhabitants of Chernovo met their death. But the first to be killed was Volf Bilert, chairman of the collective farm. This was not that collective farm founded in 1922 by my father and his comrades, but a normal collective farm of the prewar period that united Ukrainians and Jews; and the chairman was Volf or as we called him in the plain Jewish language: Velvl.

The Nazi-collaborator police force, made up of locals, knew him well and were able to find him immediately. He was tied to a stake near the hospital, in a prominent place along the Ukrainian street — you will recall there were two streets in Chernovo: the bulk of the Ukrainians had lived on one and the Jews on the other. That was how it had been long ago. Now the division had ceased to be; Ukrainian girls married Jewish lads and vice versa. But I am calling it the Ukrainian street so you will have a clearer recollection.

He was put at the far end of the street near the hospital. Remember it?

They tied Volf to a stake and began to torture him. He was beaten and stabbed with knives. Then they carved a star on his back. He died a terrible death.

Velvl died. He was killed because he was a Jew. But they carved a star on his back because he was the chairman of a collective farm.

We recalled others also, going house by house. I began to take notes on one after the other like Soloukhin did about his fellow villagers in "Drop of a Rose." Only here the rose was bloody.

The Salkovsky family: their only son Joseph perished at the front. The Kleimanovs' two sons and a grandson lay down their lives at the front. The Spectors lost a son at the front and the other six people in the family, the children and the old people, were tortured to death in the Domanevka ghetto.

Four from the Granikov family perished at the front, the fathers and sons. The rest of the family, the women and girls, were tortured to death in the ghetto. The Shkrabs' two grandsons never returned from the front. The Shvartsmans — Matvei and Iosif — gave their lives fighting for their homeland. The Bershadskys — two families — old men, children, old women — tortured to death in Domanevka. The Lekhers' father and two sons died fighting for their Motherland. Three of the Flig family died at the hands of the fascists and several survived. One of them fought brilliantly and came back a captain. A Ukrainian family saved his younger brother, a 10-year-old boy, from the fascists. They took him away to another village, renamed him Vanya Shevchenko, and he is still alive. He is married to a Ukrainian woman and has a charming 17-year-old daughter. I sat at a table with her, looked at this Jewish-Ukrainian child, and asked myself: "What does she know about this? Is it important to her?"

It turned out that she knew the entire history of her family. She knew it all. And to know even such a simple history is no small thing. Those who know cannot remain indifferent.

We moved on to other yards, other families. The Leizerovichs' two sons gave their lives for the Motherland. The Kmanskys lost three sons. The Doctorovich, Koifman, Goldberg, and Groisman families each lost a son. The Knopfs lost five men, fathers and sons, who perished defending their country; and nine family members never returned from the ghetto. Not one person remains of this large, happy family.

The Mullers' two sons fought and died. Four of the Prizantys never came home from the front; nine perished in the Domanevka ghetto. And the list goes on and on. Out of all the families that we could recall, 63 people fought for the Motherland. Forty-five perished; 18 returned from the front with awards, ranks, and wounds. And I asked:

"Did any of the local Jews collaborate with the Germans?"

Of course not! Not one. But if a person remained at his former post, on the brigade of a collective, was this not collaboration? What do you think? After all, the collective farms were left intact; the fascists did not disperse them. And the leader had to carry out the orders of the commanding staff — to send people out to work, for example.

And how many people agreed to remain with the brigades?

In Chernovo, not one person. And in Pavlovka, you remember that little place not far from us? In Pavlovka, there were four Jews among the brigade leaders. Did this really save them? They died in Domanevka. And in all, only eight

people returned from Domanevka, those who by some miracle survived.

I cannot get out of my mind what I learned about the inhabitants of my little town. You put up a good fight for our Motherland, my brothers; you put up a good fight! There are people, and not a few of them, who wanted to remain silent about this page from the history of the Fatherland War, the page about the Bilerts, the Knopfs, the Shvartsmans. But they were no worse than the others. They did nothing to be ashamed of—neither treason nor betrayal. It is a bloody page, but an unblemished one.

