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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.

FIT members and supporters are involved in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. We are activists in unions, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. intervention, student formations, and lesbian and gay rights campaigns. We help organize support for oppressed groups here and abroad—such as those challenging apartheid in South Africa and bureaucratic rule in China, Eastern Europe, and the USSR. We participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies through our ties with the world organization of revolutionary socialists—the Fourth International.

The FIT was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because they opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. We tried to win the SWP back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective, and called for the reunification of Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. through readmission to the party of all who had been expelled in the anti-Trotskyist purge. The SWP formally severed fraternal relations with the Fourth International in June of 1990. Our central task now is to reconstitute a united U.S. sympathizing section of the Fourth International from among all those in this country who remain loyal to the FI's program and organization as well as through the recruitment of workers, students, Blacks, women, and other activists who can be won to a revolutionary Internationalist outlook.

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# Understanding the Soviet Coup

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The economic reforms launched by the ruling bureaucracy in 1985 have had disastrous consequences in the Soviet Union; the economy is collapsing.

During the first two years of the new policies Gorbachev enjoyed public popularity because of the political liberalization that accompanied the economic restructuring and because of the popular hope that change would mean improvements over the stagnation of the Brezhnev years. But over the past three years as the economic reforms have made life in the USSR for most people harder and harder, Gorbachev's popularity has sharply diminished.

Despite his growing unpopularity with the masses, the Communist Party apparatus has consistently ended up backing Gorbachev overwhelmingly at party plenums, conferences, and congresses—because there was no one to replace him. Moreover, the other bureaucrats could offer no alternative policy to Gorbachev's market reforms and his appeals to foreign capitalists for help in getting the economy out of its morass. They certainly couldn't appeal to the masses without jeopardizing bureaucratic political and economic domination.

Within the ruling apparatus, meanwhile, as the economic reforms unfolded, a differentiation of forces has been developing and important changes have been taking place. Bureaucrats in industry and various ministries and government posts—especially in the economic apparatus—as well as those who have been elected to local parliaments have been able to transform their illicit bureaucratic, nomenklatura-based privileges into legalized economic advantages as a result of the introduction of the market-oriented economic reforms.

For example, take Arkady Volsky, a Communist Party Central Committee member (until the CC was disbanded) and a member of the new post-coup four-member economic reform team. Since completing his January 1989 Kremlin assignment of imposing police rule to silence the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh, he has done quite nicely for himself. He now heads a newly organized Soviet equivalent to an employers' association—the Scientific-Industrial League. He has "hired" a whole team of young economic advisers who support rapid introduction of the market to be part of his "team" seeking to

attract foreign capitalist investors. He has the "air of a prosperous business magnate," comments *The Independent* of London in its feature on this "former" apparatchik (August 27, 1991). Volsky's league attracts the "more progressive directors of state-owned industry" and is the rival to the Association of State Industries headed, until the August 19 coup effort, by coup-leader Aleksandr Tizyakov.

Another example is one of Gorbachev's earlier economic reform advisers Leonid Abalkin, who has also found himself a comfortable niche. According to an independent workers newspaper in Leningrad, Abalkin has received several million rubles from his books and lectures. With these funds, he has been able to buy stock worth two or more million rubles in the giant KAMAZ truck factory and other enterprises. "He receives as the dividends from these stocks no less than 120,000 rubles a year... and this for doing absolutely nothing" (*Rabochii*, No. 3, 1991).

A third example of an apparatchik benefactor of the market reforms is president of the Kazakhstan republic, Nursultan A. Nazarbayev. His involvement in a suspected large-scale bribery deal connected with a new contract Chevron Oil Company has with the Kazakh republic to carry out oil exploration in the Caspian Sea region had surfaced before the coup. It has yet to be investigated. One of Yeltsin's closest allies against the coup, Nazarbayev is one of the most ardent supporters of radical market reforms among the republican (or former republican) chiefs. He invited South Korean economists to Kazakhstan to give him advice. Not surprisingly, then, he is known for favoring "a South Korean model of economic development with an authoritarian political control," according to the *Financial Times*, August 21.

Many of the outstanding figures from this bureaucratic sector, furthermore, have recognized the rising unpopularity of the Communist Party and have sought to save themselves by abandoning it, since they can now do so without substantially affecting their living standard.

Other sections of the apparatus, on the other hand, like those in the trade unions, mass organizations, and the military, are not so well placed for making profits from the market reforms. Moreover, they have lost authority and power with the increased democratization and suffer most directly from the revelations of the corrupt and criminal role of the Communist Party

during the Stalin and post-Stalin eras. They stand to lose—and in many cases had already begun to lose—the privileges they had. While they saw no alternative to the reforms, they feared them, recognizing the political instability being created, and sought to roll back the democratization and more firmly protect the status quo until help comes from imperialism.

Neither the coup nor its aftermath are understandable without appreciating this split. Gorbachev was caught in between, trying to satisfy both wings of the old bureaucratic apparatus. But this proved to be an impossible task. It did seem that at decisive moments in the last few years he leaned more toward appeasing the conservative elements, but the coup has forced him to throw his lot in with the more radical, consciously procapitalist forces. This could well transform the entire situation in the ex-USSR.

Despite his vast popularity with the bourgeois governments and their mass media, Gorbachev has become intensely unpopular in the Soviet Union as the anti-worker nature of the reforms began to be felt over the past two years. Twice early this year, Yeltsin saved Gorbachev from going down to defeat.

First, in March, he helped pull voters out for Gorbachev's referendum (fundamentally a vote of confidence) by adding a separate point "for or against" a popularly elected president for the Russian republic. With his popularity plummeting due to the rising shortages, currency reform measures, and the failed military attempt to reestablish Kremlin control over Lithuania in January, Gorbachev could hardly have inspired credibility among vast numbers of voters, convincing them to participate in his March 17 referendum "for or against" a revitalized Soviet Union. Few could have really opposed the referendum's proposal the way it was formulated. But that was not the point. The point was to show that Gorbachev could pull out over 50 percent of the voters and, thereby, boost his claim to authority. Yeltsin helped him do that by adding his own audacious measure.

Then, in April, Yeltsin helped Gorbachev to conclude the "9 plus 1" accords and end the strike waves begun in March by coal miners—joined after the April 1 price increases by workers of the vast industrial enterprises in Belorussia. The strikers demanded Gorbachev's resignation. (How serious could Yeltsin have been when he himself called for Gorbachev's resignation in February?)



Apparently, when Gorbachev left the G-7 meetings empty-handed in July he had played his last card. This showed significant sections of the apparatus that his international popularity with imperialism wasn't worth enough materially to the apparatus to justify retaining him as head of state, given the obvious political liability he represented at home. Without the urgent and extensive aid he had pleaded for from imperialism, the Soviet economy was headed for a disaster within a few months.

Mass rebellions were on the agenda. And they would be aimed first against Gorbachev.

