

# Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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## Who We Are

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

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

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

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

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# Jaruzelski's Big Gamble

by Steve Bloom

As of this writing events are moving at a rapid pace in Poland. On August 24, Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Solidarity was confirmed as the country's new prime minister. A cabinet made up, in its majority, of Solidarity leaders will undoubtedly take office. This marks the resolution of a governmental crisis in that country stemming from the resounding defeat handed to the Communist Party by Solidarity in the elections held last June.

According to the pact between Solidarity and the CP which led up to the voting, two parliamentary bodies were established. An open contest was scheduled for a Senate of 100 members, but the legislative assembly of 460 had a prearranged division of 161 seats for Solidarity, with the remainder going to the CP. This was designed to guarantee continued control of the government by Jaruzelski and the Polish bureaucrats.

What actually happened during the voting, however, confounded this scheme. Solidarity won an overwhelming 99 out of the 100 Senate contests. The CP was completely discredited, and the mechanical majority which it had guaranteed itself in the assembly was totally insufficient to allow the formation of a CP government. After struggling for a period to find a CP leader with sufficient authority to become prime minister, General Jaruzelski—who managed, with the collaboration of Solidarity's leadership to get himself elected president by a slim margin—asked Mazowiecki to take on the task of forming a new government.

Solidarity has made a remarkable comeback for a group which was outlawed after the 1981 declaration of martial law. This proves once again that even the strongest military power cannot, by itself, overcome the kinds of social contradictions that originally led to the rise of the Solidarity union movement in Poland during the 1980-81 period.

Decades of mismanagement of Poland's economy by the CP bureaucrats had led to a drastic decline in the standard of living of the Polish people. Solidarity arose in the context of a struggle by the workers and farmers of Poland for a genuine voice in the running of their own country. They rejected the greater austerity policies which the CP insisted were necessary, and proceeded to build a powerful mass movement—at its height Solidarity had 10 million members and an influence that reached into every corner of Polish society.

After the 1981 military crackdown, the CP was able to suppress the legal functioning of Solidarity, but it still continued to exist through a series of underground structures. At the same time, little or nothing was being done to resolve the ongoing social crisis that had led to Solidarity's explosive growth. There has been an ongoing drastic rise in the price of basic commodities, and the availability of goods continues

to decline. In 1988 strikes resumed on a massive scale in Poland. Something had to be done.

Even during the 1980-81 period there were significant differences within the Solidarity movement concerning what alternatives could realistically be posed to the bureaucratic dictatorship of the CP in Poland. The most radical within the organization tended in the direction of the need for a genuine workers' government, which could provide a real alternative. The more conservative elements, on the other hand, tended to look for some kind of compromise with the CP—ever mindful of the threat of military intervention by the Kremlin.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that these different wings were not well defined. There was much confusion—due to years of miseducation under bureaucratic rule—about even simple questions, such as what socialism is. The only Marxism that most people had been exposed to was the misrepresentation of that ideology developed in the Stalin school. The Solidarity movement, therefore, was a vast cauldron of discussion and debate over ideological and theoretical questions, as well as over practical matters. Different and even conflicting viewpoints were held simultaneously, discussed, debated, altered as a result of experience, etc., etc.

This discussion process was cut short, or at least became qualitatively more difficult, after the 1981 coup. The years of clandestinity that followed also took their toll in other ways. Communication was reduced between the rank and file of Solidarity and its leadership. Many leaders were in prison for an extended period, and others, of course, had to act from places of hiding, or in secret. Strikes and other activities that Solidarity did organize tended to become defensive, in reaction to initiatives taken by the regime.

All of these difficulties tended to reinforce the more conservative elements within Solidarity, and those leaders who looked to an accommodation with the Jaruzelski regime came to dominate more and more. This was true to such an extent that, when the new strike wave broke out in 1988, Lech Walesa—founder of the movement and leader of the initial strike wave that won it so much support—was among those urging conciliation with the government. As a result of this conservatism and the years of repression, the formal membership of Solidarity today is probably only one-fifth what it was at the height of the movement in 1980-81. Still, the credibility of Walesa and other Solidarity leaders remains high as a result of the genuine struggles they carried out in the early days. This, above all, explains the results of this year's election.

In a move that is unprecedented in the history of bureaucratic regimes, the Polish CP, noting the increasing conservatism of the leading cadre of Solidarity, decided

to take a major gamble. It opened negotiations with Walesa and others, with the aim of establishing a social pact. The CP would legalize Solidarity and share governmental power with it. In exchange, it expected Solidarity to expend some of its political capital to help manage the economic crisis of Polish society. The result was the electoral agreement discussed above.

This bold maneuver by Jaruzelski was based on a sharing of power, but this was to take place in a Poland where the continued dominance of the CP was supposedly assured by its majority in the legislative assembly. That is, Solidarity had agreed to accept a role as the loyal opposition. In that role, the CP felt it had a great deal to gain from Solidarity's participation in the government, far more than it would risk in such a process. The result of the Senate elections made it impossible for the CP to form a government, however, and Jaruzelski called on Solidarity to carry out the task.

This has meant a dramatic change in the situation for both sides. Jaruzelski's gamble now takes on a much more profound dynamic. The CP no longer directly controls the reins of government in Poland. It is banking on the fact that the present leadership of Solidarity, while remaining an opponent of the bureaucratic system, has no alternative to offer but one of gradual reform. It desperately wants to avoid antagonizing either the Polish CP or its more powerful brethren in the Kremlin. Jaruzelski hopes that such an outlook will guarantee that whatever changes take place, they will stop short of any fundamental challenge to bureaucratic privilege, which the CP is dedicated, above all, to maintaining.

And from a purely practical point of view, Jaruzelski doesn't seem to have any viable alternative—except a return to overt military rule, which has already failed once to resolve the situation. (As a last resort, of course, should things get out of hand, that alternative always remains.)

What's more, the primary goal of the CP in agreeing to the electoral reform in the first place—to get Solidarity to share some of the responsibility for administering the Polish economy—can now be pursued in an even more profound sense. No longer is Solidarity simply a junior partner in this enterprise. It becomes the main governmental power which must administer the Polish economic mess. Without a program for revolutionary change—i.e., for genuine workers' control and democratic planning—Jaruzelski knows that the Solidarity regime will have no choice but to continue, in one form or another, the implementation of austerity measures and concessions to Poland's international creditors. He hopes that the unpopularity of such steps will now serve to discredit Solidarity, and pave the way for a comeback by the CP.

One could sense Jaruzelski licking his chops over this prospect. The CP parliamentary fraction even considered, at one point, allowing Mazowiecki to take complete responsibility for the economic debacle, and not participating in the new cabinet. A phone call from Moscow, however, convinced them that such a policy might have undesirable effects, further discrediting the CP by making it look like it was sabotaging the new government.

In a sense, though Jaruzelski's maneuver is a sharp break with previous policies followed by bureaucracies in power in

Eastern Europe and other workers' states around the world, it actually represents only a variation on a technique used many times before in bourgeois states. One of the best examples is Britain, where from time to time the capitalists of that nation have decided that it is a lesser evil to turn governmental power over to the Labor Party for a period, and allow the trade union bureaucrats to deflect the anger of working people when confronted with austerity, or other unpopular policies.

Jaruzelski is counting on the fact that the conservative wing of Solidarity will maintain its reformist perspective, and will also maintain a sufficient allegiance amongst the masses to create a breathing space for a bureaucratic regime. He hopes that this will allow it to overcome the present severe crisis. Already there is some indication that this policy is having the desired effect. In the last week of August Solidarity formally called on workers to show their support for Mazowiecki by placing a moratorium on strike action for six months. At least some workers responded favorably to this call.

However, the risks are very real. The long-range success of the CP bureaucrats and the present conservative majority of the Solidarity leadership is far from assured. The masses will now demand results from the Solidarity government, and they will not be put off for long by empty promises. There can be little doubt that a process of profound social differentiation will now renew itself within Poland.

The very fact that, despite years of repression, the Jaruzelski government was unable to stamp out the Solidarity movement, and was ultimately forced to legalize it and come to terms with its leadership, represents a significant victory for the Polish masses. They are unlikely to roll over now and play dead. Walesa had a tough time convincing workers in 1988 to end their strikes. Even if he succeeds in achieving his six-month moratorium, it is hard to see how the Mazowiecki government will be able to achieve any substantial economic improvements during that period.

And as the economic and political crisis in Poland continues, we can also expect a renewal of the kind of debate within the mass movement that marked the early years of Solidarity. Even as the conciliationist wing was consolidating its pact with the CP bureaucrats, alternative programs and prospects were certainly being discussed. Even if for now they will remain in a minority, genuine revolutionary currents have the prospect for dramatic growth as the present experiment fails to resolve the problems faced by the Polish masses.

Both Walesa and Mazowiecki have spoken of a return to capitalism in Poland. This has been given extensive play in the bourgeois media, and received applause from the Bush administration. But such declarations cannot simply be taken at face value. For one thing, it is useful to remember a point made earlier. Terms such as "capitalism" and "socialism" tend to have a different meaning in Poland than they do in the West, as a result of years of misuse. It will not be at all clear what such statements really mean until we can evaluate the program of action put into practice by the new Polish government.

*(Continued on page 9)*

# Pro-Choice Activists Galvanized by Supreme Court Ruling

by Evelyn Sell

Feminists and their allies have stepped up pro-choice activities since the U.S. Supreme Court July 3 ruling upholding restrictions on abortions in Missouri. All organizations fighting for women's reproductive rights have experienced increases in membership, larger than usual attendance at meetings, and numerous phone calls asking, "What can I do?" For example, membership in the California affiliate of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) doubled during the summer. In the three weeks after the July 3 Supreme Court ruling, forty thousand new members joined the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Many local chapters of NOW, NARAL, and Planned Parenthood are involved in coalitions carrying out protest demonstrations. The Bay Area Pro-Choice Coalition is organizing an October 15 march and rally in San Francisco. Local coalitions and groups in Pennsylvania are organizing a united September 26 "Keep Abortion Legal" demonstration in Harrisburg. The Ohio Freedom of Choice Coalition has called an October 29 rally in Columbus.

Groups around the country are promoting and organizing participation in the national action in Washington, D.C., on November 12. NOW has organized a "Freedom Train" which will leave Los Angeles on November 8, pick up pro-choice supporters in cities across the country (such as Albuquerque, Kansas City, Chicago, Pittsburgh), and arrive in Washington, D.C., on November 11. Riders will be able to participate in various activities including: attending special workshops, viewing the film *Abortion: For Survival*, and seeing a videotape of NOW's 20th anniversary event.

## Politicians Twisting and Turning

The strong pro-choice reaction to the Supreme Court's recent ruling has prompted a turnabout by politicians sensitive to the political climate. In the first national test after the July 3 decision, the House of Representatives voted against continuing the nine-year ban on funding abortions in the District of Columbia.

At the state level ambitious politicians have begun to court the pro-choice majority. Within days after the July 3 Supreme Court ruling, Illinois attorney general Neil Hartigan stated he supported "The woman's freedom of choice"—after years of statements that he was personally opposed to abortion. This reversal was prompted by Hartigan's hope to be elected governor next year in a state where public opinion polls repeatedly showed that the majority favored a woman's right to choose. Hartigan was set to urge the U.S. Supreme Court to allow Illinois to impose abortion measures even more restrictive than those ap-

proved in Missouri for the *Webster* case. This is an obviously embarrassing position for a candidate trying to win the support of pro-choice voters. At the end of August, newspapers reported that lawyers involved in this crucial Illinois case had begun talks which could lead to an out-of-court settlement before the suit went to the Supreme Court in the fall.

At the local level the abortion issue determined the outcome of an August primary election in a conservative Southern California district. Of the six Republican candidates only Tricia Hunter was pro-choice. She was at the back of the pack until pro-choice activists campaigned for her to make sure that both major parties would be represented by pro-choice candidates in the October 3 run-off election for a state assembly seat. Although it was a small local election, it sent a message to politicians around the country.

## National Actions and Local Efforts

The abortion issue has clearly become a central question in the political life of this nation. Both opponents and supporters of women's reproductive rights are discussing and debating strategies and tactics to deal with current developments. Groups within the women's rights movement share a common goal: to make sure that women can obtain safe, legal, accessible, and affordable abortions regardless of state residence and financial circumstances. But not all organizations agree on how to reach that goal. Delegates to NOW's recent national conference enthusiastically approved a strategy to keep a national focus on abortion rights while continuing to carry out necessary local and state battles. The national conference called for a massive national demonstration in Washington, D.C., on November 12. Local coalitions and campus groups are involved in publicizing the fall action and organizing people to go to the rally at the Lincoln Memorial.

The media has reported that some groups would not help build a national demonstration because it would take money and energy away from state fights placed on the agenda by the court's decision in the Missouri case. This attitude shows a misunderstanding of the relationship between state battles and a national strategy. Massive mobilizations such as November 12 do not drain our resources and energies, but *enlarge them* through magnifying our impact, attracting more allies, opening new financial opportunities, and inspiring people to become active for the first time.

National actions and local efforts are interrelated. We saw this very clearly in the activities to build the April 9, 1989,

March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives. The call for this event spurred the creation of local groups and coalitions and attracted many thousands who had never been involved in such activity before.

### Labor and Student Participation

Thousands of union members marched and rallied on April 9. The action was endorsed by unions ranging from United Auto Workers District 65 to the International Association of Machinists and the National Education Association. The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) endorsed the event, secured significant labor support, and helped organize delegations from local and international unions.

"For construction workers and other unionists, hearing Molly Yard speak on the ERA and choice was a great education," explained Kathy Nelson, liaison to the AFL-CIO from striking Eastern Airlines flight attendants. Over 100 of these strikers marched on April 9 and the demonstration was endorsed by the American Flight Attendants Union.

The head of a women's studies program at a Midwest university reported a rash of new student feminist groups — created to build participation in April 9 and inspired by the demonstration to remain functioning organizations. Busloads of students came to the April 9 action from over 450 college campuses, a strong refutation of the media-created idea that post-1960s generations are not interested in feminist issues or activities!

NOW estimated that 40 percent of the marchers on April 9 were men. This extraordinary turnout of males shows the wide support for women's rights which exists in the U.S. As with numerous female marchers, many men said they were participating in such an event for the first time in their lives. These examples from the April 9 march and rally prove that mass demonstrations:

- draw individuals out of "the silent majority" and start them on the road to persistent activism;
- spur the formation of ongoing groups which help provide a solid basis for continued efforts at all levels — local, state, regional, and national;
- create connections between women's rights activists and those fighting battles on other fronts.

### Marching Shoulder to Shoulder

Mass demonstrations also serve to dramatize the support of our allies in the struggle for women's rights. In addition to labor and students, these allies include: the lesbian and gay rights movement, minority groups, religious groups, and civil libertarians.

Mass actions bring together all of our allies. This has an impact on general public consciousness. When people see television news programs and read newspaper and magazine reports about the wide range of organizations participating in an action, they learn that reproductive rights is not a narrow matter of interest only to a small dedicated band of feminists. It's an issue of concern to broad layers of U.S. society. This helps promote support from more groups and sectors of the population. Each time we win a new ally in our struggle to control our own bodies, it promotes collaboration with other forces. And the most vivid way to display the wide-ranging support for choice is by joining together in massive public events again and again.

When tens and hundreds of thousands gather together in one place, at one time, for one purpose it inspires a unique sense of unity and power. Experience has shown, however, that one huge demonstration was not enough to win civil rights demands, to end the U.S. war in Vietnam, or to gain female suffrage. Repeated mobilizations are necessary. The enthusiasm created by national actions will help sustain us through the difficult battles that must be fought at the local and state levels. Each local and state victory will invigorate pro-choice fighters in other parts of the U.S. when we are interconnected through national campaigns and events. Weaknesses in a particular local or state situation can be compensated and overcome by strengths at the national level.

A winning strategy for women's reproductive rights needs to utilize and strengthen the interconnections between state campaigns and national actions. A united massive rally on November 12 will send a powerful message that pro-choice forces will be fighting at every level to overturn all restrictions on a woman's right to choose.

●  
September 5, 1989

**All Out on November 12!**

**For Safe, Legal, Accessible, and Affordable Abortion!**

**Mobilize for Women's Lives**

**Sunday, November 12 12:00 noon**

**Lincoln Memorial**

**Washington D.C.**

# Central America Solidarity in Canada

by Barry Weisleder

A full slate of Central America solidarity activities across English Canada and Quebec is shaping up for this fall.

Plans for stepped-up educational and protest actions come as a very welcome development in view of the changing situation in the region. Though revolutionary Nicaragua has survived eight years of U.S. backed contra war and imperialist economic sabotage, the homicidal regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala are intensifying war against their own peoples, with Washington's blessing and Ottawa's quiet complicity and its bilateral economic aid.

Recognizing that the U.S. is no longer able to remove the danger of revolution by the once common method of direct military intervention, the Central American oligarchies were forced to seek an accommodation with the Sandinistas to avert a regionalization of the armed conflict and at the same time pursue a local counterinsurgency offensive in the guise of a "democratic counterrevolution." And since the "election" of military-puppet President Cerezo in Guatemala, and the more recent capture of the legislature and presidency by ARENA, the ultrarightist party of the death squads in El Salvador, there has been a dramatic rise in assassinations and disappearances in those countries. Soon ARENA President Cristiani's new proposed "Anti-Terrorism Law" will give the military a free hand to physically eliminate any suspected or actual opponents of the regime.

Meanwhile, Nicaragua's leadership has to revive an economy in ruins, and has to face the crucial test of an election on February 25, 1990, that Washington and its political allies in Nicaragua will try to discredit, and if at all possible, to disrupt. And although the accord signed in August at Tela, Honduras, by the five Central American presidents will lead to the termination of U.S. aid to the contras, and their demobilization (reflected in the decision of three of the nine contra leaders to seek political asylum in the U.S.), the contras are still killing and maiming Nicaraguan civilians and may continue to do so, albeit on a smaller scale, following their official removal from Honduran base camps in the months ahead.

Clearly, the struggle for peace with social justice in Central America is far from over; it has just reached a new plateau — one fraught with grave dangers and, especially in El Salvador, new revolutionary possibilities.

In this situation, international anti-intervention and solidarity activity can play a crucial role in aiding that struggle and isolating its antagonists.

## All Out for September 16!

Supporters of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement, the FMLN-FDR, are initiating a three-month-long international campaign to demand an end to human rights abuses and to force the government to negotiate a political solution to the conflict. This campaign will feature selected weeks of

cultural and political activities, speaking tours and musical performances: from September 11 to 15 (culminating in picket line protests to be held at U.S. consulates across Canada on Friday, September 15, 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.); and other activities in the week of October 9 to 13.

Human rights activists, along with supporters of the revolutionary movement in Guatemala, the URNG, will hold events to mark the International Day of Solidarity with Guatemala on October 20.

The highly successful, cross-country humanitarian aid campaign for Nicaragua — Tools for Peace — will also resume this fall.

But the major upcoming united mass political action that is expected to mobilize forces from refugee, labor, religious, human rights, and antiwar groups, at least across Southern Ontario, is scheduled for Saturday, September 16. This is the date chosen to mark Central America Independence Day, which commemorates the longstanding struggle to unite and free Central America from foreign domination (first from Spain, then from the U.S. and its contemporary imperialist allies).

The cultural/political rally, starting at 2:30 p.m. at Toronto's City Hall Square, will be followed by a march through the heart of the downtown, ending at the U.S. Consulate. The event is sponsored by the Ontario Central American Solidarity Network (OCASN).

## More Political Action Needed

OCASN is composed of humanitarian aid and solidarity groups in Kingston, Ottawa, Peterborough, Toronto, Hamilton, Guelph, Waterloo, London, Sarnia, Windsor, St. Catharines, and other centers. At its annual conference, held last February in Hamilton, the over 100 activists in attendance agreed that OCASN should become more action-oriented. Now, local groups are encouraged to seek out allies and form local networks that can undertake campaigns, and even unite in regional political actions when possible.

The September 16 rally and march is the first regional mass political action called by OCASN. It is occurring particularly in response to requests for support from the Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugee communities. As a representative of the El Salvador Information Office explained to the OCASN Steering Committee meeting in Kingston on August 12, "There is a lot of economic aid campaign work across the country, which should continue, but we need more political action to support our struggle."