Thinking about the Jews of Chernovo, about the Shevchenko family, who saved the younger Flig son and about the police-collaborators who tortured Bilert, I cannot help making a comparison. It cannot be accidental that in none of the previous wars of Russia were there so many deserters and traitors as in this one. The point, I think, is that the 1941-45 war contained elements of the war from 1917-20. But given that there were certain similarities, of course, there were also big disparities.

In particular, the difference between the police of the collaboration forces of the Second World War and the White Guard executioners of the civil war was above all the fact that the Whites, although they were being supported by the Entente [England, France, and Imperial Russia], still hoisted before their regiments the banner of the Motherland, the sacred banner, even if it were red, white, and blue. All the same, it was the banner of the Motherland. But the police collaborators [in World War Two], without disguising themselves, crowded under the German banner. Therefore, the appeal to “the Motherland,” having never before been advanced, found a deep, heartfelt response in the aftermath of the German attack.

This theme is a big one; it is a good one for historians and writers to determine what impelled Soviet people to join the ranks of the Nazi murderers. In any case, it is clear that they were people who nursed a grievance and a bitterness, be it from 1919 or 1930. They were moved not by a fondness for the Germans but by a hatred for Soviet power. But regardless of what made them so full of hate, the fact that they went over to the Germans occupied a great place in the popular consciousness that condemned them immediately and without reservation: They had sold out to foreigners, the scum!

Under these conditions (i.e., above all under conditions of hostile foreign occupation) the Motherland became the main thing for us. When the Germans seized their first village, they laid the basis for their own defeat.

And it becomes clear that one and the same set of words can have different political connotations in different historic settings. That was true of the appeal to “the Motherland”; it became true of the call to patriotism.

In the years of the war against Hitler’s Germany, patriotism could only have been Russian patriotism. Thus, collaborationism, being by its motives and sentiment anti-Soviet, took on an anti-Russian character.

But when the war was over, Stalin’s toast, “for the Great Russian people,” had the sound of a certain historic vindication. But such a formulation was deeply unreliable, ahistorical, and dangerous. First of all, each nationality was great in

its resistance, even those that were numerically very small, who maintained their spirit in any ordeal. Perhaps these numerically small people may have more spiritual grandeur than the valiant knight of yore defending himself from another. But later—and this is most important—in the postwar conditions, in the ecstasy of victory won through such sacrifice, to extol everything Russian meant to risk this exaltation quickly becoming a great power attitude, chauvinism, a Great Russian arrogance, with a Yury Dolgoruky and Ivan Kalita² aspect, a justification for all the campaigns of the Russian tsars.

And then in town squares, instead of the Freedom Obelisk, there will be the Great Prince on horseback.

Just as the banner of the Motherland during the civil war and that same banner during the Fatherland War had totally opposite meanings, so the patriotism of the war years and of the postwar years were profoundly different. The word has a magic quality to us. There are just wars and there are unjust wars, where the invaders disguise themselves as just. And both appeal to patriotism.

The feelings gripping each of us who hear and repeat this captivating word may still be as noble as the ones we felt when it was first proclaimed, summoning us to fight for our independence. However, the word and the noble sentiments will serve other aims, another task, because this same appeal in a new historic setting is now, in reality, something else.

* * *

After the victory, I served several more months in the Soviet occupation forces; I was friends with my sergeant-major and together we went to his wife’s home territory, in the Krasnodar region, to a large Cossack village called Akhtary.

I was so tired of the camp barracks, and so much longed for a very small, sparse, but private room for myself where no one would look over my shoulder to see what I was reading and writing! And here I met a simple woman. The daughter of a Siberian miner, she had spent her childhood at that same mine where the Lena executions had taken place and she saw the corpses with her own eyes.³ She did not know about the Vorkuta executions, where there were many times more bodies, and I did not tell her. In reality, I deceived her, and in the same way my investigator was later to conclude that I had deceived the party and the government by hiding my prison record.