The August 19-21 coup was an attempt by a more conservative section of the apparatus, while there was still time, to take collective control since there was still no single bureaucrat with enough popular authority to replace Gorbachev. The eight-member State Committee for the State of Emergency—all formerly part of Gorbachev's government, including the heads of the army and the KGB but also his key economic advisers and allies—promised not to depart from Gorbachev's economic or international policies but only to "immediately restore law and order," i.e., use police measures to reverse the democratic political reforms and control the democratic rights movements that have characterized the glasnost period.

Yeltsin himself has been losing popularity, as was shown by the fact that he got only around 57 percent of the votes in the Russian presidential elections. It may be that the coup leaders did not see him as a viable leader and did not expect Yeltsin to seriously oppose their actions. Perhaps that is why they failed to arrest him in good time. Or perhaps they feared the consequences of decisive action on this front. We will probably never know for sure. (Just who was on that committee's list of people targeted for arrest or execution has not been revealed to my knowledge.)

Whatever the case, Yeltsin and his reform wing of "liberals" did not go along with the coup. They viewed it as a threat against them, their privileges, and plans. They were able to ally with those mass forces which spontaneously mobilized to resist the attempted takeover, and seized the opportunity to crush this "rebel" wing of the bureaucracy.

The mobilized mass sentiment was not for market reforms or even for Gorbachev, and certainly it was not for the circle of marketeers Yeltsin has around him. It was against the KGB, the Ministry of Interior, and the old military and civilian apparatus identified with the Stalinist order—as well as against those officials identified in the popular mind with economic market reforms, seen as immediately responsible

for the present crisis: Valentin Pavlov and Gennadi Yanayev.

Thus, in the process, for the third time this year, Yeltsin "saved" Gorbachev.

After the coup was defeated, a dramatic counter-coup and witch-hunt was begun by Yeltsin and his layer, with Gorbachev at their side. Not only were a dozen or so key coup participants arrested but a series of other special measures were taken. These include the banning of the CP and confiscation of its property and bank accounts; the firing of many of Gorbachev's centrist appointees, like Bessmertnykh, who couldn't tell which side would win and therefore failed to speak out in time against the coup; and the searches and intimidations of all sorts of persons under the pretext that they were suspected of involvement in or support for the coup. All this represents an attempt by one section of the bureaucracy to defeat and grab the privileges of another section. But the apparatus itself is far from eliminated.



The bureaucratic apparatuses controlling the Belorussian, Ukrainian, Azerbaijan, Uzbek, Tadzhik, Kirghiz, Turkmen, and Kazakhstan republics essentially remain in place, despite declarations of independence by local parliaments in the days following the defeat of the coup, and despite the outlawing of the CP and the local moves to take over its property. In some cases, for example Ukraine and Azerbaijan, local party bosses who were also presidents of republican parliaments sought to save themselves by quickly abandoning the CP and raising the nationalist flag. They now hope to make themselves more popular with the people by posing as champions of independence movements that they had until so recently (in some cases just days before) attacked. The Yeltsin forces seem eager to collaborate

with these local apparatchiks, even those who supported the coup—like Ayaz Mutalibov, former party chief of Azerbaijan, now its "ex-party" chief.

While carrying out this purge against the CP in their own interest, the new ruling clique is trying to gain credibility with the masses as the defenders of democracy.

There is widespread and legitimate popular resentment against the Communist Party's power and privileges. This has been expressed in numerous attacks on party headquarters and expulsion of local CP chiefs in many regions of the USSR for over a year.

Unfortunately, because the Stalinist rulers rewrote history to make themselves look like the continuators of the October revolution and the builders of socialism and communism—instead of the gravediggers of both which they really are—many sectors of the population wrongly blame the Bolsheviks and the October 1917 revolution for the crimes of Stalin and his heirs. This should not be hard to understand for anyone who is familiar with the history and degeneration of the Russian Revolution. The facts that have been revealed since the onset of glasnost about Stalin's falsifications of history, continued by his supporters and heirs, fall far short of what is necessary to rectify the criminal miseducation of the Soviet people for more than six decades.

The defeat of the "military" coup showed that antibureaucratic sentiment and support for democratic reforms pervades not only the population at large but also the army. For the moment, the interests of Yeltsin and his layer coincided with this sentiment from below. However, this alliance cannot last for long.

In the meantime, who will get the CP property and wealth? What special stores and facilities do Yeltsin, Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, and others enjoy? Certainly you won't rub shoulders with them in any of the dingy, sparse, public dining rooms most ordinary working people have to use. Perhaps these new "democratic" bosses have sufficient foreign currency to live in a relative luxury that is perfectly legal now. There has been a qualitative change: one no longer need to be in the CP nomenklatura to live quite comfortably. This new privileged layer, in fact, has managed to outlaw the old privileged layer and get even more for itself.

While we as Marxists work for the political defeat of the CP and are not opposed to mass actions by workers to confiscate CP property and eliminate its political and economic privileges and take back the power, what Yeltsin has done is not the same thing.

Banning all political organizations in the workplace as Yeltsin has done—ostensibly



to eliminate CP cells, taking advantage of popular hatred for the apparatus—is an attack on the democratic rights of all workers who may want their own, new political parties to be allowed to function there (some may even still want the CP; and if so, they have a right to have it).

Will the attack on the CP be widened to an attack on others who still call themselves Marxists or Leninists or Trotskyists, not to mention communists with a small “c”? Already the new KGB appointees are talking of the need to use the “reformed” KGB against those who “call for the violent overthrow of the government” and against “terrorists”—familiar terminology utilized by our ruling class to justify going after revolutionary-minded forces.

Yeltsin’s economic program is not basically different from Gorbachev’s. But before now, Yeltsin and his supporters—

and the Stalinist rulers in the non-Russian republics—could blame the “hard-liners” and Gorbachev for the economic failures. Having neutralized or eliminated them, who will be the new scapegoats? It is not hard to imagine. There will undoubtedly be more attacks on “lazy” workers who don’t want to work or expect too much from life. We can also reasonably expect more “inter-ethnic conflicts” to be fomented as an excuse for imposing military rule. This practice of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and KGB—used in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and elsewhere—has not been exposed or condemned by the new rulers.

When they do try to implement their own policies, or more accurately, show that they have no alternative to Gorbachev’s already vastly unpopular policies, Yeltsin and the remains of the apparatus and the aspiring marketeers will find they will need their

own KGB and army. However, given the continued potential for mass mobilization by workers and their allies, and the conscious links which remain between the masses and the army as was clearly demonstrated in the resistance to the coup, a genuine question remains as to whether these latter forces will be any more inclined to defend Yeltsin during a decisive conflict than they were to defend the Committee of Eight on August 20 and 21.

Revolutionary socialists around the world must establish links and discussions with those who have been in struggle, remain in struggle, or will be in struggle. We must mobilize to help them, support them, discuss with them, learn from them, and collaborate for the political revolution in the USSR and the socialist revolution around the world. □

September 6, 1991

*The following text was prepared as an editorial for the last issue of the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism. When the coup occurred in the USSR we pulled the editorial to make room for a brief, initial report on the immediate situation. Now that*

*Gorbachev is back, and a denunciation of Marxism, Leninism, and socialism has become the prevailing fashion in the USSR, we believe that this brief statement has a renewed, and even stronger relevance.*

## In Defense of Marxism—Now More Than Ever

Some might think the proposal, made by Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev on July 25, that the Communist Party of the USSR ought to renounce the primacy of Marxism-Leninism in its ideological arsenal was not much of an event. After all, with the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet CP in the 1920s and ’30s that party actually ceased to be guided by Marxism decades ago. It is only right, then, that this should now be formally acknowledged.