Solidarity groups composed mainly of Canadian activists have been slow to respond to this challenge. Fortunately, OCASN's September 16 action, and the fall initiatives of the Central American activists, are showing the way forward. ●

*(Barry Weisleder is a member of the OCASN Steering Committee.)*

## Letter from the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/The Caribbean (ENC)

August 31, 1989

TO: Coordinating Committee, Affiliates, and Members-at-Large

Greetings:

Enclosed is a letter announcing a national meeting of groups opposed to U.S. interventionist policies in Central America. The meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., on Sunday, October 8, 1989. Its purpose is to plan united protest demonstrations in the months ahead.

Different individuals and groups are also sending out announcements of the October meeting. Blase Bonpane (Executive Director of the Office of the Americas in Los Angeles) sent out notice about the meeting a few weeks ago. Angela Sanbrano (Executive Director of CISPES) informs me that on September 11 she will be getting out a communication co-signed by leaders of major Central America organizations urging attendance at the October 8 meeting.

October 8 is thus shaping up as an extremely important day for unifying the U.S. anti-intervention movement for joint actions.

We are writing to urge a maximum effort to publicize the meeting and make it as broadly representative as possible. PLEASE NOTE: The meeting is a *delegated* one. Whoever attends must represent an organization—union, Central America, civil rights, women's rights, student, religious, or any other that can be involved in the anti-intervention fight. The ENC, of course, is making a special effort to encourage maximum labor representation.

Please distribute the enclosed to groups in your area and to activists in other cities who may be interested in organizing for and attending the October 8 meeting.

In Solidarity,  
Jerry Gordon  
National Coordinator

## Call for October 8 National Meeting on Central America

August 31, 1989

Greetings,

There is an emergency need for representatives of organizations which oppose U.S. policies in Central America to meet and plan a united response to what is taking place in the region.

Repression against workers, peasants, and other democratic forces in El Salvador is becoming ever more brutal. The repression continues and escalates only because of massive U.S. funding of El Salvador's death squad government.

The U.S. government also continues to support the contras in Nicaragua and sabotages the peace accords designed to end the bloodshed in that ravaged country.

Washington also maintains military regimes in Honduras and Guatemala which torture and kill those who dare to speak up for democratic rights.

Please attend a national meeting of anti-intervention groups in the U.S. to discuss long-term strategy for Central America work, including a possible spring action.

The meeting on October 8 is scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the District Building at the corner of 13th and Pennsylvania avenues in Washington, D.C. Entrance is in the

side of the building on 13 1/2 Street, across from a parking lot.

For more information about the October 8 meeting, write or call Marilyn Lerch: 3020 Porter St. NW #101, Washington, D.C. 20008; (202) 244-4397. (Marilyn is the Co-Chair of the Washington, D.C., Area Labor Committee on Central America and the Caribbean.)

In Solidarity,

**Blase Bonpane**—Executive Director, Office of the Americas, Los Angeles

**Ana Coria**—Chair, Human Rights Committee, United Teachers Los Angeles (NEA/AFT)

**Thomas Paine Cronin**—President, District Council 47, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Philadelphia area

**Ben Davis**—Secretary, Labor Coalition on Central America

**Bernie Dinkin**—Education Director, Philadelphia Joint Board, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union

**Arthur T. Doherty**—General Executive Vice President, American Postal Union, Local 89, Philadelphia

**Dallis R. Graham**—Vice President, S.E. Chapter, Local 668, Pennsylvania Social Services Union, SEIU

**Theresa El-Amin**—President, Union of Union Representatives (SEIU National Staff Union)

**Phil Harris**—Strike Coordinator, International Association of Machinists (IAM), Lodge 1776, Philadelphia



**Bill Henning**—Vice President, Communications Workers of America Local 1180, New York  
**Anne Hill**—Regional Director, Northeast Ohio District 925, Service Employees International Union  
**Joe Miller**—Philadelphia SANE/Freeze  
**Harold Mitchell**—President, Local 100, AFSCME; Chair, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Cleveland (Ohio) Chapter  
**Jim Moran**—Executive Director, Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health  
**Amy R. Newell**—General Secretary-Treasurer, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America  
**Marian Porro**—President, Local 1930, District Council 37, AFSCME, New York

**David Riehle**—President, United Transportation Union, Local 650, Twin Cities  
**Cleveland Robinson**—Secretary-Treasurer, District 65, United Auto Workers, New York  
**Lance E. Rogers**—District Chairman, District 1472, Transport Communications Union, Philadelphia  
**John Ryan**—President, Communications Workers of America Local 4309, Cleveland  
**Michael Urquhart**—President, Local 12, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Washington, D.C.

(Partial List of Signers of Call to October 8, 1989, Meeting)

# Revolutionary Marxists and the Anti-Intervention Movement Today

by Michael Livingston

*The following is the edited text of the anti-intervention report approved by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency national conference on July 2, 1989.*

As revolutionary Marxists we understand the importance of anti-imperialist struggles to the world socialist revolution. Living in the U.S., an imperialist center, we know that the best way to support these struggles is to oppose U.S. intervention at its source. And we have learned that the best way to do this is to educate, motivate, and mobilize masses of people in a powerful movement against intervention; in other words, to apply a mass action strategy.

I will begin by surveying the situation in Central America, present U.S. policy, and the state of the anti-intervention movement. Then I will go on to discuss the Fourth Internationalist Tendency's tasks to build the movement against intervention.

## Central America Today

The general situation in Central America remains, as it has for the last five years, in an unstable equilibrium. The U.S. continues to intervene in a massive way. The militarization of Honduras has continued. The massive military and economic aid to El Salvador continues. And the U.S. war against Nicaragua, a war that has wrecked the Nicaraguan economy and inflicted a horrendous death toll on the Nicaraguan people, still goes on. At the same time the forces of the FMLN in El Salvador have not been defeated and in fact appear to be on the rise while the Sandinistas remain in power in Nicaragua.

Within this general equilibrium, three important changes have taken place.

First, in El Salvador the so-called center represented by Duarte and the Christian Democrats has collapsed. With the rise of ARENA and the election of Cristiani the few democratic openings that existed in El Salvador will disappear. The U.S. supported Duarte because he was a puppet

easily marketed as a democrat. The hypocrisy of the U.S.'s support for the "center" was revealed by Secretary of State Baker's response to the election of ARENA. Baker urged Congress to give the "new ARENA" a chance and immediately requested increased aid to El Salvador.

A second important change is the bipartisan consensus forged by Congress and the Bush administration. We must be clear on the meaning of the consensus. In so many words it is an agreement that the U.S. has a right to intervene. More specifically, it is an agreement between Congress and the president on the means used to intervene in Nicaragua. These include continued covert operations and economic warfare against Nicaragua, and so-called humanitarian aid to the contras into 1990 to keep the contra forces alive as an option. The agreement also includes the right of the U.S. to increase its intervention if Nicaragua does not "democratize," that is, do what the U.S. wants.

The third change in the overall equilibrium has been the collapse of the contras as an instrument of intervention. This collapse is a consequence of military and political defeats inflicted on the contras by the Sandinistas and a consequence of mass opposition to the contras in the U.S. This mass opposition created sufficient pressure to bring about the February 1988 House vote against the Reagan contra aid proposal.

We can make two general points about the current situation. First, though the situation is more or less in a state of equilibrium, the contradictions are such that it could change dramatically overnight, especially in El Salvador. Such a sudden change in Central America would also cause an equally sudden and dramatic change in the way the U.S. intervenes in the region.

Second, the collapse of the contras and the switch to more covert methods of intervention—methods not as visible to

the American people — illustrate the power of the anti-intervention sentiment in this country and how that sentiment can limit Washington's options. To understand how that sentiment can be strengthened and mobilized we must examine more closely the state of the anti-intervention movement itself.

### The State of the Anti-Intervention Movement

In spite of almost a decade of government and ruling class propaganda designed to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome," the majority of the U.S. people remain opposed to military intervention in other countries, as shown over and over by public opinion polls. But this broad sentiment against intervention tends to be shallow and uneven; most people do not become active unless there is a dramatic form of intervention.

Further, if we look at the organizations that express and mobilize this sentiment we find that there are deep divisions in the movement. For example, there is no national coalition coordinating the various groups; many groups have a narrow focus on one tactic (such as civil disobedience, lobbying, or material aid) or on a single country; few local coalitions exist. To make matters worse, the leadership of most national and local organizations do not seem seriously interested in reaching out and mobilizing new people. Instead, they concentrate on those who are already deeply committed. Tactics such as civil disobedience and material aid campaigns do not tend to reach out to those who are not already deeply committed. A survey of events in 1988 and the first half of 1989 will illustrate the validity of some of these generalizations.

In February 1988, the House of Representatives voted down Reagan's contra aid proposal. On the eve of the vote demonstrations took place in cities across the U.S., including marches of 1,400 in Washington, D.C., 8,000 in Los Angeles, and 1,500 in San Francisco. The defeat of the contra aid package was due, as insiders on Capitol Hill observed, to grassroots pressure. Yet one month later, in March, Congress passed \$50 million in "humanitarian aid" to the contras. Money given to assassins for food, clothing, shelter, and medicine hardly constitutes humanitarian aid. Given the stockpiles of weapons and munitions that the contras already had, with more still in the pipeline, it represented an only slightly less deadly form of intervention. Yet the effect of this legislation was not so visible. Few forces mobilized against it. In fact, some movement groups even supported the package, arguing that it was the lesser of two evils.

Also in mid-March, the U.S. sent troops to Honduras in a dramatic threat against Nicaragua. The response to this action was swift and spontaneous. Over 200 demonstrations involving an estimated 20,000 people took place. These actions illustrate the breadth of anti-intervention sentiment and suggest the potential of the movement. Yet they also illustrate the shallowness of the movement, which had not responded before and has not responded since in any significant degree to the extensive ongoing militarization of Honduras and the continuous presence of U.S. troops there.

In the remaining nine months of 1988, we witnessed a steady demobilization. Some shifted their attention to the June 1988 disarmament march in New York City. Others put

their efforts into the presidential campaign, placing their hopes in Jesse Jackson or some other Democratic Party politician. Many individuals felt that the war was over because of the Esquipulas II accords and the Sapoa cease-fire. In October, small walkathons were held across the U.S. and on October 17 a national action at the Pentagon involved 500 in civil disobedience, with 1,000 other marchers supporting them. An action in Los Angeles attracted 1,000, one-eighth the number that had turned out in February in that city.

An upturn began in March 1989 with demonstrations called by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) around the demand to "Stop the U.S. War in El Salvador." These actions were smaller than the demonstrations in February of the previous year, generally attracting about half as many participants. But they were much larger than the October events.

On April 2, CISPES called a meeting in Washington, D.C., to evaluate the March actions. Out of this meeting came a call to hold events around June 1 and to plan an open meeting to develop strategy for the movement.

Also on April 29 and 30, local labor committees from L.A., San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, D.C., Detroit, and Philadelphia met to form a national coalition, the Labor Coalition on Central America. This group will produce a paper replacing the *Labor Report on Central America* (published in California) and *Labor Link* (published in D.C.).

The June events were small. For example about 250 demonstrated in New York, 800 in San Francisco, 200 in Minneapolis, and 200 in D.C.

The continuations committee charged with organizing an open meeting by the April 2 gathering failed to act. But other forces—including members of the Emergency National Council Against U.S. Intervention in Central America/the Caribbean (ENC)—joined with CISPES to plan a national meeting to discuss strategy, along with possible national actions in the spring of 1990. This meeting is now scheduled for October 8 in Washington, D.C.

The on-again, off-again nature of the open meeting illustrates the problems in organizing mass action and the subjective opposition to it by the leadership of many anti-intervention organizations. Yet it also illustrates two positive features of the movement. First, many leaders of organizations are now more willing to work in coalitions and consider a mass action perspective because of the demobilization they have observed in the U.S., and the continued destruction of Central America wrought by covert intervention and military aid. Second, small openings can lead to big developments. In the present case, a few ENC activists were able to participate in the April 2 meeting because they had worked on the March actions. They were able to argue there for an open meeting to plan strategy. When the continuations committee failed to act, these same individuals were in a good position to continue to pursue the objective of an open meeting through other channels.

To summarize: The anti-intervention movement demobilized throughout 1988 and started to pick up again in the first half of 1989. While sentiment against intervention is broad it is often shallow and uneven. Organizations which express and mobilize this sentiment are fragmented and often pursue

a single tactic or have a focus on a single country. Finally, the leadership of many of these organizations do not seek to deepen and broaden the anti-intervention movement but instead use tactics that involve only the deeply committed (such as civil disobedience or material aid). Worse still, the leadership sometimes contributes to the demobilization by fostering illusions about the events in Central America and U.S. policy—for instance, supporting “humanitarian aid” to the contras or arguing that the Central America peace process will end U.S. intervention. Still, openings and opportunities exist for activists with a different perspective, interested in developing a program of action for the movement that can help lead it in a mass action-oriented direction.

### Tasks of the F.I.T.

For us, the anti-intervention movement (with regard to Central America and also to other areas of the world such as South Africa and the Philippines) is a crucial arena of work. Our task is to deepen and broaden the movement, to move it forward. To do this we must use all available openings, no matter how small, and motivate, educate, and mobilize people at every opportunity. Specifically, we must concentrate on three things:

First, we must build local groups or coalitions. In some areas there are dozens of groups while in other areas there are only a few. We must actively participate in the best of these local organizations and do our best to build them. We cannot work effectively in the anti-intervention movement if we abstain from those organizations that are doing real work and are central to the movement at the present time.

Second, we must work for and argue for a mass action strategy within such local committees and at the national

level. Such a strategy includes peaceful legal demonstrations which have a clear Central America focus, organized by a democratic and nonpartisan national coalition, and featuring labor outreach and outreach to students. The ENC can play an important role as we advance this mass action strategy because the ENC functions as a network of individuals within the movement who support such a strategy. Articles in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* can also help us explain a mass action strategy, and we should not hesitate to copy these articles for the people we work with in local groups. A mass action strategy also includes education, and we should work when possible on teach-ins, educational conferences, forums, and tours. It is always important to keep in mind that the objective situation—what is practically possible given the current level of mobilization—determines whether one focuses on education, on demonstrations, or both.

And third, we must go all out in the period ahead to build the October 8 meeting in Washington D.C. This meeting is open to delegates from religious, labor, and anti-intervention groups. We must do everything possible to publicize the meeting and get organizations to send delegates. October 8 represents an important opening, perhaps the most important opening in the last two years, for those who have a mass action perspective.

The F.I.T. has few people, but this does not mean we cannot make some valuable contributions to the anti-intervention movement. Our experience over the last five years has shown us that small numbers can make important contributions to social movements when armed with ability, good ideas, and a little common sense. ●

### Poland (Continued from page 2)

Those Solidarity leaders in positions of authority have had a primarily pragmatic approach (not unlike that of the CP bureaucrats, though with different goals in mind), rather than being committed to any particular ideology. As the agreements with Jaruzelski clearly indicate, one of their primary practical considerations has been an avoidance of further conflict with the CP. And we can say with confidence that any genuine measures to “restore capitalism” in Poland would create a rather profound conflict with the interests of the bureaucracy, represented by the CP.

Then there is the basic social question involved. Poland cannot be transformed into a capitalist country by the declarations of the present Solidarity government, any more than England can be transformed into a socialist country by resolutions of the Labor Party. Far more profound social forces must be unleashed in either case. Should the possibility for an actual capitalist restoration emerge in Poland—as a result of the policies pursued by Solidarity or for any other reason—it would undoubtedly be accompanied by a whole series of other phenomena, including massive resistance by the workers themselves and/or an intervention

by the repressive forces of the present bureaucratic state apparatus, still under the control of the CP.

So, for a variety of reasons, it would be a mistake to read too much, at this point, into the declarations of Solidarity’s leaders about restoring capitalism in Poland. Walesa, in fact, even retreated a bit after a few days, and began to speak, instead, about creating some kind of combination which would include both capitalist and socialist elements.

The key to the entire situation is not the declarations that are made from on high, but the experiences that the Polish masses will be going through in the weeks and months ahead and the conclusions that they will draw as a result of that experience. If we expect that the workers and farmers of Poland will continue to fight militantly for their own interests—and there is no reason to expect anything less—then we should have every confidence that the outcome of the present crisis can ultimately be decided by those masses themselves, and not by the maneuvers of Jaruzelski, or the reformist illusions of Lech Walesa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. ●

September 5, 1989

# Understanding the Nicaraguan Revolution

## A Critical Review of Some of the Literature

by Paul Le Blanc

Over the past decade, large numbers of U.S. radicals have expressed disappointment over the Nicaraguan revolution. Most recent among the disappointed have been the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party. A flyer for the SWP's September 9 Militant Forum in Cleveland, for example, claimed: "Since early 1988 Nicaraguan government policies have been directed at appeasing big business at home and abroad, and relying more and more on the workings of the capitalist market. This course is demobilizing the workers and farmers. If not reversed, it threatens the very foundations of the revolutionary government."

What is one to make of this? Of course, what it means in regard to the SWP is not without importance—and will be given closer attention in a future issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. But of even greater concern for revolutionary socialists is the question of what is actually happening in Nicaragua itself.

The Nicaraguan revolution is one of the most important events of our time, an inspiring example for all of the oppressed, an experience rich with lessons for revolutionaries. At the same time, its tenth anniversary has been marked in large measure by a frank discussion among its leaders, cadres, and supporters about the crisis that it now faces. Many gains have been won—but some of these have been eroded by the terrible economic crisis which has overtaken the country. With an inflation rate of 20,000 percent, the drop of working class purchasing power by 85 percent, a slashing of the state budget by 44 percent (eliminating many important social programs), and so on, there are serious questions about how the revolution can remain intact and whether majority support for the revolutionary regime will continue.

In part this reflects the larger economic crisis which afflicts the capitalist world economy, hitting Latin American countries particularly hard. There is another factor, however, which has brutally impacted on the Nicaraguan people.

One of the key reasons for the crisis in Nicaragua has been almost a decade of active hostility on the part of U.S. imperialism. This took the form of the U.S. government funding a devastating covert war and maintaining a threat of U.S. invasion, forcing the Nicaraguans to spend half of their budget to meet their own military needs. It also took the form of a U.S. economic embargo, a concerted and partially successful effort to close off other sources of trade and funding from the capitalist world, and other measures to undermine and destabilize the Nicaraguan economy.

There are a number of recent books which thoroughly document this reality, and citizens of the United States have

a special responsibility to know the facts. Among the most useful are William I. Robinson and Kent Norsworthy, *David and Goliath: The U.S. War Against Nicaragua* and Holly Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua*, although the essays in Thomas W. Walker's anthology, *Reagan Versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua*, provide perhaps the best introduction. In the Walker collection, Michael E. Conroy's essay "Economic Aggression as an Instrument of Low-Intensity Warfare" is especially germane. He quotes the World Bank's report of October 1980, assessing the damage done to the economy by the revolutionary conflict and Somoza's pillaging: "Per capita income levels of 1977 will not be attained, in the best of circumstances, until the late 1980s." The report indicated that substantial economic aid would be needed to achieve this goal and warned that "any untoward event could lead to a financial trauma." Of course, the United States government soon moved to block economic aid (including from the World Bank) and sought to multiply as many "untoward events" as humanly possible. Some of these events were connected with the U.S.-organized and funded counterrevolutionary armies known as "contras." Peter Kornbluh, in his essay "The Covert War," offers us a priceless quote from a U.S. diplomat: "The theory was that we couldn't lose. If they took Managua, wonderful. If not, the idea was that the Sandinistas would react one of two ways. Either they'd liberalize and stop exporting revolution, which is fine and dandy, or they'd tighten up, alienate their own people, their international support and their backers in the United States, in the long run making themselves more vulnerable. In a way, that one was even better—or so the idea went."

In addition to all of this, however, one must critically look at the policies of Nicaragua's revolutionaries, who themselves have indicated more than once that they have made serious mistakes. For revolutionaries who want to support the Nicaraguan revolution, one must be prepared not simply to defend it, but to understand it. In this essay, we will discuss some of the books that can be helpful as we attempt to carry out this elementary duty. At the same time, we will focus on a new book by a comrade from Socialist Action which attempts to offer a Trotskyist analysis of Nicaragua's recent history and current crisis: Alan Benjamin's *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution*.

