

# 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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# Commemorating Malcolm X— an Act of African-American Self-Determination

by Claire Cohen

May 19 is the birthday of Malcolm X. Around the country, African-Americans of all political, ideological, and religious persuasions are uniting to proclaim his birthday a national African-American day of commemoration. We view this as an act of self-determination for our people—to decide who our heroes are and how we wish to remember and honor them. Malcolm best described the current African-American concept of self-determination when he said, “We assert that we Afro-Americans have the right to direct and control our lives, our history, and our future rather than to have our destinies determined by American racists” (George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, p. 114). We do not want this to become an official national holiday. Experience with the Martin Luther King holiday has taught us that such an “official” holiday would lead to co-optation and distortion of Malcolm’s history and words by the white power structure—to serve their interests in keeping Blacks ignorant of our history, powerless, and depoliticized.

The first commemoration will kick off the “Year of Malcolm X,” from May 19, 1990, to May 19, 1991, during which there will be a drive to educate and reeducate, politicize and repoliticize the Black community around the major principles for which Malcolm stood. In the spirit of Malcolm X, special emphasis will be placed on educating and politicizing our African-American youth. It is hoped that through this project African-Americans can begin to revive the revolutionary struggle for Black liberation. To this end, the Malcolm X Day Commemorative Commission was officially convened nationally on February 21, 1990, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Malcolm’s death. Although the African-American Progressive Action Network originally spearheaded this project, a broad spectrum of Black activists are on the steering committee.

Malcolm X, though not a revolutionary socialist, was definitely a Black revolutionary who, along with Martin Luther King, made the greatest impact on the Black liberation movement of the 1960s. With the death of these two men, there has been a leadership void in the movement which until now has seriously weakened it. In the long run, it may well be Malcolm who leaves the greater legacy. The principles which he espoused in the last two years of his life, which revolutionary socialists of all races can wholeheartedly support, have the greatest potential to rekindle the flame of the Black liberation movement.

Malcolm espoused a philosophy of self-determination, organizational unity, and international solidarity for all African peoples. He stressed the importance of youth in the movement and, towards the very end of his life, began to recognize the importance of the struggle of women of African descent. While he supported voter registration, he realized the futility of African-Americans attempting to gain power through participating in Democratic and Republican

party politics. Instead, he encouraged Blacks to focus on building their own *independent* political movement which would only be beholden to African-American interests.

Malcolm’s ideas and principles have continued to be a source of inspiration, education, and politicization for revolutionary and nationalist-minded Blacks, despite the weakening and marginalization of the movement, as Blacks with bourgeois aspirations have co-opted it over the last twenty-five years. Now, with the current economic and social crises in the African-American community, increasing numbers of Blacks, especially young people, are becoming radicalized and, in their search for a viable political perspective, are turning to the principles of Malcolm X.

Malcolm often admonished youth to think for themselves and admonished adults to make sure that young people had the proper education to enable them to do so. He said in June of 1964, “Education is an important element in the struggle for Human Rights. It is the means to help our children and people rediscover their identity and thereby increase self-respect” (“Organization of Afro-American Unity: a Statement of Basic Aims and Objectives,” in J.H. Clarke, *Malcolm X, the Man and His Times*, p. 337). He further said, “We must recapture our heritage and our identity if we are ever to liberate ourselves from the bonds of white supremacy” (Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary*, p. 54). He also stressed the importance of African-Americans setting up our own schools to educate our children. On college campuses today, politically conscious Black students have, in the spirit of Malcolm X, begun to fight for a more culturally balanced curriculum. They realize that for too long education in this country has been Eurocentric and based on the biased assumption of European superiority in history, science, the arts, literature, etc. The Black students at Stanford University in California were recently successful in getting such a curriculum approved. This year at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, a group of Black students has banded together with women students to press for a culturally balanced curriculum in the undergraduate school. Meanwhile, an increasing number of African-American parents have worked to set up African-American schools to ensure that their children get a culturally balanced education. There are such schools in Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago, and other cities.

Black college students have also played a major role in the anti-apartheid struggle. But unfortunately, until recently, Black college students had become as depoliticized as white students around most other issues. This may have been due, in part, to the false sense of security many African-Americans, especially those with middle-class aspirations, felt after the gains of the 1960s civil rights movement. But as our youth see those gains progressively eroded, increasing numbers are becoming politicized again.

(Continued on page 6)

# UAW Leaders Say 'No' to 'COLA on Pensions'

## Confrontation Grows Inside Union

by Richard Scully

The United Auto Workers (UAW) contract with the Big 3 automakers expires September 14, 1990. Faced with a declining percentage of membership in the automobile industry, the challenge of the dissident New Directions movement, and a restive membership, the UAW leaders are making some moves calculated to shore up their declining support from the rank and file.

First, the leadership is talking a tough and militant line, promising no more concessions in the new contract. This is against the background of a host of takeaways in the previous three agreements. These included nine paid personal holidays, the three percent annual improvement factor, reductions in cost of living allowances, lower pay and benefits for new hires, concessions in work rules and job classifications, institution of the "team concept," ten-hour work day with no overtime premium at some locations, weakening of the grievance procedure, and the institutionalization of whipsawing (where local unions compete with each other to see who will give up the most to the company, with the "winner" supposedly getting continuing work, while the loser has its plant shut down).

Second, the leadership is promising to "close the loopholes" in the so-called "job security" clause made part of the 1987 agreement. The clause proved utterly ineffectual in saving jobs. Under certain circumstances, it barred the Big 3 from closing plants. But led by General Motors, the companies closed plants anyway, laying off thousands. They called it plant "idling" instead of plant "closing." In a case involving GM's Pontiac Fiero plant, an arbitrator upheld this interpretation on March 29 and found the company not in violation of the contract.

Third, the UAW has unleashed Stephen Yokich, the head of its GM division, to visit GM plants and "touch flesh" with the workers. Yokich has been to over 50 plants so far and is saying things the workers haven't heard in years: that Owen Bieber and the other officers are not the UAW—the rank and file is; that the officers must listen more to the members; that "true" job security must be won in the next contract and that the union will make sure that it gets language preventing further plant closing; that the UAW is looking at cutting overtime so that laid-off workers can be recalled; and that issues such as childcare and health and safety are of great importance. The message is being well received, although with some skepticism by a rank and file increasingly alienated from the union leadership and, unfortunately, from the union itself. In any event, Yokich is seen as a big improvement over his predecessor, Donald Ephlin, who championed the team concept, spent his social hours consorting with GM executives and traveling in their private jets, and otherwise personified the quintessential class collaborationist labor leader.

### *The Issue of 'COLA for Retirees'*

Still everything is not going to be simple for the UAW tops in this round of negotiations. There are a number of important issues UAW members want action on in their 1990 contract. They include the restoration of annual wage increases (lost in 1980 at Chrysler and in 1982 at Ford and GM); shortening the workweek with no loss in pay (a critically needed job-creation measure at a time when UAW membership at the Big 3 has shrunk from 720,000 to 433,000 between 1979 and 1990); improving working conditions; protection against whipsawing; restrictions against overtime, especially with so many members laid off; and of course protection against plant shutdowns. But one demand coming to the fore is proving to be extremely popular: a cost of living allowance (COLA) for retirees' pensions.

The argument for COLA on pensions is twofold. First, pensions are already quite low for UAW retirees, with many receiving less than \$400 a month. The retirees have experienced significantly decreased pension buying power through the years due to inflation. The retirees and their supporters say it is discriminatory to have COLA protection on wages but not on pensions.

COLA is also seen as a way of saving the jobs of low-seniority workers and providing jobs for many who are currently laid off. About one-third of UAW members are eligible to retire, but choose to continue working because of the ravages of inflation. Many thousands of laid-off workers would desperately like to return to work.

Within the UAW as a whole, there is a deeply felt spirit of solidarity with UAW retirees. Large numbers of them have sons and daughters working in auto plants. Moreover, it is widely recognized that it was the retirees who sacrificed and built the union, making it possible for today's generation to enjoy the still relatively high wages and good benefits they receive.

COLA on pensions is an issue that the UAW's top leadership would logically be expected to embrace, even if they didn't intend to press it in the actual negotiations. *But UAW international president Owen Bieber and the other members of the International Executive Board are making it clear that they do not support COLA on pensions for the 1990 negotiations.*

For a leadership consciously trying to protect its left flank from New Directions, the Bieber bureaucracy has placed itself in a highly exposed position as a result of its stance on this issue. On the surface, viewed even from the bureaucracy's own self-interest, it would seem they are making a gigantic mistake.

But they have decided that COLA on pensions is too costly an item for the companies—estimates range anywhere from \$3 to \$7 an hour per worker—and they don't want anyone thinking it can be won. Yet the auto giants are making billions in profit; people like GM's president Roger Smith and other executives receive huge bonuses every year; and hundreds of UAW international staff members receive pensions *with*

*COLA raises tacked on.* So rank-and-file UAW members, and especially retirees, feel there is a gross inequality here, which it is high time to correct.

The international leadership's decision to take on this sentiment early has been carefully thought through. They view COLA on pensions as a potential *strike issue*, which could obstruct the pact they hope to arrive at peacefully with their corporate partners. Key UAW local unions, based primarily in Cleveland and Flint, and well organized retiree groups, are taking up the challenge. They are fighting Bieber on the issue, with rallies, demonstrations, mass meetings, and other actions. Billboards, buttons, banners, hats, and signs are proliferating to spread the word.

About 77,000 workers across the country have already sent postcards to Bieber asking for COLA for retirees, according to a UAW COLA Coalition which has been formed. John Rach, a former UAW Local 122 president retired from Chrysler's Twinsburg, Ohio, plant is quoted in the March 28 issue of the *Flint Journal* as saying, "It appears to me the international is our biggest enemy—not the corporation. They're taking a soft touch on COLA on pensions because they don't want to be embarrassed. Our next march should be a walk around Solidarity House."

COLA on pensions is not a new issue. It has been discussed for several years within the UAW but it is being pushed hard now because of the large number of laid-off workers waiting to be recalled to the plants. *What makes the Bieber leadership particularly vulnerable on this question is the fact that the Canadian UAW won COLA on pensions in its 1987 negotiations.*

### **True Job Security?**

Backers of COLA on pensions are not counterposing their demand to one for getting better language in the "job security" clause, which Bieber and his leadership caucus are seeking to make the top priority. But the slogan of some COLA supporters is: "True Job Security Is COLA on Pensions!"

There can be no real job security for auto workers under the capitalist system. The auto bosses have never hesitated to throw workers out into the streets when their drive for maximum profits so dictates. And they never will. Any idea to the contrary is the worst kind of illusion. But, having said that, it is clear that a serious fight for the COLA demand—combined with the fight for no forced overtime and for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay—is infinitely more

important in securing jobs for UAW members than the search for "job security" language that Bieber talks about. GM, the main offender in closing plants, employs 229,800 UAW members—too large an overhead for a capitalist corporation to maintain if cars are not selling. (There is today an "overcapacity" of six million cars for the U.S. market.)

### **The Role of New Directions**

Support for COLA on pensions is far broader than support for the New Directions movement. And it can't be attacked in the same way that New Directions has been. (Even Yokich says his mother, a UAW retiree, calls him every Sunday to ask what he and the union are doing to get her the COLA benefit.)

New Directions is not neglecting the COLA on pensions demand. It is reminding UAW members that for the 1987 negotiations the union's bargaining goals included "strengthening pension programs to encourage earlier retirement so that more jobs open up for younger workers." But, as New Directions points out, "pension improvements [in the '87 contract] failed to provide retirees protection against cost of living increases, which is essential if we are to encourage more early retirement."

The UAW's international leadership has a paranoid fear of New Directions. The last thing they wanted to see was New Directions tied in with and helping to build support for what is becoming a broad and popular movement in the UAW ranks. But this is precisely what is happening and there is little the leadership can do to prevent it.

As this is written, the stage is being set for the UAW's Bargaining Convention in May, which will determine the demands for the coming negotiations. It is there that the debate on the COLA demand will surely unfold.

Regardless of the outcome of that debate, COLA on pensions is a demand whose time has come—especially given the increasing numbers of retired workers who live longer these days. Those who are presently working can easily see the justice of this provision for a segment of the population whose real income is constantly shrinking. And they have a direct self-interest, since everyone plans to retire some day. Since only three percent of pensioners in the U.S. presently have COLA protection, this can become a transitional demand of tremendous importance. Conscious trade unionists should raise it at every opportunity. ●

April 23, 1990

## **Mark Curtis Appeal Denied**

Mark Curtis—the Socialist Workers Party member who was framed up and convicted on rape charges in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1988 and is now serving a 25-year sentence—has been denied a new trial by the Iowa Court of Appeals. The court, ruling on April 24, rejected all of the points raised by Curtis in an attempt to have his conviction overturned. In doing so it ignored the refusal of trial judge Harry Perkins to permit the jury to hear testimony about how the main prosecution witness, a Des Moines police officer, was once suspended from the force for lying and brutality. He also failed to instruct the jury on Curtis's alibi—he was in another part of town when the victim says she was attacked.

In the wake of the appeals court ruling John Studer, coordinator of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, issued a statement explaining the issues in the case and calling for stepped-up defense efforts by Curtis's supporters. For a copy of this material, and other information on the case, write to the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, IA 50311; or call 515-246-1695.

# Call for General Strike in Canada Against New Tax

by Barry Weisleder

*Barry Weisleder is president of Local 595, Ontario Public Service Employees Union, and a delegate to the 1990 Canadian Labor Congress convention.*

All across the country, opposition to the 7 percent Goods and Services Tax (GST) and support for a general strike to defeat it are growing.

The time has come for the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC), which meets in convention in Montreal, May 14-18, to show some leadership and set the date for a massive Day of Protest that can rally seniors, women, native peoples, the unemployed, and working people in general to demand that the new regressive Tory tax be scrapped.

Admittedly, organizing a general strike, in alliance with other social sectors, is a major undertaking. But the CLC has the resources to do it—and it has the experience: the October 14, 1976, strike by over 1.2 million unionists against then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's wage controls.

Setting the date for October 1990 would be a fine way to mark the anniversary of Canada's last mass working class political strike, and would leave plenty of time to build the broad, democratic, local coalitions capable of doing the necessary grass-roots organizing.

## **Mounting Public Protest**

On April 7 at shopping malls and community centers, on April 8 at churches, and on April 9 in work places across the country, over two million people filled out ballot cards protesting the GST.

Organized by the CLC, the Pro-Canada Network, and the Quebec Coalition Against the GST, it was the largest such outpouring of opposition to a proposed law ever seen.

It capped a period of widespread local organizing. In Ontario alone, there are anti-GST coalitions and groups in over 45 centers, coordinated through the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice. Unions, teachers' federations, women's rights and antipoverty organizations, and artists' groups are playing a leading role in this effort.

Opposition to the GST, and the whole right-wing agenda of cutbacks and privatizations, was a major theme of the International Women's Day march in Toronto which attracted over 2,000 participants.

Across the country, the public appearances of Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Finance Minister Michael Wilson have been dogged by protests for the past several months—even in areas recently considered Tory strongholds. Over 500 rallied in subzero weather in Brandon, Manitoba, and 100 stormed the Edmonton Convention Center in early March when Wilson came to defend the GST, while another 300 rallied outside. These scenes have been repeated in many other places. And there is every sign that they will continue to be.

On April 10, at the season opening game of the Blue Jays in Toronto's Sky Dome, thousands of baseball fans, following the lead of Labor Council activists, greeted Mulroney and

his good friend U.S. President George Bush with the chant "No GST."

Everyone knows that over 75 percent of the population is opposed to the GST. But now an important segment of this majority is getting organized. The question is: What will we do next?

Meanwhile the federal Tories, sitting at a record low 15 percent in the opinion polls, enjoy less public support than the East German Communist Party in East Berlin.

Two Tory MPs from Alberta have been suspended from federal caucus for voting against the GST; others may defect too. Reduction of the GST from 9 percent to 7 percent solved nothing. Conservative leaders, like their poll-tax levying cothinkers in Britain, have reason to be worried.

Social discontent is spreading rapidly. After a decade of retreat there are new signs of militancy—from last fall's Quebec public sector strike; to the February rally of thousands in Canso, Nova Scotia, to protest the threatened closure of the fish-processing plant (victim of corporate over-fishing and federal government complicity); to the physical occupation of federal offices in St. John's, Newfoundland, by women protesting the elimination of funding to women's shelters in the last federal budget.

And April 27 across Toronto, the official Day of Mourning for workers who've died on the job, becomes the occasion for a political strike as building sites shut down at 11 a.m. Construction workers will gather in their thousands at the Sky Dome (where four workers have died so far) and then march to Queen's Park to demand safe working conditions.

The desire for social change is clear. But the growing discontent and militancy cries out for real binational leadership.

## **Calls to Action**

On November 20, the convention of the Ontario Federation of Labor (OFL), the largest provincial affiliate of the CLC, took the historic step of calling on the Congress to organize a one-day general strike to defeat the GST.

Since then other labor bodies have issued similar calls. Some have been more specific—necessarily so. The Labor Council of Metropolitan Toronto sent a resolution to the CLC in February asking that the Congress set the date for a general strike *within 1990*. A number of local unions have sent the same resolution to the CLC convention.

This should at least ensure that the debate occurs. Hopefully the Communist Party-dominated Action Caucus will help to lead the fight for the adoption of the strike date—contrary to the role it played at the OFL convention where it opposed the moving of the key referral motion, then jumped on the bandwagon when convention delegates showed their overwhelming support for it.

But the major obstacle labor militants will face at the CLC convention will be the CLC bureaucracy, under the leadership of President Shirley Carr.

*(Continued on page 6)*

# Human Rights Abuses Continue in El Salvador

by June Martin

In light of the blatant savagery of the El Salvador military in their murder of the six Jesuit priests in San Salvador in November 1989, there are halfhearted efforts in the U.S. Congress to cut U.S. government military aid to the El Salvador government. The United States Congress approved \$85 million in strictly military aid for the fiscal year ended September 30; U.S. aid finances virtually the entire El Salvador military except salaries. Almost all the officers and specialists are U.S. trained. The overall aid package provides an average of \$1.5 million per day to sustain the death squad government making it the second largest per capita recipient of U.S. aid.

As a sign of their outrage over this atrocity against unarmed church scholars, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted in late April to support a reduction of military aid to El Salvador by 50 percent. But to show that they did not mean business, they also approved several amendments. One would allow the U.S. president to increase the aid if it appeared that the forces in rebellion were receiving military equipment from abroad or were on the verge of defeating the U.S.-backed government ("were engaging in sustained military actions that threatened the Cristiani Government," as the *New York Times* put it May 4, 1990).

The proposed aid package from the White House is \$387 million for the fiscal year 1991, with \$90 million specifically earmarked for military aid. Meanwhile, the Cristiani government persists in its claim that no high-level military personnel were involved in the priests' murders and has threatened that cuts in U.S. military aid will damage negotiations with the popular forces that the El Salvadoran government claims to be initiating. This latter threat provides a convenient argument for those in Congress who are seeking public justification for approving increased military aid to the El Salvador regime while claiming to oppose human rights abuses.

Meanwhile, U.S.-sponsored death squads, arrests, and torture continue.

A report from the New York Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador, dated April

24, 1990, headed "Figures on Repression in El Salvador/U.S. Aid to El Salvador," relayed the following data:

According to the Non-governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES), during the period from November 1989 through February 1990, 2,184 civilians were assassinated, 908 were captured, and 41 disappeared.

In February 1990 alone, 129 civilians were murdered, 74 were captured, and 12 disappeared.

The CDHES states that most of the murders were carried out by the Salvadoran military. The CDHES is an organization with observer status at the United Nations. In April it received an award for its humanitarian work from 650 European nongovernmental organizations affiliated with the European Economic Community.

In April 1990, the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS), a labor federation with 300,000 members, stated that "since November 1989:

- 27 UNTS labor leaders and activists had been assassinated;
- 24 had disappeared;
- 466 trade unionists had been captured;
- most of those captured had been tortured."

Charles Kernaghan of the Labor Committee reports that three trade unionists who had been captured by the military and recently freed by international pressure organized by the Labor Committee and others, told of being hung by their hands for more than a day; then hung by their feet for more than a day. Their heads were submerged in water and in lime. They were also subjected to electrical shocks and beatings.

According to human rights organizations in El Salvador, there are at least 500 political prisoners in El Salvador.

One of the trade unionists the Labor Committee worked successfully to free was José Tomás Mazariego, a leader of the ASTTEL union of telecommunication workers. Mazariego was recently killed in an automobile accident. The obituary for him, reprinted below in a slightly abridged version, was written by Kernaghan who had known and worked with him.