But Gorbachev’s explicit renunciation of Marxism remains an important event nonetheless. Although the Soviet CP has spent the last 60 years and more defending the interests of the ruling bureaucracy against the interests of the masses, that party falsely claimed to speak in the name of socialist revolution, and wrapped itself in the mantle of Lenin and the October revolution. This ideological obfuscation was one of the main pillars of its power—convincing tens of millions of people in the USSR and around the world to look to the Soviet CP for leadership in their struggles. The formal renunciation of this myth by Gorbachev represents the end of all such illusions—if indeed many remain after the collapse of bureaucratic society in Eastern Europe and the USSR during the last few years.

In motivating his newfound viewpoint, Gorbachev reflected the same crass empiricism and ideological confusion that has always been typical of bureaucratic thought. For example, he now rejects the supposedly “Marxist” notion that the Communist Party could not allow freedom of religion or dissenting views within its ranks. In fact, however, both of these ideas are profound distortions of Marxism, promulgated by Stalinism within the workers’ movement only after Lenin’s death and after the degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party.

On the question of class struggle—a genuinely Marxist concept, though one that the Stalinists have found many ways to distort throughout the years—Gorbachev declared: “The time has long come to acknowledge that the epoch when the masses had

no means of improving their lot except by storming the Bastille or the Winter Palace has gone into the past” (*New York Times*, July 26). Indeed? This profound thinker might have taken a look at the conditions in which the vast majority of humanity still live and work today—especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but even the homeless population of New York City might have proven instructive—before coming to this conclusion. Of course, he says this not because of any new facts about the world, but because it is so convenient for a Soviet leadership that is desperate to make a deal for financial assistance from Western imperialism.

When this journal was founded in December of 1983 we adopted the name *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism* in order to strike a chord with members of the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. and around the world. In particular, we wanted to appeal to those who would be able to connect our fight to defend the theory of permanent revolution against the Barnes leadership of the Socialist Workers Party with the crucial struggle waged by Leon Trotsky against the petty-bourgeois opposition in the SWP in 1940—a struggle which resulted in the publication of the book, *In Defense of Marxism*.

Today our name will strike a renewed chord with a still broader audience. The abandonment of even a pretense of Marxism by Gorbachev and his cronies does not end the importance of Marx’s ideas for those who want to overthrow the crisis-ridden society in which we live and sweep away once and for all an international system of exploitation, war, and misery. These facts of life for hundreds of millions around the world constantly create new layers of individuals, and new groups of people, who are trying to find a solution.

Gorbachev and the Soviet CP have now given up even the pretense of fighting for any kind of fundamental change. But their open default only renews our resolve. And that is why we remain now, more than ever, in defense of Marxism. □



# Defend and Renew the Gains of the Russian Revolution

## A Resolution of the FIT National Coordinators

*The routed August coup undoubtedly registers an important turning point in the Soviet Union. But while everyone senses great changes of some kind are in store many questions remain unanswered. Is there a continuing threat of a return to dictatorship? Will the reforms of perestroika become transformed into a full-blown capitalist counterrevolution? Will the Soviet Union survive, at least in some form, or will it disintegrate? What are the prospects for the political freedoms, social benefits, and living standards of the working people of the USSR?*

*This resolution does not pretend to provide definitive answers to these, or many other important questions being posed today. In some cases sufficient facts are not available; in other cases there are conflicting claims not easily evaluated from afar. Ongoing concrete analysis, accompanied, no doubt, by differing conclusions, even among revolutionary Marxists, is required. A thoroughgoing, unfettered discussion and debate within the workers' movement of these momentous events is indispensable.*

*While not attempting a detailed conjunctural examination this resolution reviews a materialist analysis of the historical development of the Soviet Union, including the contradictions leading to the present crisis. It poses, in broad summary, the principal dangers and opportunities we see in the present situation. It also projects an outline for a basic program for revolutionary Marxism in the Soviet Union.*

*This resolution is offered not as the final word on the question but as a background contribution to the urgently required discussion we favor. Among the forms of this discussion will be contributions to the Bulletin In Defense of Marxism, and internal discussion within the FIT in preparation for the national conference that has been called for February 1992.*

### The Russian Revolution of 1917

1—The Soviet Union was created by the first successful anti-capitalist revolution—the Russian Revolution of 1917. Its goals were the elimination of exploitation of the workers by the ruling rich, replacing it with a system run by workers and poor peasants in their interests. The Bolshevik party (later named Communist Party), which led the revolution, championed the rights of non-Russians against the Great Russian chauvinism of the Czarist period. When the Soviet Union was formed, the intention of Lenin and Trotsky, the central leaders of the Bolsheviks, was to establish a voluntary association of equal republics from which any republic had a right to secede at any time. The Soviet Union was to be a beacon to humanity.

2—During the revolution and the immediate postrevolutionary period, power rested on genuine workers' councils (soviets), bodies democratically elected by the workers, peasants, and soldiers. These soviets represented the highest form of institutionalized democracy that the world has seen. Soviet officials were subject to recall by their electors at any time and their salaries were limited to no more than that of a skilled worker.

3—The leaders of the Russian Revolution understood that they could not build genuine socialism within the confines of the old

Russian empire. They saw the socialist revolution as an international process—a process they sought to assist through their initiative in organizing the Communist (Third) International. They were pessimistic about the chances for survival of the Russian Revolution without aid from victorious workers' revolutions in the more economically advanced countries of Western Europe and North America.

4—There were big workers' upsurges in most capitalist countries at the end of World War I and, at least in Germany, Hungary, and Italy, real potential for socialist revolutions. However, primarily because of inadequate leadership, these revolutions failed, condemning the Soviet Union to isolation.

5—A number of capitalist countries, including the United States, sent troops into the Soviet Union in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Soviet government. These powers also helped organize and finance a counterrevolutionary White Army which aimed to restore the monarchy and capitalist rule. But the workers and peasants fought back with their own Red Army and eventually prevailed. However, as a result of this civil war, the conditions in the country dramatically changed. The economy was devastated. Millions of revolutionary workers, peasants, and soldiers perished defending the revolution. Industry was drastically weakened and so were the soviets that were based on the workplaces. In the ruin of the war, the soviets became bureaucratized and began to be used to defend the interests of a rising bureaucracy in the party and state instead of the interests of working people.

6—Genuine socialism—a classless society, with no need for economic exploitation, or state repression—requires an abundance of desired goods and services. Only on the basis of plenty can the goal of “from each according to their ability—to each according to their need” be realized. The potential for producing such abundance, enough in fact to supply the whole world, exists in the most advanced countries—especially the United States.