Such an analysis would be an important contribution to the revolutionary movement. The attempt to provide such an analysis—even if it differs from our own—should be applauded. To the extent that the attempt suffers from deficiencies, however, it must be criticized. Revolutionary Marxists will not consider such criticism in a petty way (as

“an attack” or as “leftists squabbling among themselves”), because they understand that our knowledge and our struggle for human liberation requires a critical-minded approach to everything, whether it be the Nicaraguan revolution or a book by a comrade. Revolutionaries must help each other advance our collective knowledge and struggle, even when this takes the form of sharp disagreement — as it must in this case.

Alan Benjamin is a talented revolutionary journalist, editor of the generally impressive monthly newspaper *Socialist Action*. He is fluent in Spanish and has traveled to Nicaragua several times since the early days of the revolution. He has access to a considerable amount of information, in part due to close contacts with the independent Nicaraguan ITZTANI Institute. He is a longtime socialist activist with a more than cursory knowledge of Marxist theory. In fact, he is a leader of *Socialist Action*, a fraternal affiliate of the Fourth International — the worldwide revolutionary socialist network founded by Leon Trotsky and his cothinkers (with which the Fourth Internationalist Tendency also maintains fraternal relations). When such a writer sits down to write a book on a topic such as the Nicaraguan revolution, one is inclined to expect something of high quality. Unfortunately, *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution* does not live up to this potential. One senses that, even in its own terms, this is not the book it could have been, that its author did not have enough time to give it the attention that it deserved. (In fact, the criticisms and general approach are similar to those recently expressed by the current SWP’s leadership.)

### A Veiled Polemic

In part, the book is a veiled polemic against the positions adopted by the Fourth International at its 1985 world congress. The introduction to the book, written by Rod Holt and Jeff Mackler, refers to unnamed elements “whose concept of advancing the struggle for socialism consists in uncritically supporting, if not justifying, whatever measures are undertaken by the Sandinista leadership.” Such “pragmatism posing as Marxism,” Holt and Mackler warn, “does a disservice to the struggle for socialism.” The leaders of *Socialist Action* believe that this is an apt characterization of the majority of the Fourth International. In the opinion of this majority, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is a consciously revolutionary socialist force which — whatever its inconsistencies, limitations, and mistakes — has established working class rule in Nicaragua and deserves respect and support. Holt and Mackler strongly disagree. They describe the Sandinistas as “sincere revolutionary fighters who were not yet convinced that the oppressed majority can rule in their own name,” and as “revolutionists of action” who function “without a clear understanding of the program of Marxism.” They tell us that Alan Benjamin’s book is being translated into Spanish because it is designed to help generate a new political party in Nicaragua, “based on the historic program of the Fourth International,” which will provide “an alternative to the mistaken policies of the Sandinista leadership.”

## Theory and Style

Alan Benjamin himself doesn’t say any of these things. In fact, the section of the book which he has written is devoid of any clearly stated theoretical contribution. In their classic writings dealing with living revolutions, such writers as Marx, Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky always sought to learn from the new realities in a way that would *advance* revolutionary theory, providing new insights and deeper understanding that would add something to scientific socialism. Benjamin makes no effort at such a contribution.

Nor are we offered even an in-depth eyewitness account such as Peter Davis’s *Where Is Nicaragua?* or Salman Rushdie’s *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*. Perhaps this comparison is unfair, for Davis and Rushdie are artists. Davis made the Academy Award winning documentary on Vietnam, “Hearts and Minds,” while Rushdie is best known (and is under sentence of death by Islamic fundamentalist reactionaries of Iran) for his novel *The Satanic Verses*. Both of them have a sharp eye, write beautifully, integrate impressions with a considerable amount of information. Rushdie is also graced with a wonderful sense of humor — including about himself — which yields special insights. They give you the tastes, the smells, the feel, the sounds, the complex shapes and vivid colors of Nicaragua in the mid-1980s. They are sympathetic to the Nicaraguan revolution, but they are not cheerleaders. They are there to learn, so they come with their critical minds intact. They present a full, vibrant sense of the social reality and revolutionary process in Nicaragua, with all its contradictions and fluidity.

The problem with *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution* goes beyond literary style and artistic flair. Benjamin’s book lacks a sense of depth and dialectics. It is a series of reports designed to corroborate the preconceived notions explicitly expressed by comrades Holt and Mackler in their introduction. Of course, the book could be worse. Some left-wing critics from afar quote Lenin and Trotsky and then — through generous use of extrapolation, impressionism, and speculation — castigate the Sandinistas for not living up to these quotations. One of the real strengths of Benjamin’s book is that he utilizes information from a broad array of primary and secondary sources, plus interviews which he and his comrades have conducted. This gives it a certain value which transcends its shortcomings. But the reader must be cautious, because often Benjamin will quote selectively, picking out a passage that seems to support his own critique while avoiding any serious discussion (or even acknowledgment) of the fact that the particular book quoted from fundamentally contradicts his own analysis.

### Mass Organizations and Mixed Economy

Two such books are Gary Ruchwarger’s *People in Power: Forging a Grassroots Democracy in Nicaragua* and a collection of important essays edited by Rose J. Spalding, *The Political Economy of Revolutionary Nicaragua*.

I have a special affection for Ruchwarger’s book since he made substantial use of my own study *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua* (sometimes citing it, sometimes quoting or paraphrasing without citation), but the book has merit as the

most serious and detailed study in existence—rich with quotations and statistics—of the mass organizations which have been essential to the Sandinist revolution. He offers a useful account of the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship and then a discussion of the neighborhood Sandinista Defense Committees, the women’s organization AMNLAE, the pro-FSLN trade unions of urban and rural workers (CST and ATC), the farmers’ organization (UNAG), and the popular militia. He also discusses the FSLN, the state apparatus, and the army.

Even though Ruchwarger sometimes seems to accept too uncritically some of the many official FSLN statements which pepper his account, he is not afraid to use his own critical mind, and he is therefore able to capture important complexities. He demonstrates that the mass organizations—at least up to 1985—had a significant degree of independence and internal democracy and “have been able to win some of the demands of their membership and influence certain revolutionary policies.” On the other hand, he warned that “to the extent that they subordinate their tasks to those set by [FSLN] party policy and mobilize their constituencies only to fulfill state goals, the popular associations will be unable to realize their full potential to influence the revolutionary process.” He concludes his book with an assessment which Alan Benjamin simply ignores:

The first seven years of the Nicaraguan revolution have been marked by an incredible explosion of popular mobilization and organization. The central question is whether the country’s peasants, workers, artisans, and [low-income] merchants will continue to consolidate and expand their participation in every aspect of revolutionary life. To achieve this objective, mass organization members will have to rely on their capacity for creativity and organization that led them to victory.

Benjamin believes that the revolution became stalled *before* the working masses were able to win the victory they deserved. The culprits are the well-meaning but misguided Sandinistas, who are committed to maintaining a “mixed economy” that includes a very substantial capitalist sector. In this book we are told: “Another course is available to the Nicaraguan people—the establishment of an extensive system of workers’ control of the economy based on mass democratic decision-making institutions akin to the ‘soviets’ (or councils) formed in the Soviet Union in 1917 under the revolutionary leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky. The establishment of workers’ control and the distribution of land to the peasantry would transfer the fundamental levers of society to the great majority of the Nicaraguan people. It would link their destinies to the revolution’s success, as opposed to the increased profits of capitalist exploiters.” This glowing passage is from the Holt-Mackler introduction, to which Benjamin apparently subscribes.

We should note that there is much fantasy in this. There is, for one thing, the simple historical inaccuracy of stating that the soviets were “formed in the Soviet Union in 1917 under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.” They were, in fact, formed in Russia at a time when neither Lenin nor Trotsky were present in the country. This

demonstrates a certain intellectual sloppiness, which is inexcusable in and of itself; but there are even more important issues here.

For Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *workers’ control* was not a synonym for socialism, as it is in the just-quoted passage, but instead was a system of accounting and supervision to be carried out by trade unions or factory committees in capitalist-owned enterprises. Benjamin assures us that “working-class hegemony is impossible on the basis of defense of capitalist property rights.” This was also the viewpoint of the ultra-left faction inside the Russian Communist Party known as the Left Communists—but the Bolshevik majority led by Lenin and Trotsky did not agree. The two revolutionaries favored a “mixed economy” in the early Soviet Republic, although by the middle of 1918 these plans were wrecked by civil war and foreign invasion, initiating a brutal period of collectivization known as “war communism,” lasting until 1921. As Trotsky explained in the following year, “our acts in those years were dictated not by economic good sense but by the need of destroying the enemy.” He elaborated: “Economic good sense would have taken over only the industries we could manage; but if we had followed this plan, we would not have survived to celebrate now the fifth anniversary of our Revolution.” (See Anna Louise Strong, *The First Time in History: Two Years of Russia’s New Life* [New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924], pp. 36-38; Trotsky strongly influenced the writing of this work and contributed a preface to it.)

Nonetheless, the Bolsheviks, the working class, and the Russian people as a whole paid a very heavy price for this premature leap into a nationalized economy—including the economy’s disintegration, the rapid growth of bureaucracy, and the extreme erosion (to put it mildly) of genuine workers’ democracy. The thrust of the essays in the anthology edited by Rose J. Spalding, *The Political Economy of Revolutionary Nicaragua*, is that, despite obvious problems and serious contradictions, the “mixed economy” strategy in Nicaragua has—to use Trotsky’s phrase—made “economic good sense,” although it is inherently unstable and cannot be maintained indefinitely. The essays in this book (written by left-wing social scientists—mostly economists—with extensive experience in Nicaragua) are dense with information and analyses which are essential for understanding the economic realities of Nicaragua and the meaning of FSLN economic policy.

Benjamin dips into two of these (and also quotes from a Spanish-language version of a third), giving the mistaken impression that the quoted authors agree with his own analysis. If he had read more carefully and extensively in this valuable collection, confronting and developing a serious critique of these perspectives which he rejects, then Benjamin’s book would be far more challenging and useful.

Among the most important discussions in the Spalding volume are those by the Swedish economist Claes Brundenius, “Industrial Strategies in Revolutionary Nicaragua,” the Chilean economist Roberto Pizarro, “The New Economic Policy: A Necessary Readjustment,” and the Argentinian social scientist Carlos M. Vilas, “Troubles Everywhere: An Economic Perspective on the Nicaraguan Revolution.” Each of these analysts worked in Nicaragua

over an extended period of time as government advisors. Brundenius stresses that we must remember Marx's admonition: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past." The attempt to leap over reality, he demonstrates, could simply destroy an already fragile economy. Pizarro, defending Sandinist moderate economic policies as necessary for short-term survival, suggests that the way out of the country's economic dilemma lies through international solidarity—in the face of U.S. imperialist hostility—from Europe, the Arab countries, Latin America, and Asia.

Carlos Vilas (whom readers may know from his fine study *The Sandinista Revolution: National Liberation and Social Transformation in Central America*, reviewed in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 41), provides additional arguments for the Nicaraguan variant of the "mixed economy," but he also urges us to confront a larger dilemma "common in other revolutionary settings where the society is impoverished and the economy is open to the international market. For a period that can be quite long, these economies in the process of restructuration—or if you prefer, of transition—are not viable." They must find ways to endure until socialist revolutions occur in more economically powerful and industrially developed countries. "Assistance from the 'advanced' revolutions is essential to guarantee the *initial viability* of social revolutions in less-developed and highly dependent economies."

### Open Minds and Marxist Method

In their introduction to *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution*, Holt and Mackler tell us that "Benjamin offers us one of the most concise guides yet available to understanding the phenomenon of the Nicaraguan revolution." This brings to mind two other volumes of roughly the same length which are worth comparing to Benjamin's: Henri Weber's *Nicaragua, The Sandinist Revolution*, and the revised, updated edition of Thomas W. Walker's *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino*. Both of these provide an ideal starting point for learning about Nicaragua's revolution. Neither author is a Trotskyist (although Weber once was), but both are quite knowledgeable and, while sympathetic to the Sandinistas, quite capable of independent judgments. One senses that they are trying to learn from the realities, and therefore they are able to teach us a great deal about what is going on.

For Weber, this seems to have been a fleeting journalistic moment. Walker's entire academic career, on the other hand, is invested in the study of Nicaragua, and he has edited several substantial anthologies dealing with the revolution, the most important being *Nicaragua, The First Five Years*, a fat volume filled with concise essays illuminating almost every major aspect of the revolution up to 1985. The authors of these essays also concentrate on teaching us what they themselves have learned by opening their eyes and minds to the Nicaraguan experience. Benjamin, on the other hand, had from the beginning made up his mind to accept the general framework described by his comrades in their intro-

duction to his book. Primary sources, the scholarship of others, and discussions with Nicaraguan friends "helped fine-tune my understanding of events in Nicaragua," as he puts it in his acknowledgments. Nothing is allowed to throw even the vaguest shadow over the received "wisdom" which the book is designed to impart. Throughout this volume we find the same predictable pattern. The revolutionary impulses of the masses, plus some positive qualities of the Sandinistas, have resulted in some gains. But the lack of a fully correct understanding among the Sandinistas has stalled the revolution or led it down blind alleys. It is necessary to push forward.

Benjamin seems to make little use of the Marxist method. There is a commendable passion for the needs and rights of the working class and the oppressed. But there is no sense of the complex, contradictory manner in which reality develops, no serious attention to history or to the economic and other material realities forming the context and raw material of the Nicaraguan revolution. Benjamin is not satisfied with what the Sandinistas are doing, but he doesn't seem to consider that if cothinkers of Socialist Action somehow assumed leadership of the revolution, they themselves might not be able to do all that he proposes. They would have to function under circumstances not chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. The fact that Benjamin gives superficial attention to such objective circumstances makes his study less challenging and valuable than it should have been. Those actually facing these circumstances will not find abstract appeals for more "revolutionary" policies to be particularly compelling.

### Marxism and the FSLN

Interestingly, this 170-page critique of the Sandinistas gives us little sense of who and what the Sandinistas are. At moments they seem to be well-intentioned radicals whose ignorance of Marxism has resulted in terrible errors. At other moments it is recognized that their origins were in a left-wing split from the Nicaraguan Communists. We are told, however, that their "break with Stalinism—i.e., with the counterrevolutionary policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy—was incomplete." Again, those who want a clear understanding will need to look elsewhere.

A hostile but interesting study by someone employed by the U.S. State Department, David Nolan's *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution*, offers ample documentation that the leading cadres of the FSLN have been serious about their Marxism from the beginning. The same message comes through in an important work by the left-wing scholar Donald C. Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution*. Hodges seems to think that the FSLN's Marxism has been too "humanistic," too friendly to Liberation Theology, insufficiently clear on the need for authoritarianism (much of his own political education took place during his former membership in the U.S. Communist Party, and elsewhere he has expressed a critical admiration for Stalin's "contributions" to Marxism)—but he gives a clear sense of *diverse* Marxist influences within the FSLN as it evolved. He also provides a fascinating discussion

of the deep social radicalism in the political thought of Augusto Cesar Sandino—the martyred leader of Nicaragua’s anti-imperialist struggle of the 1920s and early ’30s. He demonstrates that this contributed something distinctive to the FSLN’s interpretation of Marxism.

For that matter, a careful reading of what the Sandinistas themselves have said about their beliefs and their struggle suggests that included in their ranks are revolutionaries and Marxists of high caliber. On this, one should consult the two indispensable Pathfinder Press volumes edited by Bruce Marcus—*Sandinistas Speak* and *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*. But to get a sense of this it is also worth reading many of the interviews in Margaret Randall’s wonderful book *Sandino’s Daughters*, as well as the memoir by Omar Cabezas, *Fire From the Mountain*, and *Fire in the Americas*, the political essay by Orlando Núñez in collaboration with Roger Burbach. (These last two works were reviewed in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, Nos. 42 and 53.)

One regrets the decision by Alan Benjamin to ignore all of this. If he had chosen to make his case in part through an honest and serious-minded confrontation with such works as these, his book would have been of far greater interest.

### Comradely Criticism and Advice

*Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution*, despite the weaknesses discussed here, has the virtue of raising important questions and criticisms. For example, while it is naive to criticize the Sandinistas because they have not “immediately moved to form a new international party” that would extend “the socialist revolution on a world scale,” as Benjamin seems to call for, it is by no means inappropriate to raise critical questions about FSLN political support for (as distinct from government-level diplomatic relations with) “friendly” bourgeois or Stalinist politicians and regimes. It is one thing to thank Jesse Jackson for his opposition to contra aid, and it is something else to urge U.S. radicals to get involved in the bourgeois Democratic Party; it is one thing to be restrained in criticizing an Eastern European government which provides life-giving material aid, and it is something else again to seem in any way to endorse any of its repressive policies; etc.

The cropping-up of material privileges for certain “higher level” Sandinistas and their friends—for example, so-called diplomatic “dollar” stores where members of the elite who are so inclined can acquire scarce commodities unavailable to most Nicaraguans—deserves sharp criticism from anyone who cares about the Nicaraguan revolution.

All moves to curtail trade union rights, the rights of such indigenous minorities as the Miskitos, general civil liberties, and forms of popular democracy threaten the proclaimed goals and even the survival of the revolution, although the FSLN record on these questions, while imperfect, is far better than its enemies are willing to acknowledge. This is documented in a carefully researched study—summarizing and evaluating the findings of a broad array of human rights organizations—by the London-based Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Right to Survive: Human Rights in Nicaragua*.

In fact, there have been significant differences among the Sandinistas on such questions as these, and some of the most cogent and useful criticisms and proposals have been raised among those who have embraced the Sandinist revolution. For example, in 1983 and 1984 the Managua-based Regional Coordinator of Socio-Economic Research (CRIES) helped to organize seminars which resulted in *Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism*, edited by Richard R. Fagen, Carmen Diana Deere, and Jose Luis Coraggio. A research director of CRIES, and advisor to the government, Coraggio produced a fascinating essay for this volume examining tensions inherent in the “mixed economy” which contribute to policies undermining worker and peasant initiatives and democracy. His complex analysis identifies internal dynamics which, if unchecked, can destroy the revolution.

In the same volume one can find additional challenging essays by partisans of the FSLN. U.S. political scientist Richard Fagen noted that “powerful traditions, arguments, and urgent realities pull toward a nondemocratic system of conflict management in the context of the transition to socialism,” but warned that unless democracy is integrated into the transition period “the liberation promised by the revolution will at best be incomplete and at worst degenerate into new forms of tyrannical rule.” Michael Lowy asserted that “there is more democracy in Sandinista Nicaragua than in any other state in transition to socialism,” and that “if Sandinista Nicaragua continues and deepens the path it has been on thus far, it will be transformed into a model of worldwide historic importance of democratic and revolutionary transition to socialism.” At the same time, Lowy advanced an essentially Trotskyist analysis of the character of and need for socialist democracy, and warned against “the possibility of restrictions on democracy in the future, under the pressures of war as well as of the authoritarian models of bureaucratic socialism.”

Maxine Molyneux noted that “the Sandinista record on women is certainly uneven, and it is as yet too early to make any final assessment of it, especially while it confronts increasing political, economic, and military pressures. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Sandinistas have gone further than most Latin American governments (except Cuba) in recognizing both strategic and practical interests of women and have brought about substantial improvements in the lives of many of the most deprived.” (For a more recent account of the struggle for women’s liberation in Nicaragua, describing achievements, unresolved issues, and debates among the revolution’s supporters, see Beth Stephens, “Women and Nicaragua,” *Monthly Review*, September 1988.)

To stress—as does Benjamin and his comrades—that the Nicaraguan revolution is “unfinished” is both profoundly true and (the way in which they mean it) misleading. On many fronts in Nicaragua, the revolution is not completed. The struggle continues, it is a “revolution in permanence.” In a sense, it is not even desirable to seek to “finish” the revolution too soon. As Trotsky noted, “for an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation. . . . Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals, and everyday life



develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium.”