## José Tomás Mazariego—1949-1990

A personal remembrance:

Brother José Tomás Mazariego was killed in a car accident Sunday April 8th at 8:30 pm. Unionists sat in wake throughout Monday night and today José was buried after ASTTEL members carried José's coffin past the ANTEL Central Roma worksite where he helped organize and found the union.

ASTTEL feels that Mazariego may have been followed and had the fatal accident as he tried to escape. He was killed attempting to pass a car when he collided head on with a bus.

The unions are demanding a thorough investigation since Mazariego had been the target of so many death threats and was so often followed by the death squads.

José spent his last day working, faxing labor rights updates to unions across Europe. That was José. He never took time off. His schedule was seven days a week, 12-13-14 hours a day. To relax he drank a few beers and—for something different—talked about the work. He was tireless, relentless, totally dedicated to union work.

José died really because he worked like this. He was probably exhausted. He only had a car for the last few months since it was impossible for him to walk the streets or use public transportation. He would have been disappeared. He was often followed. He couldn't sleep in his own home and had to move to a different location each night to stay a step away from the death squads.

José was a union leader, but in El Salvador a union leader is poor. José didn't own a TV, didn't have a stereo, in fact, José had almost no possessions. When José was on his way to the Congress last June to testify on his being tortured by the Treasury Police, we had to stop off to buy shoes. His only pair of shoes had fallen apart.

Mazariego was captured three times — in September 1988, April and June of 1989. In the June abduction the Treasury Police poured acid on his legs after he passed out from the capucha — a lime-filled bag they tied over his head which caused suffocation. This was repeated several times.

For those of you who knew José you may not have known that he began work at 9 years old working in a factory after school. By 12 he was out of school and working full time in San Miguel far from his home in San Salvador. José said he learned a lot then about people and work. Years later José returned to San Salvador where he worked and went back to school at night. At 18 years old he was fired from a shoe factory for helping to organize a union.

José was an extremely intelligent person. He eventually made it to the National University where he began to study psychology. But it was his union work which called him back from the university. In 1979 José helped found the first union at the ANTEL telecommunications agency. After a lead organizer was beheaded along with his wife the union was

forced underground. ASTTEL reemerged and was legally instituted in 1984.

José was 40 years old.

He made a difference.

José was the reason the ASTTEL campaign was launched. In El Salvador in 1985 very few opposition unionists — and no one in ASTTEL — had ever heard of the ICFTU or the Trade Secretariat, the Postal, Telephone and Telecommunications International. In fact they knew nothing about the U.S. Congress or the U.S. labor movement.

In truth the ASTTEL campaign didn't know much either. What happened from 1985-1990 was the development of a five-year struggle which brought the ASTTEL union around the world to Canada, Europe, and the U.S.

ASTTEL emerged to play a lead union role internationally in El Salvador. Delegations from around the world wanted to meet ASTTEL. Mazariego mastered the byzantine reality of the U.S. labor movement. In El Salvador he argued for new strategies — more effective ones. ASTTEL now maintains relations with unions in 13 nations!

We have lost a brother. And Mazariego was invaluable.

But we are also proud. In November when the military was hunting down unionists Mazariego was underground. He was armed with a fax machine which was moved around. Communications never broke down — never — not even through the state of siege. Information got out of El Salvador. Our small contribution was the fax machine and a willingness to try to keep up with the amount of work Mazariego produced. Mazariego's contribution was to risk his life. Every day. Like countless other Salvadoran unionists.

Mazariego won't be forgotten.

He taught us things about life one never forgets.

April 10, 1990.

## Malcolm X (Continued from page 1)

Malcolm stated, "Economic exploitation in the Afro-American community is the most vicious form practiced on any people in America" (J.H. Clarke, p. 339). "In order for the Afro-Americans to control their destiny, they must be able to control and affect the decisions which control their destiny: economic, political, and social. This can only be done through organization" (J.H. Clarke, p. 339). "The organization of Afro-American Unity has called upon Afro-American leaders to submerge their differences and find areas of agreement wherein we can work in unity for the good of the entire [now 30 million] African-Americans" (J.H. Clarke, p. 288).

In Pittsburgh, the Malcolm X Holiday Commission has been the most successful activity in at least six years in getting a broad spectrum of Blacks "to submerge their differences" and unite around a common goal, declaring Malcolm X Day and the Year of Malcolm X "as a self-determining act." The local steering committee includes myself, a Black trade unionist, members of the League of Revolutionary Struggle, the chair of the Rain-

bow Coalition of Western Pennsylvania, the local chair of Women for Racial and Economic Equality, and two Black Muslims. Endorsers and participants in the planned program of activities include African-American leaders from all religions, various African-American political tendencies and parties on the left, Black poets and other artists, Black student organizations, and the two Black city councilmen. Not all of those involved in this effort have a revolutionary or Black nationalist perspective. Steering committee members know that for the event to be a significant contribution to the Black liberation movement, it must focus the activity on something broader than just honoring Malcolm X. Just as important, maybe more important, are the goals of: 1) working to unite African-Americans across a broad spectrum around a common goal of Black control of Black communities; 2) educating and politicizing, especially our youth, around Malcolm's principles; and 3) reviving and strengthening the Black liberation movement in Pittsburgh. Other local groups around the country which are involved in this project can organize around a similar perspective. ●

May 5, 1990

## Canada (Continued from page 4)

Most labor bureaucrats saw the April 7-9 cross-country ballot against the GST as a *substitute* for a general strike, or a way to contain the felt need for ongoing mass independent working class political action to smash the Tory agenda.

Most delegates, however, are likely to recognize that the protest ballot was not sufficient, that the struggle must continue, and that we must escalate the struggle if we are to win. Despite their vulnerability, the Tories still have a huge parliamentary majority and they will not fall solely under the weight of negative opinion polls.

Labor must bury the Tory government.

Sadly, though not surprisingly, the New Democratic Party (NDP) leadership has contented itself with parliamentary filibuster tactics, which rapidly ran their course. The federal NDP convention last December narrowly defeated a resolution calling on the party to lead a mass action campaign against the GST. And new NDP leader Audrey McLaughlin's inaugural promise to "fight from Parliament to the picket lines to the farm gate" remains largely unfulfilled.

That leaves the CLC with the major responsibility to act.

The Congress must be forced to lead this struggle, lest the anti-GST sentiment fall right into the lap of the populist right wing which seeks to slash taxes, public services, and public sector jobs with the same knife. ●

## Introduction to a Discussion on Nicaragua:

*Lloyd D'Aguilar has performed a genuine service with his frank polemic, printed below, against the views on Nicaragua presented previously in the pages of this magazine. Those of us who support the struggle for socialist revolution have a responsibility to take a hard look at the Nicaraguan realities and to voice our opinions on what they mean. We must not shy away from expressing honest disagreements with assessments we believe to be mistaken, especially if such assessments are advanced by political comrades. Far from taking offense at such criticisms, revolutionaries must welcome them. The serious discussion of disagreements provides an opportunity for all of us to further develop our own understanding of the realities we face, and perhaps to learn from each other so that we can become more effective in advancing the revolutionary struggle. This is especially necessary as we come to grips with such things as the current stage of the Nicaraguan revolution and the electoral defeat of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).*

*I will submit a substantial, direct reply to D'Aguilar's critique next month, including some remarks on the postelection situation. Here I am offering a detailed discussion — written several months before the 1990 electoral defeat — which addresses some of the questions raised by him (see page 12). My hope is that this contribution will be useful for those engaged in the collective process of learning from the Nicaraguan experience.*

*I would like to conclude this note by making a minor correction of a polemical excess. D'Aguilar is quite mistaken in asserting that "Le BLanc is calmly at home with the prospect of the Sandinistas being out of office." The bitter defeat dealt to our comrades in Nicaragua is something which has been deeply painful to all genuine revolutionaries, especially those who were able to form personal friendships with some of them. It must deepen our passionate resolve to struggle against and finally bring down the bourgeois and imperialist forces responsible for the counterrevolutionary damage inflicted on working people in Nicaragua and elsewhere. But we must remember Trotsky's admonition (quoting Spinoza) neither to laugh nor to cry but instead to understand. The attempt to do that should not be mistaken for calm acceptance. As Marxists we know that understanding is a prerequisite to liberation.*

*Paul Le Blanc*

# Nicaragua and the Pitfall of a Mixed Economy

by Lloyd D'Aguilar

The workers and peasants in their majority voted the Sandinistas out of office on February 25. As supporters of that revolutionary process it is our duty to begin assessing the lessons of that defeat. U.S. imperialism has already determined that their combined application of economic, military, and psychological pressure drove the Sandinistas from office. They are indeed correct that this played an important part in the Sandinista defeat. But this is not the entire picture.

Other revolutions have survived against greater odds. Nor should it escape our attention that the Sandinista demise did not come directly from contra bullets but from the ballots of the workers and peasants. We therefore need to ask ourselves: What was the Sandinista responsibility for losing the support of the masses? An inquiry into this aspect of the relationship between the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan workers and peasants is of far more value than bemoaning the actions of imperialism. After all, we hardly expected imperialism to behave otherwise.

There is also another issue at stake. As revolutionaries we cannot afford to merely show solidarity through demonstrations, etc., with our embattled brothers and sisters in places such as Nicaragua. Where we feel compelled to do so we must also be prepared to offer critical advice. We would be acting like liberals to restrict our roles to cheerleading while questions are being raised about the direction of the revolution. To ignore such critical questions is to run the risk of abandoning the "solidarity" movement to the forces of pessimism. There is nothing more important in solidarity work than to guard against confusion over the difference between defending a revolution against imperialist aggression and uncritically supporting the leadership of that revolution.

With this approach in mind one can understand how unnerving it is to read in the February 1990 issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* ("An Appeal to Reason — The SWP and the Central America Struggle") that Samuel Adams finds it necessary to rebuke the Socialist Workers Party for criticizing Sandinista leadership mistakes in governing Nicaragua. He opposes this on the ground that the "relation-

ship of forces" had turned against the Nicaraguan revolution. This is a classic example of a tendency among those doing "solidarity" work to encourage mindless cheerleading. The facts are that the revolution was fraught with danger from the very beginning, and if we were to abide by this logic, then any criticism of the Sandinistas at any point would have been wrong. This is untenable from a revolutionary Marxist perspective.

On the contrary, it would have been far more effective, first to have congratulated the SWP for unhitching themselves from the Sandinista bandwagon, and then to use this as the basis for criticizing their slavish support of the Cuban bureaucracy. This was not possible, of course, since Adams is advocating an approach to Nicaragua that appears to duplicate the SWP's attitude towards Cuba.

This uncritical acceptance of the process in Nicaragua is also to be found, but at a much more sophisticated level, in Paul Le Blanc's review of Alan Benjamin's book *Nicaragua: Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution* in the October '89 *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* ("Understanding the Nicaraguan Revolution: A Critical Review of Some of the Literature"), and in his subsequent assessment (April '90) of the Sandinista defeat in the February elections.

In response to a well-documented book about the consequences of the Sandinista decision not to deepen the revolution as Cuba did, thus setting the stage for their electoral demise (Violeta Chamorro promises to roll back many of the social gains of the revolution), Le Blanc in my opinion takes a rather fatalistic view, arguing that a combination of factors relating to the underdevelopment of the Nicaraguan economy and the pressures of U.S. imperialism created few alternative options for the Sandinistas. This approach is not only flawed theoretically and politically, but by implication rules out the possibility of making a socialist revolution in any third world country where similar conditions prevail.

Such an idea is most pernicious at a time when the international bourgeoisie has scored big propaganda victories with the undermining of Stalinism in Eastern Europe. Is Nicaragua (which was never considered Stalinist) to be the latest confirmation that socialism is a utopian pipe dream? The time could never be more ripe for all those who uncritically supported the Sandinistas in the past, who claimed that a workers' state had been established, etc., to now reassess those positions in the face of new developments and to correct pessimistic conclusions which the Sandinista demise encourages.

All one-party regimes that claim to be socialist are now coming under pressure to give the masses a formal say (at least) in deciding who shall form the government. It has been too easy in the past to pretend, because there is no electoral process through which the masses can express themselves, that all are behind the government of the day. Apologists can no longer conveniently ignore the signs of struggle between state and the masses. Competitive politics makes it difficult to ignore the masses as an independent political factor. This new development applies not only to Stalinist parties which have functioned as diplomatic agents of these bureaucratic states, but also Trotskyist ones, such as the SWP. In the case of Nicaragua, we are now seeing how easily it is for other Trotskyists to fall into the same rut as the SWP.

It is to the credit of the Sandinistas that they made it clear at the beginning that they would not be establishing a one-party state. They declared themselves for "political pluralism," i.e., that the bourgeoisie and other working class formations would not be excluded from participating in the political process. But this political pluralism was not to be one based on nationalized property and on special political structures which would guarantee the political and economic dominance of the working class. It was one as we shall see that was in essence a bourgeois parliamentary system since it protected private property as the fundamental basis of the political system. It is important at the outset that we not confuse a workers democracy with bourgeois democracy—even though a workers democracy would not necessarily exclude the bourgeoisie from contesting elections.

According to the Sandinista concept of political "pluralism," they went on to set the stage where their political future was destined to rise or fall on the basis of the results of their decision to pursue a policy of "mixed economy." This was a component part of political "pluralism." It was not a verbal subterfuge. It was a strategic objective as the Sandinista leadership said many times, though the full implication was never fully comprehended by Sandinista supporters. According to Tomás Borge:

"We could have taken away all their [the Nicaraguan capitalists] businesses and we would not have been overthrown; I'm sure of that. But what is more conducive to the economic development of the country is what is best for the Nicaraguan people. So when we talk about a mixed economy, we mean it; and when we talk about political pluralism, we mean it. This is not a short-term maneuver but our strategic approach." (*Nicaragua*: p. 29)

There is such a plethora of examples of the many third world governments that have tried and miserably failed to bring about their promised socialist society by "mixed economy" policies that it is surprising how anyone could have reacted but with extreme skepticism and concern with the Sandinista declaration that they would be pursuing such policies. To Alan Benjamin's credit, he was the skeptic.

Benjamin's book is replete with the empirical data showing that the Sandinista mixed economy policy proved not to be a tactical retreat in the face of pressure from the bourgeoisie, as some hoped, but was a policy which served to strengthen the bourgeoisie, and gave it the power to slowly undermine the economy and the political rule of the Sandinistas. The more the Sandinistas appeased the capitalists, the less "patriotic" the capitalists became. The government's guaranteeing the rights of private property was not for them a gesture of goodwill but a sign of weakness.

The following is a sample, as outlined by Benjamin, of the ways in which the Sandinistas locked themselves into dependency on the capitalists:

- assumption of \$1.6 billion of Somoza debt plus \$180 million additional private debt (needless to say that by assuming this debt the government seriously restricted its ability to make social investments);
- generous compensation to owners for land "illegally" seized by the peasants, and for nationalization of some businesses (all compensations for the nationalization

of private property represented a mortgage on future earnings);

- policy of not intruding into the operations of private businesses resulted in decapitalization and the flight of capital which at the end of 1988 stood at over \$625 million;
- private businesses had access to government subsidies, cheap credit, concessionary foreign exchange, which did not translate into increased production or investments; some of the beneficiaries (with Sandinista knowledge) went as far as to funnel some of the money out of the country to the contras;
- to sweeten the deal for the capitalists, i.e., “guaranteeing a climate of industrial and commercial confidence,” the government would invariably ban strikes (in one instance Minister of Agriculture Jaime Wheelock threatened to cut off the hands of workers who went on strike; *Nicaragua*: p. 151);
- a limit was placed on wage increases;
- both land and factory occupations were eventually declared illegal;
- 64,000 peasant families have still not received land;
- 60 percent of the economy remained in private hands;
- leaders of non-Sandinista trade unions and far left organizations were harassed and in some cases jailed.

The following is a most telling quote from a Sandinista rank and filer which shows the distrust, and the inequalities, generated by Sandinista policies:

“The plan of the government economists is no good. . . . It is true that the war is the main cause of the problems, but it does not explain everything. Some are spending the equivalent of three salaries, and live like millionaires, when I cannot buy batteries for my radio. We need more equality, I say, because the revolution ought to make us more equal. Am I wrong? I say to my wife: it wouldn’t take much for us to see here the wives of some government members go out well dressed up, get together with the wives of the bourgeoisie, and organize bingo and poker sessions to raise money for charity for us.” Eric Toussaint, *International Viewpoint* No. 179.

We might also add that the contra war did take its toll on the economy (over a billion dollars in damages). In addition, several natural disasters struck Nicaragua during this period, such as Hurricane Joan in 1988. Also compounding the problem was the U.S. economic blockade which was not compensated for by the lukewarm economic support of the Soviet Union. Some have argued that this was all the more reason why the Sandinista mixed economy policies were correct. But were they? We shall examine this contention below.

To ask what the Sandinistas could have done differently is to raise the question of whether they represented the historical interests of the workers and peasants, given the fact that they had the power to create a society which reflected those interests. It would be an exercise in futility debating what the Sandinistas could have done to consolidate workers’ power when such a question would be ruled out by it not being in their class interests to do so.

In any event, I would argue that a workers’ state was never established in Nicaragua, and it is debatable that they represented a workers’ government. It might have been unclear during the first year or two as to what the Sandinistas represented but it is impossible to see how there could still be confusion on this after a decade.

In terms of who the Sandinistas were, one need only repeat that from a Marxist perspective regimes are not judged on the basis of their rhetoric or even on their class composition alone but, most importantly, on the basis of their program and policies. The record is clear that the FSLN was not a Marxist party in the sense of being based exclusively on workers and having a vision of a new society based on workers’ power. Ideologically, the FSLN was a party that was comprised of competing political currents, including that of the nationalist bourgeoisie, liberation theology, and a faction that believed in the theory of revolution by stages.

The program of mixed economy was an expression of the necessity for compromise with those who were opposed to a complete rupturing with bourgeois society. Among Marxists it should not be necessary to debate whether workers can achieve social and political power in a mixed economy as we understand it. That is a theoretical impossibility. Nonetheless, by having smashed the Somoza army, the Sandinistas were the absolute military power, and it was legitimate to assume that under the dynamics of the unfolding class struggle the Sandinistas, in an attempt to defeat the enemy, might have put the power of the revolution into the hands of the workers and peasants as the July 26 Movement did in Cuba. They did not. But the question is being raised as to whether they could or should have done so.

The first major problem created by the Sandinista commitment to a mixed economy, and which required a radical response, was the fact that as a consequence of the capitalists not being accountable for their management of the factories and various businesses, these owners (representing 60 percent of the economy) would decapitalize, use various methods to illegally export scarce foreign exchange out of the country (\$625 million), or generally not produce the results commensurate with the benefits they derived from government policies. What could the Sandinistas have done about this? For starters, they could have encouraged workers’ control in such factories and developed far more confidence in workers’ ability to manage such enterprises.

Such a policy would have greatly reduced the decapitalizing process and helped to halt the flight of capital. Combined with a policy of nationalization without compensation, the Sandinistas would have had control over the social surplus, and would have been in a better position to restructure the economy away from the old policy of producing exclusively for exports. They would have been able to more adequately feed the people and not place all of the burden of the U.S. economic boycott on the backs of the working people. How could anyone argue that this would not have been good for the revolution?

Paul Le Blanc disputes Benjamin’s contention that “working class hegemony is impossible on the basis of capitalist property rights.” He alludes to this as ultraleftism. Lenin and Trotsky we are told “favored” a mixed economy—a preference which regretfully, he thinks, was wrecked by civil

war and foreign invasion. Without any attempt to draw conclusions, Le Blanc then proceeds to quote from Trotsky to the effect that this policy of "mixed economy" was scuttled because "we could not have survived to celebrate now the fifth anniversary of our revolution" (emphasis added).

My response is that if 1917 Russia is to be used as the model, and if in the face of civil war the Bolsheviks were forced to discontinue their supposed mixed economy policies as the *sine qua non* for the survival of the revolution, then it begs the question of why different results should be expected for the Sandinistas. Why should they be expected to successfully implement such policies and hold on to power when the Bolsheviks couldn't? Surely, there has to be some applicable lessons from this historical experience.

What is even more disturbing is that Le Blanc proceeds to blame the "premature leap into a nationalized economy" for the erosion of workers' democracy and the bureaucratization of the Soviet state. It is surprising that someone as orthodox as Le Blanc, for the sake of defending the Sandinistas, should now be revising standard Trotskyist explanation for the rise of Stalinism and bureaucratism by offering this mono-causal explanation. It would take us too far off course to debate this with him except to make the following points:

1. To say that Trotsky and Lenin favored a mixed economy is to accuse them of being social democrats or Mensheviks. There is absolutely nothing in the statements of Lenin or Trotsky or in their policies which would suggest that they had any intention of having Russian capitalists control the economy.