7—Prerevolutionary Russia, on the other hand, was just emerging from feudalism, just beginning to establish an industrial base. Russia, and the regions that were to make up the Soviet Union, devastated by a decade of uninterrupted war, revolution, and civil war, barely had the resources to establish any economy at all, let alone a socialist economy.

8—On top of the physical destruction of much of its infrastructure, the Soviet Union was victimized by an embargo imposed by the main capitalist powers.

9—Marxists are committed to the working class majority itself taking political power for the purpose of transforming society along socialist lines. There are various labels that have been given to this: proletarian dictatorship, proletarian democracy, workers' state, etc. Those who are true to the perspectives developed by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels identify these terms with the establishment of working class political rule of society, envisioned as the most complete and meaningful form of democracy that will be achieved before the eventual fading away of class society and the state. Far from believing that the proletarian state can simply reconstruct the economy by means of a few decrees, Marxists



believe that when the working class takes power there will necessarily begin a prolonged *transition period* from capitalism to the socialist goal.

10—The form of workers' rule established by the Russian Revolution of 1917 were the democratic soviets, which faced the task of creating a collectivized form of economic rule by the working class. In the midst of the life-and-death struggle against foreign invaders and civil war adversaries, the Soviet government moved much more quickly than originally intended to nationalize the economy, attempting to bring it under the control of the proletarian regime. This established the economic basis for the new workers' state, and some revolutionists hoped that this expedient of "war communism" would shorten the transition period. Yet, as Lenin and Trotsky had feared, these measures were undermined by the lack of expertise and skill in running vast and complex economic enterprises. The vacuum was filled by a rapidly growing bureaucratic apparatus which attempted to overcome economic chaos with increasingly authoritarian measures.

11—Society under the new Soviet republic was, in fact, marred from the beginning by great scarcity, sometimes including essentials such as food, clothing and fuel. This scarcity further undermined Soviet democracy. It gradually undermined the morale and the ability of working people to give sufficient attention and energy to complex political questions. It also bred corruption and led to the rise of elements in the regime who were intent on maintaining their own privileged access to goods and services.

12—Another cruel blow to the revolution was the loss of many of its most dedicated and effective leaders, killed in great numbers during the civil war. Their places of leadership were largely filled by self-seeking opportunists who had played little or no role in the revolution. In addition, the period of life-and-death struggle during the civil war created an atmosphere of brutalizing violence and inevitable excesses not intended by those who made the revolution. A vibrant multiparty pluralism in the democratic soviets, a vital and independent trade union movement, full freedom of press, etc.—all had been an integral part of the revolutionists' perspective for the transitional period, but none of these things survived the civil war.

### The Rise of Stalinism and the Struggle Against It

13—This combination of the defeat of workers' revolutions in other countries, material scarcity, undemocratic precedents during the civil war, and an increasingly careerist Communist Party and soviet leadership, paved the way for the creation of a parasitic bureaucratic caste. This bureaucracy utilized a monopoly of the distribution of scant resources in order to consolidate ever-tightening control over the workers' state and to ensure the appropriation of material privileges for themselves.

14—The new bureaucracy could not coexist with soviet democracy. To arbitrate their own affairs the bureaucrats chose Joseph Stalin, a secondary figure in the revolution. Stalin was able to use his administrative post as general secretary of the Communist Party to become eventually the absolute dictator of the Communist Party and, through the party's dominance, the soviet state. The soviets were transformed from vibrant institutions of power to ceremonial assemblies that rubber-stamped approval of bureaucratic policies.

15—This transformation did not occur all at once, or without a fight. Shortly before his death in 1924, Lenin himself attempted to initiate a struggle against the growth of the bureaucracy and Stalin's power. Soon after, a Left Opposition was formed within the Communist Party to struggle against Stalin's repressive economic policies, wrong foreign policies, and bureaucratic rule. The most prominent leader of the Left Opposition was Leon Trotsky, one of the central leaders of the revolution and the Red Army.

16—Thousands of oppositionists fought bravely against the consolidation of the bureaucratic dictatorship. But they were unable to mobilize the masses of workers for the kind of struggle needed to defeat the bureaucracy. The masses were weary after a decade of continuous battle. They no longer had the strength to conduct a prolonged fight. By the end of the 1920s, Trotsky had been deported, the Left Opposition had been driven underground, its known adherents jailed, and later executed.

17—A parallel struggle was also waged within the Communist International. Due to its revolutionary success, the Russian Communist Party had enormous authority from the beginning in the world party it helped found. Initially, under the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky, the Soviet influence on other Communist parties was quite positive. But, as the Soviet party degenerated, this degeneration was transmitted into the International as well.

18—An international Left Opposition developed within the Comintern. This opposition initially hoped to reform the Communist International, to return it to a revolutionary, democratic course. But in most parties oppositionists were ruthlessly expelled before they could gain much support among the ranks.

19—One of the chief characteristics of the bureaucracy has been its pessimism about the prospects for further successful revolutions. Its skepticism about the future of world socialism led it to rationalize its isolation with the theory of socialism in one country. Breaking with traditional Marxist teachings that socialism could only be secured on a world scale, the Stalinists proclaimed that they had already built socialism in the Soviet Union and that the main task of the international working class was to defend this socialist model. This cynical theory was used as a justification for subordinating the struggles of workers around the world to the perceived interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

20—The Stalinist bureaucracy has had no real ideology other than its own self-defense and promotion. Over the years the Stalinized Communist parties, always loyally following Moscow's direction, have vacillated wildly from one extreme to the other. There were opportunistic maneuvers that backfired disastrously for British revolutionists and workers in the general strike of 1926, and murderously for Chinese workers during the revolutionary upsurge of 1927—betrayed by reformist trade union leaders in the first case and bourgeois nationalists in the second, both of whom had been praised as friends of the Soviet Union by the Stalin leadership. This was followed by the ultraleft zigzag of 1928-34, which resulted in disastrous policies in numerous countries—bitterly attacking all other forces in the labor and socialist movements in a manner that undermined the capacity of the workers to defend their interests, abstaining from real trade unions, instead building sectarian "red unions," etc. This policy of insane sectarianism toward the German Social Democrats by the German Communist Party allowed Hitler to come to power in 1933 without a serious fight. Beginning in 1935 was the period of the Popular Front, featuring the most craven support to capitalist parties and governments. The Popular Front strategy contributed to the defeat of several revolutionary opportunities in Europe during the 1930s, including the disaster in Spain which led to more than thirty years of fascism. In the United States, the CP has generally supported the Democratic Party for the past half-century.

21—The militants of the Left Opposition advocated policies in the interests of the working class and poor peasantry and against the interests of the bureaucracy. They opposed bureaucratic repression of democracy within the party and the soviets. They argued for a return to an internationalist foreign policy of the early revolutionary period. The survival of the USSR depended on revolutions occurring in other countries. The Soviet Union and the Comintern, they argued, needed to collaborate and promote the struggles of the workers and oppressed abroad to take power. The Left Opposition opposed the bureaucracy's reactionary foreign policy, based on socialism in one country, which meant the aban-



domment or betrayal of the workers and communist movements abroad in the interest of making deals with imperialism. Despite the repression against them, the Left Opposition continued throughout the 1920s and until 1935 to try to present alternative analysis and program for the Communist International. But, when there was no real questioning by the CP ranks of the third period disaster in Germany, the Left Opposition concluded that the Communist parties were unreformable, that a new communist international was needed. In 1938, the Fourth International was organized to carry on the struggle for the original goals of the Russian Revolution and the Third International.