Nor is it possible to “finish” the revolution within the borders of Nicaragua. The nature of the world economy, the world development of productive forces, and the world scale of the class struggle precludes the resolution of Nicaragua’s problems simply through the policies of the FSLN. “The socialist revolution begins on national foundations—but it cannot be completed within these foundations,” Trotsky stressed. This is especially the case with a small, economically dependent country such as Nicaragua. It ill behooves revolutionary socialists, especially those who want to offer up stern criticisms and advice, to forget such things.

Frankly confronting problems, raising questions, being prepared to criticize and to suggest alternatives—all of this is needed by any revolution and should be expected from any revolutionary. Those who made the Sandinist revolution and who are struggling to preserve and advance it don’t need adoring “groupies,” they need genuine friends who will do what they can to help—which sometimes involves comradely criticism and advice. But this must be grounded in greater knowledge of what is being discussed than can be gleaned from *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution*.

It is quite easy to ignore the genuine contradictions that are built into the very structure of reality, and to pretend that a few good slogans (“workers’ control” and “put the economy in the hands of the people,” etc.) will make the contradictions evaporate. One then concludes—along with the Socialist Action comrades—that the Sandinistas, by failing to implement the slogans, are responsible for the contradictions and must be seen as obstacles, as political opponents, by genuine revolutionary socialists. It then becomes necessary to build a new political party in Nicaragua that will be prepared to eliminate the contradictions by implementing the slogans. Rather than comradely criticism and advice, it would then become necessary to advance a general attack on the FSLN, as articulated in *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution*. In helping to produce such a book, Alan Benjamin is not making the contribution that is needed from him by the revolutionary movement.

### Theoretical and Practical Conclusions

Benjamin and his comrades fail to offer a clear theoretical perspective. They fleetingly affirm the applicability of Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution to the Nicaraguan experience. But their interpretation of what happened in Nicaragua throws Trotsky’s theory into question. Trotsky asserted that for the democratic revolution to move forward to victory, the working class will need to establish its hegemony in the struggle to overthrow the old regime. Such hegemony in the victorious struggle would then result in the establishment of proletarian rule, the initial step in a transition period to socialism. The transition period would include despotic inroads into the capitalist economy, eventually culminating in the social ownership and control over the economy in general, plus—inseparable from this—the spread of socialist revolutions to other countries.

At some points, as we have noted, these Socialist Action comrades appear to believe (in contradiction to Trotsky)

that a socialist economy can be brought to Nicaragua and solve the country’s most pressing problems without the spread of socialist revolution that would create vital economic allies and partners in other, more industrially advanced countries. What’s more, they appear to believe that although the working people of Nicaragua carried out a successful democratic revolution, the result nonetheless (again, contrary to Trotsky’s theory) was a continuation of capitalist hegemony. They *do* appear to see the Sandinista regime as different from most other governments, but they offer no clues as to what this difference is or how it fits into Trotsky’s theory. Nor do they seem to have any clear notion as to how anything is added to Marxist theory by their analysis of the current crisis facing the Nicaraguan revolution. Apparently nothing is to be learned which was not already known.

Yet the crisis confronting the Sandinistas is one which raises profound questions for revolutionary Marxists. In a thoughtful essay, “Is There a Simple Solution to Nicaragua’s Economic Crisis,” in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 55, Steve Bloom noted the crystallization of a contradiction in the Nicaraguan revolution—political rule by the working masses coexisting with the continuation of a largely capitalist economy—over a period lasting far longer than anticipated. The question must be faced, however, regarding what the impact of this crystallization will be on the economic and political life of Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan (and other) capitalists naturally find it difficult to invest substantial resources in a country in which a left-wing ruling party is determined to keep political power out of bourgeois hands while proclaiming, often in bluntly Marxist terms, that the interests of the workers and peasants must come first. Even aside from pro-contra economic sabotage, serious capitalists with good business sense would not consider this an appropriate climate for making long-range commitments. This reality obviously bodes ill for the future of the mixed economy, and has already had destructive effects on the quality of life for the majority of Nicaraguans.

On the other hand, we have seen that the collectivization of the economy, under present circumstances, can hardly be expected to solve the country’s problems and could result in greater hardships than ever. The government’s attempt to maintain some space for Nicaraguan capitalism in order to prevent the total collapse of the economy has generated FSLN attempts to contain or control the militancy and radicalism of the working masses. This undermines the proletarian morale and popular energy which has been essential to the revolution. What’s more, the mixed economy policy of the government and other social and economic policies of the Sandinistas have failed to prevent the drastic decline of worker and peasant living standards, and it seems likely that growing numbers will hold the FSLN regime responsible for the worsening situation.

The danger seems to exist, therefore, of a fragmentation and erosion of proletarian rule in Nicaragua. If this progresses, three possibilities might face the Sandinistas: 1) to utilize the democratic-electoral forms established under the

(Continued on page 32)

# UAW Loss at Smyrna

by Bill Onasch

The decisive defeat of the United Auto Workers union in a National Labor Relations Board representation election at Nissan's Smyrna, Tennessee, plant has received wide attention in both the bourgeois and radical press.

Many were impressed by the company's apparently solid defense and crushing vote totals. Jane Slaughter, who closely follows and supports militant currents in the UAW, wrote in *Labor Notes*, "An organizing committee led by Big Bill Haywood, Eugene Debs, and Mother Jones would probably have lost this election."

The British newsweekly, *The Economist*, reported,

Six years ago, when Nissan announced the opening in Smyrna, Tennessee, of the first wholly-owned Japanese car factory in the United States, more than 100,000 people applied for 3,000 jobs at the plant. Smyrna is in a rural, conservative area of a state that is well-endowed with anti-union laws. And Nissan psychologists screened the applicants for their willingness to submit to authority, submerge their own identities and place the company's interests above their own.

It was no surprise, therefore, when the United Auto Workers lost an election last week [July 26] to represent assembly workers by a vote of 1,622 to 711 (it was odder, in fact, that one-third of the carefully chosen "technicians" dared to challenge the established order).

It was odd indeed. Before the election some commentators expressed the view that Nissan had already suffered a moral defeat because the union was able to force an election. While the union took a drubbing, clearly the company was not so invincible. Workers in Tennessee, even those who passed rigid psychological screening, demonstrated that they are not essentially different than workers in Detroit, St. Louis, or Atlanta.

Wages were not a major issue at Smyrna. Unlike many American-owned companies operating in the South, Nissan didn't try to get desperate people to work for five dollars an hour. Nissan's basic wage is \$13.35 per hour, with lump sum and bonus payments adding approximately an additional \$1.50. This is nearly double the average wage in Tennessee and only slightly behind a UAW-organized Ford plant in nearby Nashville.

Nor was job security an issue. In striking contrast to the Big Three automakers Nissan Smyrna has never had a layoff. On the contrary, the company has announced plans to add an additional 1,700 workers over the next couple of years making Smyrna the biggest auto assembly operation in North America.

So what led nearly a third of the Nissan workforce to "challenge the established order"? Two interrelated issues:

relentless speedup, often resulting in debilitating injuries; and loss of dignity and self-respect.

There are no hard statistics available for the number of injuries at Smyrna because the company has refused to comply with OSHA reporting rules. (For this violation they were fined a whopping \$5,000 by the state department of labor.) But everyone acknowledges the injury rate is high. The worst problem is probably with carpal tunnel syndrome, a debilitation of the hand primarily caused by repetitive operations with torque-action power tools. There are numerous back injuries as well.

Of course such injuries also occur in UAW-organized plants. But in the organized plants the workers, through their union, can sometimes improve particularly hazardous jobs and injured workers have some protection. At Smyrna a growing number of workers have essentially been fired when injuries have prevented them from keeping up with the hectic pace of production. There are no "light duty" jobs in the Nissan scheme of production.

As in Japan, Smyrna workers are organized in work groups relying on peer pressure and straw boss group leaders to get maximum production. Favoritism is widespread.

Working conditions and "treatment issues" are frequently the driving force behind union organizing campaigns. But the UAW was unable to fully take advantage of these concerns because they are cooperating with General Motors and others in establishing the same kind of "team concept" structure of production.

The rebel workers at Nissan, like militant workers everywhere, are looking for a union that will be their advocate, defending them against the encroachments of the boss. The most advanced among them—about a third of them—recognize that even a poor union is better than no union at all (just as the employers always recognize that no union is preferable to even a sweetheart union).

But the majority of Smyrna workers failed to see any benefit in paying dues to the UAW. They know the union is agreeing to the same kind of work practices at other companies as they are faced with at Nissan. They know that the union gave up enormous concessions, first to Chrysler, then to Ford and GM as well, over the past decade. They know that a third of the UAW membership lost their jobs for good over the same period. It is for these reasons, not insidious Japanese brainwashing, that the union doesn't have much attraction for them. It will take a different kind of union approach to win these workers over.

For four decades the UAW didn't have to worry about organizing plants in the basic auto industry. The entire industry was under national contracts with the automakers and extension of the contract to new plants was a formality unopposed by the bosses. But the Japanese "transplants" are

outside this cozy arrangement and so far not a single one has been organized by the union.

The present bureaucracy at Solidarity House has been living on the capital of past conquests of the union for a long time. But these dwindling assets will not disguise their bankruptcy much longer. The UAW was the most successful of the new industrial unions that arose out of the CIO upsurge from 1936-41. In its early days this union was probably the most militant and dynamic, the last of the major unions to be completely bureaucratized.

The auto industry was organized not through NLRB election campaigns run by slick public relations experts but through militant confrontations with the auto bosses and often the police and national guard as well. Most of the early leaders (including the Reuther brothers who were to establish the present bureaucratic machine ruling the union) were socialists or communists of one variety or another and talked explicitly of class struggle. The construction of the auto workers union was certainly a prime example of what would today be called "adversarial" unionism.

The material gains of organization for these workers were considerable, including:

- Virtual total organization of the industry, winning wage parity between companies and regions.
- Establishment of the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) as a defense against inflation which over the years put autoworkers' wages far beyond those of most other industrial workers.
- Supplementary Unemployment Benefits (SUB) which gave a measure of protection to living standards during frequent layoffs in the industry.
- Among the best health and retirement benefits anywhere.

These gains were mainly won by the mid-'50s. For nearly three decades wages were determined by a formula of three percent per year productivity raises plus the cost of living increases. During the long postwar capitalist boom the UAW bureaucracy became consolidated as an administrative machine engaged in technical discussions with the employers over the continuing implementation of these gains of past struggles.

All of this changed with the end of the boom in the 1970s. In 1979 Chrysler threatened to go under. The UAW bureaucrats rushed to grant enormous concessions to the company and lobbied the federal government successfully to get massive government assistance to Chrysler as well. Half of the UAW Chrysler membership lost their jobs during the

### Labor Solidarity Day in Pittsburgh Mobilizes Thousands

More than 5,000 union workers, with families and friends, marched down the streets of Pittsburgh on Sunday August 13 in order to express their solidarity with the struggle of the Pittston coal miners, the Eastern Airlines employees, Bell Atlantic workers, and others engaged in militant strikes. "We Are Union!" many chanted. "We Won't Go Back!" and "The Workers United Will Never Be Defeated!" also echoed

through Pittsburgh streets as the demonstration proceeded to a rally that filled Pittsburgh's Market Square. Massive contingents from the United Mine Workers of America, dressed in camouflage, provided an especially distinctive character to the march, but members of the Communications Workers of America, the International Association of Machinists, and the Air Lines Pilots Association also represented the proud fighters from labor's front lines. In all, more than 100 unions and community groups were represented, with major participation also coming from the United Steel Workers of

course of the "bailout" but the UAW president was installed as a decorative figure on the Chrysler board of directors to emphasize the union's class collaboration.

Chrysler's U.S. competitors—under contract with the UAW—demanded and got concessions as well so that they could remain "competitive." The fabric of the auto industry contract protection began to rapidly unravel.

The Japanese automakers, driven by threats of import barriers and increasingly attractive labor costs in North America, began setting up shop ready to challenge the UAW. At joint operations, such as the Toyota-GM partnership in Fremont, California, the UAW was able to keep jurisdiction but only with a completely revised concession contract. The wholly owned Japanese plants have thus far completely resisted unionization.

The UAW bureaucracy has relied on a two-pronged strategy in their fight to save *their* jobs: 1) xenophobic "buy American," bash the Japanese appeals and 2) concessions to and cooperation with those employers willing to deal with them with the aim of making the companies profitable and competitive. The result of this strategy has been the loss of more than 300,000 UAW jobs and reduced wages and worsened working conditions for those remaining on the job.

This trend can only get worse. Already the Big Three have served notice that they cannot compete with nonunion operations like Smyrna and will demand further concessions, particularly in work practices.

The only hope for reversing this disastrous course is to return the union to the class struggle approach of its early, successful years. The workers don't need a union to negotiate wage cuts or to help the boss with speedup. But a union that can restrain the greed of the employer, that can make the shop floor safer, that can eliminate favoritism, and maybe even occasionally win some gains in wages and benefits, will be welcomed even by psychologically-screened workers in Smyrna, Tennessee.

Transforming the UAW is of course not an easy task. The bureaucracy is deeply entrenched and has the might of the Big Three and the government behind it in any confrontation with militant workers. But a significant current opposed to the worst abuses of Solidarity House has emerged in the form of the New Directions movement. This group is organizing a national conference in St. Louis October 21-22. Hopefully, in addition to their deliberations about bargaining objectives and the fight for union democracy within the UAW, they will devote some attention to the problems of organizing the rest of the industry.

●  
August 28, 1989

America, the Service Employees International Union, the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and other Building Trades unions, and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America.

The event was also endorsed by the Allegheny County Labor Council, the Central Westmoreland Labor Union Council, the Monongahela Valley Central Labor Council, and the Lawrence County Labor Council. The Pennsylvania State AFL-CIO was prominently involved as well.

# A Visit to the USSR

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

During six weeks this summer I studied in the USSR—as part of a cultural exchange program agreed to by Gorbachev and Reagan as a result of meetings in 1985. I spoke with many people and have a lot of impressions. But in such a brief time—much of which was taken up with the formalities of the exchange program—it is impossible to get a rounded appreciation of what is taking place in a country as vast as the USSR. I cannot be sure to what extent the people I happened to meet and talk to represent a genuine cross section of those who are becoming active in the vast political debate that is taking place in the Soviet Union today.

My most overwhelming impression is that the country is seething with change, both questioning and rediscovering its revolutionary past. Wherever I went, I met people who were grappling with the new opportunities and trying to find a way forward. When I arrived in the USSR, I already knew of individuals I wanted to contact in Leningrad, Moscow, and Tallinn. Through them—and the fact that the institute where we were studying was located a block from the Kazan Cathedral where dozens of people gather each night for long hours of wide-ranging political discussions—I was able to learn a great deal about current political developments.

In Leningrad I met Nikolai, who is in his early 30s. Like many others, he only became politically active since glasnost and has just, in the past few years, begun to learn about the history of the revolution, or even of the dissident movement of the 1960s and '70s. He is a serious supporter of the Leningrad Popular Front (LPF) movement and took me, on July 4, to a large meeting the LPF had organized to discuss their strategy for influencing the newly elected deputies. Nikolai was very interested in knowing more about the U.S. Trotskyist movement. He was even more interested in finding out about the history and program of the Fourth International, about which he knew almost nothing. (“This is all new to us!”) He had never heard of the *Bulletin Oppozitsii* and read avidly the volume I had with me.<sup>1</sup>

## The Democratic Trade Union

At the LPF meeting, I received a copy of *Rubicon*, “Periodical of the Club for the Democratization of the Trade Unions.” The next day, I phoned Igor, the editor listed on the inside page. He is actually a collaborator of Nikolai’s and had known I was in the city. *Rubicon* contains programmatic documents, proposals, facts, interviews, and analyses of the current stage of the development of the economy and the workers’ movements. I met Igor the following day. He was very interested in Trotskyists. He invited me to write something for their journal about the the U.S. labor movement. I gave him copies of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* which contained such articles that he could use. He also edits a

thick journal called *Cleo* that contains more lengthy articles, poetry, interviews, some fiction, historical works. Igor has plans to set up a study group about Trotsky and print more about him, his works, and the FI.

Igor was open to collaboration with all currents on the left and wants to receive as many journals from the world left as he can, which he believes is possible today. He receives a magazine published by a British radical group so he feels that he could also receive others.

Igor accompanied me July 12 to the founding meeting of the Democratic Trade Union (DTU) organization. There were about 20-25 people there altogether throughout the evening. The meeting was held in the House of Culture of the Leningrad Soviet, the same building in which the LPF meeting had been on July 4. Only 12 present were allowed to vote. They read and adopted their program which includes the stipulation that no worker who remains a member of the official trade unions can be a full voting member of their organization. They decided on a 5-person executive committee and set an initiation fee of 15 rubles, with dues of 2 rubles per month. I was surprised at the nonchalant, almost jovial atmosphere, which I would not have expected on such a momentous occasion. I was not introduced and was the only woman present. I thought it odd that no one seemed to care who I was or ask me to introduce myself.

During the smoking break (it seems that smoking has been banned almost everywhere since the Nineteenth Party Conference in the summer of 1988), I introduced myself to a number of the smokers. They, like almost everyone I met, were extremely interested in meeting a Marxist from the U.S. They had never heard of such a thing and could not imagine what it could mean. They assumed that I must be in the Communist Party. When I denied that, explained why, and identified myself as a Trotskyist, in most cases people had only one response: intense curiosity (among the very few exceptions were a few far right-wingers who did try to provoke a fight over the wisdom of the Bolshevik revolution).

All the people present were Leningrad workers. When the meeting ended, as I was about to leave, the chairman asked me to stay and discuss with them. He is an older man and a former labor camp prisoner. In the course of the discussion, I questioned the wisdom of their decision to inform Lane Kirkland, head of the AFL-CIO, of their existence and solicit his support. They really had no idea what they were getting into with such a gesture; they were unaware of the bureaucratization of U.S. trade unions, the collusion of the AFL-CIO leadership with the U.S. government against authentic democratic trade unions abroad, and the consequences that this has had for the international workers’ movement. They expressed a great deal of interest in receiving materials about opposition labor groups in the U.S.—

such as New Directions of the United Auto Workers, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, etc. — and would like to establish contact with them.

### An Informal Library

Through a visitor to Igor's flat, I met a young radical named Vitaly who is active in the Democratic Union (DU).

(Igor lives in what is euphemistically called a "communal apartment." This simply means that families get only one room in a multiroom apartment and must share the kitchen and toilet facilities. Of Leningrad's five and one-half million population, one and one-half million live doubled up in this way, reflecting the dire housing shortage. Of these communal facilities, 79 percent have no hot water and 50 percent have no bath, according to one of our tour guides.)

DU is one of the most aggressive of the unofficial organizations that have arisen. The portion of its program that deals with defense of political democracy is good — in fact, better than most others I know about. Unfortunately, its economic platform favors a market economy and the dismantling of all aspects of the plan and centralization in favor of private ownership. But the DU is always out in the streets with its ideas and its paper — often getting dragged off by the militia — so it attracts activists of all sorts, including some vehement anti-Bolsheviks. But Vitaly is not one of those; he is a radical pacifist. He works on the newspaper and said that they would print materials submitted by the FI and Trotskyist groups.

He and a woman named Galina, who is a long-time activist in the Leningrad democratic opposition, are collaborating on a project to set up an informal library where people can come and read unofficial literature. Nikolai and I visited the library. It is in Galina's apartment and has a significant collection of post-glasnost journals and newsletters.

### Democratic Workers Movement 'Independence'

Outside the Kazan Cathedral one evening I encountered a young fellow wearing a button with Karl Marx's picture on it. He was presenting serious and sophisticated arguments against the reinstitution of private property in production and of the market system in the USSR. When I was finally able to speak with him, I introduced myself as a Marxist from the U.S. He insisted I meet Leonid, who was also present — an older man with long graying hair and beard whom I had seen before, always in the center of such a dense circle of intent arguers and listeners that I could never get near enough to hear him. When my young acquaintance introduced me to Leonid as a Marxist and Trotskyist, Leonid's first question was "Does that mean you are a Leninist?" After I answered "Well, yes, of course, I consider myself a Leninist — I am a Marxist," he said "I thought so!" They invited me to attend the twice-weekly meetings of their group, and I attended three of them.