At the time of the war, when going from one place to another my only documents were my military papers. I never went in and admitted to the authorities that I had been imprisoned under the article against counterrevolutionary-Trotskyist activity. It could be that I had not sufficiently repented my crimes and this means that I have not mended my ways. And those who have not sufficiently mended their ways have to serve a new term. Do you understand? That is the logic of the “Mr. Fidgets” [jailers].

I lived quietly, clenching what remained of my teeth and trying to mend what remained of my soul. It was as if nothing else had ever existed. Not Ananayev, not Odessa, not the Donbass, not Vorkuta. In the morning, you get up, without remembering what you dreamed that night. And you go to

work. With the shop foreman and your comrades, you talk about repairing the machinery, or about the blueprints, and after that you are silent again. At home you are silent. You listen to songs on the radio and remain silent. Sometimes you remember the tent on the Usa; but you remain silent.

A letter arrived from Nina. Yeva had died, and after she died, that very same week, Grandma had died. The old woman had lost her sons, her younger partisan-daughter, but could not bear the loss of her older daughter. I recalled Kharkov in 1929, and Yeva beside the cradle. She fed Nina and said:

"What are you doing Misha, what are you doing? Do you want to destroy me? If Volodya sets foot in here again, I'll throw him out! Do you hear me?"

And several years later, in December 1934, she repeated the same thing, pressing her hands to her temples and listening to the automobile horns.

Death can be natural or violent. Which was hers? Twenty years can stretch and overwind a person's nerves. Even steel wire can break if it is overwound. And what happened? One brother disappeared, then a second brother, then her husband—even if her former husband!—then a third brother. The secretary of the regional committee disappeared and Communist friends; and people disappeared whom she had only yesterday greeted at a meeting.

I also got a letter from Mama: Father had died of dystrophy.

From Nina's words, I know that Yeva in the last years of her life had begun to do some thinking. How could she not? She lived in Moscow where there were more rumors than in a remote village, and more arrests. Even in places like Akhtary [in Siberia], it was difficult to force oneself not to think.

I returned from the camp and I came home from the war; but my friends considered me dead. In the summer of 1947, I received an assignment to Belorussia on business connected with choosing equipment at a storehouse of captured machinery. I visited Moscow, the children and Mama; but I did not visit a single old friend and did not even consider doing so. Why? It would be easier for them if the dead remained dead.

Who of my friends would trust me? No one was safe from arrest even if he had never in his life known a carrier of an infectious disease such as I had. It is good if my friends had buried me. May I rest in peace.

Except for newspapers and radio, little bound me with the life of the Great Land. The fishing village of Akhtary was at the end of the railroad line on the shore of the Azov Sea. There I worked in a mechanic's shop on the construction of a fish factory boat. There were twenty people in all working there. Our only lathe operator, a demobilized soldier, out on the street on a holiday, in his soldier's shirt dripping with the medals and decorations he had received, sometimes allowed himself to utter a few words in the spirit we had all learned during the war: Now we will return home. We will establish order! And any of you scum, look out!

But we returned and remained silent. We became even more quiet than we had been before.

End of Notebook Five.

[Next Month: Notebook Six— "But They Find Me Even Here"]

Notes

1. These were all Stalinist campaigns. During World War II, Stalin had entire minority populations deported from their homes to distant parts of the Soviet Union because they were suspected of being potential collaborators with the Nazis. Many of those nationalities are still fighting to clear themselves of suspicion and to be restored to their homelands. The campaign against the "cosmopolitans" (Jews) was a thinly veiled anti-Semitic campaign. The "Doctors' Plot," cooked up by Stalin in January 1953, implicated nine prominent Soviet doctors, six of them Jewish, in plots to assassinate Soviet leaders. Charges were dropped after Stalin's death later in 1953.