### Crimes and Contradictions of Stalinism

22—The thirty-year Stalin dictatorship was among the most brutal repressive regimes in history. Not just Left Oppositionists were persecuted: millions of opponents, real or perceived, died in labor camps, or were shot. History was rewritten, often making absurd claims. Even scientific theory was falsified to please dim-witted bureaucrats.

23—Fear of repression, or the desire to please authority—not to mention graft—led to widespread fraud in the accounting and planning procedures in the state economy.

24—Bureaucratic solutions to political problems ran amok. Fear of the rise of the *kulaks*—rich private farmers—led to acts of unprecedented brutality in forcing the collectivization of all agriculture against both active and passive resistance by the workers' former ally, the peasant family farmers. Millions of peasants died and Soviet farming has not recovered to this day from that disastrous crime.

25—No less sinister was the bureaucracy's treatment of the nearly 100 nationalities living within the Soviet state. Though himself a Georgian, Stalin carried out a policy of Russian chauvinism more ruthless than that of the Czar. The plight of Soviet Jews is well known in the West. Less known was the genocidal policies carried out against the Crimean Tatars. All non-Russian nationalities suffered oppression to one degree or another.

26—Further crimes against self-determination grew out of World War II. Stalin not only annexed the Baltic states, but also chunks of Finland, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Japan. These annexations—made in most cases against the will of the residents—were sanctioned by the imperialist powers at the 1945 Yalta and Potsdam conferences.

27—Also sanctioned at Yalta was the Soviet Union's domination of those Eastern European countries occupied by the Red Army at the end of the war. (The imperialists weren't granting any favors to Stalin by doing so—they were simply recognizing the de facto reality of the occupation. In return, Stalin agreed to recognize the rest of Europe as being in the imperialist sphere of influence and Communist parties, in the spirit of this deal, helped defuse postwar revolutionary situations, and restore capitalist rule, in France, Italy, and Greece.) Stalin began by looting the East European countries of not only goods but even whole factories. Capitalism was overthrown in these countries not by workers' revolution but essentially by military coups. Puppet clones of the Soviet bureaucracy were installed and maintained in power by Soviet tanks. The bureaucratically planned economies established in these countries were tied to the demands of the Kremlin, not their own national interests. Soviet armed forces were used to crush pro-socialist workers' uprisings in Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968).

28—One of the great strengths of the Russian Revolution had been its appeal to the oppressed nationalities. Under Lenin's leadership, the Communist Party supported the right of self-determination, including the right to independence, unconditionally. Even if independence meant a capitalist state (as it did in the cases

of Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states) the revolution had no right to impose a solution. You can't build socialism with enslaved people at the point of a bayonet. To attempt to do so merely discredits socialism and delays the development of genuine socialist relations. The chauvinistic policies of Stalinism, coming home to roost in the Soviet Union, and throughout Eastern Europe today, confirm these revolutionary warnings.

29—Revolutionary Marxists have also noted the contradictory influence of the Soviet Union on world politics. While Stalinism betrayed many revolutionary opportunities, and concluded numerous unconscionable deals with imperialism, Moscow at times has contributed valuable material assistance to revolutionary struggles—especially in the third world during the period of the cold war. Of particular importance was the crucial aid given to Vietnam, during its life-and-death battle against U.S. imperialism, and to the Cuban revolution—aid which has now been suspended with grave consequences for the Cuban people.

30—Despite the terrible crimes of Stalinism, despite the corruption and incompetence of the bureaucracy at every level, the Soviet Union nevertheless made great economic progress during its first sixty years and was able to withstand and defeat the invasion by Hitler's Germany. These achievements demonstrate the inherent superiority of a nationalized planned economy.

31—While Soviet working people have lacked political freedoms and access to consumer goods taken for granted by workers in the advanced capitalist countries, they nevertheless enjoyed important social victories established by the revolution: the right to full employment; free medical and dental care; free education; nominal, subsidized prices for housing, transportation, and basic foods. Such social advances have not been made available to the populations of even the richest capitalist countries.

32—The bureaucracy was not a new class. It did not own the economy. It could not dispose of state property. It played no indispensable role in the dynamics of Soviet society; indeed it proved to be an obstacle to economic development. The bureaucrats could not even pass their privileges directly on to their offspring. The bureaucrats' privilege and power rested on their political control of the Soviet state.

### The Need for Political Revolution and the Crisis of the Bureaucracy

33—The Left Opposition, and its successor, the Fourth International, concluded that a *political revolution* was necessary to replace the regime of bureaucratic tyranny with the democratic power of the working people. Only in this way could the social gains of the revolution be defended from bureaucratic mismanagement, and expanded in the interests of all. Only in this way could a nationalized and planned economy be rescued from the authoritarianism and incompetence of a parasitic elite, instead coming under the democratic control of society in order to enhance the free development of all people.

34—For decades the prospects for political revolution appeared dim. A combination of steady economic growth, military parity with imperialism, and a ruthless police state, appeared to make the bureaucracy invulnerable to all threats, foreign or domestic.

35—But during the 1970s the Soviet economy began to stagnate. Despite the recovery from the vast destruction of the Second World War, and the growth of the USSR into an industrial and military superpower, the deadweight of bureaucratic rule over the economic planning had created widespread social crises and economic and social decline. The repression of democracy on all areas of life meant that technological, scientific, and cultural growth was strangled. The Stalinist system of antidemocratic bureaucratic rule could not continue to survive in the old way.

36—In the early '80s, a section of the bureaucracy concluded that serious reforms were needed to revive the economy upon



which their political power and their privileges were based. For example, it had become clear that the extreme paranoia of the ruling caste—which, among other things, resisted the introduction of such essential technology as microcomputers and photocopying machines, because of the potential for unauthorized literature production—retarded the development of the kind of workforce necessary to move the economy forward. Slowly, a wing of the bureaucracy recognized that repression would have to be loosened.

37—This wing of the bureaucracy had no intention of returning to a system of democratic control over the economy by workers' councils organized in the workplaces, which would replace the bureaucracy's power with their own. That would mean that the workers in the USSR could plan their way out of the crises and then continue to develop toward socialism. However, such an option is anathema to the bureaucracy. It is interested in preserving itself by any means necessary, not in building socialism. Instead, the reform bureaucrats found inspiration in what they viewed as successful economic models in the capitalist West—especially Thatcherism and "Reaganomics."

38—When the Gorbachev wing of the bureaucracy came to power it decided to loosen the grip on repression somewhat, instituting what they called *glasnost* (openness). Confident that their continuing monopoly of political power through the Communist Party would assure them ultimate control, they opened the door to what became a genuine democratic upsurge among the Soviet masses.