Their group is the Democratic Workers Movement "Independence" (DWMI), which was set up June 16 of this year. As an economics student, Leonid read a great deal of Marx and concluded that the regime had stolen Marxist terminology but had rejected the genuine Marxist method and values.

He has tried to assess what went wrong in the USSR and concludes that what exists is a form of feudal socialism. He has a number of rather unique conclusions and historic assessments. To my knowledge he had never read any of Trotsky's writings.

Leonid has assembled a very interesting group of workers and continues to attract them — through discussions at the Kazan Cathedral and occasional leaflets calling for an independent workers' movement. At each meeting, workers would read the declarations they had issued, or proposed to issue, at their shop. The meetings are very boisterous with Leonid always chairing and pretty much calling the shots. But while he would often shout at people, they did not hesitate to shout back, and the meetings seemed to be very open and democratic in spite of this quality.

There were always three, four, or even a few more women among the 20-30 present in the small, spartan one-room flat where the meetings were held. During a particularly loud and prolonged disagreement, one of the key women passed me the following apologetic note: "Russia has lived only a very short time in conditions of bourgeois democracy: in all only 12 years from 1905 to 1917. Before 1905, there was feudal centralism and after 1917, feudal-centralized socialism in the USSR. Therefore, democratic procedure in our country has a very poor start. We have no experience, either historically or personally. Hence, the inability to listen, the shouts, the dragging out of things and interrupting."

And, although loud and long, the DWMI meetings were serious and purposeful. Leonid helps insure that. Articles and leaflets intended for mass circulation must be read aloud for general criticism and/or approval because copying facilities are so primitive. Leonid was working very hard to get his "Manifesto" accepted as the program of the group. He was running into resistance as it is a wide-ranging historical piece with some specific and disputable formulations and conclusions. But the group had adopted a few basic programmatic positions, one of which is that no intellectuals can join. They have run into angry engineers (or technical workers, who would be considered intellectuals in this case) and even some production-line workers who did not feel that this is a correct approach since "intellectuals" also suffer from the same bureaucratic oppression as the workers, etc. But the group has a sophisticated analysis that says only workers produce surplus value and therefore only workers can change the system; and they must do it in organizations they form independently. I have a feeling that this antagonism towards the intelligentsia is really a sort of backlash resulting from the fact that the intellectuals who have been prominent democratic opponents of Stalinism over the years have not tended to concern themselves with the workers' demands.

After the strikes began in July in the coal fields, DWMI sent a telegram of solidarity to the local strike committees and then sent one of their members to the Kuzbas (the Kuznets Basin in Western Siberia) to offer support and bring back a report. A leaflet in support of the strikers attracted a striking miner from the Donbas (the Donets Basin in Ukraine), who happened to be in Leningrad, to their meeting. He was young (a veteran of the Afghan war) and curious, and was an example of the remarkable raw material repre-

sented by working class activists who are just beginning to learn to use their political muscle against the bureaucracy. DWMI sent telegrams of support to all the strike committees and hopes to establish relations with them. DWMI continues to attract new, enthusiastic activists.

A Polish journalist covered one meeting, taking photographs. Leonid was very happy to have representatives of the "international workers' movement" present. DWMI activists want publicity and do not seem afraid. They insisted I take the rare copies of a variety of their materials so they could be published in the U.S. in order to help spread their ideas.

### 'Secret Group'

One young activist, an engineer in a factory, insisted I meet some "normal people," who are not big talkers outside the Kazan Cathedral but are workers with important ideas. They turned out to be an artist and a worker who are forming, or have formed, an underground workers' movement. They are aware of the FI through Polish contacts, but had not heard anything about it for many years. The worker had just returned from Poland and discussions with Solidarity activists. They asked me many questions about the FI's history and its assessment of events in the USSR, Poland, Britain, and the U.S., as well as the world economic situation and what Trotskyists are doing politically. They were also interested in what role Stalinism had played in the world workers' movement since the 1930s and what workers thought of the Communist parties. They seemed to nod agreement with the FI's general assessments of most world political and economic problems. They are trying to make contact with foreign leftists and want to receive materials and meet Fourth Internationalists who come to Leningrad. But they do not trust glasnost and do not want to risk getting involved in public activity as yet for fear of a big crackdown. They had a broad selection of foreign-language materials but most of it was from U.S. government and United Nations type organizations, not from the left or working class currents.

These underground activists do not believe in working with the Popular Front because they do not support its program. They do, however, believe in trying to work within the bureaucracy's existing unions and in the new "yellow union" organizations like the United Front of Workers that the bureaucracy set up in Leningrad in mid-July. I met no one else in the opposition who shared that strategy. While they spoke approvingly of the need for a political revolution, I do not have any idea what their program is, if in fact they have developed one.

### The Movement in Estonia

During my two days in Tallinn, capital of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, I became acquainted with two activists — a man named Andres and a woman named June — in the Estonian Historical Society. They were very eager to get to know a Marxist from the U.S. who supported their struggle. We talked for almost ten hours. They introduced me to others in their group. They regretted that time was so short because there were other authoritative people they felt

I should have met. While they were very progressive on social issues, it seemed to me that their understandable conclusion that they needed independence to eliminate their national oppression was accompanied by rather unproductive conceptions. For example, they seemed to feel that Estonian national oppression was such an exceptional case that they were unable to see any connection between their future progress and the progress of other non-Russian, national liberation, democratic, or workers' rights movements anywhere, except perhaps in Latvia and Lithuania.

I met the next day with an official of the society, Kullo, who explained some of the activities of their group. Among them is one directed toward helping people to prove their three-generation Estonian residency. This aspect of their actions is obviously aimed at distinguishing the authentic Estonians from people (usually workers) sent by the Russifiers to colonize the region. The campaign around such an effort naturally arouses fear among non-Estonians that they will become second-class citizens if Estonia achieves self-determination. Estonians have been second-class citizens to the Russian or Russified occupiers and apparatchiks for 50 years, since Stalin occupied their region following his vile pact with Hitler. A future sovereign or independent Estonia — one that would be a beacon for humanity — would not, however, simply turn the tables around and make non-Estonians second-class citizens.

The International Movement of Workers of the Estonian SSR (Intermovement), the movement of Russian-speaking workers, built, led, and encouraged by local Russian Communist Party apparatchiks and factory bosses against the Estonian national rights movement, plays up very strongly such aspects of the Estonian nationalist movement. Partially as a result of such political maneuvering, the Russian-speaking workers can be mobilized in mass demonstrations and strikes against the right of Estonia to self-determination when they should be able to sympathize with and support that right.

The Estonian Historical Society collaborates with the massive Estonian Popular Front that controls the government and includes CP tops who are trying to straddle the nationalist wave. The society is collecting testimony from hundreds of Stalin's victims and trying to reconstruct the history of Estonia in the 20th century, the bulk of which was either destroyed or falsified by Stalin and his heirs. In this, they are doing very inspiring and important work.

Intermovement held a rally of 35,000 the second day I was there, July 21. CP officials from throughout the Baltic came to express their opposition to "cultural genocide" and support for the right of children to go to school and function daily in their native language — i.e., Russian. They spoke of the need for workers to take power and revitalize real workers' soviets of the type established by the revolution. They said they were preparing for a political general strike for workers' democracy! Then they ended with the singing of the *International*. (While huge speakers blared with a poor, scratchy recording of a choral rendition, I saw no one singing along.) It is this sort of pure demagoguery which must have motivated Kullo to call Intermovement the "far left" in Estonia. In reality, it is quite the opposite.

## Moscow

Of the eight Moscow phone numbers I had accumulated, only three yielded results. One was an anarchist group "Obshchina" that Igor had known of. (I had received two copies of their journal a few months ago.) They were eager to meet with me; but unfortunately, I ended up with no time to do so.

I first went to the office of the Memorial Society, located in an office of the Cinematographers Union, one of their sponsoring organizations. Memorial is not yet an officially recognized organization and, therefore, is not allotted official permanent space by the state. I spoke with Liudmila, their person on duty, who was meeting continuously with elderly people who had come to pass along to Memorial their long-suppressed historic accounts or to seek some sort of assistance. To Liudmila's knowledge, Memorial had never received a copy of the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky (serialized in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*) or the other materials I had previously sent. I showed her materials issued by the Moscow Trials Campaign Committee and articles from the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* about Memorial's work. I asked her if she knew of individuals or groups that were focusing on the rehabilitation of Leon Trotsky. She encouraged me to attend a large meeting Memorial was having the next day where I could meet individuals she indicated would know detailed answers to my questions.

That same afternoon, I visited the prominent socialist activist Boris Kagarlitsky. He is on the verge of helping set up a new and expanded socialist group—New Socialist Initiative—that will be composed of individuals who had belonged to Socialist Initiative plus some new people from the Social Democratic (SD) wing of DU. I was not able to establish just what this SD fraction represents. There is a SD group in Moscow and the SD held a broad discussion conference in Tallinn in July which Kagarlitsky attended. He had since visited the Donbas strike region and was working on a report of what he had learned.

I walked around for several hours with Volodya, a friend of Kagarlitsky, and a computer specialist. Volodya, also in his 30s, is very new to politics; he only became active over the past year and a half or so. But he tried to give me an assessment of the relationship of political forces in Moscow. He reported that on the previous day at Moscow State University there had been a meeting to form a movement of electors. Historian Yuri Afanasyev, CP maverick Boris Yeltsin, and many others were there. Volodya was shocked at a statement by Afanasyev that socialism could perhaps be built in the USSR but not by following Lenin's ideas, or something along those lines. We could not believe that Afanasyev had evolved that far backward.

### Memorial, Part II

One of the high points of my visit occurred the next day. I attended the large meeting of Memorial at the Palace of Youth which Liudmila had recommended. It was a conference to organize a new committee of the Memorial Society, or so it seemed to me. The meeting was well underway when I arrived. Nadezhda Joffe was on a panel of the

### Trotsky's 'New Course' Published in USSR

For the first time since he was exiled from the USSR, an official Soviet publication has reprinted one of Trotsky's works. "The New Course," which first appeared in 1923 during the early stages of Trotsky's fight against the increasing power of Stalin and the bureaucracy in the USSR, was printed on August 17 by *Molodoi Kommunist*, magazine of the Young Communist League, or Komsomol.

presiding committee but I was not aware of her presence until later. Also present was Ivan Vrachyov, an Old Bolshevik who was also an organizer of the Left Opposition in Moscow in the 1920s. (His life has recently been described in *Ogonyok* and *Znamya*.) He is still quite militant from all descriptions.

The discussion at the conference centered around the question of whether the new committee would be a part of Memorial or not. I was later to learn that this had been an attempt by the Stalinist apparatus to replace Memorial and deprive the movement of its political thrust by creating a new, more or less welfare society for Stalin's victims. The maneuver failed because the founders of Memorial mobilized dozens of Stalin's victims who are committed to Memorial's quest to restore and preserve historic truth. The Memorial activists were able to win a key vote making this new formation a part of Memorial and not a separate organization. (This was one of a number of political maneuvers by the bureaucracy in major movements that occurred while I was there: in addition to the Intermovement, there were two offensives aimed at heading off independent movements of workers. The massive strikes of hundreds of thousands of coal miners present a real nightmare to the bureaucratic caste in this regard.)

I managed during a break in the meeting to introduce myself to a fellow, also in his 30s and named Nikolai, who had been credited with helping organize aspects of the meeting. I showed him the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (No. 61) where the Memorial poster was reprinted with an article about its work. I told him who I was and explained my interest in seeing to it that Memorial had a copy of Baitalsky's memoirs. He said he knows Baitalsky's widow and would give her the materials I had for her. He gave me her address. I then sat next to a son of a victim of Stalin who now works at the State Historic Museum on Red Square. He wants to get as much Trotsky materials as he can. To help me, he went off and made a number of inquiries and returned with the name and phone number of a person who was "gathering everything about Trotsky."

While we were talking at the end of the meeting, Nikolai came up and brought with him a woman named Irina. She was very animated and insisted that I should come with them to a Memorial headquarters several metro stops away.

This Memorial office turned out to be the place where all the real work goes on. It is a three-room apartment where Irina, Nikita (a historian of the gulag, the vast network of Stalin's forced labor camps), Arseny (who spent five years in

labor camps for his democratic opposition after his arrest in 1972), and others work. According to Irina, Nikita and Arseny were key individuals responsible for launching the Memorial Society, and they are today two of the key political figures who organize to keep it going in its original direction. Virtually all the materials Memorial has collected are kept in this apartment. Irina showed me stacks of mail they have received from victims of Stalin. Part of her job is to record all this and conduct oral interviews when necessary, all to be preserved for the Memorial archives when they finally become an officially recognized organization and are allotted permanent premises. Nikolai showed me an appeal on their behalf that the government newspaper *Izvestia* was finally pressured to print in July after many months of stalling. (see below)

Memorial does have a set of the *Biulletin Oppozitsii* which they received from Vanessa Redgrave. (One of the Memorial activists said he currently has Vols. II and III at home and is reading them.) They also have Baitalsky's

memoirs and a biography of Baitalsky that his widow Betty has written.

Immediately upon our arrival at the Memorial office, Arseny and Nikolai had an intense discussion over the proceedings of the conference we had just attended: Nikolai was summarizing to Arseny—who had not been there—just what had transpired, who said what, how various individuals responded to certain proposals, etc. They had just cause for recognizing their success in a diligent effort to outmaneuver a section of the CP apparatus that fears the consequences for the survival of CP political credibility and power with further revelations of historic truth.

The Memorial activists told me about various groups working on the rehabilitation of Trotsky. One is a club at the Moscow Aviation Institute and another is in Kharkov in Ukraine. I had just missed the representative from the Kharkov group who had been in Moscow the previous day but had already left to return home. I then asked about Aleksei, the person the young man who works at the State

*The following appeal appeared in the government daily Izvestia July 26, 1989, after months of pressure from Memorial supporters.*

### Who Doesn't Trust Memorial?

We, relatives of revolutionaries who were annihilated by Stalin and who even under the Tsar had struggled for a new social order, are deeply disturbed by the fate of the popular movement "Memorial."

The Memorial Society was established not only for the sake of the dead, but also for the sake of those who remained alive; and for the sake of all who live and will live in our land. They must have not only the memory, but the whole truth about our past in order to overcome its contemporary consequences.

The unmasking of Stalinism and sympathy for its victims require awakening the conscience and compassion of the people. And it can further the moral and spiritual cleansing of the population. The rejection in principle of violence and lies in public relations is a necessary step on the road toward a state based on law.

On our way toward it, the withholding of registration from the All-Union Voluntary Historico-Educational Society "Memorial" is cause for alarm. The founding conference of Memorial took place as far back as January 1989, with the participation of delegates from more than 100 cities in the country. All legal formalities were observed. Among its official founders are such eminent organizations as the Cinematographers Union, the Union of Artists, and the Union of Architects. How can one explain the fact that month after month goes by, but as yet the Soviet authorities have apparently not seen fit to recognize Memorial.

Even the competition for a plan for a monument to the victims of Stalinist repression was announced without the participation of the public council of the Memorial fund. Surely, it is unusual to involve in the decision of state business a council chosen at random and not on the basis of electoral districts. And this is not

mere state business but a popular cause. And the people's money is involved too.

After corresponding protests the USSR Ministry of Culture allowed Memorial to be on the panel of judges selecting the winner. One can't help but ask: Would this have happened without the protests?

We would like to meet face to face with those who do not trust Memorial, engage them in a dialog, and try to change their minds. But someone's decisive opinion remains mysteriously beyond personal accountability. We hear talk about the absence of all-union legislation in this area, that the new Supreme Soviet will have to adopt a new law on public organizations. But point 14 of a resolution still in force of the VTsIK [All-Union Central Executive Committee] and the SNK [Council of Peoples' Commissars] of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic] of July 10, 1932, provides for the registration of all-union societies if their board of administration is located inside the borders of the RSFSR.

The question naturally arises: Whose interest does it serve that Memorial, which is upholding the rights of those who have been repressed, itself has no rights of any kind and does not even have a permanent place for the safekeeping of the invaluable documents and relics that have already been collected?

Support for Memorial, which was created democratically and openly, and is speaking out for the consistent renewal of society, is in the interest of all who are not indifferent to the future of our country.

A.A. Antonov-Ovseenko [Apparently should have been A.V. Anton-Ovseenko, son of Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, a Bolshevik leader during the October revolution and the civil war; Left Opposition supporter from 1923-27; he recanted and served in responsible posts. Russian consul-general in Barcelona during the

Spanish Civil War; arrested in Oct. 1937; shot 1938. A.V. is a historian of the Stalin period.]

M. Tukhachevskaya and O. Tukhachevskaya [Sisters of Mikhail Tukhachevsky, Soviet Marshal executed by Stalin in 1937.]

M. Kosareva-Naneishvili [Maria, the wife of Aleksandr V. Kosarev, General Secretary of the All-Union Leninist Communist Youth League, Komsomol.]\*

G. Poleshuk-Muralov [Daughter of Nikolai Muralov, Bolshevik leader of October insurrection and civil war. Founding supporter of the Left Opposition; executed after second Moscow trial in 1937.]

S. Fedorova.

V. Ubovich-Borovskaya [Descendant of I.P. Ubovich, distinguished civil war commander, one of the Soviet army generals charged with treason and shot in 1938.]

Lev Razgon

B. Kochneva (Gamarnik) [Victoria, the daughter of Ia. B. Gamarnik, Chief of the Army's Political Division and Deputy Commissar of Defense, committed suicide 1937 after hearing that he was declared to be an "enemy of the people."]

Kh. Rakovsky [Khristian, son of Khristian Rakovsky, leading figure in the Bolshevik Party, early leader of the Left Opposition; a defendant in the third Moscow trial in 1938 and subsequently shot.]

T. Smilga-Polyan [Daughter of Ivan T. Smilga, Bolshevik, supporter of the Left Opposition; expelled from the party in 1927; repudiated his ideas; perished in the 1930s.]

S. Sheboldaev [Sergei, son of Boris P. Sheboldaev, first secretary of the Northern Caucasus Regional Committee of the CP, arrested in 1937 and perished.]\*

\*Both Kosarev and Sheboldaev had played an active role in the mass repression until they themselves fell victim.



Historic Museum at Red Square told me was collecting everything about Trotsky. Nikita said he knew him but that Aleksei was a bit of a "fanatic," "more radical than us," Nikita described him. I said that this sounded like my kind of guy and insisted on calling him. I hoped to be able to meet him even though I only had a couple of hours before I had to leave Moscow.

They helped me contact him, showed me where he lived on the map, and even gave me the two-kopek piece I would need to call him from the station when I arrived there in the event that Aleksei was not there to meet me. They said I would recognize Aleksei because he would be carrying a book by Ernest Mandel!

Irina walked me to the metro station and related some background information about herself, Arseny, and Nikita. Irina's interest in Memorial was rooted in her own family history. Her father was in the German CP and was forced to flee Germany after Hitler came to power. He was arrested in 1937 within days of the arrest of other German CP members. Her family never saw him again, although they did receive one letter. In 1949, they received an official notice that he had died of tuberculosis in a labor camp in 1941.

Aleksei did not seem fanatical to me at all. He was carrying a book by Mandel in French, which he reads. Aleksei is a professional translator and speaks excellent English. Although time was short, he preferred that we walk instead of remaining in the area of the metro station; so we headed toward his apartment that is located in one of the newer microregions, or vast housing complexes.

Aleksei knows comrades in the Fourth International. He has worked on Russian translations of Mandel's writings. He has a small collection of Trotsky's works. He was the key person who organized the Memorial meeting about Trotsky which Pierre Broué attended in November 1988 in Moscow (see *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 61), and the petition for Trotsky's rehabilitation that Seva Volkov (Trotsky's grandson) saw when he visited the Memorial exhibit in December 1988.

Aleksei shares his library with others and plans to set up a study group on Trotsky's ideas. While one visitor from abroad had recently suggested to him that he help initiate the organization of a FI support group in the USSR, Aleksei felt that this idea was premature. Aleksei warned me not to allow those abroad to become too ecstatic over him as he is not sure that he is in total agreement with Trotsky. We did not have time to pursue that comment as I was just on the point of boarding a bus to the metro.