2. Ivan Kalita is Ivan I Danilovich (?-1340). He was the grand duke of Moscow from 1325, who used the military assistance of the Tatar invaders to help expand and consolidate the territory and power of the Moscow principality. He was noted for his cunning and cruelty and for the heavy tributes he extracted from the populace. It was under Ivan I that the Russian Orthodox Church was further integrated into the power structure of the Russian state when he established the residence of the Metropolitan of the Church in Moscow. Ivan I was termed Ivan Kalita for the huge wealth he amassed for himself. "Kalita" in Russian means "money bags."

Yury Dolgoruky (1090?-1157) was the prince of Rostov-Suzdal. He engaged in prolonged military campaigns to expand his turf toward Kiev and fortify his borders. He is associated with the founding of the city of Moscow because he held a meeting with another prince at the settlement called Moscow in 1147. This turned out to be the first historic reference to Moscow, which Dolgoruky subsequently proceeded to surround with forts. The Stalinist bureaucracy's Russian chauvinist frenzy included the issuance of a coin in 1947 imprinted with what was alleged to be Dolgoruky's image "commemorating the 800th year of Moscow"; and in 1954 in Moscow, a monument was erected to Dolgoruky as the city's founder.

3. Tsarist troops fired on striking miners in the Lena goldfields in 1912, killing and wounding hundreds.

Letters

Reply to Dave Riehle

I appreciate the time and effort that Dave Riehle put into his response to my article in the exchange between us which appeared in the May issue of *Bulletin IDOM*. It made a deep impression on me, as a result of which I must modify my views.

There is no question that the objective conditions today are far different than they were in the '30s and that makes all the difference. The sad fact is that today we don't have the unemployed organizations and trade unions under radical leaderships that existed in the '30s on a national scale and was responsible for the rise of the CIO. In 1985 the P-9 leadership and rank and file were the exception to the current trade union bureaucracy, which discourages any militant action. Still, I believe the P-9 strike was the precursor of things to come.

The question that is still hanging, somewhat different than the one I originally posed and which remains to be answered, is this — What can the workers who are on strike do in the meantime? Should the P-9 strikers have gone out on strike when the odds against them were insurmountable, when even a Trotskyist leadership would not have sufficed? In the absence of a resurgence of labor solidarity on a national scale, can the unions achieve victory today in a strike struggle? These are different ways of putting the same question.

Implicit in Riehle's view is the argument, on the one hand, that the employers have become so sophisticated and united, and there is such a complicity of interests of the bosses and their henchmen, the courts, cops, National Guard, and government, and on the other hand the working class is still immobilized under the conservative leadership of the trade union bureaucracy, that to all intents and purposes these objective and subjective conditions must change before strikers can win any victory of significance. This seems to be the logical conclusion to draw from Riehle's views and indeed it may be so. It may only be necessary to add that while a militant, radical leadership does not guarantee a strike victory it would go a long way to insure a victory when there is a change in the objective conditions.

Bernard Daniels
New York

Indian Burial Rights

I thought readers of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* would be interested in the following brief excerpt from the *May Inter-Tribal Tribune*, published in Kansas City:

On April 24, 1989, Governor Mike Hayden of Kansas officially signed into law the Human Remains Preservation Act. This law is similar to the one passed by Missouri in July 1987, insuring the return of Native American remains for reburial following a specified scientific research period. This law also prohibits people from taking or displaying bones or burial goods from unmarked graves.

Our commendations to Kansas and Missouri representatives for their caring and support of Native Americans on this issue. This is not the end of the controversy. In museum storage rooms throughout the nation, there may be as many as 600,000 specimens of Native American human remains (bones, skulls, whole skeletons). The American Museum of Natural History houses about 25,000 specimens; the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History has about 18,000 specimens; 5,000 at Harvard's Peabody Museum; the National Park Service has as many as 20,000 specimens tucked away in repositories all over the country.