39—At the same time, the new leaders in the Kremlin, over the objections of so-called "hard-liners" (those reluctant to tinker with the tried and true methods of Stalinist rule), introduced what they called *perestroika*—restructuring. Characteristic of the bureaucracy's pragmatic philosophy, *perestroika* was not a well-thought-out game plan from the beginning. Restructuring has moved in fits of starts and stops, with many retreats and constant improvisations. Initially, mainstream elements in the bureaucracy spoke in terms of reforming the state economy, using market mechanisms, material incentives, misnamed "cooperatives" (private start-up enterprises), and franchising agreements with foreign capitalists, in attempts to overcome the stultifying effects of the "command economy"—the term used to describe traditional rigid central planning. While initially many *perestroika* supporters spoke of building "market socialism," the evolution of *perestroika* has seen the beginning of the dismantling of the planned economy and state monopoly of foreign trade, along with attacks on the surviving social gains of the revolution. A transition to a "market economy" is now proclaimed by many of its central proponents to be the sole cure for all the Soviet Union's ills.

### Socialism or Capitalism?

40—The term "market economy" means different things to different people. Undoubtedly, many people in the USSR hoped that the political and economic reforms, including the "market" reforms, would lead to the availability of more and better quality consumer goods in the stores. But when Western economists praise Soviet efforts to shift to the market they are talking about the reintroduction of capitalism.

41—Socialism seeks the complete elimination of an economy based on profit rather than human needs, yet revolutionary Marxists have never excluded the option of using market mechanisms during the transition to socialism as a means of regulating the distribution of some scarce goods and services. But when human labor power becomes a commodity to be bought and sold on the market—one of the goals of *perestroika* today—there will be tendencies to extract increasing labor through such mechanisms as the speed-up and lengthening of the workday, a dampening effect on wages, and unemployment. This must be opposed by those committed to creating a socialist society. Similarly, essential

goods such as basic food and clothing, services such as medical care, education, and transportation, cannot be left to the market. Otherwise social inequality is perpetuated and even intensified.

42—While the Soviet workers embraced, and took advantage of, *glasnost*, the bureaucracy has had a tough time selling them *perestroika*. Concrete attempts to attack social benefits and working conditions have met stiff resistance, forcing the bureaucracy into many partial retreats. After more than five years of *perestroika* opinion polls still indicate that while the workers overwhelmingly say they support the market they are just as decisive in rejecting private ownership of property, or any basic changes in their socially guaranteed benefits.

43—Over the past five years central planning has been virtually eliminated in the Soviet Union. However, the market economy is far from being in place. Economic stagnation has given way to economic chaos. There is no stable halfway house between socialism and capitalism.

44—The bureaucracy, which seemed so unshakable only a decade ago, has created a crisis that may well lead to its destruction. The old stability of the hypercentralized "command economy" established under Stalin cannot be re-created, yet if capitalism is restored it is guaranteed that the bureaucracy as a whole will not be able to establish itself as a new capitalist class. In addition, the growing autonomy—in some cases the impending separation—of certain Soviet republics and oppressed nationalities, who are led by elements largely independent of the old bureaucratized party/state apparatus, was being at least partially recognized by the Gorbachev wing of the bureaucracy. This, too, has obviously dire implications for significant sections of the bureaucracy. A fragmented Soviet Union, to the extent that it is drawn into the capitalist orbit, likely will become quickly dominated by foreign capital, interested mainly in selling consumer goods, and obtaining raw materials, not developing a powerful capitalist competitor. Sections of the top echelons of the bureaucracy could undoubtedly enrich themselves by becoming native agents for the penetration of foreign capital, but much of the bureaucracy—which numbers in the millions—will lose their privileges and be driven back into the working class.

### The Coup and Its Aftermath

45—This crisis led to the August coup. The coup has been explained as an attempt by "hard-liners" who want to call a halt to both *glasnost* and *perestroika*, to preserve domination over the various Soviet republics and oppressed nationalities, and to restore the old Communist Party dictatorship. The reality is more complex than this—the "hard-liners" themselves promised to move ahead with the "economic reforms" and also demonstrated considerable hesitation, or inability, to unleash a thoroughgoing repression. The amazing incompetence of the coup-makers has even caused some to speculate that the whole affair was a ploy, or at least intentionally provoked, by Yeltsin and/or Gorbachev. It is clear, however, that the immediate and spontaneous response of hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country played a decisive role in the defeat of the coup. Though the working class response was uneven (much weaker in Moscow than in Leningrad, for example), the impending strike of Soviet miners, and the potential for strikes among other sectors of the working class, the very real possibility of uprisings among the various oppressed nationalities, and the obvious illegitimacy of those making the coup were also factors causing major sectors of the bureaucracy and the military to take their distance—guaranteeing the collapse of this reactionary effort within three days. The defeat of the coup was a genuine victory for the Soviet peoples. The active intervention of the masses in this situation creates important opportunities for the forces of democracy and socialism.

(Continued on page 36)



# SOLIDARITY DAY II

by Frank and Sarah Lovell

Demonstrators and organizers alike rejoiced in the size of the turnout in Washington, D.C., on August 31 in response to the AFL-CIO call for Solidarity Day II. The idea behind the call was to mark the decade of labor abuse since the massive demonstration of labor solidarity in the nation's capital on September 19, 1981, and to send a message to the employing class and the politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties that working people have been browbeaten too long. Even though fewer union members marched down Constitution Avenue this time than ten years ago the marchers numbered in the hundreds of thousands, estimated by the U.S. Park Police at a quarter million. Despite the 95-degree heat the huge crowd was festive and the general atmosphere of a gigantic family picnic seemed to prevail.

A special issue of *AFL-CIO News*, the biweekly national publication of the 14-million-member federation, asserted: "As with the first Solidarity Day 10 years ago, we march for fairness, equity and opportunity and against the forces of reaction and greed who assert 'economic rights' over human rights."

AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland echoed the tone of this statement. He said, "We are here to remind our elected representatives that they were put there to serve, not the faceless marketplace, but the aspirations of real people." These "aspirations of real people," as summarized in AFL-CIO slogans, include the following: health care reforms; labor law reform; civil rights and equal rights guarantees; federal investment in education; protection of U.S. manufacturing industries; "fair trade" agreements with other nations to replace recent "free trade" treaties; federal funding of city and state governments; workplace safety and health; environmental cleanup; legislation to protect the right of strikers to return to their jobs.

The massive demonstration for these general objectives was officially endorsed by a coalition of more than 180 religious, environmental, civil rights and union organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, American Jewish Congress, National Organization for Women (NOW), Women's Strike for Peace, Friends of the Earth, National Wildlife Federation, and Young Social Democrats. Members of the coalition have their own agendas in addition to the demands of the AFL-CIO leadership, and some have different interpretations of those demands. This, then, was the official face and surface appearance of the demonstration. But the composition and contrasting moods of the demonstrators presented a different picture.