2. It is a fact that they had thought there would be limits to the extent of nationalizations but Le Blanc should not forget that when the workers seized factories which were being sabotaged, etc., as was the case in Nicaragua, Lenin did not rebuke the workers or hand the factories back to the capitalists. Lenin's main concern was that the workers should be prepared to manage these factories. This was not the attitude of the Sandinistas because they had committed themselves to protecting the sanctity of private property. The extent to which the Bolshevik leaders were prepared to nationalize the economy was based not on any desire to maintain a balance between private and state ownership but was a function of technical capacity and political considerations (with the latter being the final arbiter of decisions made).

3. The decision to move towards "war communism" was made precisely so that the Soviet state could have all the resources at hand to fight the counterrevolution. It would have been unthinkable for the Bolsheviks to be fighting against the counterrevolutionaries for their very survival and at the same time to tolerate capitalists in their midst who were supporting the counterrevolution by sabotaging production. This was the anomaly in Nicaragua and the evidence of the Soviet Union seems to refute Le Blanc's belief that the Sandinistas could fight the contras and tolerate capitalist sabotage at the same time.

4. Again in response to Le Blanc's belief that "premature" nationalizations caused the ruin of the Russian Revolution we should remind him that Leon Trotsky (the man who supposedly favored a mixed economy) was among the first

to recognize the point at which NEP policies had become counterproductive, arguing for more input into the development of the industrial sector, and a curtailment of the kulak stranglehold over the national economy. Stalin's belated response to this worsening economic situation was forced collectivization and other forms of repression against the peasants. This was certainly not what Trotsky had in mind. Nonetheless, it goes to show that Trotsky could not have been in favor of a mixed economy other than to allow certain capitalist enterprises to operate for purely tactical reasons. The same goes for Lenin.

5. Le Blanc chooses not to understand the significance of workers' control in a capitalist-owned enterprise. No one argues that workers' control is a synonym for socialism. It is merely a device for workers to have power to prevent management implementing decisions inimical to the interests of workers and the state. Workers' control should be seen as only a transitional step towards workers' self-management. Does Le Blanc not see that this would have helped to stem some of the decapitalization in Nicaragua?

### Permanent Revolution

Marxist doctrine recognizes that the coming into being of a socialist society will not be by accident. The overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism are deliberate acts. Marxist theory therefore encompasses a vision of how this new society will come into being and embodies some of the tactics, based on experience, which might be utilized to bring it about. Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is likewise a further development of Marxist theory designed to elucidate the process through which revolution is possible in less developed capitalist societies. In case it should be forgotten, let it be said that Trotsky's theory was not developed as an academic exercise but had the specific intention of assisting the struggle for socialism.

The defeat of the Sandinistas raises the question of whether this was a negative confirmation of Trotsky's contention that in countries where revolutions begin in quest of solving bourgeois democratic tasks, this will not be achieved unless consummated in a socialist revolution. On this score, it is not possible in this short article to have a meaningful debate with Le Blanc since we are miles apart on the ABCs of what constitutes a socialist revolution — or at least within the Nicaraguan context.

In his analysis of the Sandinista defeat ("The Electoral Defeat in Nicaragua" — April 1990) Le Blanc states that the dictatorship of the proletariat had been achieved in Nicaragua: "We have argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat, defined as the political hegemony of the working masses, had been established by the Sandinista revolution. The incoming regime will certainly do its best to dismantle that. The level of consciousness of the Nicaraguan masses has proved, under present conditions, insufficient to guarantee the future of workers' power." For Le Blanc then the Nicaraguan revolution through its decade-old experience was a positive confirmation of Trotsky's theory. (His only problem would be to convince the Nicaraguan masses that this was so.)

It is only necessary to repeat that based upon the facts already adduced a proletarian dictatorship could not have been established in Nicaragua: there was no workers' control as a countervailing force to capitalist mismanagement (not necessary according to Le Blanc); there was no state "hegemony" over the economy (60 percent in private hands); economic planning was therefore ruled out as the economy was completely dominated by the law of value; political relations between the Sandinistas and the trade union movement was at best contentious; the political system established by the Sandinistas afforded a modicum of democracy but nothing similar to the 1917 soviets; and at the ideological level the Sandinistas were not preparing the workers to become the real rulers of Nicaragua.

Those who therefore support the Sandinistas and their mixed economy policies but whisper criticisms about the need for democracy from below are being disingenuous, because it is impossible to have "democracy from below" when 60 percent of the economy is in the hands of private capitalists. These are mutually exclusive. There is bound to be a limit to which there can even be workers' self-management in state enterprises which are operating according to the law of value. These enterprises are in the final analysis no different from capitalist enterprises. Labor will always be sacrificed at the expense of profitability.

If the dictatorship of the proletariat had been established in Nicaragua, we believe that Le Blanc had better concede that it was also established in many other third world countries: Angola, Mozambique, Guyana, and Grenada (1979-1983), etc., where mixed economies were tried and failed. I wonder if he would be prepared to make the same claim in these countries or to explain the differences.

By invoking Trotsky as a defender of "mixed economy" Le Blanc renders Trotsky's theory on the strategy of fighting for permanent revolution in neocolonial countries no different from popular front, stage by stage, strategies. Based on permanent revolution theory one could have predicted an inevitable setback for the Nicaraguan revolution because of its inability to go over to the socialist stage. Le Blanc strips the theory of its most potent element and makes it adaptable to reformism when he incorporates mixed economy policies as one of its features!

### **Socialism in One Country**

Paul Le Blanc is so sold on the idea of mixed economy that not even the proposition that conditions were being ripened for the bourgeoisie to return to power gives him cause for alarm. Continuing to base his analysis on the theory of permanent revolution (so he thinks at any rate), and this time on that component which argues that the survival of revolutions in backward countries depends in the long run on the advancement of world revolution—especially in the advanced industrial countries—Le Blanc is calmly at home with the prospect of the Sandinistas being out of office. This is to be expected, he argues in dry academic style, since there has been no extension of world revolution. It is better to allow the bourgeois oppositional forces to take over the reins of government, and for the FSLN to "assume an oppositional

role," since "the path of nationalizing the economy" would only bring "chaos and political authoritarianism."

I would only ask why if he thinks it was not worth it for the Sandinistas to fight to hold on to power, would it be worth it now for them to fight for power as an "oppositional" force. What new insight or perspective does he think that the Sandinistas now have to offer the Nicaraguan masses. It would not be hurling epithets to say that this is nothing but tail-endism, or Trotskyist Menshevism.

The Mensheviks, we should remember, held steadfastly to a rigid doctrinaire stages theory of revolution and refused to support the workers assuming power in Russia for the exact reasons which Le Blanc is giving for holding back the Nicaraguan revolution: "the time is not ripe; we do not want authoritarianism," etc.

Le Blanc's approach is so totally oriented towards the Sandinista leadership rather than towards the masses that he displays an almost paranoid fear of socialist measures. He chides those who call for an introduction of socialist measures as a means of strengthening the revolution with believing that "a socialist economy can be brought to Nicaragua to solve the country's most pressing problems without the spread of a socialist revolution that would create vital economic allies and partners in other, more industrially advanced countries."

To counterpose the introduction of socialist measures with the need for "spreading socialist revolution" is nothing but a smokescreen for defending the bankrupt policies of mixed economy. It is based upon the undialectical assumption that the Nicaraguan society can be kept in "equilibrium." The fact that socialism can only be completed in a world context is not to be interpreted to mean that we fold our arms until the grand day arrives. If this was the way that Trotsky felt about the relation between national and world revolution he would not have fought so hard for the defense and rectification of the Russian Revolution.

Finally, as far as the future of the Nicaraguan revolution is concerned, let it be said that there is absolutely no heresy in wanting to "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." And it is perfectly in order and perhaps timely in my opinion that if the 1985 world congress of the Fourth International is found to be too uncritically supportive of the Sandinistas, then I think it should be so said and mechanisms initiated for another discussion.

The mistaken approach of Le Blanc is that he believes it is possible to build a revolutionary socialist movement in the United States on the basis of a hazy understanding of the interconnection between the situation in Nicaragua and the United States. A setback in Nicaragua is just as disorienting for the solidarity movement in the United States. Educating American workers to support permanent revolution in Nicaragua will not only increase their consciousness of their internationalist duty but will embolden the revolutionary left in Nicaragua to move beyond the limitations of the Sandinistas. It is absolutely impermissible for revolutionary Marxists to make the mistake of equating a revolution with its leadership; and who can dispute that we have yet to hear the last word from the Nicaraguan masses. ●

# Reflections on Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua

by Paul Le Blanc

Questions have been raised regarding the proper understanding of the theory of permanent revolution and the Sandinist revolution in Nicaragua. I have dealt with the question in several writings published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency in 1984, 1986, and 1989. In fact, I began working on this question in 1982-83 at the request of the late George Breitman while many of us were still in the Socialist Workers Party. Well before the Fourth International majority concluded in 1985 that the dictatorship of the proletariat had been established in Nicaragua, I had argued that in *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua* in 1983. Much has happened since then. It is altogether appropriate for us to review our position at this time. I believe we should conclude that our analysis should be developed and extended along the lines which we have pioneered in developing up to now. What follows is a restatement and elaboration of that analysis.

## The Theory of Permanent Revolution

Leon Trotsky's articulation of the theory of uneven and combined development, arising from a profound analysis of Russia's historical realities, resulted in his famous theory of permanent revolution. By the late 1920s he was prepared to argue that it had global relevance. There were three components to this revolutionary perspective: 1) consistent and uncompromising struggles for the democratic goals that were earlier associated with classical "bourgeois-democratic" revolutions can only, in modern times, triumph under working class leadership (supported by allies among the peasantry and other strata) and can be fully realized only through the working class coming to power; 2) the revolution does not come to rest with the establishment of proletarian political rule, but rather begins a period of transition to socialism, involving complex, dynamic, ongoing tensions, conflicts, and changes in all spheres of economic, political, social, cultural life; 3) the revolution can begin within national boundaries but inevitably has an impact beyond those boundaries—generating counterrevolutionary hostilities from capitalists and powerful governments of other countries, inspiring revolutionary ideas and enthusiasm among the oppressed of other countries, and helping in various countries to advance the struggle for socialism, which can only be won on a world scale.<sup>1</sup>

Trotsky's theory is often associated with a stilted understanding of the Russian Revolution, which then gives us a stilted understanding of Trotsky's theory. The Russian Revolution began as a democratic struggle to overthrow the tsarist autocracy, but that the needs of the masses could not

be met until the Bolsheviks—under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky—led the workers of Russia (along with their peasant allies) in the struggle for socialism. The Bolshevik insurrection gave absolute political power to the workers' democratic councils, the soviets, and then this proletarian dictatorship moved toward socialism by carrying out sweeping nationalizations, replacing capitalism with a planned economy.<sup>2</sup> Or so the story goes—and basically this *is* what happened, although it is often forgotten that in less than a year both the economy and workers' democracy had disintegrated. They were replaced by what has been called "war communism," a period of one-party dictatorship and militarized collectivism which even today is often portrayed as a forward movement toward socialism.

This conforms to Trotsky's theory, we are told, which says that the working class and its allies must transform the revolution for democratic rights into a revolution for socialism. More than one observer of Nicaraguan realities has commented that this in no way describes the Sandinist revolution. Instead of a proletarian dictatorship, the FSLN has favored a populist-sounding alliance of "the popular masses" and a political pluralism which even allows capitalists to participate in the political process. Instead of fighting for socialism, the FSLN regime has consistently fought for a so-called mixed economy in which capitalism is preserved. Many who identify with Trotskyism have, in the name of permanent revolution, denounced the Sandinists for failing to do what the Bolsheviks had done in Russia. And many critics of Trotsky's theory have argued that the Nicaraguan experience once again demonstrates its inapplicability.<sup>3</sup>

## The Working Class and Its Political Role

Before going further, I want to deal with two problems in terminology. Actually, in clarifying what we mean by the terms *working class* and *dictatorship of the proletariat* we will also be developing our analysis of the meaning of the theory of permanent revolution.

By working class, or proletariat, I do not mean simply factory workers (of which there were and are relatively few in Nicaragua), but instead much broader, more varied and in many ways contradictory layers. In the period leading up to Nicaragua's revolution, the proletarianized sectors of Nicaraguan manual wageworkers of rural and urban areas blended with small peasants in the countryside and with artisans and small vendors in the cities and towns (in many cases the same individual would move into different occupational categories at different times), with family networks

including varieties of blue-collar and white-collar occupational experience — not to mention students and housewives associated with the lower strata, and so on. If we examine the European proletariat with which Marx and Engels were familiar, we find a similar phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Utilizing this approach, we can accept the figures offered by Carmen Diana Deere, Peter Marchetti, and Richard Harris indicating that 78 percent of the rural economically active population and 90 percent of the urban economically active population in Nicaragua were essentially working class. The “popular masses” whom the Sandinistas wanted to lead into power had — in an uneven and combined manner — become proletarianized by 1978-79. And the massive intervention from these layers in that period, all objective observers agree, was decisive for the victory of the democratic revolution to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship. Nor were these insurgent masses inclined to settle for “*somocismo* without Somoza,” or moderate reforms more palatable to the country’s business interests. The majority instead rallied to the more radical program of the FSLN.<sup>5</sup>

This brings us to a second terminological point. The democratic revolution smashed the dictatorial, bonapartist procapitalist state machine of the Somoza dynasty. What was the nature of the new state structure which took its place? If Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution is applicable, then this should have been *the dictatorship of the proletariat*, the political domination of society by the working class. There are at least three elements of confusion which often come into play around this notion of *proletarian dictatorship*. One is the false notion that it means a one-party dictatorship, or absolute rule by an elite claiming to speak for the working class. Yet such scholars as Hal Draper and the late Richard N. Hunt have amply documented that Marx and Engels viewed this concept as being consistent with the most thoroughgoing democracy, including full civil liberties and meaningful political pluralism. They have also demonstrated that this notion of working class political rule by no means automatically excluded the possibility of capitalist participation in the country’s political life (just as political domination of society by the capitalist class does not automatically rule out the possibility of working class politics). Nor does it exclude the possibility of drawing representatives of other classes into the government.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, in his classic articulation of his theory in *Results and Prospects*, Trotsky argued that the victory of the proletarian revolution “by no means precludes revolutionary representatives of non-proletarian social groups entering the government. They can and should be in the government: a sound policy will compel the proletariat to call to power the influential leaders of the urban petty bourgeoisie, of the intellectuals, of the peasantry.” What was essential was not that the government be exclusively proletarian, but that “the hegemony should belong to the working class.” The precise label was not of primary importance: he found “workers’ democracy” or “dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry” or “coalition government of the working class and petty bourgeoisie” to be equally acceptable, just so long as the reality reflected the “dominating and leading participation” of the working class.<sup>7</sup>

We can find similar perspectives articulated by leading Sandinistas. For example, there is the December 1979 assertion of Jaime Wheelock: “The state now is not the same state, it is a state of the workers, a state of the producers, who organize production and place it at the disposal of the people, and above all of the working class.” That this was not exclusively Wheelock’s opinion is clearly indicated in Tomás Borge’s 1983 comments that “here political power is not in the hands of the businessmen,” that “they will not resign themselves to losing power,” but that “this . . . is a revolution of the working people. It is not a revolution of the bourgeoisie.” In fact, this had been the Sandinist orientation from the beginning. For example, the 1977 document of what became the leading “Insurreccional Tendency” in the FSLN — after enumerating the many social sectors that would be drawn into the national upsurge that would overthrow the Somoza dictatorship — went on to specify in regard to the anticipated “revolutionary, popular-democratic government” that “the revolutionary laborers, peasants, students and intellectuals will be its *basic elements*. The working class, synthesized and guided by the Sandinista vanguard, the FSLN, will be the leaders of the revolution.”<sup>8</sup>

### The Mixed Economy

There are some would-be adherents of Trotsky’s theory who argue that it is not possible to have a *dictatorship of the proletariat* (sometimes called a workers’ state) without a nationalized, planned economy. The insistence of the Sandinistas on maintaining a mixed economy has been shown as providing proof that the FSLN has certainly refrained from establishing a classical dictatorship of the proletariat in Nicaragua. Even some observers who are not inclined to worry about terminology have severely criticized the Sandinistas for not following the good example provided by the Bolsheviks. This contains three serious misconceptions, however.

The first problem is that such critics don’t understand what Marx and Engels — not to mention Trotsky — saw as the sequence of events in a revolutionary transformation. A careful reading of the *Communist Manifesto* shows that the political “sway of the proletariat” is seen as *preceding* (not coinciding with or being based upon) a nationalized planned economy. We are told that “*the first step* in the revolution of the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy,” which means establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. *After* working class political rule is established, Marx and Engels tell us, “the proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class.” It’s worth noting, too, that the *Manifesto* doesn’t anticipate nationalizations taking place all at once. It talks about doing this “by degrees” and adds that “this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production.” Not only do we see the workers’ state preceding the socialized economy, but we see a period of proletarian rule coinciding with a mixed

economy in which capitalist production suffers despotic inroads rather than outright abolition.<sup>9</sup>

The second point to be made is that in articulating his theory of permanent revolution, Trotsky embraced this approach. The “mixed economy” perspective, with capitalist enterprises being maintained under working class political rule, was built into Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. “It would be absurd to think that all the proletariat has to do is acquire power and it can replace capitalism by socialism by means of a few decrees,” he explained. “The proletariat can only apply state power, with all its energy, so as to ease and shorten the path of economic evolution in the direction of collectivism.” Trotsky believed that “the socialization of production will begin with those branches which present the least difficulties. In the first period the socialized sector of production will have the appearance of oases connected with private economic enterprises by the laws of commodity exchange.”<sup>10</sup>

The third point to be made is that this was the perspective of the majority in the Bolshevik party—Lenin and Trotsky first of all—in the period leading up to the Bolshevik revolution and in the period immediately after. In a December 1917 interview, Trotsky explained: “We are not ready to take over all industry. That will come in time, but no one can say how soon. For the present, we expect out of the earnings of a factory to pay the owner five or six percent yearly on his actual investment. What we aim at now is *control* rather than *ownership*.” In the face of pressures from the left among some of his comrades to move decisively toward the elimination of capitalist production, Lenin responded that the workers “have *no experience* of independent work in organizing giant enterprises which serve the needs of scores of millions of people.” It was necessary, he insisted, “to learn from the capitalist organizers” and to proceed “cautiously” and “gradually.” He stressed: “The difference between socialization and simple confiscation is that confiscation can be carried out by ‘determination’ alone, without the ability to calculate and distribute properly, *whereas socialization cannot be brought about without this ability*.” According to historian E.H. Carr, “a certain tacit community of interests could be detected between the government and the more sensible and moderate of the industrialists in bringing about some kind of orderly production.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the Bolshevik majority under Lenin and Trotsky seriously attempted to implement this “mixed economy” policy, it collapsed within eight months in the face of civil war and foreign intervention. And yet the reasons which had initially inclined them toward caution and gradualism proved to be sound. The sweeping nationalizations which followed had a devastating impact on the economy. It should be noted that this economic crisis coincided with—and helped to generate—a calamitous political crisis, involving the withering away of working class political pluralism and soviet democracy, with the dramatic development of authoritarianism and bureaucracy on a scale unknown in Nicaragua. The economic calamity, at least, was partially repaired by the New Economic Policy initiated in 1921.<sup>12</sup> While some enthusiasts described the economic policies of “war communism” as a manifestation of the forward movement to socialism, Trotsky did not. In 1922 he explained the

rapid nationalizations of the so-called “war communism” period in anything but glowing terms: “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 could not have survived to celebrate now the fifth anniversary of our Revolution.”<sup>13</sup>

Of course, the kind of “mixed economy” which the Bolsheviks had envisioned up to the middle of 1918 was qualitatively different from what we have seen in the so-called “welfare states” of Scandinavia, for example, where capitalism was shored-up by the reform programs of the social democratic parties. The Soviet Republic, after all, constituted a proletarian dictatorship, led by revolutionary Marxists, not seeking a “middle way” between capitalism and socialism but instead committed to advancing toward socialist revolution on a world scale. The 1977 document of the FSLN’s Insurrectional Tendency projected such a revolutionary variant of the mixed economy for Nicaragua as well. “Nicaraguan capitalism, unlike that of Europe and other highly developed and industrialized nations, does not facilitate the immediate establishment of socialism,” the document noted, adding: “the fact that we do not immediately establish socialism does *not* mean that we support a *bourgeois-democratic revolution*.” While not quoting Trotsky, the Sandinist theorists articulated their own variant of permanent revolution:

The present struggle against tyranny should lead us to a true democracy of the people (not a bourgeois democracy) that will form an integral part of the struggle for socialism. Our struggle should never be left midway, even if conciliatory, bourgeois forces should strive for such a goal. The popular-democratic phase should be, for the Sandinista cause, a means used for consolidating its revolutionary position and organizing the masses, so that the process moves unequivocally toward socialism. The necessary *popular-democratic revolutionary phase*, to be fulfilled once the tyranny is toppled, should not lead us to capitalism, reformism, nationalism, or any other development [other than socialism].<sup>14</sup>

In Nicaragua, the mixed economy today consists of three ownership categories: state or collective property (accounting for 25 percent of agriculture, 40 percent of industry, 38 percent of internal trade, 100 percent of public services); a purely capitalist sector (accounting for 17 percent of agriculture, 30 percent of industry, and 12 percent of internal trade); and a sector of small and medium producers, in many cases organized in cooperatives (accounting for 58 percent of agriculture, 30 percent of industry, and 50 percent of internal trade). Of Nicaragua’s gross domestic product, the state and collective property sector accounts for 45 percent, the capitalist sector accounts for 25 percent, the small and medium producers account for 35 percent. This form of “mixed economy” has not been to the liking of Nicaragua’s capitalists, who have consequently held back from making significant investments in the economy. Explaining the feelings of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie in 1983, *New York Times*

correspondent John Vinocur acknowledged that “about 60 percent of the economy is thought, nominally at least, to be in private hands. But because the Government controls all the banks, all access to foreign currency and all jurisdiction over imports and sets production quotas and designates priorities, the businessmen are not much more than crown agents whose salaries the Government does not need to pay.”<sup>15</sup>

Such a situation certainly is fraught with profound tensions and contradictions, and these have taken their toll on the Nicaraguan economy. The fact remains that the Sandinistas have been able to maintain for a decade what the Bolsheviks were only able to maintain for slightly more than half a year. It is by no means clear why revolutionary socialists, followers of Trotsky above all, should criticize them for this. Without offering a blanket endorsement for all economic policies of the FSLN since 1979, there are powerful and well-documented arguments to be made for the “mixed economy” policy under the circumstances faced in Nicaragua.<sup>16</sup> The primary point which we are stressing here is that such a policy is not inconsistent with Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. In fact, it is explicitly predicted and embraced in that theory.