No older than his early 30s, Aleksei has been involved in the democratic movement for a number of years, it seems. It is a pity that we had such a short time together—about 40 minutes. I was not really able to learn much about his thinking. However, I am lucky that I found him at all.

## Return to Leningrad

My final two days I attended one last meeting of DWMI, met with Leonid to learn how he became a Marxist, and then with Nikolai and Igor. The last night I learned that a LPF labor specialist had approached Igor and Nikolai (who is also considered a labor specialist in the unofficial circles) for advice as to what demands the LPF should raise to get more workers involved in their movement. I later showed Nikolai a copy of the *Transitional Program* of the Fourth International, especially its section on the USSR, that is remarkably relevant to the discussion. Nikolai had never heard of this document and was quite interested in it.

Nikolai recommended that I leave all my valuable literature with the informal library where people from all the groups would have access to it. I had discussed this with Galina, and she had already agreed that this would be a good idea. Nikolai and I went to the library only to learn that Galina was away for two weeks. Nikolai agreed to see to the delivery of the materials to the library upon Galina's return.

## Back to the U.S.

Upon my departure from Helsinki to New York I read in the *Herald Tribune* of August 1 that the Soviet Union had lifted all restrictions on importing works of banned authors. "No authors are banned," said customs chief Vitali Boyarov.

These four remarkable words have special meaning to revolutionary Marxists whose ideas have been banned, abused, and falsified for decades by the Stalinist bureaucratic rulers. Revolutionary Marxists would be well advised to exert a concerted effort in the months ahead to take advantage of this unprecedented opening for our ideas. The potential for an interested and grateful audience is unlimited. Humanity has a new opportunity for a giant step forward. ●

## Note

1. The *Bulletin of the Opposition*: the Russian-language journal of the Marxist opposition to Stalin and Stalinism. The *BO* was established and edited by Leon Trotsky after he was deported from the USSR in 1929 for his uncompromising political opposition to the counterrevolutionary and anti-democratic policies of the bureaucratic apparatus headed by Stalin. Trotsky edited the journal until he was assassinated by Stalin's agent in August 1940. (His son Leon Sedov, who managed all the technical aspects of the *BO* in Europe, died mysteriously in February 1938, undoubtedly under Stalin's hand.) The *BO* ceased publication in August 1941 as World War II cut deep into the revolutionary cadre. Its 87 numbers were published in a four-volume facsimile edition by Monad Press of New York in 1973 with an explanatory introduction and a table of contents provided by the Monad staff. Unfortunately, Monad Press no longer exists; and it appears that Pathfinder Press, who collaborated with Monad on the project, has allowed the *BO* to go out of print at this time in history when it is so badly needed by revolutionary-minded activists in the USSR.

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# Prospects for the Situation in China

by Yang Hai

*This article was received from October Review, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. It has been abridged for publication in the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism.*

The root cause of the struggle for democracy in China from mid-April to early June this year was the response to a series of crises under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party. Especially important were the complaints and hatred of the people for the increasing corruption and degeneracy of the CCP bureaucrats, big and small, within the context of the open door market reforms.

The June 4 massacre and the subsequent brutal repression temporarily suppressed the democratic struggle of the people. But did it solve the various crises of society? How will the economic, political, and social situation in China develop in the coming period?

Of course we can only make a preliminary analysis and conjecture now, to be confirmed or revised on the basis of actual developments. But this discussion on prospects could be helpful in grasping the main line of events from among the many contradictions, and from there to point to the social forces, strategic aims, and tactical measures that should be pursued by the democracy movement.

## How Will the Bureaucracy Rule the People?

In the struggle for democracy from April to June, the urban masses, with Beijing in the lead, massively and spontaneously mobilized, breaking through 40 years of highly repressive government by the CCP, severely undermining its basis of rule, and even causing divisions within the bureaucracy.

The CCP used the bloody massacre and the subsequent terror to temporarily suppress the mass struggle. But terror does not solve problems; it only covers up the contradictions. Not only has the discontent of the people not been eliminated, but for those who know the truth it has deepened into bitter hostility. The biggest problem for the CCP now is how to continue to rule the people who have begun to awaken and mobilize.

In the coming period, because of the depth of the contradiction between the CCP and the masses, the CCP will not be able to give up ruling through repression and terror. Though it no longer makes propaganda out of its mass arrests and executions, and has begun to withdraw some troops from Beijing, the army, police, street committees, and other repressive apparatuses will continue to proceed at full steam.

At the same time, the CCP is conducting some superficial campaigns—for example, against corruption—to try to ease the mass discontent. But these will not touch on the ruling factions.

On the other hand, it is trying to shift the target of mass discontent to other social layers by accusing individual household enterprises and private businesses of tax evasion and extravagant living. Predictably, the CCP will strike at one layer to appease another, while increasing the income gap between different sectors of the laboring masses so as to divide and rule, and force the people to intensify their labor in order to raise production.

But the masses will engage in bigger slowdowns, sabotage, and other means to passively resist the bureaucracy which has become the prime enemy of society.

## Bureaucrats Strive for Individual Way Out

Within a bureaucracy facing a deep crisis and the threat of another massive wave of resistance, many will feel unsafe. The internal disintegration of the bureaucracy that appeared during the previous wave of people's democratic struggle will now continue in the form of "every bureaucrat for himself or herself."

Regardless of what the policy from above may be, the approach of bureaucrats, big and small, will be to accumulate wealth by any means—official hoarding and speculation, abuse of power, blackmail, oppression, exploitation, and others.

The campaign against corruption will not only have no real effect, it will be used to purge dissidents, strike at other factions, try to increase control over lower-level bureaucrats, and so on.

The ruling crisis will intensify the factional struggles and hasten individual bureaucrats in their drive for fat positions, big profits, an escape hatch for themselves and their families, arrangements to go abroad, etc.

## Bigger Concessions to Foreign Capital

The CCP bureaucracy, in the face of its crisis, will make even bigger economic and political concessions to foreign capital, and offer even more favorable terms to attract foreign investment.

Foreign capital and imperialism will take advantage of the crisis to blackmail, offer usurious loans, and weaken the CCP's control of the internal economy. It will also try to push the CCP as far to the right politically as possible.

However, foreign capital and imperialism do not want the masses to gain victory. Therefore they will temporarily help the regime to overcome the present difficult period. The halfhearted and insignificant sanctions of the U.S.A., Japan,

and other countries are proof. Their long-term goal is to restore capitalism in China. Therefore, they will strive to foster capitalist forces inside the country and push the bureaucracy in that direction.

In the unstable situation, some capitalists may withdraw from China. But others will ask for guarantees of bigger profits and better conditions, and make short-term plunderous investments, aggravating thereby the imbalance in the economic structure of China.

### **Central Bureaucracy Losing Control**

The central bureaucracy itself is increasingly losing control, not only of the masses and the economy, but also of local and lower-level bureaucrats. Their orders are not obeyed; regions struggle for power and profits; big and small bureaucrats seek personal gains; bureaucrats and businesses make dirty deals with each other; and, with its increased influence after the repression, the army will ask for a bigger share.

Big and small bureaucrats, newborn capitalists within the country, as well as foreign capital and imperialism, will try to gain the maximum in the shortest time. Their common subject of exploitation and oppression is the general laboring mass—especially those layers who are weak, unorganized, lacking in strength, or tightly controlled.

Local bureaucrats will pursue development on their own, in an uncoordinated way, even hindering and blocking each other. Big and small bureaucrats, merchants, and capitalists will speculate and hoard, and plunder for personal gain. Capitalist economic forces will be strengthened in practice. All these factors will result in greater chaos, imbalances, and stagnation in production everywhere inside the country.

### **Lives of Workers and Peasants Will Be Hit**

Agricultural production will suffer blows from a series of factors: Capitalistic forms of production and market anarchy will bring losses to the peasants and increase their lack of confidence. The bureaucracy will abuse, oppress, and exploit the general peasant masses. Official speculation, hoarding, and corruption will cause high prices and shortages in seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Due to a lack of funds for purchasing agricultural products, the bureaucrats will have to pay the peasants with promissory notes, while those notes from last year are still unpaid. This will cause further discontent among the peasants, and a good summer harvest could intensify the conflict by depressing the price of grain and bringing about losses for the peasants. Insufficient production and rising prices of consumer goods produced in the cities will affect the countryside even more, causing the peasants to be even less willing to expand production and sell their products.

Furthermore, because the cities are cutting back on construction projects, a lot of workers who came from the countryside have become unemployed, but there is no more

land for them to work when they return to their villages. Coupled with the polarization of wealth in the villages and the extravagant lives of the rich peasants, this means that internal tension within the villages will increase.

The agricultural crisis and the fall in living standards will lead the poor peasants to the brink of rebellion.

In the cities, because of the crisis in industrial production and the problems in the countryside, shortages in food and consumer goods will appear; inflation will worsen; the standard of living will fall. In addition, the bureaucracy is attempting to reduce social security and benefits, extend the contract system and enterprise bankruptcies, create unemployment, and so on, in order to pressure the working class, reduce state subsidies, and push the marketization of the labor force. All these factors are posing the greatest threat to the standard of living and security of the urban population since the establishment of the new China.

After 40 years of rule by the CCP and 10 years of open door reforms, the entire economic and political system is rotten. Facing increasing crisis in the villages and the cities, the CCP has little room to make concessions. If the discontent of the peasants breaks out into the open, the CCP will be forced to raise the purchase price of agricultural products and to transfer more goods from the cities. But this will lead to higher inflation and worse shortages in the cities, resulting in more discontent among the workers and citizens. The struggles of the urban masses will likewise aggravate the crisis and trigger the struggles of poor peasants in the villages.

### **Defend Livelihood, Struggle for Democracy**

What is different from the previous phase of the struggle for democracy is that the struggles will now draw their motive force from a defense of living standards. Therefore the struggles have a stronger force, a wider social participation, and more tangible and practical goals.

The most decisive force of all is the working class conducting strikes in defense of its livelihood, jobs, social security, etc., and in the course of the struggle building up combat organizations to defend itself, gradually changing the atomized and unorganized state of the workers.

The workers will be encouraged by international struggles (e.g., the big strikes of miners in the Soviet Union) and support from people overseas. Through its own fight the working class will be able to assist and group together other oppressed social layers, like national minorities, women, youth, and the peasants—especially the broad layer of poor peasants—to struggle together.

This defense of basic livelihood will become the main struggle, and will combine with the previous phase of the fight for democracy, drawing its lessons, and becoming the next wave of the anti-bureaucratic revolution—to eradicate the main contradiction in Chinese society and the main obstacle to social development: the bureaucracy. ●

August 7, 1989

In the introduction to our *Arsenal of Marxism* feature last month — “Revolution and the Negro” by C.L.R. James — the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* stated that “James has a well-deserved reputation as one of the most significant Marxist theorists to arise in the Americas.” In this contribution, Lloyd D’Aguilar expresses his disagreement with that point of view. We invite further contributions on this subject from our readers.

## What Was C.L.R. James’s Contribution to Revolutionary Marxism?

by Lloyd D’Aguilar

Q. What would you say your greatest contributions have been?

A. My contributions have been number one, to clarify and extend the heritage of Marx and Lenin. And number two, to expand the idea of what constitutes the new society. (Paul Buhle, ed. *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work*, London, Allison & Busby, 1986, from 1981 original)

By any standard this is a rather bold claim. C.L.R. James did in fact spend his mature years trying to give expression to his own particular interpretation of Marx and Lenin, but as to whether this constituted a clarification or an extension of that heritage is debatable. This article is an attempt to examine the Marxism of James who died in May of this year at the age of 88. (See “C.L.R. James, Writer and Revolutionary,” by Charlie Van Gelderen, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 66.)

James did not begin to study Marxism until he was in his mid-thirties, soon after migrating to England in 1932. But there is nothing remarkable in this since most West Indian intellectuals and artists of the period did not begin to develop their full potential until after they had migrated to the “mother” country where they were exposed to a more “advanced” intellectual and political climate. Among James’s contemporaries who achieved reknown abroad we might mention George Padmore (Trinidad), Claude McKay (Jamaica), and even Marcus Garvey (Jamaica).

In his native Trinidad and Tobago, which was then a colony of Britain, James was a high school teacher. There he managed to get a few short stories published as he had ambitions of becoming a writer. The hope of developing a literary career thus enticed him to go to England. Until then he had demonstrated no inclination towards political involvement.

He writes in his semiautobiographical book *Beyond a Boundary* that by the age of eight he had read William Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* several times. He was, he writes, “A British intellectual long before I was ten, already an alien in my own environment among my own people, even my own family.”

James was also a cricket enthusiast and it was this which provided the opportunity for him to go to England. At the urging of Learie Constantine, then a famous Trinidadian cricketer living in England, James went there to help him

write his autobiography. Constantine was then much in demand on the lecture circuit as a speaker on “West Indian affairs.” James concedes that Constantine was much more politically developed than he was. “My sentiments were in the right place,” he writes, “but I was still enclosed in the mold of nineteenth century intellectualism.” That situation would soon change as James gradually moved away from saying a few words at these lectures to substituting for Constantine, who was more preoccupied with cricket.

James was not totally unprepared to tackle the West Indian question, however. He had brought to England with him the manuscript of a biography of Captain Andre Cipriani, one of Trinidad’s most important post-World War I labor leaders. Cipriani is credited with being the first in the region to raise the demand for self-government.

This work was eventually published as *The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. James was now, for the first time, not only confronting the question of colonialism, but he would soon be affected by English working class radicalism, especially that of Lancashire where he first lived.

It was during this period that James read Trotsky’s *History of the Russian Revolution*. “I was very much interested in history and the book seemed to offer some analysis of modern society. At the end of reading the book, spring 1934, I became a Trotskyist — in my mind and later joined. It was clear in my mind that I was not going to be a Stalinist.” He in fact joined the Trotskyist Marxist Workers’ Group and there “learned Marxism.”

In 1935 Mussolini invaded and captured Ethiopia (Abyssinia). This was the only African country to have so far escaped being colonized in the wake of the extraordinary 1880 Berlin Conference which divided up the continent among the European powers. The small Pan-African community in England, jolted by this development, responded by forming the International African Friends of Ethiopia, in which James played a prominent role. According to a contemporary, Charlie Van Gelderen, it was during this crisis that James “displayed his qualities as a speaker and writer to particular effect. . . . His articles in the ILP [Independent Labor Party] journal *New Leader*, cutting through all the cant of the League of Nations, were among the best agitational material that he ever wrote. At the ILP’s annual conference in Keighley, he succeeded in winning support for the line of workers’ sanctions.” (*International Viewpoint*, June 26, 1989, Issue 166)

The first Pan-African Conference seeking to unify the African race against racism and colonialism was held in 1900, in England, under the auspices of Henry Sylvester Williams (also of Trinidad) and W.E.B. DuBois. There were three more conferences by the time James arrived in England, but they seemed not to have made any great impact since their demands never posed a serious challenge to Western imperialism. But now with Mussolini's invasion, and signs that Stalin was prepared to sacrifice the anticolonial revolution for the sake of making political deals with imperialism, the question of an independent Pan-African response acquired a new sense of urgency. That Stalin continued to supply Mussolini's war machinery with oil during the invasion helped to give Pan-Africanism an anti-Communist element as well.

George Padmore, at one time a high-ranking Comintern official, had already resigned over what he saw as Comintern betrayal of the colonial revolution. He was later to write a book, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, which answered in favor of the former. Others in the U.S. Communist movement also resigned in protest against Stalin's complicity in the Ethiopian invasion.

Thus in a short space of time the die was cast. James would devote his attention for the rest of his life, though not exclusively, to issues concerning Pan-Africa, and he would try to put this in a Marxist context. To underline the point James published two books in 1938: *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, and a smaller schematic work, *History of the Negro Revolt*.

*Black Jacobins* was to be his magnum opus, and is still considered today as the best study of the world's first successful slave revolt. James said he was motivated by a desire to show that Black people were never passive in the face of their enslavement, and were in fact directly instrumental in their liberation. That was a radical position in those days.

*Black Jacobins* also shows evidence of the effect the methodology of Trotsky's *History* had upon James. "In this work," according to Robin Blackburn in his newly published book, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, "James establishes the impact of revolution in the Caribbean on events in the metropolis and explores the extraordinary fusion of different traditions and impulses achieved in St. Dominique in the 1790s. James's story illuminates the essential workings of capitalism, racialism, colonialism, and slavery—and the complex class struggle to which they gave rise in St. Domingue; it conveys a marvelous sense of the eruption of the masses in history. With a sensibility attuned to the cosmopolitan forces of the age he follows the transatlantic revolutionary impulse as it crisscrosses the ocean from Saint Domingue and back to the Caribbean again. This is both far more satisfying as explanation, and far more compelling as narrative, than those accounts of struggles concerning colonial slavery which never look outside the plantations or, even worse, never leave the drawing rooms or debating chambers of the metropolis."

But what of the Marxism which James was now studying within the Trotskyist movement in Britain—the theoretical, the doctrinal, the practical aspects? On a psychological level it is legitimate to ask how a Black colonial, "ex-nineteenth century British intellectual," who had no experience in working class struggle, would assimilate and function in a Trotskyist/Marxist movement which was still Eurocentric and without roots in the working class. Would all of these class and national tensions make it possible for him to identify with the worker chained to the lathe or to the machete, or would he be overcome by the petty-bourgeois intellectual yearning for individual freedom?

Marxism is not a Eurocentric doctrine. It is a theory of universal human liberation. But this does not make its focus, its vocabulary, any less Eurocentric when the world revolutionary process is uneven, and the bulk of the intellectuals are Europeans. The relevance of this issue to the question of the history of colonials participating in Marxist movements in the metropolis, and even in the United States in the case of African Americans, does show that the inevitable emphasis on the struggle in the metropolis, as opposed to the colonial question, has the potential to cause alienation and short-lived relationships. While the case can be made much more strongly with others, such as Harry Haywood, George Padmore, Richard Wright, etc., in the case of James it would be "European" issues which precipitated his break with Trotskyism.

James's first major work explaining the Trotskyist perspective of the havoc which Stalinism had created in the international working class movement, *World Revolution 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*, gives early insight into the questions which would later separate James from the Trotskyist movement. The research for the book was a collective effort but James took responsibility for the analysis. He had emerged as an intellectual in his own right. And just as important, the analysis offered by *World Revolution* indicated that James did not fully accept Trotsky's explanation for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, nor did he fully endorse the way Trotsky conducted the fight against Stalin after Lenin's death. He also took issue with Lenin.

Specifically, James argued that the "centralism" of the Bolshevik party—which had been forged by Lenin—was in turn the instrument which ruined the state and the party. "Centralism which had helped to create the International helped to ruin it." This was to be the opening shot for a later full-blown theory that the Leninist vanguard party, though appropriate for Lenin's time, was now passé—since it was the root of all bureaucracy.

*World Revolution* pointed out what James thought were some rather unflattering aspects of Trotsky's character. He was imperious; he lacked Lenin's "good nature" and "homeliness"; he was brilliant in action, but this carried with it a "compensating incapacity" for personal maneuvering. His greatest weakness was "incapacity" in party organization.

Trotsky was also accused of not bringing the masses into the fight with Stalin as Lenin “infallibly would have done sooner rather than later.” The point was also raised as to whether Trotsky as head of the army should not have brought it into the picture as well!

*World Revolution* proved at least that James was not to be easily acquiescent with Trotsky’s materialist analysis of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, and that James was prepared to take issue with Trotsky himself. But this was not a position peculiar only to James. There were others in Trotskyist circles who held variants of the same position. In James’s particular case it appears that he had come under the influence of Boris Souvarine, whom he met and collaborated with in France, and which led to his translation of Souvarine’s book *Stalin* into English. James obviously thought that Souvarine was someone he could learn from, but to Trotsky Souvarine was a “gangrenous skeptic, who believed that nobody knew what the dialectic was.” Trotsky warned young comrades: “Beware of this malignant infection!”