Native American tribes and groups such as the Native American Rights Fund and the National Congress of American Indians are demanding the return of skeletal parts held by museums for reburial. To many Native Americans, the collecting of their ancestors' bones and bodies by museums is a source of pain and humiliation — the last stage of a conquest that has already robbed them of their land and destroyed their way of life.

Native Americans argue that anthropologists have had decades to study the remains — so why haven't they? They also wonder why museums need thousands of skeletons.

Jack Bresee
Kansas City, Missouri

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

A monthly magazine of political analysis and theory
for activists in the workers' and radical movements.

__ 1 year: \$24 __ 6 months: \$15 __ 3-month intro: \$5

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Write *Bulletin IDOM*, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009

Special offers to new readers:

- With an introductory 3-month subscription, receive a free copy of the pamphlet "Organizing for Socialism, The Fourth Internationalist Tendency – Who we are, What we stand for" (a \$1.00 value), by Bill Onasch.
- With a 6-month or 1-year subscription, receive a free copy of "A Year of Decision for U.S. Labor – The Hormel Strike and Beyond," by Dave Riehle and Frank Lovell (a \$2.50 value).

International Viewpoint

A unique fortnightly magazine with news and analysis of the international class struggle
from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, published in Europe.

__ 1 year: \$47 __ 6 months: \$25

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Write *International Viewpoint*, P.O. Box 1824, New York, NY 10009

Special offer to new readers:

- With a 6-month or 1-year subscription, receive a free copy of "A Tribute to George Breitman – Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary," edited by Naomi Allen and Sarah Lovell (a \$5.00 value).

F.I.T. DIRECTORY

- Bay Area: P.O. Box 971, Berkeley, CA 94701
- Boston: Mary Scully, 56 Prince St. #3, Boston, MA 02113
- Cincinnati: Doris Marks, 1132 Franklin Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45237
- Cleveland: George Chomalou, 4671 Dalebridge Rd. #202, Cleveland, OH 44128

- Los Angeles: P.O. Box 480410, Los Angeles, CA 90048
- New York: P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009
- Pacific Northwest: P.O. Box 17512, Seattle, WA 98107-1212
- Philadelphia: P.O. Box 28838, Philadelphia, PA 19151
- Pittsburgh: Paul Le Blanc, 840 Heberton, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
- Twin Cities: P.O. Box 14444, University Station, Minneapolis, MN 55414
- Washington D.C.: C. Faatz, P.O. Box 25279, Washington, D.C. 20007

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS FROM THE F.I.T.

A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE BREITMAN: *Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary*
Edited by Naomi Allen and Sarah Lovell \$5.00

MATERIALS FOR A HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM IN THE UNITED STATES:

Trotskyism in America, the First Fifty Years
by Paul Le Blanc \$3.50

Organizational Principles and Practices
Edited with an introduction by Evelyn Sell \$3.50

Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism
Edited with an introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$5.00

*ORGANIZING FOR SOCIALISM: The Fourth Internationalist Tendency—
Who we are, What we stand for*
by Bill Onasch \$1.00

Platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency \$.75

Trends in the Economy—Marxist Analyses of Capitalism in the Late 1980s
by Carol McAllister, Steve Bloom, and Ernest Mandel \$3.00

Don't Strangle the Party, by James P. Cannon \$1.25

Leon Trotsky and the Organizational Principles of the Revolutionary Party
by Paul Le Blanc, Dianne Feeley, and Tom Twiss \$5.00

Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.00

A Year of Decision for U.S. Labor—The Hormel Strike and Beyond
by Dave Riehle and Frank Lovell \$2.50

The Trenton Siege by the Army of Unoccupation, by George Breitman \$1.75

The Transitional Program—Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the United States
by Evelyn Sell, Steve Bloom, and Frank Lovell, Introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$4.00

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

New from the F.I.T.:

American Elections and the Issues Facing Working People

by Paul Le Blanc, Bill Onasch, Tom Barrett, and Evelyn Sell

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

\$5.00