On the other hand, it is certainly not the case that revolutionary Marxists have embraced the “mixed economy” (even if under a proletarian dictatorship) as an appropriate resting-place for the revolution. Marx and Engels predicted that such measures would “appear economically insufficient and untenable, but . . . in the course of the movement, [would] outstrip themselves, [and would] necessitate further inroads upon the old order.” One reason for this untenability of the mixed economy was highlighted by Trotsky when he said that “the political domination of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic enslavement.” In the transition period, there will be momentum on the part of working people to move toward socialism, and there will be a reaction among business people against the loss of political power and the prospect of the eventual loss of economic power. Economic stability or growth are unlikely under such circumstances. It is also necessary to factor-in the actual economic conditions, levels of technology and productivity, and so on. “How far can the socialist policy of the working class be applied in the economic conditions of Russia?” asked Trotsky in 1906. He answered: “We can say one thing with certainty—that it will come up against political obstacles much sooner than it will stumble over the technical backwardness of the country.”<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, he never thought of denying that the economic backwardness of Russia prevented the country from simply moving forward to socialism. Yet the notion that a mixed economy would somehow solve the country’s problems was also alien to his entire approach.

Nor does the “mixed economy” as developed in Nicaragua under the FSLN offer any hope for meeting the long-range needs of the Nicaraguan people. One of the most perceptive observers of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua, Carlos Vilas, offered a very clear analysis of this problem a couple of years ago. He rather bluntly asserted that “the options that the Sandinista Revolution faces are quite reduced,” given that it takes place in a society which “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*.” This flows from the fact that agro-export economies in the “third world” require intense exploitation of labor, with authoritarian labor relations and workers’ incomes being held below the cost of reproduction of labor (i.e., below the cost of adequate food, clothing, shelter, etc.), in order to be competitive in the international capitalist market. A revolution dedicated to ending such exploitation and oppression introduces (from the standpoint of traditional economic realities) irrationalities that undermine the country’s competitiveness, increase the foreign debt, generate inflation, and in general upset the equilibrium of the country’s economy. Vilas concluded: “As a result, *while these economies are in the process of being restructured, they need foreign subsidies. Without them, such economies collapse.*” This was not the case with the Russian or Chinese revolutions only because they took place in countries which were continental in scope, and which therefore possessed enough resources to enable them to achieve at least a certain degree of self-sufficiency, which is not an option for countries the size of Nicaragua. In any event, it is clear that Nicaraguan experience has corresponded to Trotsky’s prediction regarding the transition period—a process of complex socio-economic transformation taking place “for an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle.”<sup>18</sup>

### Revolutionary Internationalism

We have seen Carlos Vilas argue that countries like Nicaragua which embark on a transition period from capitalism to socialism cannot survive without what he calls “foreign subsidies.” Given the fact that the only non-capitalist country capable of providing such a subsidy, the USSR, is not prepared to assume that burden, it is necessary for the Nicaraguan government to rely, to a large extent, on trade, loans, and assistance from capitalist countries and institutions. This creates national pressures to maintain the overall agro-export orientation and to limit radical socio-economic shifts within the country. Adaptation to the market, with the consequent socio-economic inequality, cannot be easily transcended in Nicaragua.

Given the contradictions and instability of the mixed economy as it has existed in Sandinist Nicaragua, what could be done by the FSLN aside from embarking on a catastrophically premature collectivization path on the one hand or abandoning the revolution in favor of pure and simple capitalism on the other?

This brings us back to Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. The third component of the theory—the revolutionary internationalist component—suggests that the problem cannot be solved, and socialism cannot be achieved, within a single country in isolation from the rest of the world. The only way to *truly* cut the Gordian knot is to spread the revolution to other countries. “The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable,” Trotsky insisted, adding that economically “backward countries may, under certain conditions, arrive at the dictatorship of the proletariat sooner than the advanced countries, but they will come later than the latter to

socialism." He elaborated on this: "In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international revolution."<sup>19</sup>

Among the Sandinistas there also seems to be such an understanding. According to Omar Cabezas—replying to left-wing critics—the Sandinistas need "to buy time and give time to our brothers and sisters in the rest of Central America to deepen and advance their revolutionary movements." He repeated that "the overturn of these [capitalist] socio-economic property relations and structures cannot be carried out by decree. It cannot be done as it was done in Cuba or Indochina. This is particularly so when the socialist camp [i.e., the USSR and the Eastern European bloc] is not in the position of entering a Third World War on account of us. And we don't have borders with other friendly countries." At the same time, there should be little doubt that the Sandinistas, while asserting (too optimistically) that their "mixed economy" . . . can last whatever amount of time [that] is necessary," are inclined to see this as a time-limited project. "The most important thing," according to Cabezas, "is to preserve power so that those socio-economic structures can be overturned at an appropriate time in the future; at a time [when] the objective and subjective conditions in Nicaragua and Central America are gathered."<sup>20</sup> Trotsky would have added that successful revolutionary struggles will have to spread well beyond Central America, at some point, if socialism is to be realized in that embattled region.

Indeed, just as the revolutionary hopes of Bolshevik Russia were not realized because of the revolution's isolation and because of an accumulation of authoritarian and bureaucratic precedents, so the revolutionary hopes of Sandinist Nicaragua are threatened by the country's relative isolation, by the condition of its devastated economy after a decade of imperialist and counterrevolutionary aggression, and by the need to make compromises with its enemies. Just as there were contradictions and internal tensions in the ranks of the Bolsheviks, so are there different perspectives on future directions which can be perceived among the Sandinistas. It is impossible to predict what will be the outcome.<sup>21</sup>

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution offers revolutionary socialists important guidelines for waging a victorious struggle. But it is important to stress that the theory offers no guarantee for the inevitable victory of socialism or for the continued political hegemony of the working class. In fact, it provides analytical tools which help us understand how socialism and working class power can be thwarted, and it suggests what the consequences of this might be. In regard to the future of the Nicaraguan revolution, Trotsky's theory implies that the key now lies *outside* of Nicaragua. If the 1990s see the continuation or deepening of the revolution's relative isolation, it is difficult to see how it can survive. If there is the spread of socialist revolution in other parts of Latin America and elsewhere, a brighter future will be possible for the Nicaraguans and for the rest of us as well. Such a reality will not unfold automatically, of course, but will be dependent on what people like ourselves are able to do. We can conclude that the three interrelated components of

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution provide an analytical framework which helps us make sense of the Nicaraguan revolution.

1. The democratic revolution against the Somoza dictatorship was successful because the FSLN provided leadership which guaranteed the hegemony and coming-to-power of the proletarianized "working masses."

2. The variants of "mixed economy" and pluralistic democracy fostered by the FSLN did not lead (and were not meant to lead) to a bourgeois-democratic stabilization but rather have been conceived of as (and correspond to) a complex, dynamic transitional period between capitalism and socialism.

3. While beginning very much on distinctive national foundations, the revolution has had international dimensions from the very beginning and can be resolved—one way or the other—only through a complex interplay of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary struggles on a world scale. ●

## Notes

1. Leon Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1969). Also see Michael Löwy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development, The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981).

2. Two of the classic accounts are John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1926) and Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Three Volumes in One (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1936). These are richly corroborated by new scholarship, such as: David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime and The Petrograd Workers and the Soviet Seizure of Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983 and 1984); Diane Koenker, *Moscow Workers and the 1917 Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); David H. Kaiser, ed., *The Workers' Revolution in Russia, 1917, The View From Below* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

3. Two of the more sophisticated examples of Trotskyist-inspired critiques can be found in Alan Benjamin, *Nicaragua, Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution* (San Francisco: Walnut Publishing Co., 1989) and, in passing, James Dunkerly, "Class Structure and Socialist Strategy in El Salvador," in Fitzroy Ambursley and Robin Cohen, eds., *Crisis in the Caribbean* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 125-127. Critiques of Trotsky's theory partially in light of Nicaraguan experience can be found in Jack Barnes, "Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today," *New Internationalist*, Fall 1983, and David Finkel, "Some Problems of 'Permanent Revolution': Is Workers' Power a Perspective for Third World Revolutions?" *Changes*, July-August 1984.

Some of these works are criticized, with an alternate Trotskyist interpretation offered, in several of my own writings: *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua* (New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1984); "Nicaragua: Workers' Power and Mixed Economy," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, July/August 1986; "Understanding the Nicaraguan Revolution: A Critical Review of Some of the Literature," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, October 1989; *Workers and Revolution: A Comparative Study of Bolshevik Russia and Sandinist Nicaragua* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1989).

For Trotskyist analyses compatible with those offered in this paper, see: Ernest Mandel, "Nicaragua: Road to 'Socialist Democracy,'" *Intercontinental Press*, December 24, 1984; "The Central American Revolution," in Resolutions of the Twelfth World Congress of the Fourth International, *International Viewpoint, Special Issue*, 1985; Arnold Berthau, "Ten Years After the Nicaraguan Revolution," *International Viewpoint*, September 18, 1989. Also valuable in sorting through these issues are some of the essays in Richard R. Fagen, Carmen Diana Deere, and Jose Luis Coraggio, eds., *Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986).

4. On the European working class during the time of Marx and Engels, see: William H. Sewell, Jr., "Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789-1848," Michelle Perrot, "On the Formation of the French Working Class," and Jurgen Kocka, "Problems of

Working-Class Formation in Germany: The Early Years, 1800-1875," in Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg, eds., *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 50, 71, 349. On the composition of the Parisian working class at the time of the Commune of 1871, also see E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York: New American Library, 1979), p. 184; Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris 1871* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 28-29. Also see important points offered by E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), pp. 11, 9. For useful discussions of Marxist perspectives on social class in harmony with my own orientation, see: Louis B. Boudin, *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Co., 1907), pp. 191-214; Ernest Mandel and George Novack, *The Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974); Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp. 24-30, 377-423; Peter Meiksins, "New Middle Class or Working Class?" *Against the Current*, Winter 1984; Peter Meiksins, "Beyond the Boundary Question: The Sociology of Class Politics," *New Left Review*, May-June 1986; Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat From Class* (London: Verso, 1986).

5. On rural labor, see Carmen Diana Deere and Peter Marchetti, "The Worker-Peasant Alliance in the First Year of the Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform," *Latin American Perspectives*, Spring 1981, p. 42; on urban labor, see Richard L. Harris, *Economic Development and Revolutionary Transformation in Nicaragua* (Meadville, PA: Allegheny College and University of Akron Department of Urban Studies, 1986), p. 18. Deere and Marchetti assert that in 1978 the economically active population in the rural areas could be divided into these categories: semiproletariat 38.3 percent, "pure" proletarians 7.5 percent, and subproletariat 32.1 percent — 335,162 people in all. Harris asserts that in the nonagricultural sectors during 1980, non-property-owning salaried and wage workers could be divided into the following categories: salaried "middle sector" 18 percent, proletariat 31.4 percent, semiproletariat 16.3 percent, subproletariat 24.7 percent — 882,400 people in all. Of course, there are different ways to define and count, resulting in an assertion by one revolutionary Marxist analyst, for example, that the Nicaraguan working class at the time of the revolution consisted of 40,000 industrial workers and 60,000 agricultural workers (according to Arnold Berthau in his valuable article, "Ten Years After the Nicaraguan Revolution," *International Viewpoint*, September 18, 1989, p. 26). Carlos Vilas, in his important book *The Sandinista Revolution*, also defines the Nicaraguan proletariat narrowly, but then finds himself compelled to utilize the broader term "working masses" in order to account for the more or less proletarianized layers excluded from the narrower definition of the country's working class.

Even accounts hostile to the Sandinistas acknowledge that the "working masses" (proletarians of "semi-," "pure" and "sub-" varieties) of Nicaragua were the decisive element in the revolution, and that they overwhelmingly favored the FSLN. "Popular revolt was the [FSLN] strategy's crucial element," according to the U.S. State Department's David Nolan. "Only a total mobilization of the population could disperse the 14,000 National Guardsmen and restrict their mobility to the point where the Sandinista Army could meet them on equal terms." Neo-conservative analyst Joshua Muravchik of Georgetown University also acknowledges that the FSLN enjoyed the enthusiastic support of this majority that helped bring down the dictatorship: "virtually everyone in Nicaragua recognized their leadership of the anti-Somoza struggle and admired their courage and self-sacrifice." See: Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami, 1984), p. 99; Muravchik, *Nicaragua's Slow March to Communism* (Washington, DC: The Cuban American National Foundation, 1986), p. 5.

Valuable accounts of the revolutionary struggle which overthrew the Somoza dictatorship can be found in: Henri Weber, *Nicaragua: The Sandinist Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981); Humberto Ortega, interviewed by Marta Harnecker, "Nicaragua—The Strategy of Victory," in Bruce Marcus, ed., *Sandinistas Speak* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1982); Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua, The Land of Sandino*, 2nd Edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); Carlos M. Vilas, *The Sandinista Revolution: National Liberation and Social Transformation in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986); Gary Ruchwarger, *People in Power: Forging a Grassroots Democracy in Nicaragua* (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1987).

6. Hal Draper, *The "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" From Marx to Lenin* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986); Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, Vol. III: The 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986); Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas*

of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974, 1984).

7. Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, pp. 69, 70, 72.

8. Wheelock quoted in George Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Press, 1981), p. 267; Tomás Borge, "Large-Scale Aggression Is Being Prepared," *Intercontinental Press*, February 23, 1983, p. 119; Bruce Marcus, ed., *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985), p. 174; "General Political-Military Platform of the FSLN for the Triumph of the Popular Sandinista Revolution (May 1977)," in Jiri Valenta and Esperanza Durán, eds., *Conflict in Nicaragua, A Multidimensional Perspective* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 303, 304. Also worth consulting on FSLN political perspectives is Donald C. Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

9. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), pp. 119, 126.

10. Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, pp. 100-101; Leon Trotsky, *On the Paris Commune* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 13, 25, 26.

11. E.A. Ross, "A Talk With Trotsky," *The Independent*, March 9, 1918; reprinted in *Intercontinental Press*, July 13, 1981, p. 743; V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty Bourgeois Mentality," *Selected Works*, vol. 2 (New York: International Publishers), pp. 707, 692; E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, vol. 2 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 87.

12. Among the works which document this are the following: E.A. Ross, *Russia in Upheaval* (New York: The Century Co., 1918); Anna Louise Strong, *The First Time in History: Two Years of Russia's New Life*, with a Preface by Leon Trotsky (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923); Maurice Dobb, *Russian Economic Development Since the Revolution* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1928); William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, 2 vols. (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965); Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

13. Strong, *The First Time in History*, pp. 36-38.

14. Valenta and Duran, eds., *Conflict in Nicaragua*, pp. 303, 302.

15. Recent percentages on Nicaragua's mixed economy can be found in Berthau, "Ten Years After the Nicaraguan Revolution," *International Viewpoint*, September 18, 1989, p. 26; also see John Vinocur, "Nicaragua: A Correspondent's Portrait," *New York Times*, August 16, 1983.

16. Rose J. Spalding, ed., *The Political Economy of Revolutionary Nicaragua* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987). For an early and quite perceptive analysis which intelligently confronts the question of Nicaragua's particular form of "mixed economy," see Adolfo Gilly, *La Nueva Nicaragua: anti-imperialismo y lucha de clases* (Mexico: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1980).

17. Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *Selected Works*, vol. 1, p. 126; Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, pp. 101, 104-105.

18. Vilas in Spalding, ed., *The Political Economy of Revolutionary Nicaragua*, pp. 245-246; Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, p. 132.

19. Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, pp. 279-280.

20. Omar Cabezas, "Our Revolution Will Not Be Destroyed," *Socialist Action*, April 1986, p. 7.

21. For a perceptive and informative left social democratic analysis of Nicaraguan realities, see three important articles by Abraham Brumberg (former editor of the U.S. State Department publication *Problems of Communism*): "'Sham' and 'Farce' in Nicaragua?" *Dissent*, Spring 1985; "Nicaragua: A Mixture of Shades," *Dissent*, Spring 1986; "Nicaragua: The Inner Struggle," *Dissent*, Summer 1986. Similarly informative, and more recent, revolutionary Marxist analyses can be found in: the Editors, Tomás Borge, Orlando Núñez, Víctor Tirado, Daniel Ortega, "Sandinista Leaders on the Nicaraguan Crisis," and G. Buster, "U.S. Changes Tack in Anti-Nicaragua Campaign," *International Viewpoint*, July 10, 1989; Arnold Berthau, "Nicaragua: Economic Crisis Forms Backdrop of Election Campaign," *International Viewpoint*, September 18, 1989; Eric Toussaint (interviewing Luis Carrión and Edgardo García), "Nicaragua: Working-Class Exhaustion Is a Danger for the Revolution," *International Viewpoint*, October 2, 1989.

In the early morning hours of April 26, 1986, an explosion and fire in unit No. 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant about 80 miles north-northwest of Kiev, capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, became the worst nuclear accident humanity has known. The transparent culpability of the ruling bureaucrats in Moscow and Ukraine for the disastrous consequences helped hasten the turn toward more openness—glasnost—and radicalized millions who suffered from the radiation's effects. The Stalinist rulers were clearly guilty of concealing from the Soviet people the dangers of nuclear power. More immediately, they tried until 48 hours after the accident to deny that it had happened. In the meantime the accident had thrown a deadly plume of radiation over large parts of the western regions of the USSR and across Europe.

At the end of April 1990, the Kremlin finally began to admit that—professions of glasnost aside—it had been covering up the extent of the damage to land, resources, and human beings. It was vast and is continually getting worse. The damage had been officially minimized throughout the past four years—including the number of deaths—as the regime, despite the disaster, sought to push ahead with its plans to expand the USSR's nuclear power capacity.

In the meantime, mobilizations have been taking place in the neighboring Belorussian Republic over the past year, with tens of thousands participating in the republic's capital of Minsk and in other regional cities. A demonstration of 50-100,000 took place April 28 in Kiev—commemorating the accident and demanding that the government immediately implement a program to resettle and assist the accident's victims. It condemned the party and government officials who are considered responsible for the disaster, its coverup, and the subsequent neglect of the populations and regions affected. In the city of Gomel, in an irradiated region of Belorussia, 35,000 workers at the Gomelmash engineering works walked off the job, demanding the region be declared a disaster zone. Workers in 20 other factories joined them.

The government's response has been feeble. The new economic policies, such as *khozraschet* [self-accounting]—promoting cooperatives, and encouraging individual initiative, have offered nothing to alleviate the mounting crisis. In fact, by throwing the burden of finding a solution back onto the victims, central authorities have added to the anger felt by the populations in the affected regions.

The recent official acknowledgment of the seriousness of the situation is merely a belated response to the widespread sense of alarm, desperation, and increasing anger that these people have expressed. The people's action in organizing to dig up the truth about the reactor's history and the causes for the accident, document the extent of the damage, find

out who was responsible for the coverup, and mobilize in mass street protests was something the government could no longer ignore.