### Marchers Assemble

We arrived at the offices of the Communications Workers of America (CWA Local 1180) in lower Manhattan at 5:30 a.m. to board a bus to Washington. The local had chartered eight buses and several motor vans. One of the first people we met at the union was a young woman telephone worker, one of the hundred or so

who came early. She had a bundle of *Labor Notes*, the nationally circulated monthly publication that tells what's happening inside the unions. She gave us a copy which proved to be a useful guide to a better understanding of the occasion.

The great majority of Local 1180 members who made the trip were Black. On our bus the majority were women, also several well-behaved children. In Washington the CWA had set up a large tent where lunch was served before the march, which began promptly at noon. Other unions also had tents where free food and refreshments were served to their members.

### Two Demonstrations Compared

Small groups gathered to talk about where they were from and their changing conditions of work as they waited for contingents to form and join the march. Almost invariably in these groups someone was there who had been at the 1981 demonstration. Naturally, the two demonstrations were compared and contrasted. We were reminded that ten years ago the unions had taken over the Washington subway system and everyone rode free for the day. There were no closed turnstiles to create bottlenecks, causing long lines outside the Metro stations. Everything moved more easily and quickly that time, even with more demonstrators on hand.

Another difference was the political attitudes and economic expectations expressed then and now. During the past ten years union members by and large have learned that not much can be expected from the political structure in this country, and their faith in the economy is shaken. This was expressed in signs carried by the marchers, and by their conduct.

### On the March

The first large contingent leading the march consisted of thousands of members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), all wearing green T-shirts and carrying a variety of signs against the massive layoffs of public workers and for national health care reform to cover the 37 million in uninsured families of the working poor and unemployed in this country. Other very large contingents were the United Steel Workers, United Auto Workers (both with delegations from every state), the International Union of Electrical Workers, Local 1199 hospital workers of New York, the Communications Workers (which we identified with), the American Federation of Teachers, the Teamsters, United Mine Workers, and the many others that comprise the AFL-CIO. Each union had its own distinctive color, and the marchers wore red, blue, green, yellow, white T-shirts with the names and logos of their different unions. The miners wore their camouflage combat suits and carried signs in support of the main AFL-CIO slogans, but they also raised their own demands for mine safety and seemed to conduct themselves in a more determined and disciplined way than other contingents. A teacher in the New York University system remarked that the miners did not come to Washington for a picnic and obviously had a more important mission in mind.

This observation prompted a question as to how the intent of an unregimented group like the miners can be detected simply by their conduct and appearance in the line of march. His answer was that their demands were more decisive than most others and that their determination was reminiscent of the angry demonstrations of public workers last spring in Albany, the New York state capital, against severe cutbacks in social services and education and the impending layoffs. That same sense of urgency, the realization that something must be done to stop the drift into



unemployment and poverty, is what set the miners apart—this, combined perhaps, with their distinctive combat suits. Many of the same public workers and teachers who demonstrated angrily in Albany marched in Washington behind tame slogans and in a different mood. This certainly confirmed the truism that the general character of a demonstration is determined by its organizers and conditioned by the demands they raise.

The union contingents included a high percentage of Black and other minority workers, and women workers. This contrasted sharply with the many massive antiwar demonstrations in Washington since the 1960s which were largely white, consisting mostly of students and others of the middle class. Union marchers at this demonstration were of all ages from retirees to young apprentices. And they came from every section of the country. One group of marchers seemed to be nearly all children, perhaps attached to one of the endorser organizations. A group of Vietnam war veterans also marched.

### **Rail Unions Under Fire**

A small United Transportation Union (UTU) contingent, representing railroad workers, marched. But the rail unions were nowhere prominent or featured in the demonstration which is curious because at the moment they are the sector of organized labor under most serious attack from the government. Why weren't railroad workers given special attention? And why was not the entire labor movement called upon to pledge solidarity with them in their present struggle to save their unions? We consulted *Labor Notes* and discovered some leads in an article by Peter Rachleff titled, "Anger grows over rail contract disaster; 40,000 jobs lost." The article explains that one top union official, Richard Kilroy of the Transportation Communications Union and also president of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, was kicked out as president of his union at its convention in July after he had connived with the rail carriers and government boards to bring on the contract disaster. One other rail union president has since been kicked out by angry members, and two more are expected to get the same treatment soon. This may explain why there were no enthusiastic expressions of solidarity from the speakers stand for the embattled railroad workers. Today they are in a similar situation as the air traffic controllers (PATCO) in 1981, one of the triggers of the first Solidarity Day demonstration. And just as the top union officialdom failed then to help the PATCO strikers, so now, ten years later, they seem prepared to sacrifice the railroad workers.

### **For a Better Life**

In organizing and publicizing Solidarity Day II the top AFL-CIO officials gave the impression that they were seeking to redistribute wealth and win a voice for labor in government. Their special Solidarity Day '91 issue of the *AFL-CIO News* cites Labor Department data showing a decline in average real wages of 21.1 percent since 1979. It demands "social and economic justice . . . job opportunities . . . decent wages and working conditions." It says, "These are the goals that should be part and parcel of the economic policies of the nation."

Without exception the demonstrators agreed that this is what should be. Their problem is how to get it. As the country continues to decline and multinational corporations and banking consortiums continue to skim off an increasingly larger share of wealth, the unions lose members and political influence. But if the union movement hopes to reverse the downward economic trend and redistribute the national wealth it must find solutions to the problems of the economic system and mobilize its members politically. This is what the union bureaucracy is incapable of doing.

Just as the speeches at the rally avoided both the problem and its solution, so the scattered chants and slogans of the marchers were misdirected or inadequate. One of the most repeated chants was "Bush has got to go." Since there was no suggestion or follow-up response on how Bush can be made to go, the implication was that he must be replaced by a Democratic Party candidate in the 1992 presidential election. A group of silent marchers (as many were) carried signs which said, "One Republican Party is enough," the implication being that there is no difference between the two anti-labor parties and it might be stretched to mean that labor ought to have its own party. In any case these two half-formed ideas, elect a new administration and Democrats have become Republicans, remain incomplete and inconclusive without the explicit call for a labor party.

### **Lack of Leadership**

The absence of leadership in the face of the present crisis of the labor movement was unintentionally exposed by a large contingent of auto workers accustomed to making their demands known. They came with squad captains carrying bullhorns and prepared to make noise. Their leaders had failed to tell them what they should shout. So they did what they are accustomed to do. They shouted "UAW . . . UAW . . . UAW" most of the way down Constitution Avenue. This is appropriate on a picket line where the union is trying to organize a nonunion plant, but it does not address the political impasse of the union movement at this time.

For Lane Kirkland and other top officials the impasse remains only an embarrassment. The depth of labor's crisis has not yet penetrated their consciousness. They remain steadfast and complacent in the harness of the Democratic Party machine.