The book appears to have been well received in Trotskyist circles with little importance placed on the discordant note struck by James. The seeds of future disagreement had nonetheless been sown. From a theoretical standpoint James expressed a disdain for the “tendency among Trotskyists to exaggerate the economic and social influences in the Trotsky-Stalin struggle.” In other words, James preferred not to believe that Stalin’s rise to power had anything to do with Russia’s backward economic conditions; the devastation caused by the civil war; and the plain physical exhaustion of the working class. He chose instead to concentrate on personality and psychology. Trotsky would later tell James in a discussion *On the History of the Left Opposition* (a document submitted by James for discussion) that: “In parts the manuscript is very perspicacious, but I have noticed here the same fault I have noticed in *World Revolution* — a very good book — and that is a lack of dialectical approach, Anglo-Saxon empiricism, and formalism which is only the reverse of empiricism.” (C.L.R. James, *At the Rendezvous of Victory*, Allison & Busby, 1984)

### Anglo-Saxon Empiricism

The year 1938 was a very busy and eventful one for James. The publication of *Black Jacobins* and *A History of the Negro Revolt* had established him as an authority on the “Negro” question. He was also in attendance at the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International in France. James Cannon, leader of the American Socialist Workers Party, also impressed no doubt by James’s credentials, invited him while on a visit to England in 1938 to come to the United States to undertake a speaking tour on the Negro question and on the war situation in Europe. The SWP was only too aware that they would never have a real impact on the U.S. political situation unless they were able to win militant Black people to the party.

A meeting was arranged in 1939 for James, Trotsky, and other leaders of the SWP to have a discussion on the Black question. This discussion has been published by Pathfinder Press as *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Deter-*

*mination*. The differences which emerged between Trotsky and James are instructive. Trotsky, with admittedly less knowledge about the struggles of Black Americans but armed with a superior grasp of the dialectical method and the experience of the Russian Revolution behind him, was able to gauge in a more concrete way the political mood of Black America, and thus offer useful suggestions on tactics and slogans that might be utilized.

The differences revolved around the question of whether Black people were a nation and whether the slogan of “self-determination,” as advanced by the Communist Party, was appropriate. Trotsky argued that while he considered Blacks a race and not a nation, he felt that the logic of their struggle against racism propelled them in the direction of confronting the question of nationhood. It is a question of their consciousness, and if that is what they want “then we must fight against imperialism to the last drop of blood, so that they gain the right, wherever and however they please, to separate a piece of land for themselves. The fact that they are today not a majority in any state does not matter. . . . In any case the suppression of the Negroes pushes them toward a political and national unity.”

James on the other hand felt that the demand for “self-determination” could be “reactionary,” and concluded that “fortunately for socialism” Blacks do “not want self-determination.” He felt that the thrust of their struggle was for the “abolition of social discrimination.” Their demands should be tailored to white workers, as in the South, who though having “centuries of prejudice to overcome” were beginning in some cases, such as in the “sharecroppers’ union,” to work with Black workers! Self-determination would create division and confusion. James also refused to acknowledge that the so-called “Back to Africa” program of Marcus Garvey, which had attracted millions of Blacks in the U.S., was implicitly a call for self-determination. Indeed, James proudly boasted on occasion that he personally heckled Marcus Garvey while speaking in Hyde Park. It would be many years before James admitted that he had totally failed to understand the true significance of Marcus Garvey.

Trotsky was squarely opposed to James’s position. “We cannot say,” he argued, that “[self-determination] will be reactionary. It is not reactionary. . . . [T]he realization of this slogan can be reached only as the thirteen or fourteen million Negroes feel that the domination by the whites is terminated. To fight for the possibility of realizing an independent state is a sign of great moral and political awakening.” He also did not feel that self-determination leads away from the class point of view. Such a position is an “adaptation to the ideology of the white workers. The Negro can be developed to a class point of view only when the white worker is educated.”

This discussion was quite illuminating in terms of the insights which it revealed about the possibilities for influencing the Black struggle. But the long term results were disappointing in that the SWP was never able to significantly recruit and consolidate Black cadre or to influence the Black struggle.

A possible explanation for the disappointing results is that while Trotsky was right on target as far as the question of self-determination was concerned, he in effect nullified his brilliant insights by agreeing to a position of “neutrality,” i.e.,

to declare the party's commitment to fight for self-determination only if Blacks indicated they wanted it, not to advocacy. This might have been due to the feeling that such advocacy by the SWP, a "white" party, would be received with skepticism, as a subtle call for segregation. But having agreed to James's call for the formation of an independent Black organization, "oriented to the masses," then surely interesting possibilities would have been opened up for the creative utilization of this slogan. We do not have the space to explore this question further but it is safe to say that the trend in the Black struggle has been the search to found an independent Black political organization, and the organizations which have flirted with the idea of self-determination have been, not the bourgeois elements, but those which are closer to the masses and which are favorably disposed towards socialist ideas. The question of self-determination as a unifying call for struggle is very much on the agenda but has yet to be given the careful thought which it deserves.

And how do we assess James in this discussion? The record speaks for itself. There is no logical connection, for example, between his rejection of self-determination on the one hand and his call for an independent Black political organization on the other—the class nature of which was never clearly defined. He even went as far as to suggest that this organization in bringing out a theoretical journal should abstain from discussing socialism! Trotsky objected: "It is one thing to accept a heterogeneous group and to work in it, and another to be absorbed in it."

This discussion with Trotsky has been highlighted because it was the sharpest assessment yet of James from a Marxist perspective. It is a tribute also to Trotsky who quickly sized up James's lack of dialectical approach and his opportunism. We shall see how this opportunism expressed itself in a sharper form in the way James later attempted to deal with the anticolonial struggle in Africa and the Caribbean.

### State Capitalism

The signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in 1939 was to precipitate a full-blown dispute in the SWP over the social character of the Soviet Union, and whether it should be unconditionally defended during the upcoming world war. Trotsky and the Fourth International held the position that the Soviet Union was a degenerated workers' state, but that it should nonetheless be unconditionally defended by the workers' movement if attacked by imperialism.

Trotsky would have occasion once again to return to the lack of dialectics in the theoretical arguments of those who labeled the Soviet Union a state capitalist country and rejected the call for its unconditional defense. James allied himself with this faction (led by James Burnham and Max Shachtman) though he was never one of their major theoreticians.

Trotsky took the position in these debates (see *In Defense of Marxism*, by Pathfinder Press) that in order to prove capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union, it was necessary to demonstrate, according to the laws of dialectics, how and at what point this restoration had taken place. One had to explain, according to Marxist theory, how it was that the Soviet economy functioned differently from the typical

capitalist economy, but yet was also being regarded as capitalist. He questioned whether it could be denied that the economic conquests of the October revolution had remained intact in spite of the bureaucracy's political appropriation of the working class.

The SWP opposition group was described as petty bourgeois by Trotsky, the features of which included "a disdainful attitude toward theory and an inclination toward eclecticism; disrespect for the tradition of their own organization; anxiety for personal 'independence' at the expense of anxiety for objective truth." He finally challenged the opposition to prove that their differences were not in fact terminological by stating whether their solutions differed from the Fourth International call for a political revolution against the bureaucracy.

The inevitable split (1940) resulted in the opposition forming the Workers Party. James Burnham wasted no time in repudiating Marxism. He ended up as editor of the ultra-right-wing magazine *National Review*, which he used to lead a crusade against the "Communist conspiracy." Max Shachtman's drift was a little slower, but he would eventually support the U.S. Bay of Pigs invasion, and its war against the Vietnamese people.

And what of C.L.R. James? His political decline was a little less precipitous. He teamed up inside the Workers Party with Freddie Forest (real name Raya Dunayevskaya—former secretary to Trotsky) to form the Johnson-Forest Tendency (JFT)—(Johnson being James). The main objective of their collaboration was to work out a coherent theory of state capitalism. Perhaps because of the rapid deterioration of the Workers Party the JFT returned to the SWP in 1947. This was at least a partial vindication of Trotsky's contention that, despite different characterizations of the social nature of the Soviet Union, there was no need for a split if both agreed on the need for a political revolution.

### Leninism

The "return" was to be short-lived, however. In 1950 the JFT left the SWP—this time for good. The reasons for the departure are now far less important than the new twist which the JFT theory of state capitalism had acquired. Lenin's centralized vanguard party, even though it served its purpose during Lenin's time, was not only responsible for Soviet degeneration, but was now totally irrelevant under conditions of modern capitalism. According to the JFT, "It was a particular theory designed to suit a specific stage of working class development. That stage of society is now past. The theory and practice that went with it are now an anachronism and, if persisted in, lead to one form or another of the counterrevolution. The first thing we must do is to purge ourself of it."

By whatever route James arrived at this position that the Leninist vanguard party was irrelevant, that it would inevitably degenerate, etc., he was in effect turning his back on the lessons of history, that spontaneity is insufficient to make revolution. Lenin dealt with this question on many occasions, using his intellectual energies to fight against all forms of anarchism and party liquidationism.

James makes liberal use of Lenin's last stand against the bureaucratization of the party and the state, but the logic of Lenin's fight was not to negate the role of the party, or to pretend that the state was no longer necessary. Lenin was moving inexorably towards infusing the party with new blood from among the workers, bringing about a definite separation between party and state, party and trade unions, and inevitably to restore a multiparty socialist system. Bureaucratization of working class organizations is a real problem, acknowledged even by Marx. The solution is certainly not to be found in denying or rejecting the role of the organization in the making of revolution, or in denying the need for revolution itself. The solution is to be found in developing an understanding of the material roots of bureaucracy and in implementing measures to safeguard against its rise.

The essence of James's and his comrades' position was that there was no longer any need for revolution. As the title of one of their many pamphlets implies, the new situation was an *Invading Socialist Society* which was imperceptibly overtaking capitalism. The masses were demonstrating their own capacity for self-organization. The rise of the CIO was testimony. This was facilitated by the socialization of workers in huge factories—where there was planning of production no less than in the Soviet Union. All that was required was an organization of propagandists to spread the “word.” The masses would decide what political form the *New Society* would take. Anything else would result in the new “counter-revolution.”

Thus, rather than launch a frontal assault on Marxism as Burnham, Shachtman, and others had done, James spent his fifteen years in the U.S. revising Marxism in the name of fighting Trotskyism. Stung by Trotsky's criticism that he did not understand dialectics he plunged himself into a study of Hegel. (The product of that study is *Notes on Dialectics*, in case anyone is interested in finding out if he became any clearer on the subject.) What is immediately striking about his *Notes* is that there is no attempt to incorporate Marx's critique of the idealistic nature of Hegel's dialectics, or his attempt to give it a materialist foundation. That was not necessary, said James, in cavalier fashion. And so, shrouding dialectics in further mystification he argues that his study of Hegel proves that it was Trotsky who did not understand dialectics, and who was wrong on the major questions! *Quod erat demonstrandum*.

Our final concern with James's attempt to pass himself off as continuing the tradition of Marx and Lenin concerns his return to the Pan-Africa revolt after he was expelled from the U.S. in 1953—a victim of McCarthyite anti-communist hysteria.

Deported to England, he returned to cricket journalism for the *Manchester Guardian*. With the exception of a new work entitled *Facing Reality* (1958) published by his group of the same name, James would devote most of his intellectual energies to the emerging anticolonial revolt in Africa and the Caribbean. His fame associated with *Black Jacobins* created the necessary entre into Caribbean intellectual circles. He had already established a relationship with the young Kwame Nkrumah while he was a student in the U.S.

The first indication of where the theories of party liquidation and the view of the Soviet Union as another imperialist country would take James in the real world of political struggle came when he was invited by his former student, Williams, author of the equally famous *Capitalism and Slavery*, but then premier of Trinidad, to edit the newspaper of his ruling party, the People's National Movement (PNM).

The question of whether to accept or not would of course depend on James's assessment of the class nature of the program and politics of Williams and the PNM. That Williams and the PNM represented nothing more than the local bourgeois forces jockeying to replace the administrative apparatus of British colonialism could not have been in doubt. But yet James accepted and returned to his native Trinidad in 1958 as editor of the PNM paper, the *Nation*.

While the Trinidad working class was not organized in huge factories, it was by no means nonexistent. Tens of thousands of workers were employed on huge sugar plantations. There was also the oil sector which played a key role in the economy and had perhaps the most vibrant trade union in the Caribbean—the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union (OWTU). The same situation existed in the rest of the Caribbean where, while the question of independence from Britain was immediately on the political agenda, the working class had its own organizations and its own agenda.

Not only did James ignore the working class side of the equation in Trinidad, he became a leading advocate for the setting up of a West Indian Federation. This was clearly an attempt to unify the regional bourgeois forces, though it predictably failed because of political rivalries and jealousies. For his efforts in the service of the federation James was made a secretary of the federation.

From a theoretical standpoint, James's descent into collaboration with the Caribbean bourgeoisie (in the '70s he would be called upon by Manley for advice) is not difficult to understand. He had already expunged himself of “archaic” Marxist ideas about the need for the working class to seize state power and to economically expropriate the bourgeoisie. And if not opposed to the working class making revolution, he was certainly not into the business of guiding them along this road. Working class spontaneity would decide such questions.

Also thrown out of the window as an “abstraction” was Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. For James it was nothing more than a continuation of Trotsky's “old struggle with Bolshevism, by this time corrupted under Stalin.” He was therefore not particularly concerned with any assessment of how far the colonial bourgeoisie would go in the general struggle against imperialism, and hence had no overriding concern for seeing to the independent organization of the working class. That the “stages theory” of revolution had been introduced into Guyana by Cheddi Jagan, and would slowly spread to the rest of the Caribbean, was not his concern. He was similarly of no use to the African revolution, where he at one point described Kwame Nkrumah as “Africa's Lenin,” and uncritically endorsed Julius Nyerere's “African socialism.” Jagan, Nkrumah, and Nyerere utilized socialist and revolutionary rhetoric, but gave their policies a

(Continued on inside back cover)



# Michael Harrington, 1928-1989

by R. L. Hubner

Michael Harrington, 61, the veteran social democrat and author of the influential book, *The Other America*, died of cancer Monday August 3 at his home in Larchmont, New York. Harrington was probably the most well known and influential social democrat to emerge since Norman Thomas. As founder and national co-chairperson of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)—the largest left formation in the U.S. today next to the Communist Party—Harrington left an indelible stamp on left politics and American culture.

Born in 1928 on the eve of the Great Depression in St. Louis, Missouri, Harrington developed a lifelong concern for the causes of institutionalized poverty and social injustice. Educated at Holy Cross, Yale, and the University of Chicago, Harrington joined the Catholic Worker organization, founded by the former IWW and Christian anarchist-socialist, Dorothy Day. From 1950-53 he was an associate editor of the *Catholic Worker*.

Harrington first became prominent in socialist politics in the early 1950s as a leader and sympathizer of the left anti-interventionist wing of the Socialist Party's youth organization, the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL). As a radical pacifist, Harrington, along with many other YPSL activists, opposed the Korean War. When it became clear that the SP supported U.S. intervention, Harrington led YPSL out of the SP and into the Shachtmanite International Socialist League (ISL), the organization founded after the collapse of Shachtman's Workers Party (which split from the Socialist Workers Party in 1940). The YPSL merger with the youth branch of the ISL gave rise to the Young Socialist League (YSL) with Harrington as its chair.

Under the tutelage of Shachtman, Harrington deepened, for a time, his commitment to independent electoral politics. In a 1956 YSL pamphlet on the elections Harrington argued that "there is no basic, fundamental difference between the policies of the two major parties." He rejected support for Adlai Stevenson as the lesser evil because "it is not a lesser evil when a party stifles progressive possibilities, when it fails, not our socialist ideals, but its own liberal potentialities." The Michael Harrington of 1956 had no doubts that "there is no way out of this impasse in the Democratic Party. . . . The way out is a labor party" (cited in Eric Thomas Chester's *Socialists and the Ballot Box*, 1985, p. 133).

However, the rightward direction of Shachtman's development would pull Harrington along with it. By 1960 the differences between the ISL and the SP were no longer of such a nature as to require separate organizations. Harrington supported the decision to liquidate the ISL and rejoin the SP. Although he would accept and extend the basic "realignment" argument—that progressives and social democrats must drive the Southern Dixiecrats out of the

Democratic Party and so recapture the party for the working class—as late as 1960 he refused to back John Kennedy, arguing that "in the 1960 elections, there is no way to vote for change" and that "a vote for John F. Kennedy or Richard Nixon doesn't mean much." The 1963 publication of *The Other America* catapulted Harrington into an advisory position in Johnson's so-called "War on Poverty." Harrington celebrated Johnson's 1964 landslide election as a victory for the realignment perspective and the beginnings of major social change. Even after leaving the administration in protest over Johnson's escalation of the war in Vietnam, Harrington would defend the "Great Society" and "War on Poverty" programs of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations for the rest of his life.

Although Harrington never again scaled the supposed heights of influence he enjoyed in the Johnson administration, he nevertheless remained active in a variety of capacities. On the labor front Harrington extended the ties Shachtman had already established with the top levels of the AFL-CIO as well as the UAW hierarchy. His work in the civil rights movement brought him into contact with Martin Luther King and he exercised an early influence on the student movement and the New Left through the League for Industrial Democracy and its youth organization, Student League for Industrial Democracy, which gave birth to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the 1960s.

Harrington remained in the Socialist Party through the 1960s while becoming ever more deeply embroiled in Democratic Party stratagems. His initial support, in 1968, for Eugene McCarthy gave way to Robert Kennedy and finally, rather reluctantly, to Hubert Humphrey. At the same time he entered into increasingly vitriolic polemics with the antiwar movement and consistently attacked efforts to build a third party.

By 1972 Harrington could no longer stomach the even rather timid political independence of the SP. Neither could Harrington's former mentor, the now far-right Max Shachtman. The two former collaborators of the realignment perspective broke the same year with their SP comrades as well as with each other over Harrington's endorsement of George McGovern and Shachtman's support for Richard Nixon. Harrington established the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) as the "left-wing of the possible," working openly now within the Democratic Party. In 1982 DSOC merged with the New American Movement to form DSA.

In addition to organizational activity within the reformist wing of the American left, Harrington spent much of his adult life working out the theoretical underpinnings of American social democratic politics, producing some 16 volumes. However, unlike many American social democrats,

Harrington never gave up entirely on Marxism; rather, like Kautsky before him, Harrington revised the Marxian corpus, jettisoned its revolutionary dimension and salvaged whatever remained for his own social democratic project. In his books *Toward a Democratic Left* and *The Twilight of Capitalism* he offered young American radicals his own version of “democratic Marxism” and a reformist vision of socialism. In the 1970s and ’80s he tempered the anti-communism that characterized so much of his earlier career as well as produced two autobiographical works, *Fragments of the Century* and *Long Distance Runner*.

In retrospect, there is little denying that Harrington’s life was punctuated by a strong sense of moral purpose and conviction. However, the method necessary to realize those convictions was ultimately undermined by Harrington’s abandonment of the political independence and anti-imperialist orientation of his youth. No less disturbing to revolutionary socialists is the realignment perspective that he developed early on and its tragically mistaken assumption that socialists can somehow “win over” the Democratic Party and wield it as an instrument for progressive social change. Far from having achieved their goal, social democrats and reformists working within the Democratic Party have, year

after year, had to witness the rightward trajectory of their party and its collaboration with the Reagan-Bush assault upon the working class. Inasmuch as Harrington both worked within and sought to bring others into the Democratic Party, he will have to share responsibility for the historical quagmire and dead-end reformism that has characterized much of the American left.

Young socialists and radicals need to go beyond the reformist pipe dream of social democracy and begin the process of recovering America’s revolutionary socialist and independent working class traditions represented by the Wobblies, the pre-World War I Socialist Party of Eugene Debs, and the Socialist Workers Party under James Cannon. Especially now that the question of a third party is once again being placed on the political agenda by trade unionists, pro-choice activists, and many others, it is essential that socialists break entirely with the schemes of social democracy. Ironically, the passing away of Michael Harrington – the chief torchbearer and charismatic defender of the social democratic vision – may open space for a reevaluation by young DSA activists of revolutionary Marxism and the place of socialists in the American and international class struggle. ●

## Nicaragua (Continued from page 15)

new constitution to allow bourgeois political forces to take over the reins of government (allowing the FSLN to assume an oppositional role – assuming it was not overwhelmed by repression or demoralization); 2) shifting from a revolutionary socialist to a “radical nationalist” path similar to that of the Mexican revolution in the early decades of the 20th century (although such a shift would probably cause splits among the FSLN’s Marxist cadres); or 3) choosing the path of nationalizing the economy, at the risk of economic chaos and political authoritarianism.