Some important data about the Chernobyl disaster appeared in *Moskovskiy Novosti*, No. 42, October 15, 1989, written by investigative reporter Yevgenia Albats. Yevgenia's previous articles have exposed the unclean, unsanitary, and crude conditions she experienced in the Moscow maternity ward when her daughter was born; and the spread of AIDs to babies in obstetrician wards of hospitals of the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic due to

unsanitary conditions and the dire shortage of hypodermic needles and syringes. Her work has shown her to be one of the top-line reporters of the glasnost era.

The article takes the form of a "round-table discussion," or panel, on the subject of the accident. Involved are activists, specialists, and elected officials from the Belorussian and Ukrainian republics. The article was entitled "The Big Lie: Who will answer for hushing up the Chernobyl tragedy and its consequences?" It contains material that is useful to those who are concerned about the possible consequences of such a nuclear explosion, the circumstances of the people affected, the extent to which top-level government leaders in the Gorbachev team are responsible for the catastrophe and its aftermath, and the extent to which the limited democratic openings have

enabled local populations to collect and begin to publicize what is going on in their region.

The following are excerpts and high points:

Yuri Shcherbak, a prominent spokesman for the victims of Chernobyl, a Kievan writer, a deputy in the parliament, and member of the USSR Supreme Soviet Subcommittee on the Power Industry and Nuclear Safety of the Committee for Rational Use of Natural Resources, participated and opened the discussion. He asserted that the lying started at the time of the accident. The blame was shifted by the bureaucracy to the personnel who violated the operational instructions. A number of lower-level and supervisory personnel were tried and sentenced. They were not really the only ones at fault. Of those sentenced, he notes, one has died from the effects of radiation, one went mad, another is suffering from serious radiation sickness.

But the real fault lies elsewhere, Shcherbak maintains. He possesses documentation proving that the reactor's imperfections had been obvious even before the Chernobyl accident. "Such accidents had already happened; for instance, at the Leningrad Atomic Power Station in 1976. That accident . . . was classified because the reactor belonged to the Ministry of Medium

## The Aftermath of Chernobyl

### Four Years After the Nuclear Disaster in the Ukraine

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Machine-Building of the USSR. No one from the personnel servicing the Chernobyl Atomic Power Station (APS) knew anything about that accident.”

An independent investigation by atomic engineer A. Yadrikhinsky discovered the above data and also estimates that the radiation released was more than ten times the officially announced figure.

What does this mean? It means that in the center of Europe we have an atomic war zone. As estimated by Science magazine, in terms of caesium alone, the emission from the Chernobyl reactor is 60 percent of all radiation from atomic explosions in the atmosphere.

Shcherbak then moves to the question of coverup: “Where did the information on the accident go, what was its quality, and in what ‘departments’ was it distorted?” The question should be referred to A. Lyashko, former chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR who is now in retirement, and V. Shcherbitsky, former first secretary of the Central Committee of the CP of Ukraine, who was alive when the discussion took place but died afterward. Lyashko, then, should be able to explain “what happened on the night of the accident, what information they received and what they passed on and, lastly, who took the decision not to notify the public about the global catastrophe that had taken place. . . . It is still not known when the country’s top political leadership learned about the accident,” Shcherbak concludes.

Another discussant, Alla Yaroshinskaya, a journalist and deputy to the USSR Congress of the People’s Deputies from the Zhitomir region, one of the seriously contaminated regions in Ukraine west of the Chernobyl plant, continues the train of thought providing another name of a responsible person who could fill in some “white spaces” in the Chernobyl coverup. “In G. Medvedev’s Chernobyl Notebook, which appeared in Issue No. 6 of *Novy Mir*, it is clearly stated that on the same night, at 3 a.m. (i.e., literally 60 or 90 minutes after the accident), it was reported to V. Maryin, then head of the nuclear power industry sector of the CPSU Central Committee, now vice chairman of the Bureau on Fuel and Energy Resources at the USSR Council of Ministers.”

Shcherbak suggests that one effect of the silence was that the decision to evacuate the city of Chernobyl, located only 14 kilometers from the reactor, was not made until May 2, a full six days after the accident. Until then, only people living within 10 kilometers had been evacuated. On May 2, Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov and Politburo member Yegor Ligachev arrived to inspect the extent of the damage. Only then did the chiefs of the Ukrainian Republic visit Chernobyl.

He continues that both Lyashko and Shcherbitsky reviewed the May Day demonstration in Kiev even though it is now clear that they had received data, which they did not reveal, showing that by April 30 radiation levels had risen dramatically and that in a number of Kiev’s districts “were

100 times above the maximum permissible levels. But the population was not warned.” Was their appearance at the demonstration, even knowing the danger, “incompetence? Or was it a warped understanding of duty: it’s better to fall victim to radiation than to tell the truth to the people? Whatever the case, these comrades bear direct responsibility for the children who were taken to the square on that day.”

Ales Adamovich, a writer and deputy to the USSR parliament from Belorussia, informs us that the coverup was more overt in the Belorussian Republic. A Belorussian nuclear physicist V. Nesterenko went to the republic’s leadership with a list of urgent measures that needed to be taken, including evacuations. He was told to get lost.

Who were these irresponsible officials? The first secretary of the Belorussian CP Central Committee N. Slyunkov, who is now a member of the Politburo of the CPSU, and the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the BSSR M. Kovalyov, who still holds that position.

As a result of their actions: “Tens of thousands of people, covered with a radioactive cloud, remain there to this day.”

Valentin Budko, first secretary of the Narodichi District Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, reports that their region – although it is only 68 kilometers from the reactor – learned that the accident had occurred because they phoned the district party committee to ask for an explanation of the large number of buses that were concentrated on the district’s boundary.

The evacuation of children was finished only on June 7. Little wonder that there are so many sick children in our district – especially those with the hyperplasia of the thyroid gland – and *practically no children in good health* [emphasis added].

Yevgenia remarks that the lies seem to have begun immediately. But glasnost had only recently become government policy at that time. Now, one could perhaps assume, “the situation in the country would no longer permit telling untruths.”

Adamovich disabuses anyone who might have such an assumption:

The crime . . . started in 1986, continued, and is continuing. Its forms changed, but it did not diminish. I am asking myself: why did they keep silent for three years and say nothing about the degree of radioactive contamination of Belorussia, the Ukraine, and the Bryansk Region? Why were both local and Moscow scientists, especially the Institute of Biophysics of the Ministry of Public Health – led by Academician Ilyin, Vice President of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences – committed to corroborating this lie? It was only three years after Chernobyl that it was finally admitted that *a third of Belorussia had been contaminated, a fifth of the arable land had been “killed.”* Here are the figures: the Russian Federation – 1,000 square kilometers of contaminated soil, Ukraine – 1,500, Belorussia – 7,000

## ‘In the center of Europe we have an atomic war zone’

## New Revelations About Trotsky in the USSR

Various sources are reporting a new document regarding Trotsky's relationship with Lenin (we have received clippings from the *London Observer* and the *Jewish Week*). The quoted text below, abridged from the *Jewish Week* article, "Trotsky's Jewish Reasons for Not Succeeding Lenin," by Helen Davis, presents an exaggerated interpretation of the overall importance of the document in question. Trotsky himself referred to this matter only in passing in his autobiography, *My Life*. Davis also fails to understand the broad historical context of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, and presents the common, caricatured notion of the role played by Lenin in the Bolshevik party. In addition, Trotsky's seeming adaptation to anti-Semitic prejudices may strike some readers as out of character. Nevertheless, the facts as reported here seem to be accurate, and the disclosure has significance—especially in terms of the renewed interest in Trotsky and his role in the Bolshevik party that has surfaced in the USSR as a result of glasnost. This revelation clearly refutes the charge which continues to be made by the bureaucracy that the battle between Stalin and Trotsky was nothing more than a personal power struggle.

A leading Soviet historian has discovered the answer to one of the most enduring and closely guarded secrets of the modern Communist state: Why did Trotsky, the natural heir, not succeed Lenin when the Soviet leader died in 1923?

The answer, which will appear in the *History Workshop Journal*, to be published in Britain later this month by the Oxford University Press, is almost as intriguing as the question itself:

Trotsky declined Lenin's invitation to inherit ultimate power in the new Soviet state because he was Jewish and feared that his elevation to

the post would provide the spark for an outbreak of anti-Semitism.

The source of this extraordinary revelation was contained in a huge collection of secret, previously unpublished Communist Party papers which was recently opened to a team of 30 Soviet historians. The most important essay to emerge from the research so far, entitled "We Are Starting to Learn About Trotsky," was written by Victor Danilov and sheds important new light on the most controversial—and vilified—figure of the Russian Revolution.

Danilov quotes extensively from an impassioned speech which Trotsky made in his own defense at a meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee on October 26, 1923. With Lenin's death imminent, Stalin was determined to eliminate any possible opposition that might impede his drive to consolidate his grip on the party.

At the meeting, delegates freely accused Trotsky of overweening ambition and disloyalty to the party. While the full text of the resolution that was approved has still not been published, the sole item on the agenda was: "Comrade Trotsky's position in the party."

In his speech Trotsky sought to persuade his comrades of his selfless devotion and personal sacrifice to the greater good of the Soviet Union.

While he had rarely referred to his Jewish origins and was never a practicing Jew, Trotsky frankly confessed that the single overriding factor which had prevented him from accepting Lenin's offer was "my Jewish origin."

He described two occasions on which Lenin had attempted to persuade him to become his heir.

The first, on the day of the 1917 October revolution, came as Lenin lay resting on the floor of the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg. Trotsky recalled the Soviet leader telling him: "We must make you People's Commissar of the Interior, Comrade Trotsky. You shall crush the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy!"

Trotsky declined. "The fact is, comrades," he told the Central Committee, "there is one personal aspect of my work which, although playing no part in my day-to-day existence, is nonetheless of great political significance. This is my Jewish origin."

He told Lenin he could see no point in "playing into the hands of our enemies. 'It would be far better,' I said, 'if there was not a single Jew in the first Soviet revolutionary government.'"

"Stuff and nonsense, that's all rubbish," countered Lenin.

Trotsky, however, believed the Soviet leader took his point: "I was not appointed Commissar of the Interior, but of foreign policy," he told the Central Committee, "although to be honest, I was equally loath to accept this post."

Five months later, when he was appointed Commissar of War, he was, he said, "even more opposed to assuming the post."

"And I can say with conviction, comrades, that I was right. . . . Our enemies were able to exploit the fact that the Red Army was headed by a Jew."

In May 1922, Lenin renewed his invitation, offering Trotsky the post of first deputy chairman of the government, effectively the No. 2 man in the Soviet Union.

"I firmly turned down the offer," Trotsky told the Central Committee, "on the grounds, as before, that we should not give our enemies the chance to say that our country was being ruled by a Jew."

"I think Vladimir Ilyich agreed with me. Although he again said 'stuff and nonsense,' I felt that he said it this time with less conviction and that privately he agreed with me."

"Anyone who accuses me of personal ambition and the ludicrous desire to assume single-handed this huge responsibility [of leading the Soviet Union] would rightly consider me a double-dyed villain and an utter lunatic."

According to historian Danilov, Trotsky's speech convincingly demonstrated his lifelong lack of ambition for personal power. Stalin, however, "needed to sustain the myth that the party struggle in the 1920s was a power struggle between all those willingly or unwillingly involved in it."

At the time of Trotsky's fateful address, there were no formal stenographic records of Central Committee proceedings, and the report of Trotsky's speech, found in the Communist Party archives, consisted of shorthand notes taken by Stalin's assistant, B. Bazhnov. Danilov believes that Bazhnov took his notes at the instigation of Stalin.

"Trotsky," he says, "evidently knew nothing of the existence of the resume of his speech, or he would have corrected the text and would have kept a copy in his own archive." Nor, he adds, is there any reason to distrust Bazhnov's notes, "so fully does it convey the sincerity and conviction of Trotsky's words and so damningly does it reflect upon the organizers of this kangaroo court." ●

square kilometers. Lies continued even when information started surfacing; people were persuaded, for example, that no one dies from radiation. But when a postmortem was done on people who allegedly died from other diseases, like ischemia, for example, it turned out that their lungs were filled . . . with a large quantity of so-called hot particles. Two thousand such particles are a guarantee of cancer. Some of the victims had levels up to 15,000!

Yaroshinskaya quotes a report on deliberate curtailing of postmortems in affected regions: "In Polesya and Ivankov districts of the Kiev Region no autopsies are done on the dead and stillborn" in the recent period. Authorities cite shortage of proper facilities. . . . "Of 353 persons who died in 1987 not a single one was autopsied." The same was true of the Slavutich district. When facilities were finally set up in Zhitomir, autopsies were only done on persons who died while in medical institutions. "So how can we know

whether people died from radiation or not?" Yaroshinskaya asks.

She attributes "the big lie of Chernobyl" to the "policy of classified and unclassified glasnost." She cites as proof three separate documents, dated July 8, 1987, February 29, 1988, and June 12, 1989. They were all reports from governmental investigations showing such conditions as radioactive contamination levels of inhabited regions that exceed "the permissible level," "loss of capacity" of workers in the affected regions, and incidences of "acute radiation sickness." All three reports were ordered by the relevant commissions to be "classified."

An example is the "List of information on questions about the accident at the Chernobyl APS which is not to be made public in the press, on radio and TV broadcasts," approved by the Government Commission (of 1988) chaired by B. Shcherbina. It read: "Classify information on the levels of radioactive contamination by individual inhabited localities which exceed the permissible level, and the information on the loss of physical capacity for work and loss of professional skills by the operating personnel working in the special conditions of the Chernobyl APS, or persons enlisted for work in eliminating the consequences of the accident." Officials who participated in the commissions deny that the reports were secret, even though the population had no way to gain access to the vital information they contained and the existence of the data was denied. One of those involved in this denial is V. Maryin, mentioned previously in the initial coverup, who was a member of the government's own investigative commission.

Adamovich describes how some officials who formerly concealed the truth are now, under the strength of the popular movement, beginning to publicize documents the existence of which they previously denied. Among such figures is Yu. Izrael, chairman of the State Committee for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Control, and V. Shevchenko, president of the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Soviet.

But it is not only the apparatchiks who are to blame, Adamovich goes on. "No small part of the guilt must be shared by our scientists—physicists and doctors alike. How could doctors sign documents hiding the truth from the people and thereby dooming them to suffering? This is clan mentality. It exists everywhere. But in our case it has acquired exaggerated dimensions and ideological support."

A similar situation occurred with respect to the official U.S. government coverup of the seriousness of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in 1979. In that case, the coverup was to help protect the profit drive of the corporations in the nuclear industry. In the case of Chernobyl, the coverup is to protect the Stalinist bureaucracy's needs. Nuclear power seems more convenient from their administrative point of view. But events, and especially this accident, have proven that nuclear power is extremely inconvenient indeed.

Yevgenia puts it this way:

**'How could doctors sign documents hiding the truth from the people?'**

Soon after the [Chernobyl] accident . . . it became obvious how pernicious it is to conceal the truth. The accident did not do much to change the minds of the people who believe that there is one glasnost for the elite and another glasnost for everyone else. Children fell ill in the zones of heightened radiation. Adults died or committed suicide. And the country was . . . preparing to publish Solzhenitsyn—thus learning the truth about its past—and wanted to believe that there were no zones closed to glasnost. Now we know differently. What conclusions have been drawn?

Adamovich concludes that "once having started telling lies, it is hard to stop." Now the officials—Academician L.

Ilyn is named specifically—maintain that the level of permissible radiation a person may receive in one's lifetime is 35 rem. However, it is obvious by the massive number of health problems that this level is too high. A much lower level is having catastrophic effects. Even the World Health Organization (WHO) endorsed the figure. When one WHO official was asked why, he replied that "you don't have the money for resettlement" of the affected populations.

Academician Velikhov himself, one of the regime's chief defenders of nuclear power in the recent public-relations effort, admitted to Adamovich that the figure "35 rem came out of the blue; . . . that people must not live where they cannot eat potatoes from their own kitchen garden or drink milk from their own cow," which is the case today in large areas of Belorussia and the Ukraine.

Several speakers then report evidence for the fact that exposure to even 20 rem is dangerous. For example, soldiers who worked in the APS zone received exposures of approximately 25 rem. "When they were reexamined 18 months later, it turned out that their immune system had not completely recovered."

Yuri Voronezhstsev, people's deputy of the USSR from the Gomel district of Belorussia, then read from the conclusion of the Belorussian Academy of Sciences' decision, which explained that there have been observable changes in the immune and endocrine systems, disruption of metabolic processes, and chromosome aberrations in the populations of the contaminated (but still inhabited) zones, as well as "increased incidence of anemic syndrome," and various afflictions of the nervous and glandular systems.

Academician Ilyn claimed that everyone who lived in areas subject to radioactive contamination had received iodine treatment. However, Voronezhstsev himself checked the records in one such area, Narovlya, and found that "not a single child had received this treatment." The same proved true of other areas.

Voronezhstsev goes on:

A few words about the lack of money for the resettlement of people. This money is simply being buried. Take the Bartolomeyevka village in the Vetka District—it has been included in the Belorussian SSR's

program for evacuation. *But at the given moment excavators and a bulldozer are building a new facility there whose cost is 1.5-2.5 million rubles.* And the settlement of Maisky, of which *Pravda* has written? Twelve million rubles have been invested in it “forgetting” that quite near, in Chudyani, the radiation level is 140 curies per square kilometer [emphasis added].

People in Belorussia believe that responsibility for this rests with G. Tarazevich, the former president of the Presidium of the Belorussian SSR Supreme Soviet who is now chairman of the Commission on Nationalities Policy and Inter-Ethnic Relations of the USSR Supreme Soviet’s Council of Nationalities.

Shcherbak then makes reference to the fact that the government is building a new city, Slavutich, on a “dirty” caesium slick and therefore the majority of the personnel . . . refuse to work there.”

Adamovich then presents the discussion’s most shocking data. Not only have measures to localize the spread of radioactive dust been inadequate, so that this dust is now spreading all over the country; not only is Belorussian meat rejected in a number of regions because it is believed to be radioactive;

but we have continued increasing the production of butter and meat in radiation contaminated zones. Here are the figures. The Khoinki District is one of those which were immediately declared to be radiologically hazardous. Everything has been contaminated there and no farming is permissible. However, the plan of 1985 for milk was 32,500 tons; the plan for 1989 was 36,000 tons. That for meat was 7,000 tons but is now 7,800 tons. . . . The plans for milk and meat have been raised by 50 percent [on land where the soil is notoriously dirty]. Thus the mechanism of bureaucratically killing people continues to function right before our eyes: it’s simply the normal work of the bureaucratic mechanism.

The Novosti Press Agency correspondent in Kiev, Vladimir Kolinko, reports that he has documents “demonstrating that severely contaminated grain and potatoes are distributed all over the country. And not secretly, but quite openly.”

Budko says:

You know . . . such a horrible tragedy has befallen us. OK, they didn’t warn us in time, didn’t evacuate the children. But we expected that the scientists, doctors, and leaders of the republic would help us. We trusted them all. They didn’t help us.

We were visited by Yu. Izrael who said that our average rate of contamination was five curies, consequently it was possible to live. But what does ‘average’ mean? What does it mean when there are villages with 170 curies? I can show you documents where it is officially stated that over a three-year period in the village of Maliye Menki children have gathered 20 rem each.

Shcherbak adds: “Do you understand what kind of a load it is on the child’s organism — 20 rem? It is future leukoses, leukemia, cancer, genetic mutations.”

Budko:

We had been promised that 338 families with children would be resettled this year. But September came, and again we were forced to open kindergartens and schools in villages with 170 curies. The district’s resettlement will take four years. It is, therefore, urgent to solve the question of switching the whole district to clean nourishment. Approximately 1,500 children eat “unclean” food products. As far as I know, today the paper with this decision has gotten “stuck,” even though it has been approved by [the USSR’s deputy minister of public health].

Adamovich calls upon all those who are complicit in the coverup, lies, and fraud to retire on pension.

It would seem a harsher penalty would be in order.

On the fourth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe, the government finally admitted that the number who died was not 31 but much higher. Shcherbak recently stated that the number who died is closer to 300 people, although, as indicated above, the number is probably higher still. No exact figure is possible due to the lack of autopsies in the affected regions.

At the Soviet Embassy in the United States, officials announced that four million inhabitants of Belorussia, the Ukraine, and Russia are living on contaminated earth. On April 25, 1990, the Soviet parliament adopted a \$26-billion program to resettle some 200,000 of these people. The Soviet Embassy cited the number of people whose thyroid gland is “seriously affected” by excessive doses of radiation as 150,000. However, scientists working for the citizens’ committees put the figure at 1.5 million, approximately 160,000 of whom are children. The government has also admitted that the death rate among those working in the area of the accident is ten times the normal rate. One member of a U.S. medical team which just returned from the region remarked that “every time they look, the situation is worse.” (*New York Times*, April 28, 1990)

In September 1989 the government announced an evacuation plan for the Gomel District involving 100,000 people over five years costing \$16 billion. Protestors immediately demanded the number of people involved be raised to a million. Current estimates of the amount it will actually take to relocate the victims, offer proper medical care, etc., is \$320 billion over the next ten years, according to Shcherbak.