Two important factors, however, must be kept in mind so that we don’t blind ourselves to other possibilities. First, the Sandinistas have more than once turned to popular-democratic solutions – inspiring and mobilizing the country’s working people – to deal creatively and resourcefully with grave problems. Second, what happens outside of Nicaragua, such as successful socialist revolutions elsewhere in Latin America, could open up new possibilities for the progressive development of the Nicaraguan revolution.

What happens in the advanced capitalist countries, especially the United States, will be particularly important for the future of the Nicaraguan revolution. *We have a special responsibility to help organize an effective mass opposition to the policy of economic and military aggression which has been orchestrated by the U.S. government for the purpose of maintaining U.S. corporate interests in Central America.* Related to this, but going beyond it, we have the responsibility to build a revolutionary socialist movement capable of establishing a working class democracy in our own country. As we work to do that, there is much that we can learn from our brothers and sisters who made the Sandinist revolution in Nicaragua. ●

August 1989

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# Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

## 32. They Even Found Me Here

The King: That he is free means eternal danger, for us, for you, for each, for all. — Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

In Akhtary there lived only two Jews, both participants in the Patriotic War who did not evacuate to Tashkent: my master sergeant and I. And on the street, nobody ever called our Russian wives anything but Jewesses. There is nothing innately insulting about this word. But a reproach is implied: she is a Russian woman, but look whom she married! Whipping up their anger, they started saying “kike-wife.” What could I do? Take them to court for using that word? It is doubtful in those years that anyone would have been convicted for that as they had been in the 1920s. Now they were condemning nationalism but not in the same way—now what they had in mind was the nationalism of the minority peoples and not great power nationalism.

It was just about then that I learned for the first time that the Chechens had recently been expelled from Dagestan. I myself had seen not long before how the Germans had been expelled from the land the Soviet Army had occupied in Eastern Prussia. But in that case, a significant proportion of them had fled their native regions; and, in addition, this was a matter somehow connected with the front. But in the case of the Chechens, a people who from time immemorial had been inhabiting these mountains were suddenly deported. Then, it is true, no one particularly looked to see what was at the bottom of the matter. That makes it all the more important to do so now, regardless of how long ago it was. Moreover, when it comes to crimes against humanity, the fact that it happened long ago should not be a reason to forget it. For history, a certain distance from events is necessary.<sup>1</sup>

Although I do not know the details about the Chechen

deportation, I do know about the Balkars. But every deportation was conducted in the same way. The entire operation was carefully worked out beforehand. This is how it was done at the Balkar settlement of Belaya Rechka, about twelve kilometers from Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. At the beginning of March 1945, the troops entered the settlement with machine-guns and other armaments. It was explained to the inhabitants that this unit was so well armed because it had been taken directly from the front and sent here for a rest.

At dawn, March 8, International Women’s Day, which became a black day for Balkar women, all the inhabitants were awakened at once. An officer, with pistol drawn, entered every home. Soldiers stood at the door. Pointing his gun at the sleeping residents, the officer woke them up with a shout:

“Citizens, get up! Everyone get up! You have fifteen minutes to assemble. Get dressed! Take only clothes and flour or grain in a little bag. Ten kilos per person, no more! No potatoes. No dishes, blankets, furniture, or books! Now, muster!”

“Why?” “What is the reason for this?” “Where are we going?” He did not answer these questions.

“In five days, you will be there, then you’ll find out!” That is all he could say. “Now, muster!”

The women wailed, the children cried. . . . “Never mind, muster!”

Tears of impotent rage flowed down the cheeks of the old men. “Now, muster!”

A girl pleaded: “Do what you want with me, but don’t drive my sick mother from her home. She will die on the road!”

“Muster!”

“Speed it up! The cars are waiting! Faster!”

*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.*

A car doesn't wait for anyone and is not capable of pity. And a human machine is the same. In the street stand the "Studebakers"—the American-made trucks of which the Soviet army had many: Roosevelt sent them to us through the Lend-Lease program so we could more successfully fight racism and chauvinism. They crammed everybody in. Pack yourselves in tighter! As they left their village, everyone saw that cannons had been positioned on all the surrounding hills.

At the Nalchik station, freight trains stood ready. And one trainload after another moved out. After several days, the Balkar people found themselves in Kirgizia. The mother of that girl who offered to go surely must have died en route. She was gravely ill and full of sorrow. Many of the men were not settled with their families but taken to different places, some even to the camps. The families were dispersed throughout the villages. All the deported were required to report regularly at the commandant's office.

The deported were not deprived of their constitutional rights, either of the right to rest or the right to work. And no constitution in the world guarantees the right to go wherever you want; you might as well guarantee the right to breathe. But the passport system is all the more useful because should the need arise, without violating any formal laws, a "passport regulation" can be applied.

While there is not a word about this in the official history, the following peoples were deported: Chechens, Balkars, Ingush, Karachaevs, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Greeks, Volga Germans, and all Germans living throughout the USSR.

One can explain the violations of the law by saying Stalin had been incorrectly informed—many today use that explanation—or by saying he had too much confidence in Lavrenty Beria, or finally by saying he himself made a mistake. But a decision to punish a whole people cannot be justified, even if Beria had announced he had caught a spy, disguised as a newborn baby. Let us even suppose that among some people 100,000 traitors were found. First of all, it is necessary to prove their guilt in an open court. But to claim other people are guilty because they are of the same nationality as the traitors is racism. Do historians who have read Lenin need to have this proven to them? The fact that it was not some judge who applied this racist method but Stalin himself changes nothing. So much the worse for history.

Of course, there was no discussion of his order. And to this day, no one has uttered a word against this racist act, the initiator of which has no place inside the party, let alone at the party's head.

Carrying out his order, communists may have deliberated over the ideological side of the matter, but took comfort from this kind of reasoning (I heard it more than once): If Hitler could haul our youth away into slavery, then our leader is justified in sending Hitler's collaborators into exile. But what went unnoticed by the very ones who reasoned this way was that Stalin and Hitler were being juxtaposed; and in justifying Stalin, one is also justifying Hitler. So the line between actions permissible to a communist's conscience and those permissible to a non-communist's is obliterated.

With whom could I have shared my sad thoughts in a

remote village, having lost all my friends of youth? But, I must confess, my thoughts at that time were not too complicated. When you live in silence, hiding in the coal like a mouse, without knowing it, you begin to think like a mouse.

But could I do something in defense of a small, ever so tiny bit of the truth? If my boss at the building administration was a thief who was lining his pockets, was I able to speak up at a workers' meeting? Could I write about it in the regional paper?

My war against injustice on that tiny patch of land on the Azov shore ended in defeat. The official of the construction crew was a friend of the regional prosecutor and didn't like my exposes one bit; and I myself feared still more exposes: the KRDT [counterrevolutionary Trotskyist activities], the Trotskyist good-for-nothing who somehow ended up here is trying to destroy the reputation of our honest workers who are building socialism! And I kept quiet. When the thief fired me, I moved to Eisk.

Nothing changed for me in Eisk. A small town on that same clay shore of the Azov Sea. A mechanical factory, a repair shop. I polished the mounting plates, tested machine tools, interpreted plans for repairs. But about everything else, I maintained a steely silence like the motionless, gray, all-enduring plates.

It was difficult enough for me to be secretive. However, I could not manage to restrain myself, and hold my silence forever at meetings, despite my fresh Akhtarsk lesson. I tried to comment only about the careful handling of the machine-tools, even if they were German and brought to the factory from the captured supplies. (We also received from there wonderful Czechoslovakian machine-tools from "Shkoda.") The workers, having rewarded a nonparty activist with election to the factory committee, did not know that to intercede for captured tools meant to worship the West. At the time, I didn't know this either.

\* \* \*

It seemed as though everything was going well. But a vague anxiety corroded my heart.

A verification and reissuance of passports was declared. Everyone who had lost his birth certificate due to the misfortunes of war (it is the basic document for verification), had to write an autobiography and obtain copies of one's birth certificate from one's place of birth. The majority of people do not remember this verification at all. It was organized for a minority, for those who had to be removed from society. Lines at the doors of the passport office began to form before daybreak and sometimes at two in the morning.

And suddenly, in the machine shop of our factory, two workers were arrested, one after the other. They came for the second one right in broad daylight. News of this spread instantly (in whispered tones) throughout the factory. My heart skipped a beat. Both of the arrested had spent time in the camps. I knew that my guilt or innocence was inconsequential: Wait your turn!

I was not the only one afraid of being arrested. There was a lathe operator who worked in our shop, almost the best lathe operator in the factory. Quite an old man, meek and taciturn. They said that he had come from a camp. On the

second or third day after the arrests in the machine shop, he suddenly died. He was working on a complicated component and he suddenly began to reel and fall. They grabbed him and took him to the medical station and then home. They carried him in and five minutes later he was dead.

My heart turned out to be stronger. I did not die, I just suffered from the anxiety of waiting. I finally told my wife that I had also been in the camps at one time, and she began to cry.

They buried the old man without music or a banner. He had been considered one of the best shock workers, but the head of the factory committee told us:

“Did you know, comrades, that he had been in the camps? It’s inappropriate to bury someone like that under a red banner. Call a priest.”

A priest had to be called. You can’t bury a comrade like a dog.

The order for my arrest, it turned out, had been prepared long ago. A large, pretty, solemnly printed form, no less decorous than the official documents that I had received at the factory, specified why arrest was chosen as the measure of prevention. In big letters, running diagonally down the page, the ubiquitous red pencil had inscribed: “Approved.”

My arrest was delayed because of a silly incident. I had tried without help to lift a heavy crate with a lathe in it. I had hurt myself and was bedridden. But “there” they knew and waited until I was on my feet again. Fate wanted me before my arrest to have the final pleasure of reading a novel draped with Stalinist laurels—*Happiness*, by Petro Pavlenko. The author, using artistic means, had justified the expulsion of the Crimean Tatars, intimating that this entire population, including the party members, were Turkish spies. Pavlenko, of course, did not point his finger directly but kept beating around the bush and winking.

A person who has never had to sit and wait to be arrested will not be able to understand what was going on in my head. I remembered Boris Gorbатов, whom I was always trying not to remember. He was “inside the law,” as they said in camp slang. He was Stalinist prize-winning laureate and a prominent writer. Well, I thought, what have I got to lose? I wrote him a few innocent lines: Here, I said, is my address, that is, my wife’s address, if you want to get in touch with her. And if you want to, and could loan her a little money, I’ll pay you back later.

Two months had not gone by before the investigator began to stubbornly hound me about my friendship with Gorbатов, since even those who were inside the law were still also subject to the pencil. I got the impression that my letter had gone straight into a dossier. At one time, our newspapers were terribly indignant that the U.S. government eavesdrops on telephone conversations; and the German government opens and inspects the mail. I understand their righteous indignation.

I had hardly begun to hobble about the room with a cane when the long-awaited guests arrived: the major and the sergeant, both in civilian clothes.

I had just sent Asya to the library to exchange Pavlenko’s happiness for someone else’s. And just then, his messengers arrived in an auto. In the patriarchal region of Eisk, far from the eyes of the world, they quietly appeared at noon. They

were right in the middle of a complete search when Asya crossed the threshold and drew back in fright. A book could be seen sticking out from behind the flap of her coat.

“What are you hiding in your breast?” the major asked, and started to reach out.

Asya pushed his hand away and—his ire aroused—he ordered the landlady, whom he declared a witness, to search from head to toe this impudent woman who wouldn’t allow him to handle her. The landlady was clumsy at it; the major gave instructions. Later, they tore the bed apart and stirred the coal in the bin. No evidence was found in the bed, but on the shelf above it lay four volumes by Heinrich Heine in German. I had bought them in Germany while I was in the Soviet occupation forces there: the first German edition of the great poet after twelve years of fascism. For keeping his books, the Nazi judges raised an ominous charge that invariably brought the book-lover who had been caught red-handed a term in a concentration camp. The major asked me:

“In what language are these books?”

“German.”

“German?” screamed my literary expert in civilian clothes, and immediately linked the seditious poet to my case. He considered keeping his works a criminal act. I said that it was Heine. But to the major, it made no difference at all: He was a German!

Asya and Katya, her daughter who was living with us, came to the station to say goodbye. The Eisk patriarchal spirit was touching. Katya may have understood that saying goodbye to me would cost her her job. She was a civilian employed in a military department. She came into the car and, kissing me, whispered in my ear:

“The main thing is, Dad, don’t confess to anything. Nothing at all!”

How did this twenty-year-old girl know that in the criminal practice of Vyshinsky and his school, just as in the Inquisition, a confession wrung from a person under investigation was fully sufficient grounds for a conviction.<sup>2</sup> In one of his pathetic speeches before the UN, Vyshinsky shamelessly referred to the presumption of innocence: the person under suspicion is not bound to prove innocence—the prosecution must prove guilt. But that speech was exclusively for show before the world and Vyshinsky’s students understood this well.

I was held at Krasnodar for several days. There I shared a cell with three young soldiers. The crime of the eldest of them was that at a political education session he had asked about the liquidation of the kulaks. The other two little soldiers, nice lads, had committed similar crimes. All three awaited with trepidation the decision of a military collegium and prayed to the impotent god of soldiers that they be given only ten years each and not more.

The guards hissed as they led me along the corridors. The guard walking along next to me hissed like a snake at every turn, warning that no one should be led out into the corridor until we had passed. Evidently they were afraid that I would meet an accomplice in the hall and whisper to him in passing: “The main thing is, comrade, don’t confess! Don’t confess to anything!”

Having formalized the legal documents, they sat me in a

comfortable car. To Moscow! Besides the major and the sergeant, whom I knew, I was accompanied by a second major; from the open conversations among friends, I learned that he had been going on personal business so had gotten an assignment as the third guard. Thus, I became an unwitting accomplice of a little service transaction. And they bought a seat for me in a cushioned car only because the major was not accustomed to traveling at public expense in an upholstered carriage. I cost the state a great deal.

At the Kursk Station square, a spacious black police car was waiting for us. The captain who met us — yes, I turned out to be quite a big shot: what a retinue! — opened the back door wide. The car was empty. With a dramatic gesture swinging back his arm like a Spanish grandee, the captain exclaimed:

“We have been expecting you for a long time. Get in!”

And in Butyrka, I became acquainted with still another prison cell. My first cell in 1929 had been really simply the basement in an Artemovsk GPU building. There I found about a dozen arrested criminals. Millions of bedbugs found refuge in our plankbeds and the fight against them took the edge off the prison boredom. In the internal prison of the Kharkov GPU, where they took me after Artemovsk, silence was not included in the means for psychiatric pressure. We talked, argued, wrote letters. But in 1950, a new order had been firmly established. In Krasnodar, in the cells, they spoke only in whispers.

In Moscow, after that gallant reception at Kursk Station, they took me to Dzerzhinsky Square [GPU headquarters]. There you are immediately flung into the silence of a sacred temple. In the cell, except for the weak clink of the peephole in the door, not a sound was heard. Someone’s pupil peers in at you, then the peephole closes.

In Butyrka, the quiet reached a state of perfection. On the floors of the halls under the guards’ feet were crude cloth runners, and the guards wore felt boots. They approach the door without being heard and just as soundlessly open the peephole, so as to catch you in the act: perhaps you are approaching the window or violating some other prohibition.

Whether you were alone in the cell or with co-Butyrniks — such a term really exists — you were always listening for it. What is coming from behind that heavy mute door? They took away our watches so we guessed the time by listening for the clanking of the dishes in the corridor: now they are getting the aluminum bowls for our food ready.

The clink of the lock and the clank of the door of the neighboring cell to the right or to the left can have various meanings, but you learn to be able to guess by the slightest shade of difference where they are taking the prisoner: for a walk, to the investigators, or to be searched.

Sounds could be heard ever so rarely over the course of one day, but all your time, all your attention, and all your nervous energy were devoted to that expectation of a sound. Any minute something could happen, something unexpected, and usually bad.

The guard walked on cat’s feet. The peephole is noiseless; silence prevails. Drop a spoon on the floor and the guard gets excited, opens the feeding hole in the cell door, and with a harsh whisper asks: “What’s all the noise in there?” And more silence.

To listen to prison silence strengthens the character. You no longer fear the unexpected. Or, at least, you learn to expect it at any time.

[Next Month: “My Co-Butyrnik”]

## Notes

1. *Sobesednik*, weekly supplement of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reported in issue no. 27, June 1989, on the recent struggle of the Chechen-Akkintsi to erect a monument at the sight of their settlement, which was obliterated after their overnight expulsion from their homes and deportation February 23, 1944. The Akkintsi are a mountain people who resided in a region that is now just inside the western border of the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

According to *Sobesednik*, the Akkintsi were deported by Stalin under the same decree as the Chechen and Ingush. However, since the Akkintsi were not named in the decree, they have never been officially rehabilitated and cleared of the phony charges used by Stalin to justify their massive resettlement, or allowed to return to their homes like the Chechen and Ingush peoples were. The charges against the Chechen and Ingush were declared false and the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, destroyed by Stalin in 1944, was reestablished in 1957 during the Khrushchev “thaw.”

Of 29,000 Akkintsi loaded into cattle cars that night in 1944, only one-third survived the deportation: one-half of the women died en route from bursting bladders, according to an Akkintsi historian quoted by the *Komsomol* newspaper. The local party apparatus in Novolakskiye had sought to prevent the erection of the monument to the perished Akkintsi, which *Sobesednik* says is the “first monument to the victims of Stalinism,” on the grounds that “it will not facilitate the drawing together of peoples.” While the monument — conceived of and designed by Akkintsi people who are returning to their home region to live despite official obstacles — finally was erected, it must be guarded each night by volunteers to protect it from destruction by the authorities.

2. Andrei Vyshinsky (1883-1954). Stalin’s prosecutor at the Moscow show trials, 1936-38, where the top leaders of the Communist Party, many of Lenin’s closest collaborators, were framed up in monstrous trials on the basis of forced confessions and shot. Vyshinsky became a diplomat in the 1940s and following Stalin’s death was made Soviet delegate to the United Nations. Since the bureaucracy has now admitted that the charges against the Moscow trials victims were false and has cleared the names of all the Bolshevik leaders except Leon Trotsky and his son Sedov, Vyshinsky and his vile method of conviction on the basis of confessions has been attacked in the official press. See *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, No. 54, July-August 1988.

## Coming Next Month:

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has received a copy of an interesting letter written by Barry Sheppard — long-time leader of the Socialist Workers Party and associate of Jack Barnes. It is addressed to the SWP’s Political Committee and explains the reasons why Sheppard resigned from the organization in 1988. In our next issue we will report further on this development and analyze it for our readers.

content which simply guaranteed that a renewed system of exploitation and oppression would be maintained.

How then, in the final analysis, do we assess James? His impact on the Caribbean literary scene is marginal, though his *Beyond a Boundary* is a novel socio-historical approach to sports writing. *Black Jacobins*, as a historical work, will always remain a model for historians. The myth of docile slaves was totally dispelled. And though not formally trained as a historian he proved himself inferior to none.

James's study and adoption of certain Marxist principles was undoubtedly the decisive intellectual turning point in his life. But he was drawn into the Marxist movement at a time when the numerous betrayals of Stalinism had, on a practical level, created the greatest confusion in the international working class movement. On the theoretical level a tremendous challenge was presented in terms of explaining this phenomenon according to the principles of Marxist theory, yet at the same time remaining faithful to the vision of a world socialist society. It is in this context that we must judge

James's inability to maintain a revolutionary Marxist tradition.

His positions can be traced in many respects to a lack of understanding or rejection of dialectical materialism, but in the final analysis his politics were a reflection of a close intertwining between personal psychological factors and James's own petty-bourgeois class background.

The main benefit from studying the life of this nonetheless extraordinary individual is that it helps to remind us of how much the same tasks face the working class movement now as during the height of his political and intellectual career. James's initial assessment—that it was the Trotskyist movement which offered the answers to the crisis of Marxism—was intuitively correct. It is only unfortunate that his conversion was not deep enough to withstand the further crises into which Stalinism would yet plunge the workers' movement. ●

## PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN NICARAGUA

by Paul Le Blanc

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