Vladimir Lipsky, a Belorussian writer and head of the republic’s Children’s Fund, noted that 2.2 million Belorussians, or approximately one-fifth of the population, live in contaminated regions. Every week in the central hospital in Minsk, the republic’s capital, one or two children die of leukemia. Before the accident, the rate was one or two each year! Lipsky made a public appeal for disposable syringes

**‘The death rate among those working in the area is 10 times normal’**

which, like medication for the thyroid glands, are in short supply. There is an expectation that many adults will soon begin to develop tumors — one of the effects of radiation that may take a decade to develop.

Such is the continuing “fall-out” from Chernobyl. Just recently the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, under pressure from the popular discontent, voted by a large majority in favor of closing down the two nuclear reactors still functioning at Chernobyl. The measure stated that the Ukrainian Republic faces an “ecological catastrophe.”

Meanwhile, in the United States, another struggle against government secrecy and coverup with respect to the damaging effects of radiation has won access to information that will be useful to those affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe.

In March 1990, the U.S. government energy secretary James D. Watkins announced that his department would no longer be conducting studies on the health effects of radiation and that in the future all studies of health effects of radiation would be taken over by another government agency, the Health and Human Services Department. He also promised that secret medical records his department has collected will be made available to the public. This material includes the medical records of 600,000 American nuclear weapons employees that the U.S. government has kept since 1942 when the industry began.

One of the first scientists who will have access to this soon-to-be-declassified material will be Dr. Alice Stewart, an 83-year-old epidemiologist from Britain, who has been a key spokesperson in the battle for glasnost on this issue in the U.S.

Dr. Stewart has done pioneering research on the health effects of low-level radiation. It was largely due to her investigations in England between 1953 and 1957 that the damaging effects on a fetus of X rays was discovered. Prior to her research, the medical and nuclear industries had denied that low levels of radiation were harmful, and X rays were virtually considered toys.

Her findings outraged physicians and also the nuclear industry, which realized that once people became aware of the dangers of X rays, other questions concerning the health effects of low-level radiation would be raised. Sooner or later, the effect of radiation on the health of workers in the defense industry would come into question. This is what they wanted to avoid.

In this area, Dr. Stewart also proved to be a pioneer. In early 1975 she was invited to participate in a research project for the Atomic Energy Commission on the effects of low-level radiation on the workers at the Hanford nuclear processing plant in the state of Washington. Before the year was over, her research showed clearly “that Hanford workers exposed to radiation levels less than half the federal safety limit of 5 rems a year suffered from at least a third more than expected levels of pancreatic cancer, lung cancer, and . . . a rare bone marrow cancer” (*New York Times*, May 3, 1990).

After she and other researchers presented the results to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1976, the AEC terminated their funding for the research project. The AEC was abolished and replaced by the Department of Energy in 1978. Even though a U.S. government commission in 1978 denied that the termination of the funding for the research project had any connection with the cancer findings, a battle was clearly taking place.

Since that time, Dr. Stewart has been a key spokeswoman in a campaign supported by numerous antinuclear groups and activists on two points: first, that the same government agency that is responsible for the weapons industry should not be the one investigating its harmful health effects; second, it is scientifically indefensible to keep the results of investigations like hers secret from the public. It was this campaign that finally forced the government to announce that the files would soon be opened to the scrutiny of independent scientists.

Stewart's investigations and her open campaign have deeply angered scientists on the government and nuclear industry payrolls because she continually keeps alive the issue of the deadly threat posed by radiation — even in its low-level variety. They consistently criticize and deny the validity of her findings, much like the prostitute scientists in the 1950s and 1960s who maintained, despite the evidence, that X rays were harmless.

The medical records that will soon be available to independent scientists are sure to show that the U.S. government, and the nuclear industry, and all the scientists connected with them, have been knowingly contributing to the deaths of thousands of workers by denying that the radiation levels in the 17 weapons plants and related nuclear industries were harmful when their own research, like Dr. Stewart's, showed otherwise.

Her research was the first to be publicized showing the higher rate of cancer among workers in the weapons industry due to low levels of radiation. “Not even I thought that the effect of such a small dose on an adult would be as great as it was,” she stated. Dr. Stewart will be the first scientist to be allowed to read these medical records the U.S. government has long suppressed in her capacity as a representative of the Three Mile Island Public Health Fund, a citizens' organization based in Pennsylvania that is devoted to studying and exposing the damaging and deadly effects of radiation on living organisms.

As Yevgenia Albats's *Moscow News* report shows, it is not only the U.S. government and its scientists who will have some answering to do for their criminal behavior. The Kremlin bureaucracy's pronuclear scientists and spokespeople — who have claimed right up to the present day first that up to a 35-rem dose and then a 20-rem dose could be permissible with no harmful side effects — will also be discredited; and let us not forget the World Health Organization Commission that upheld the maximum 35-rem concept.

The implication of studies like Dr. Stewart's on the far-reaching damage to the health and life expectancy of the

## ‘The Ukrainian Republic faces an ecological catastrophe’

millions of Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Russians — not to mention millions of others on the planet who lived in areas that were reached by the fallout of Chernobyl — justifies some of the worst fears of honest scientists and antinuclear activists in the accident's immediate aftermath. The truth can no longer be concealed. Many of the victims are now visible, even if it is only when they die.

But what of the tens of thousands who are still living in the contaminated areas? And those in other regions who are consuming the contaminated food products? It took increased death rates and mass movements to finally force the Ukrainian parliament to vote to close down the remaining reactors at the Chernobyl station. Since the Chernobyl accident, popular fear of and opposition to nuclear power — which the bureaucrats contemptuously call “nuclear-phobia” — has led to mass demonstrations that have forced the government to close down at least six nuclear power plants and five nuclear reactors that produced plutonium for nuclear weapons. The construction of others has been halted.

In the United States, the existing 113 commercial nuclear power plants continue to generate the ever-present danger of another “Chernobyl” with all the unspeakable consequences as well as radioactive waste that will remain deadly for as long as 10,000 years. No one knows what to do with this waste. The U.S. Congress recently voted that every state

must accommodate some “low-level” nuclear waste by 1993. Residents of a number of states have already organized against this. When the data in the U.S. government's classified reports on the effects of low-level radiation are finally made public, widespread popular resistance to providing storage space for these deadly remains can be expected. The longer the reactors are allowed to operate and continue to create nuclear waste, the more costly and dangerous will be the clean-up operations even if there are no “accidents.” The U.S. government allocated \$800 million in July 1989 to attempt to stabilize large amounts of radioactive wastes at the sites where they are produced, a costly project which is only a holding action. In fact, leaks of radioactive gases and waste are continually occurring but with little fanfare. The human costs of these repeated nuclear power plant malfunctions are incalculable. It seems appropriate, in honor of Earth Day, and the future of humanity on this planet, to emphasize the importance of publicizing the long-suppressed data on the deadly threat posed by the nuclear industry, whether associated with arms or with nuclear power, and expose as criminals all those who have been complicit in the coverup of the dangers. This will help to continue to build broad mass movements internationally to force a shutdown of all the nuclear facilities. ●

## **Arab Trade Unionist Arrested in Ramallah, West Bank**

*The following is taken from an urgent appeal, which includes up-to-date information as of April 5, 1990:*

Hani Ali Mohammad Baydoon, a 35-year-old executive committee member of the Hotel Workers Union in Ramallah on the West Bank, was arrested by Israeli authorities on March 20. When his lawyer tried to visit him in Ramallah prison, he was told that Hani was under interrogation and was not allowed to see anybody. No information was given as to why he was being detained, or about what he was being interrogated. On April 1 his detention was extended for 55 days, still without his being allowed to see an attorney. His lawyer was finally able to visit him on April 5.

Last summer Hani traveled throughout the United States and Canada and spoke with trade unionists and individuals about the situation of Palestinian trade unionists under Israeli occupation. During the Intifada, trade union offices have been closed down for periods ranging from one to two years, union activists have been detained — often without charge or trial — and three have been deported.

In 1977 Hani was arrested and sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. During a 30-month jail term in 1985-88, after his second arrest, he lost the hearing in one ear, developed an ulcer, and suffered a severe heart attack — due to maltreatment and torture.

Letters and petitions can be sent to:

**Brig. Gen. Amnon Strashnow, Military Attorney General, c/o Ministry of Defense, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel**

**Mr. Ben Ari, Legal Advisor of the West Bank, Beit El, West Bank, via Israel**

The following is the text of an "interview with Ernest Mandel" that appeared in the French language publication *Inprecor*, issue No. 300, January 12-25, 1990. Translation for the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is by Stuart Brown.

## Fifteen Years of Inprecor

*Inprecor* is a militant, revolutionary Marxist magazine, firmly on the side of all exploited and oppressed peoples of the world. But to change the world it is first necessary to understand it in its complexity, its diversity, its national specificities, regions, histories, etc. That is why *Inprecor* deliberately publishes, in the first place, facts, firsthand information, and the necessary elements for an analysis, rather than simply ideological proclamations. Likewise, *Inprecor* has readily opened its pages to other organizations and militants involved in struggles, as well as to researchers specializing in one or another field, even when their opinions are not the same as ours. This has been our editorial approach for more than 15 years, since the appearance of issue number 0, dated May 1, 1974. To mark our number 300 (new system, 367 issues in all), *Inprecor* has interviewed Ernest Mandel, a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, on the changes which have taken place on the international scene during the last 15 years; the evolution of the capitalist economy on a world scale; the upheaval in the countries of the East, its effect on workers' consciousness; the future of the socialist project and the conditions of struggle in the period opening up before us.

*Inprecor* was founded at a time when the Fourth International and the entire revolutionary Marxist movement was still in the period of rapid growth following May '68. A change in the objective situation could clearly be seen after the defeat of the Portuguese revolution and the beginning of a long wave of international capitalist economic depression between 1974 and 1976. But there was something of a lag between these developments and their effects on the workers' movement, in the working class, and in the revolutionary vanguard.

We founded *Inprecor*—and its English language version, *International Viewpoint*—with the idea that we needed a tool for political analysis to influence the broader layers of the vanguard and to construct our own organization. This was a two-sided goal. During an initial period that goal was largely achieved—to the limit of our still weak forces, which were nevertheless considerably larger than before 1968.

### *The turn in the situation*

Little by little there was a turn in the situation within the vanguard and within the workers' movement, leaving aside for the moment the new social movements. But in the workers' movement (in the broadest sense of that term) and in the national liberation movements—the march of permanent revolution—the change was clear.

For one thing, the working class in the imperialist countries was passive and on the defensive, as a result of the effects of the economic crisis, during the second half of the 1970s and certainly during the '80s. For another, the process of permanent revolution in the third world countries suffered a series of setbacks after the victory of the Sandinista revolution in 1979.

This difficult situation reached its lowest point between 1983 and 1985. The retreat of the workers' movement, the move toward defensive struggles, was linked to the objective situation, notably the growth of unemployment. It reacted also to subjective causes: a formidable neoliberal and neoconservative ideological campaign by the bourgeoisie; the reflection of this in the workers' movement, the near total

capitulation of the neo-Stalinist and social democratic bureaucratic apparatuses in the face of the offensive; the difficulty that healthy forces of the workers' movement had in reorienting themselves politically, strategically, and from the point of view of organizing the struggle—in conditions that were very different from the preceding period of virtually full employment.

### *The period of retreat*

This turn in the situation weighed on all of the revolutionary movements, on the Fourth International—and therefore also on *Inprecor*. Our expansion was halted. We also experienced setbacks which took the form of an aging of our cadres, fatigue, and a certain skepticism within our ranks after twenty years of fighting against the stream, a reduced subscription base for our publications, etc.

To some degree this reflected both the fact that we were not a sect and also that in a certain number of countries we were no longer simply tiny organizations of propagandists. Groups like that can grow, stagnate, or retreat independently of what happens in the real world. Because we were implanted in the working class and in the mass movement we were more or less tribunes of the fluctuation of that real movement, and therefore of larger forces. When they retreated, we retreated in a similar fashion.

Though inevitable in part, our retreat also resulted from a grave error which we committed at an international leadership level. We had strongly underestimated, in the wake of our movement's expansion after 1968, the necessity for a systematic policy of theoretical development, and for the renewal and rejuvenation of our cadre. We were too spontaneous in this regard. We believed that our growth would carry with it automatically a parallel development of the membership and the leadership. But this idea has proven false. We therefore find ourselves in a situation where the same number—or even a slightly smaller number—of cadres are available to be leaders in organizations which have grown considerably.

This gave rise to a series of tensions – not so much on the political plane, since in this area we have known relatively little internal dissent compared to other periods (not to mention the situation of Stalinism, Maoism, or Social Democracy) – but these tensions and contradictions have certainly weighed on the psychological level. We have experienced the inevitable consequences of hyperactivism when we wanted to do too much; a partial feeling of failure, etc. We have therefore had great difficulty in stabilizing our national leadership apparatuses and in renewing them.

We have been too slow in paying attention to this gap. We tried to overcome it by creating permanent educational structures which have served us well. We have likewise attempted to redress the situation through *Inprecor*, *International Viewpoint*, and the similar publications in other languages, as well as through the theoretical organs of the international. We have launched the international youth camps. The results of these efforts are real but modest, and have not totally neutralized the negative effects of these phenomena.

### The Perspectives for Growth in the New International Situation

This second period has, without doubt, finally come to an end. We are now entering into a third phase, the outlines of which we can begin to see. Clearly, the retreat of workers' struggles has ceased. We are participating in a revival, partial to be sure, throughout Western Europe. In the countries of the third world, the struggles of the masses are seeing a spectacular new growth, above all in Brazil, in South Africa, in South Korea, in Algeria, etc.; at the same time in important countries like India or Indonesia, the period of retreat has not yet reached an end.

#### *The mass movement in the East*

But what has changed the world situation most profoundly is, of course, the rise of the mass movement in the postcapitalist bureaucratic countries, firstly in the USSR, then in China, in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia, and finally in Romania.

It is true that there was also the development of Solidarity in Poland from 1980-81, which previewed what would happen in 1989. But the consecutive defeats of Jaruzelski's coup and the repression weakened that movement. We were right to say that on the organizational level Jaruzelski would be unable to wipe out a mass movement of such scope. But, incontestably, we underestimated at the time the disastrous effects of this defeat on the level of politics and ideology, certainly among the working class.

Now, for the first time since 1968 – and on a larger scale – we are seeing a rebirth of the mass movement in the three sectors of the world revolution. I think therefore that our movement is going to experience a new expansion, which will certainly be in proportion with our existing forces.

We approach this new rise of the mass movement, of course, stronger than in 1968, but weaker than 1975. It is evident that this fact is going to partially limit our growth, which will not be as great as it might have been, but will be real. It is not a question of breaking through to a mass

movement, but the scope will be, without doubt, on the same scale as it was after 1968 on a numerical level but, what's more, with a more important and more significant geographic extension than at that time, and also with a greater implantation in the trade unions and in the working class.

We have other advantages as well: above all, the changed social composition of many of our sections means that there will be an important implantation in the working class – salaried and trade union. Secondly, in a series of key areas we have succeeded in sharpening our theory and our programmatic analysis. Compared to the period which immediately followed 1968 our analysis and written texts are less all-encompassing than before, but more serious, more scientific, more durable. Without false modesty, it can be said that ours is among the best work done during the last 15 years by those who consider themselves part of the world Marxist movement. There do remain some areas, notably ecology, where we have been very slow and continue to have a great deal to learn.

#### *Social and democratic internal transformation*

We must also add another element which we have not yet completely come to grips with. The transformation of the social composition of our organizations, their "proletarianization," poses a new problem.

At the beginning, most of our sections were organizations of revolutionary activists "detached," in part, from the social reality of their countries. Involvement in internationalist activity – absolutely necessary for a revolutionary organization – substituted itself in part, therefore, for their participation in the real mass struggles of their own countries. Their redefinition, their transformation into organizations composed mostly of "normal" working people having a family life, a significant trade union activity, etc., and for whom the rhythms of militancy are no longer the same, was a difficult change and has had consequences, notably in their internal functioning.

This poses the question of the real – not formal – essence of internal democracy. Internal democracy is not measured only by the number of reports at a congress, or by the number of pages in the internal bulletin. It is measured by the real participation – once again, not the formal participation – of the rank and file, and especially the rank-and-file workers, in the development of political ideas and in making political decisions. And this raises many questions which have not yet been completely resolved.

The balance sheet of former experiences by the second and third internationals is a balance sheet of semifailure. The development of the mass base of these two organizations was accompanied by the phenomenon of bureaucratization which progressively – though with a certain unevenness – reduced, and then stifled, workers' democracy. This will be, without doubt, the decisive test of our own history. Will we be capable, in the ten years to come, of solving this problem, of finding a method to combine the growth of our organizations with the maintenance and reinforcement of internal democracy and a constant effort at education and development?

## A Profound Ideological, Political, Strategic, and Moral Crisis of the Working Class

On the ideological and political plane, also on a strategic plane, the situation does not allow us to entertain hopes of a breakthrough in the short term, with the exception of a few countries—and even there! All of this continues to be marked by the absence of a united strategic vision, a fundamental goal, a global “plan” for changing society. The general tone is profoundly skeptical, and we cannot just say that this is because of the influence of the bourgeoisie—though that changes very little as far as the result is concerned.

### *Crisis of socialist perspectives . . .*

The international working class is deeply troubled, if not to say traumatized, by the historic bankruptcy of Stalinism and Social Democracy with their promises about constructing a fundamentally different society from the one in which we live: a society that is unjust, unequal, burdened with catastrophes, which the masses reject without having the ability to define anything to replace it.

The crisis—which could be called a crisis of socialist perspectives, of a plan to transform society on a world scale—is an extremely profound ideological, political, strategic, moral crisis. The very promising mass movement that we see developing—at least in its initial phase—is therefore revolving around immediate objectives, which it believes it has the ability to win and which have been won at times with a surprising rapidity and energy, and not only in the countries of the East.

Here you have the negative side, which means that we must wage a long fight—against the current—on the political, theoretical, and strategic plane. The conclusion that must be drawn is that the questions of education, development, defense of program and of the fundamental values of socialism, must occupy a more important place in the forefront of our activity. We can in no way confine ourselves exclusively to the immediate demands of the masses. Certainly we will take an active part in these struggles, trying to play a leading role. Regarding this, we have made important progress thanks to our implantation in the working class and in the mass movement. But that is not enough.

Finding a global alternative for society is not an automatic product of a growing struggle. Here we have an essential job to do. And we are practically the only ones who can accomplish it, since we cannot be accused of treason, crimes, or lies. We have a spotless banner. We are the only ones who are in a position to claim, as an international current, to represent the tradition of socialism and of communism as it was established by the founders of the workers’ movement, of Marxism.

### *. . . And new possibilities*

But on the other side, beyond this profound weakness which must not be underestimated, we now have a gigantic advantage which completely changes the situation as we have known it. The failure of Stalinism, of post-Stalinism, and of traditional reformism, is opening up a very large arena beyond the power of the traditional bureaucratic ap-

paratuses to control. This is the first time that there has been such a situation since the beginning of the 1920s. The weaknesses of Stalinism and reformism create significant openings in a whole series of countries. This liberates very broad social forces.

That is the common explanation for what has happened in Poland in 1980-81, Brazil, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, South Africa, South Korea, and, on a more modest scale, in the trade union left in Western Europe, etc. All of these movements are deeply committed to independence and workers’ democracy. They are infused with an antibureaucratic and antiauthoritarian spirit, and they are opposed to manipulation, “verticalism,” etc. This opens up great possibilities for us. In this milieu we are like fish in water. We are able to defend our entire program. We are not denounced, censured, or slandered, and still less persecuted or assassinated.

### *Promising shifts*

This is a completely new situation. Do not forget that even in France, in the French Democratic Workers Federation (CFDT) [the social democratic trade union federation]—home of the grand defenders of democracy—when a fighting union left-wing emerged in which we worked and made some progress, the axe fell; they were expelled. We were likewise treated as “black sheep.” This type of development is, for the moment, impossible in the Brazilian PT [Workers Party], impossible in the embryonic mass movement in South Korea, or in South Africa, and it is certainly impossible in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia, and also in the USSR, where people went through a terrible experience with Stalinism and have become ultrasensitive to any form of repression in the workers’ movement.

Certainly, all of this is only a promising shift, nothing more. The rest depends on our ability to intervene in the mass movement, to practice politics in our own name, to not be sectarian, to defend and enrich our program—and also on our numerical forces, since you can only grow on the basis of what you have to start with. But this is a new situation which our movement, and others besides, have not yet taken the real measure of. Paradoxically, it is in those countries where the workers’ movement seems to be the weakest, because of the crisis of Stalinism, that there exists the greatest opportunity for the development of a mass movement which will escape the control of the bureaucratic apparatuses.

## The Evolution of the World Capitalist Economy

The situation in the international capitalist economy is characterized, since the beginning of the 1970s, by a long wave of depression which continues to indicate a traditional industrial cycle. Many people were astonished at the duration of the expansion after the recession of 1980-82. But what has been most characteristic of this expansion is not its duration, but its limited nature.

Despite the favorable conjuncture, the rate of expansion is much lower than what it was during growth periods 25 years ago. Unemployment continues to increase; inter-imperialist contradictions are becoming accentuated. The

economic crisis in the third world countries is reaching catastrophic proportions, unequaled even by the situation 10 or 15 years ago.

### *A question of the depression?*

As a result, an expansion of the capitalist economy comparable to the boom which took place during the postwar years is for the moment totally unrealistic. It is another matter whether, in the longer term—let us say during the twenty-first century—such an expansion is possible. But it is necessary to point out the conditions. A new recession is inevitable, even if the date is a matter for discussion. But if the next cycle of expansion that follows this recession is going to develop into a new boom of the 1948-73 type two conditions must be met.

The first would be an extremely grave defeat of the working class in the imperialist countries. In all of these countries, the decline of real wages for the workers has only been 10 or 15 percent during the last 15 years, which is insufficient for the bourgeoisie. If in the coming ten years this cut reaches 30 or 40 percent—what would be equivalent to the situation in Germany after the victory of Nazism in 1933—then there will be a growth in the rate of profit thanks to a spectacular growth in the rate of surplus value. This could relaunch a process of accumulation of productive capital—rather than speculative capital—on a grand scale. But simply a growth in the rate of profit is not sufficient. There is a second condition: a spectacular expansion of the market.

This could come about on two conditions. Firstly, the appearance of an area of mass production which would be a driving force for the whole capitalist economy, comparable to the role played by the automobile industry and housing construction during the postwar boom—that is to say, merchandise which could find hundreds of millions of buyers on a world scale. For the moment we cannot foresee anything of this nature—not for a lack of new inventions, new technological innovations, but because of a matrix of economic and social factors. The great majority of workers, even those who are well paid, do not have the means to buy computers, or cellular telephones for their cars. At the same time, they do not see what use they can make of these things.

The second requirement would be a geographical expansion, which implies a *qualitatively* superior integration of the USSR and China into the capitalist world economic market. Therefore, it is not a question of 6 million dollars a year, but 60 or 100 million dollars per year in the growth of “East-West exchanges.” That appears totally unrealistic for the moment. Outside of the countries of the East such an expansion of the market is excluded. It is not possible, simultaneously, to superexploit the countries of the third world—even less those undergoing development like Brazil or Turkey—and also have them act as purchasers on a large scale. It is here that we find the source of all of the contradictions of the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and of the indebtedness faced by these countries.

What would be more useful for international capitalism in the long term would be, on the contrary, to increase the funds available to these nations and not their debt. But who will be able to bring such a thing about in a climate of extreme inter-imperialist rivalry made worse by the long depression and by

the absence of an imperialist power able to impose its will? The United States is not up to the task and Japan is no longer ready to start out on that road. As for European imperialism, and certainly German imperialism, at the same time that they seem more inclined to pursue such a course, they do not have the necessary political apparatus on a world scale and are too divided amongst themselves.

As a result, in terms of the long wave, none of the conditions which would favor an economic boom, an easy way out of the current depression, are coming together. The decisive factor will be, once more, the issue of the class struggle in the imperialist countries, in Eastern Europe and the USSR, and in the third world. Despite certain retreats and partial defeats, the workers’ movement still maintains the capacity for struggle and resistance. The conservative forces of the bourgeoisie and of the bureaucracy have committed a grave error in underestimating this capacity to fight.

### *A period of crisis and of struggle*

This characterizes, moreover, the entire world situation. The conservative wings of the bourgeoisie and of the bureaucracy are incapable of imposing their solution essentially because of an objective weakness. The working class and its allies are not yet up to the task of imposing their own revolutionary solution—as a result of essentially subjective factors. We remain, therefore, in a long period of crisis and of struggles.

In a certain number of third world states the bourgeoisie—backed into a corner by mass protests over hunger and the impasse of the debt—has systematically resorted to repression and military dictatorship. But the question of the relationship of forces also has to be taken into account. In a series of countries the proletariat is on the increase numerically, and is constructing powerful trade union organizations. The electoral impact of the workers’ movement, its capacity to mobilize its allies in the peasantry, in the marginalized urban layers, in the youth, etc., is such that the bourgeoisie will pay a high price for any attempt to return to an open military dictatorship. This is also true on the economic plane: the powerlessness, the inability to control this change in the relationship of forces at the level of the enterprises. To the degree that—with regimes that are ultraconservative, that are dictatorial—the combative wing of the working class becomes increasingly marginalized, the means disappear for controlling what happens day by day in the factories. A strike cannot be ended because there is no leadership, and no one is able to negotiate. The problem does not reveal itself in the absence of strikes, but when they do take place this factor is present—therefore, the bourgeoisie is confronted with a real dilemma. Everything depends, one more time, on the scope of the mass movement and the impact of the eventual repression.

### **The Breakup of Stalinism and the Three-Sided Struggle in the East**

The breakup of the bureaucratic dictatorship in the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania, along with its weakening in the USSR, has to be understood in all of its contradictory aspects for our movement. We are the best placed—as a result of our

entire history and our theoretical analysis of the bureaucratic dictatorship – to understand the real terms of what is happening in these countries. It is a matter of a three-way struggle between social forces. Of course, in each country this struggle takes its own unique political form, but it is first of all necessary to understand the actions of the broad social mechanisms.

### *The present social forces*

There are three key social forces involved: the nomenklatura, that is to say those at the top of the bureaucracy, the layer of bureaucrats that is socially and materially the most privileged; the petty- and middle-bourgeoisie, pushed by the international bourgeoisie; and the working class. Any approach to events in these countries that is reduced only to ideology, to proclamations, to verbal declarations of intention, which eliminates the potential or even the real intervention of the working class, is totally false and will rapidly lead to a completely erroneous analysis.

In basing ourselves on the experience of previous crises of the bureaucracy, in contrast to others, we know that a hardened nucleus of the nomenklatura will hang onto its power and privileges. It will be able to maneuver, it will be able to divide, that is certain. Today, one wing of the nomenklatura is trying in a conscious and rapid way to fuse with the middle bourgeoisie, and to fuse with international capital. But that is not true for the entire bureaucracy. Most of the bureaucracy is holding onto its present position for a very simple material reason: it cannot hope to do better under a capitalist regime, and still less so under a socialist democracy. No dominant social layer in history has ever committed suicide.

### *Restoration of capitalism*

The outcome of this struggle is not predetermined – not even in countries like Poland or Hungary where they seem to have already cut themselves off decisively from the old ideology. It is possible to proclaim ten times that you have restored capitalism. But it is one thing to restore it in words, and still another to do so in fact. Without doubt the danger is real, mostly in these two countries, but capitalism has certainly not been restored in reality. The decisive struggle is still ahead of us.

And here is where the working class comes in. The restoration of capitalism can only be accomplished to its detriment, through a lowering of its standard of living, by the loss of the substance of its social conquests, by a great social injustice, as well as by the reappearance of poverty on a colossal scale – except perhaps in the GDR – and the rest. All of this will provoke a reaction and a terrible moral crisis. In Poland, there are already five million people who live below the poverty line. There are retirees who are unable even to buy bread, etc. A more and more repressive policy will develop in these countries, without doubt, to combat the explosions

and protest. What is brewing is an extremely grave social and political crisis. It is only as a result of the outcome of that crisis and of these struggles that the question will be settled.

We think that the Stalinist and post-Stalinist bureaucracy is not a new class. It does not have deep roots in society, nor a legitimate social role, nor even a consciousness of its own legitimacy (and this, moreover, explains a great deal about what is happening today). Therefore, its overturn, once the masses take action, will be relatively easy, since nothing stands in the way except its hold on governmental power.

In the final analysis, everything turns around the degree of mobilization, the self-organization, and the consciousness of the masses in these countries. But the situation is contradictory. In terms of the mobilizations, I think that we will yet have some happy surprises, and there will be an explosion of mass struggles the likes of which history has never known before.

On the level of self-organization, the picture is less positive at present. Self-organization is not only a matter of how strong the mobilizations are, but also of their goals. And when the goals were not clear, and the successes of the first phase were rapid despite this, people did not understand very well why and how they should get organized. They organized mostly because of their distrust of the leaders.

One of the principal tasks for the far left in these countries is, as a result, to formulate and advance progressive ideas for rank-and-file committees, for councils, but also to demand the ability to recall elected officials. This corresponds to the present state of consciousness, the distrust of the population. Elections and universal suffrage, yes, but with the possibility to recall those elected. Such a thing would already change the situation.

### *Neither bureaucratic despotism nor the dictatorship of the market!*

The third factor, the most important, is the lack of revolutionary direction and of a precise understanding concerning objectives. In this circumstance it is evident that the standard of living of the imperialist countries and the social democratic models are exercising an important attraction.

For the first two factors to overcome the third it will take a period of time. It is necessary to develop an alternative economic model. Theoretically, programmatically, one aspect of this is already clear: neither bureaucratic despotism nor the dictatorship of the market. But it is above all necessary for this option to demonstrate that it is a real one. And the first prerequisite for that is a struggle to realize these objectives, so that such an alternative can have a genuine impact. ●

December 29, 1989

# The Health Care Crisis: One Worker's Experience

by Tom Barrett

Readers of socialist publications, including this one, are used to reading information about the broad general situation in the world, with lots of facts and statistics to support the arguments presented. That is a good thing. It's important that working people be informed about the world at large, beyond the reach of their own communities and even their own country. It's important that working people understand that the problems which they face are not unique individual problems, but are faced by workers in many other trades in many other areas. A good example of the kind of information which working people need is "The Health Care Issue — Cutting Edge for Labor's Fightback," by Richard Scully, which appeared in the April 1990 issue of this magazine. It explained clearly and convincingly how serious the health care crisis is in the United States and what it means for the labor movement. It provided not only the information on what is wrong, but it gave us some good ideas on how to fight back as well.

But sometimes it's useful to see that the big political issues which we discuss on such a high intellectual level are part of the real world, and they affect working people in their day-to-day personal lives. We can look at unemployment statistics with a degree of rational detachment; however, in each case someone has lost his or her job and income and is now facing the hardships that result. We can talk about pollution in the abstract; in reality it means real individual people dying slowly and painfully of cancer and other diseases. Infant mortality is a good statistic to measure a population's standard of living. But it also means that somebody's baby is dead. Our commitment to socialism is not based on intellectual beliefs, but on the reality of our lives as working people. We fight for socialism not because we want to do it, but because we have to do it.

Now, American workers don't whine. We take pride in ourselves and in the way we provide for our families, and we don't make our personal problems other people's business. We take responsibility for them ourselves, without expecting others to solve them for us. Sometimes, however, our pride gets in our way, preventing us from seeing that it is by working together to solve problems which we all face that we can all achieve a better standard of living. There just aren't always individual solutions, though it is probably completely natural that we should look for them first. For this reason, I am sharing my personal experience with the health care crisis, in the hope that other readers will see that their experiences are not unique, and that neither individual workers, nor particular geographical areas, nor specific trades or trade unions are at fault for this health insurance mess. The problem even goes beyond the collective-bargaining level. It's political, and only by collective action at the governmental level can the problem be addressed.

I have worked in the printing trades for nineteen years, nearly twelve of them as a member of the Newark (NJ)

Typographical Union (Local 103, Printing, Publishing, and Media Workers Sector, Communication Workers of America). Our health insurance is provided by the Newark Typographical Pension and Welfare Trust, a union-administered fund, to which the employers make contributions as stipulated by collective-bargaining agreements. For as long as I have belonged to Local 103, the Welfare has been in a crisis.

Its perennial crisis has several causes, only one of which is the uncontrolled inflation of health insurance premiums. They also stem from the stagnation of the union itself and the thoroughly self-defeating policies which the local bureaucrats continue to follow.

For the Typographical Union — and for many others — a key contributor to the health insurance crisis is loss of membership. In our case, a serious blow came in 1970 when the Newark *News* closed its doors. Several hundred jobs — along with their Welfare contributions — were lost. At the Newark *Star-Ledger*, as at all newspapers, there have been massive reductions of the work force, especially in the composing room. These have been done through attrition, layoffs, and buy-outs (a procedure in which the publisher pays a substantial lump sum to an employee to give up his or her job). In 1980 the *Star-Ledger* chapel (union composing room) had about 150 cards (members). By 1990 it has dropped to slightly more than 50. In the book-and-job section, nearly all of the composing rooms have been closed. The only union-organized job shop of any significance is Arrow Typographers, where I work. The Arrow chapel has 34 cards, down from just under 50 when I started working there.

Combined with the decline in membership has been an increase in the average age and an increase in the ratio of pensioners to active members. The average age at the *Star-Ledger* is 57 — the average age. In my relatively young chapel the average age is around 40. Naturally, as the employees age they will be making more claims on their health insurance, especially workers who have worn themselves out working long hours at odd shifts in New Jersey's environmentally hazardous industry. Insurance carriers base their premiums in part on the client's "experience rating" — the more claims the insured makes the higher the premium payments (you can't win!). Based on the Newark Typographical Welfare's experience ratings, the carriers have increased our premiums nearly every year since I have been enrolled, sometimes as much as 25 percent.

The pensioners retain their benefits, but, of course, the employers are no longer contributing for them. Employers contribute a negotiated amount per worker per shift, and as fewer workers are working fewer shifts, the absolute amount of employer contributions has not kept pace with premium increases. The money has to come from somewhere.

Beginning in 1978 — 12 years ago — deductions began being taken from workers' paychecks to cover the Welfare's deficits. It began with \$5.00 per week. At the expiration of each contract, the local president (at the time Tom Callanan, who has since retired) would promise to get increased payments into the Welfare — and the scale committee *would* get increased payments into the Welfare. But it was never enough. The Welfare had to come back for payroll deductions in the third year of two three-year contracts. Now the

payroll deductions are up to \$8.50 per week, and, according to Callanan's successor, Fred Kraut, "You'll never get rid of that."

In the spring of 1989 the biggest blow came. The hospitalization carrier, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of New Jersey, raised the premium to such a level that payroll deductions of nearly \$20 per week would have been required to cover them. The Welfare's trustees decided to change carriers and shift our business to the Prudential, which already covered us for Major Medical. The only hitch was this: for the same money (including the continued payroll deduction) our benefits were to be substantially reduced. Instead of 100 percent hospitalization coverage, we were now faced with a \$200 deductible per family member per year, plus only 80 percent coverage up to \$5,000 (after \$5,000 in bills, Prudential picks up 100 percent). Preadmission notification is required for all nonemergency admissions (with notification within three days required for emergency admissions), and second opinions are required for nonemergency surgeries. What does all this mean in real life? As it turned out, my family made the Arrow chapel's first hospitalization claim under this new plan.

As I said before, workers don't whine, and it's not my intention to start now. I work hard for my hourly wage, and thanks to the work of unionists in past decades, that wage is high enough to support a family. I have never faced a layoff, and in the early months of the year I have always managed to take care of major expenses with overtime, Saturday, and holiday work. So I'm one of the lucky ones. Even the cause of the hospitalization was not something to complain about: my companion, Linda Bryk, was admitted to give birth to our second daughter.

When our first child was born, in 1979, I had complete coverage for the entire family. The total expense for the hospitalization was \$8.00, which paid for the television set in the hospital room. (This does not include the fast-food hamburgers and milkshakes which I smuggled in because Linda found the hospital food to be so unpalatable!) My health insurance covered prenatal care (after the first visit), the delivery, a four-day stay, and pediatric care for the baby, who was fortunately full-term and completely healthy.

The experience with the second pregnancy could not have been more different.

The first prenatal visit took place before the carrier change; in fact, we had no idea that such a change was coming. However, we found out that Blue Cross/Blue Shield is in such a complete financial and management mess that physicians are having difficulty collecting from it. The obstetrician informed us that she no longer accepted Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and that we would have to pay her \$2,100 up front (assuming an uneventful pregnancy and birth) and do our best to collect from Blue Cross/Blue Shield ourselves. The only insurance she accepted was Prudential. We had not been able to come up with the full \$2,100 by the time of the carrier change, so naturally we felt some relief that the Welfare was changing to an insurance carrier which the doctor would accept.

In the case of child-bearing women, the aging process is even more serious than I described earlier. After the passage of ten years, Linda's pregnancy was classified as "high-risk,"

and the prenatal care had to be more extensive and more expensive. Two ultrasounds and an amniocentesis were required, each with a price tag in triple digits. The first prenatal procedures had to be paid out of the family budget — because of the \$200 deductible. Until the hospitalization itself, everything else was only covered up to 80 percent. Now when a family has to come up with \$30 this month, \$50 the next month, and \$40 again the next month, it starts to add up, even though by comparison to paying the full cost it isn't quite so bad.

As it turned out, classifying the pregnancy as "high-risk" was not such an off-the-wall notion. Linda's water broke three weeks before the due date, requiring an emergency admission to the hospital. Two days of hospital stay later an ultrasound revealed that nearly all the amniotic fluid was gone and that the baby was in a breach position. The obstetrician made the only possible decision — a cesarean section.

There was no doubt that the baby was not full-term. The ultrasound revealed that she was probably not yet five pounds. What was not clear was how well her lungs were developed and if she had feeding reflexes. Consequently, a pediatrician was called into the delivery room. In addition, for the surgical procedure an anesthesiologist and an assisting obstetrician had to be involved. Naturally, medical bills were the least of my worries at that moment, so it did not occur to me that I was witnessing a \$10,000 + procedure.

As it turned out, we were lucky. The baby was sufficiently developed not to need special care. However, different procedures had come into effect in the ten years since our first child was born: the full-weight babies and their mothers were being discharged after only two days, rather than four, clearly a consequence of stricter insurance regulations. Linda and baby Victoria had to remain for five days.

Once the baby was born she was legally a separate person, and as far as the Prudential was concerned, that meant a new deductible and a new 20 percent of the bills which I had to pay. So the truth was that our expenses did *not* stop once \$5,200 had been billed. The bottom line: in contrast to the \$8.00 which I had to pay when my first child was born, my expenses for the second child's birth came to over \$1,800, out of my own pocket.

My experience is hardly unique. As Richard Scully pointed out in the April issue, health benefit cuts have been key issues in contract negotiations and strikes in many different trades over the past year, including the miners' strike against Pittston and the CWA strike against many of the "Baby Bells," including NYNEX. However, even the employers don't have control over insurance premiums, and the kind of contract settlements which would provide sufficient contributions to keep up with health insurance's astronomical price increases are beyond what the unions today can realistically negotiate, given the relationship of class forces. Workers see this clearly. They know that we cannot expect sufficient settlements from the employers. But they don't have a clear idea of what to do about it.

There is only one answer, and it is becoming more obvious to working people by the day: national health insurance. Health care is more than a collective-bargaining issue: it is a *political* issue, and to win a national health plan which really

addresses working families' needs it will require independent political action by organized labor. We will address this in a future article in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. ●

## AIDS Activists Demonstrate in Chicago for Improved Health Care

by Jeff Brown

Over 1,000 AIDS activists converged on Chicago the morning of April 23 in a three-mile march through the downtown area to protest inadequate public health care for the poor, people of color, women and children, and the discrimination of insurance companies towards people with AIDS or who test positive for HIV or have HIV-related diseases. The demonstrators staged civil disobedience with speeches at each of the insurance companies targeted, as well as in front of the headquarters of the American Medical Association and at the Cook County Board of Commissioners. The protest was organized by ACT-NOW (AIDS Coalition to Network, Organize, and Win), the umbrella organization of direct action AIDS advocacy groups with chapters throughout the U.S., and by ACT-UP/Chicago (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). Their goal was to dramatize the collapse of health care in the public hospitals and the practices of insurance companies in red-lining, canceling policies, and in not covering prescribed treatments for people with AIDS or HIV-related illness. The American Medical Association was targeted for systematically opposing any plan for a national health service or national health care/insurance and for repeatedly blocking or discouraging alternative drugs and treatments, homeopathic treatments, etc.

Prudential Insurance was particularly targeted for denying applicants health insurance on the basis of certain occupations and certain zip codes designated "gay" or "at risk," and for screening with HIV tests. Aetna, MONY, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield were also targeted for these and other practices, such as canceling policies when people get sick and continually raising rates. The main point of the demonstrators on these last two practices is that the cost of health insurance coverage is becoming too costly for the vast majority of the population. They are increasingly denied coverage altogether or just can't afford it. A case in particular denounced by the demonstrators was that of a woman who tested *negative* for HIV but who was denied coverage after the insurance company, MONY, looked into her medical records and—based on statements she made to a psychiatrist *in confidence*—deemed her to be too sexually

promiscuous, thus too much at risk for a sexually transmitted disease, to qualify for insurance.

The protestors carried signs and banners with pictures of tombstones and inscriptions such as "Canceled," "Death for Sale," "Profit Kills" (directed at the AMA), and "Wealthcare" circled with a line through it and underneath "We Demand Public Healthcare." Activists blocked the entrance to the AMA headquarters and a group of protestors wore doctors' scrubs, splashed with red paint and with \$20 bills stuffed into their pockets.

The highlight of the march came in front of City Hall where a women's affinity group set up an AIDS ward for women in the streets to draw attention to the fact that Chicago's Cook County hospital has no beds for women with AIDS or HIV illness. At the same time, twelve people with AIDS sat down and chanted in the middle of the intersection at Clark and Randolph streets in front of the County Commissioners Board offices, and were arrested in a particularly rough manner by the Chicago police. At the same time, five protestors entered a second floor office and climbed out the window to place a large banner over the entrance balcony which read, "We Demand Equal Healthcare Now." The Cook County Hospital Board Commissioners were also denounced for consistently not using all the funds allocated to them for AIDS care and for having only 30 beds in a county reported to have over 30,000 individuals who have tested positive for the HIV virus which causes AIDS, and 3,000 reported cases of AIDS. In all, 134 activists were arrested by club-wielding police, many on horses, as a result of acts of civil disobedience.

As momentum picks up in drawing attention to the government's complete lack of an effective response to the escalating AIDS pandemic, AIDS activists, demonstrators, and PWA's (People with Aids) are calling for all those who recognize the extreme urgency of the situation and the complete neglect of the federal, state, and municipal governments to respond effectively to the epidemic to engage in a day of protests against the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—the agency responsible for the selection of drugs and treatments and their tests in trials. NIH has come to a grinding halt due to bureaucratic red tape, careerism, and incompetence. The action is to take place in Bethesda, Maryland, from 7 am to noon, May 21. This national demonstration could turn out to be the largest ever in the history of the direct action AIDS rights movement.

ACT-NOW is also calling on all AIDS activists and groups to join in protests against the Sixth International AIDS Conference to be held in San Francisco, June 20-24. In addition to the international boycott of the conference, AIDS activists plan to stage demonstrations calling for a more extensive international campaign to fight the worldwide epidemic. For more information contact ACT-NOW, 2300 Market St. Suite 87, San Francisco, CA 94114; 415-861-7505. ●

April 25, 1990

# Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

## 40. We Delve Into the Psalms of the New David

This section will speak not about my life or the life of my friends, but about books which they made us read and about other books which they took away from us. In other words, how the new David of Marxism composed his psalms.

According to the data from the All-Union Chamber of Books, during the years 1917-1948, works of Lenin contained in 4,400 books were published in an overall run of 174 million copies. I read this while sitting on my cot in the circular barracks of the Sharashka near Moscow.<sup>1</sup> And now I have read it again.

The information was printed under the heading "The Treasure-house of Leninism." In it they also indicate the run of Stalin's works for that same period: 7,219 books, in 525 million copies. Consider these figures. I never suspected that Stalin wrote almost twice as many books as Lenin did. But we will trust the statistics: they know what they are doing. Every title, even if it is only a brochure of 20 short pages, is considered a book. By no means do all countries accept such a method of counting, but let us not argue about that. This method makes it possible for a two-page brochure, containing Stalin's speech at the Nineteenth Congress along with his portrait, which goes through five printings, to be called five books by Stalin; and on this basis to claim that in terms of the number of books published, we hold first place in the world.

Taking into account the time when the information was compiled, we will easily understand why the period 1917-1923, when works by Stalin were almost zero, is not separated from the later years, when his works surpassed half a billion.

During the twenty-four years after Lenin's death, the run of Stalin's books turned out to be more than twice the number of Lenin's: 525 million as compared to 174 million. Such is the alloy from which Stalin's treasure-house of Leninism was made. Besides the books of Stalin himself, every day one saw a wider and wider flow of works popularizing his personality, his theoretical revelations, and his penetrating insights into all branches of knowledge. His biography, under the editorship of Pospelov, Mitin, and other pillars of theory, well-versed in Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theory, was published in a run of seven million. His

role in biology was defined by Academician Oparin, who established that he was an initiator of Michurinite science.<sup>2</sup> Voroshilov succinctly described his place in military science, writing: "Stalinist military science, based on a correct understanding of the laws of social development, was born at the same time as the rise to power of the working class."

Did you get that? "At the same time as the rise to power of the working class." This means that in October 1917 it all began. But where then was Lenin at that time? Usually authors of Stalin's time—out of a sense of decorum—wrote about "Leninist-Stalinist" science. But Voroshilov, with soldierly directness, rejects such exaggerated expressions of respect.

His revelation was made public in an issue of *Pravda* of December 21, 1949, the thickest issue in many decades—a 12-page issue—totally devoted to Stalin's birthday, his seventieth. On that day, also, the "flow of greetings" began. It seemed that the limits of obsequiousness had already been reached—but no! In connection with Stalin's speech on the problems of linguistics (he was a linguistics specialist too) a bacchanal of servility began, the likes of which cannot be described. His article was never referred to except as "the ingenious work of Comrade Stalin on the problems of linguistics."

It is difficult to find the words to describe what took place in those years, particularly after the war, in the columns of the newspapers. The name of Stalin, with all the adjectives prescribed by the latest Communist etiquette, was repeated in every article, no matter what it was about, 10, 15, even 20 times, depending on the zeal of the author. For a person with even the vaguest recollection of the years when Lenin was alive, it became monotonous. He quietly turned the pages and read on. But further on would be the same type of obsequious material by another author. The thinking behind this was correct: keep dripping onto the reader's brain densely, frequently, ceaselessly, endlessly. We have seen the result: It succeeded in cultivating a Volodya Remensky; and there were millions of nice, intelligent, capable and good-natured boys and girls just like him.

*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.*

An innocent person is inclined to believe people, and this is an admirable trait. The youth are particularly so inclined. The most terrible consequence of Stalinism was the birth of a universal mutual distrust, on the one hand; and on the other hand, a skepticism on the part of the youth with respect to the eloquent words of the elders. To hope to eliminate this mistrust by concealing, silencing, and evading is silly and pointless. The believers have lost their faith. What is needed is not to resurrect that faith but to answer the questions of the youth so that faith—no longer an option—can be replaced by knowledge.

However, if those seeking knowledge want to have a closer look at the machinery of deceit, it turns out that this is not so easy to do.

Visit any secondhand bookstore and rummage through the books. Prerevolutionary publications will be found there but books printed in the first 20 years of Soviet power, before 1936, we will find hardly ever. Meanwhile, they printed many more than—significantly more—books than were printed before the revolution. Where did they all go?

They weren't burned in the streets. They were removed on the sly, in an organized and business-like way. An enormous apparatus, financed by the labor of the millions who create material values, was busy sorting out the spiritual values created during the first two decades of October. This apparatus compiled endless lists, containing tens of thousands of book titles. These lists were printed up into thick books marked "for service use," and sent out to all the libraries and bookstores in the country. My Austrian friend with whom I had discussions while sitting on the dirt mounds surrounding the camp barracks was right. Why did they need Hitler's bonfires? Institute a check-off list. "Institute": how ordinary it sounds. In the camp, they "instituted" lists of the dead so as to later exclude them from the roll call and remove them from the ration and clothing lists. The first list for the removal of books was compiled in 1936.

So why, starting in 1936, did they begin to remove books printed in our own country, during Lenin's life or shortly after his death? There was a reason for it, and it was part of the overall task.

During Stalin's time, all books in which there was even one mention of that objectionable name were destroyed unless the name was preceded by the certified abusive sobriquets: "traitor," "contemptible," "degenerate," "betrayed," "Little Judas." And it was not just Trotsky's name, but Skrypnik's, or Eikh's. Subsequently, the names of those who were condemned at publicly staged trials were mentioned in books and newspapers (of course, only with abuse). The names of those who were secretly murdered simply disappeared, as if they had never existed. Tens of thousands of books, an entire Montblanc of human culture, was annihilated for the sake of one goal: to conceal the murders.

They tackled scientific literature with particular zeal after the session of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences in August 1948. The sciences were hastily improved by administrative means by a decree of the most enlightened person in the country, the minister of higher education Kaftanov. Lunacharsky could never have conceived of doing what Kaftanov did. A colossal number of textbooks on

agronomy, biology, and even psychiatry were removed from society.

Operation "checklist" cost us dearly. The losses to the book industry were reimbursed from the state budget. However, there was no reimbursement for the damage done to the minds and consciences of the people. And not everyone noticed what had happened. To the compilers of the lists, and to those carrying out the measures, the lists were a godsend.

But let us think about what resulted from all this. The book by John Reed, with a preface by Lenin, can be considered "secret" only in the reverse sense of the word: it is a secret from the Soviet people but in no way is it a secret from people abroad. We have a large number of such "secrets" in our country. Putting the finger of caution to our lips while again and again repeating the word "secret," we must be clearly aware: from whom is it a secret—from them or from us?

The secret of confiscated books belongs to the same category as the secret of the camps, the kind that has all the pointed edges turned inward, to protect against the curiosity of those who are interested not in military installations but in a brick factory where innocent people were shot.

Having undertaken to examine the operational mechanism of Stalin's ideological offensive, one must at least take a look at his weapons. We will open the major work of the Stalin era, the main textbook of Marxism for the masses, the bible of those days: "A History of the AUCP(b)—A Short Course."

First, several words about its authorship. This book was reprinted every year, as a work without an author, exactly like a bible. There was only the line: "Approved by the CC AUCP(b). 1938." I have already described how such approval influences the progress of historical science. But after eight years of being fatherless, the child was finally acknowledged. The preface to the collected works of Stalin (there were supposed to be 16 volumes but they managed to publish only 13) nonetheless said: "Volume 15 contains J.V. Stalin's work 'A History of the AUCP(b)—A Short Course,' which was published in a separate edition in 1938." Thus, they explained to us that Stalin writes about himself in the third person in this history book only because he is so modest: he could well have written "I, I, I," but he did not!

From the "Short Course" we learn from Stalin himself that throughout all the years of party history he selflessly saved Bolshevism from deviations. And above all, of course, from Trotskyism. In the "Short Course," are listed four instances before Lenin's death (the Southern Front, NEP, the trade union discussion, the Declaration of the 46) when Stalin saved the revolution—as well as after 1924.<sup>3</sup> The instances are too numerous to count. As to the Southern Front, Stalin wrote (I won't quote the whole thing, which takes up a whole page): "Trotsky messed up the work on the Southern Front, and our forces suffered one defeat after another. . . . So as to organize the destruction of Denikin, the Central Committee sent to the Southern Front comrades Stalin, Voroshilov, Ordzhonikidze, and Budenny. Comrade Stalin sharply criticized this plan (the operational plan of attack) and proposed the Central Committee accept his plan to destroy Denikin. . . . The Central Committee adopted Comrade

Stalin's plan. . . . In this way, Denikin's forces were also finished off."

If all this had been written by someone on the sidelines, that would be understandable. A historian was inspired by Stalin's military talents and praised them. But to write about himself in this way! The reader begins to lose confidence that the author is telling the truth, and becomes certain that he is very conceited.

Stalin devoted considerably more space to a description of his struggle against Trotskyism on the ideological front than to his struggle against Trotsky personally, that is, to issues of military strategy. For Stalin the ideological struggle was central. However, it seems that about this most dangerous deviation with which Stalin concerned himself most of all in his life, a student would have to ask: What is Trotskyism? Where did it come from? What did it believe? What did it advocate?

The platform of this deviation, written in 1927 on the eve of the Fifteenth Congress, and often called then "The Platform of the 83" (I have already spoken about it)—this whole platform is summed up and unmasked in the "Short Course" in four terse paragraphs.<sup>4</sup> Each one begins with the words: "In words, i.e., in the platform, the Trotskyists and Zinovievists said . . ." (then a *three-line* rendering of what they said) ". . . but in deeds, they . . ." did such and such (again a free rendering in *five lines*).

The first two paragraphs—11 lines—lay out the essence of Trotskyism on inner-party questions: disloyalty, factionalism, and violations of party discipline. Insofar as this is rather widely known, I won't quote this section. About Stalin's own disloyalty, it is true, we know from Lenin's letters. Having exposed Trotskyism on inner-party questions, the "Short Course" shifts to other matters about which less is known. This examination is so unique that it deserves to be reproduced in full:

"In words, i.e., in the platform, they spoke out for a collective farm movement and even accused the Central Committee of not collectivizing quickly enough, but in deeds, they scoffed at the policy of involving the peasantry in the construction of socialism, and preached the inevitability of 'irreconcilable conflicts' between the working class and the peasantry and placed their hopes in the 'working farmers' in the countryside, i.e., in the kulaks." That is the entire analysis, eight lines of the book.

From this you could conclude that to set forth your opinion in a platform is to support something in words only. But "to scoff at," "to preach," and "to place hopes in" signify something manifesting itself not in verbal expressions but in deeds. What we have here is a model of higher logic.

Thus, in one paragraph, Trotskyism is bashed on the head on the question of the peasantry. The question of industrialization is treated in just the same way:

"In words, i.e., in the platform, they spoke out for a policy of industrialization, and even accused the Central Committee of not industrializing fast enough; but in deeds, they criticized the decision of the party on the victory of socialism in the USSR, scoffed at the policy of socialist industrialization, demanded that a whole number of factories and plants be turned over as a concession to foreigners, and placed their main hopes in foreign capitalist concessions in the USSR."

Almost the very same phrase and definitions: they "scoffed at," "placed their hopes in." And again, the placing of hopes is declared not a verbal placing but an action that actually took place. Further, in order to more thoroughly frighten communists studying history, one charge—about concessions—is repeated twice, in different ways, transforming it into two charges. In addition, it is added that they criticized *the decision of the party on the victory of socialism*, and this criticism is also declared not a verbal expression but an action that took place. As far as Trotskyism is concerned, the case is closed.

Try to get a grasp of both quotations (or get the book—page 277!). The "Short Course" does not dispute the aims of the Trotskyists-Zinovievists in their domestic policy, but only finds them to be excessive ("they spoke out for a policy of industrialization and even accused the Central Committee of not industrializing fast enough." As regards the collective farms, the very same thing, word for word). Regarding the mistakes of the Opposition on these questions the "Short Course" says no more. Then what are the arguments that prove the opponents were wrong?

First: the platform was written and copied—their words.

Second: different words—there is no indication of where, when, or before whom they were uttered—are the deeds.

From here, the unshakable, logical conclusion: their words and their deeds did not agree, attesting to the deceitfulness of the Trotskyists. The "Short Course" summarizes it this way: "This was the most deceitful of the deceitful platforms of the Opposition." The "Short Course" does not say that it was unrealistic or un-Leninist, no. Only that it was deceitful. The proof is the awkward verbal formulations which clearly showed: The author of the book, J.V. Stalin, considers the readers to be idiots.

One could cite a whole number of primitive arguments, some approaching the absurd, the conclusions of which keep driving home one point: The Trotskyists cannot be tolerated, and to fully cleanse ourselves, it is best to kill them. The venom is everywhere and not a shred of evidence is presented. For example, about NEP, the "Short Course" says the following: "The Trotskyists and the other Oppositionists believed that NEP was only a digression. Such an interpretation was to their advantage because they were carrying out a line for the restoration of capitalism" (p. 245). However, so that no one could verify the accuracy of this information, Stalin had to conceal the letters of Lenin which refuted it. They have now been published and each line refutes whole volumes of Stalinist lies. However, we are not trying to grasp the significance of this; we are not trying to compare them with the "Short Course" after those many long years have passed.

The stenographic record of the Twelfth Congress has now been published, and we find out that the reporter on the questions of industry was none other than Trotsky, about which the "Short Course" maintained a discrete silence. However, in a purely jesuitically constructed phraseology, devoted to Trotsky's role at this congress, the "Short Course" says, first, he was a capitulator; and second, that his supporters (not he himself, but his *supporters*) "proposed we surrender to the mercy of foreign capitalists"; and third, he "did not acknowledge in practice the policy of building an

alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry.” Again, “in practice.” Once one is required to prove that black is white, one must immediately say “in practice.” Meanwhile, about the real facts, there is not a word. Where, when, and before what audience was this practice revealed? On this there is silence.

I have to admit that until I began to work on these notes, I had never in my life opened the “Short Course,” a point of pride with me before my friends at the Sharashka. However, now I have read it with great and, naturally, not indifferent attention. Read it yourself if you can get your hands on it, and tell me: does it not create in your mind the definite impression that the guiding, fundamental, and central thesis of the book is: “Trotsky is not my personal enemy but an enemy of the party, of the working class, of the people, and of socialism”; and that its sole aim is to justify the mass murders. All the ideological operations of Stalinism pursue that one goal: to lay a theoretical foundation under the brick factory, Kashketin at Vorkuta, Garanin at Kolyma, and the 1936-38 trials; and to whitewash the hangmen before the judgment of history.

You can fool millions of people, not forever, but for a very long time. But the cost is exorbitant. Mountains of literature had to be burned and simultaneously another mountain printed. An ocean of words had to be broadcast over the radio, in order to drip and drip on the brains one and the same thing: Tro-Tro-Tro-Tro. Always the same thought: Stalin saved the revolution, which was confirmed by his own eyewitness testimony.

Stalin imagined that the court of history was like his show trials, except that the task of the latter was to uphold the charges while the task of the former was to prove justification. Each person will come forward and give the very best testimony about himself and his boss. The boss will give glowing testimonials to himself and his servants. The court will adjourn to the deliberation room and sign the paper stamped “Agreed,” which was prepared beforehand.

Because Stalin could not convince the rising generation of youth of the correctness of his wretched theories, he could only take the road he did: to fool the youth and plunder their consciousness; to monopolize in his own hands all assessments, all thoughts, all judgments about everything in the world. In the last years of his life, what was strengthened was not the cult of his personality per se, but the offensive against the people who were beginning to see things more clearly;

the direction of the main blow was determined: get the thinking people.

However now, after having allowed myself a short excursion into the province of ideology, I have no choice but to return to the corrective labor camp, the tale of which is still far from complete.

[Next month: “*The Artful Workings of the Special Judicial Sessions*”]

## Notes

1. *Sharashka* is a word derived from a Soviet slang expression meaning a sinister enterprise based on bluff and deceit. See the May 1990 episode in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 74.

2. Michurin was a Stalinist biologist.

3. The Southern Front, around the town of Tsaritsyn, during the Russian civil war was the headquarters of Voroshilov’s Tenth Army. Under Stalin’s influence, the Tenth Army became the seat of the “military opposition,” which opposed the use of military specialists from the old tsarist army and resisted the centralization of the Red Army under a unified command. Stalin used the group of commanders there as a basis for his personal intrigues and maneuvers, capitalizing on their grudges against the center of command to accumulate personal loyalties to himself. The eighth congress of the Russian party in March 1919 rebuffed the Tsaritsyn group and reaffirmed the military policy that Trotsky, as head of the Red Army, had been implementing. In 1919, when the group began disobeying direct orders and endangering the course of the civil war, Lenin and Trotsky finally had Voroshilov transferred to the Ukraine, where, again with Stalin behind him, he created a similar opposition group.

The New Economic Policy, or NEP, was initiated in 1921 to replace the policy of “military communism,” which prevailed during the civil war and led to drastic declines in agricultural and industrial production. To revive the economy after the civil war, NEP was adopted as a temporary measure allowing a limited revival of free trade inside the Soviet Union and foreign concessions alongside the nationalized and state-controlled sections of the economy. NEP was succeeded in 1928 by forced collectivization of the land and the first five-year plan.

The trade union discussion took place in 1920, during the civil war, when economic deterioration had led to a catastrophic drop in agricultural and industrial production and the working class had dispersed to the countryside to escape famine. Trotsky proposed a system of labor militarization, to be organized by the trade unions, to try to restore production and revive the economy, but the scheme was unpopular and was never widely applied.

The “Declaration of the 46” in 1923 (see *Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1923-25*), by leading Bolsheviks of the revolution and civil war, was addressed to the Central Committee and called for inner-party democracy and economic and political change.

4. Baitalsky seems to be confusing the “Declaration of the 84” (originally 83, later 3,000), written by the Trotskyists and Zinovievists in May 1927, with the “Platform of the Opposition,” written in September 1927 as a contribution by the United Opposition to the Fifteenth Congress to be held that December. Both documents are in *Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)*.

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