In response to questions earlier this year on the labor party issue Kirkland indicated to the Los Angeles *Times* labor writer, Harry Bernstein, that union leaders are unhappy with the treatment they are getting from the Democrats in Congress. When House Democratic leader Richard Gephardt supported Bush's request for "fast track" authority to negotiate the administration's "free trade" treaty with Mexico, labor officials denounced him and the Democratic Party. The president of the Missouri AFL-CIO, supposed to be a political force in Gephardt's home state, said, "Basically, the Democratic Party has not delivered on a national basis. As time goes on and things get worse, the feeling from working people may be that they should articulate their own concerns." The head of the St. Louis labor council was more pointed. He said, "I have heard more talk about a labor party or a labor-farm coalition than I have in the past 15 years." But this was soon forgotten. Kirkland still thinks labor party talk is "a formula for wandering in the political wilderness." Some contingents in the Solidarity Day parade actually carried signs demanding "off the fast track," a demand rejected last June by large majorities of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

### **Democratic Party Shuns Labor**

Leading Democrats were invited to address the Solidarity Day rally but none came. New York governor Mario Cuomo and New York City mayor David Dinkins accepted but both sent regrets the day before the rally. The organizers had to be content with Jesse Jackson and Geraldine Ferraro, sufficient to demonstrate that union officials still look to Democratic Party politicians for answers to the social and economic problems of this country and its workforce.

Evidence mounts that working men and women are fast shedding illusions in the Democratic Party. Polls taken of union members for Labor Party Advocates, a recently formed group headed by Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), show that workers in all parts of the country favor



the labor party idea. In CWA Local 1180, for example, a poll a year ago showed that 49 percent of the membership agreed that "it's time for the labor movement to build a new political party of working people that would be independent of the two major political parties." Sixty-two percent agreed that "both the Democrats and Republicans care more about the interests of big business than they do about the interests of working people."

### Labor Party Choice

Labor Party Advocates reports steady growth since it started membership recruitment early this year. It issues a regular bimonthly progress report and expects to call a constitutional convention when 5,000 local union leaders have signed up. We did not find Labor Party Advocates at the demonstration. If they had no formal presence there this was a missed opportunity. Surely if they had set up a registration table hundreds of new members would have joined. Hardly anyone in unions today actively opposes the labor party idea, except top officials and some hangers-on who get paid to distribute political action literature for Democratic politicians. But neither is there a popular groundswell to immediately set up a labor party structure and field working class candidates in the coming election. A lot of educational and organizational work remains to be done.

### Scabs in Congress

The most popular sign and chant of the march was "No More Scabs" and "Scabs Have Got to Go." This refers to legislation to outlaw the "permanent replacement" of strikers (HR 5/S 55) which is sponsored by the AFL-CIO. It is something almost every union member can personally relate to. Those who do not yet have firsthand experience of strikebreakers crossing picket lines can readily understand that chances of winning strikes will improve if "replacement workers" cannot be guaranteed permanent jobs. The same Gephardt who only last June was denounced for his "betrayal" of labor's goals is now the guiding hand in support of this anti-scab bill, "Workplace Fairness Bill" as it is officially titled. We checked our copy of *Labor Notes* for a rundown on our "good friend of labor" who steered this bill through committee hearings in the House of Representatives. We found an article which says scabbing in Congress does more damage to unions than any number of strikebreakers at the point of production. It says, "Gephardt, along with the rest of the House Democratic leadership, made sure Congressional Democrats ignored pleas from Eastern strikers, voted to break the rail strike, rammed through the free trade fast track authority for Bush, and helped ditch a Canadian-style health care plan for one so weak it was approved by the American Medical Association." This is the leader of the Democrats to whom the labor officialdom and its Washington lobby look for favors. He has no trouble convincing other Democrats to make the record in favor of bills the labor lobby wants enacted when they all know this legislation faces certain veto when it reaches the desk of the president.

When all the speeches were over and demonstrators were heading for the subways we got on the wrong line which took us to the Pentagon, a long ride out of our way to RFK stadium where our bus was parked. A group of miners was on the car to the Pentagon to board their buses from West Virginia and Kentucky that were parked there. We learned from them that they, at least, have no faith in politicians. They have been beaten, fined, and imprisoned by Democratic Party sheriffs, judges, and congressmen in their states. And they have learned that when they organize to elect one of their own, as they have done in local and state elections, it is possible to defeat the corrupt political representatives of the coal barons. In both West Virginia and Kentucky union officials,

running on union write-in tickets, have defeated entrenched Democratic incumbents in the state legislature and other elective offices.

On the way back to RFK stadium we talked with other demonstrators from Indiana, members of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), who had also taken the wrong line. They told us that they had left directly from work on Friday afternoon and rode all night to get to Washington in time, and had made reservations to stop over in a hotel on the trip back home. Their local union had sent five buses. One of their group had been at the 1981 Solidarity Day demonstration. He remembered that the subways were free that time. Another of the group said that this might be a sign that the unions have lost some of their influence in Washington. He said their local union had protected wages and working conditions pretty well during the past decade, but the owner and founder of the Franklin pump company where they work had recently died at age 94. "A fine gentleman," he said. This reminded us that the AFL-CIO basic organization policy is to collaborate with "good" employers, and union members are taught that if business isn't well managed and financially successful the workers will be out of jobs. And what can you do without a good employer who signs your paycheck every week?

### When All Is Said and Done

Back in New York at 11 p.m. we walked to the bus at City Hall and got home before midnight. On the bus we met another demonstrator from AFSCME District Council 37, very proud of her union. She is near retirement age, works as a biochemist, and lives in a lower middle class community, the Stuyvesant Town development. On weekends in summer she goes to the beach, she said. While in Washington she found time after the march to shop for clothes. She told us that without the unions life in this country would be much worse.

Another passenger we met was a retired member of the Teamsters union, also just returning from Washington. He wore a T-shirt for the reelection of his business agent, Barry Feinstein, in the coming local union elections. He thought the election of the new International president of the Teamsters will be "a tossup." No matter who wins the union will carry on, he said. He was pleased with the turnout at the demonstration in Washington, pleased with all the speeches he heard, pleased about the demands that are being made for better conditions of life and better health care. He had specific information about how many buses went to Washington—200 from New York City and more than 3,000 from other parts. Trains, cars, and airplanes also brought in thousands. It cost a million dollars he said, and a million workers came. For him it was a demonstration of what working people, through their unions, can do. "No one got hurt, no one got robbed, no one got shot, and everyone had a good day," he said. And this may have been the sentiment of most demonstrators, including those who understand that these demonstrations—organized the way this one was, more to ask for favors than to make demands—are the best way the union movement has of lobbying Congress. At least the basic aims of the union movement are publicized, and for a change millions of people have a chance to hear what unions stand for and hope to accomplish.

As always there were also those who came with the intention of helping to bring about badly needed changes in the lives of working people without having to beg politicians who are interested only in their own welfare. They share the confidence of many that a new day is coming. □

*Sarah Lovell is a member of CWA. Frank Lovell belongs to UAW.*



# For Independent Labor Political Action

## Statement of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency

Since the end of the postwar boom in the 1970s unions have been under attack. In the 1980s real wages declined and fringe benefits (guaranteed annual wage, supplementary unemployment benefits, full health care coverage, early retirement with lifetime benefits, etc.) disappeared.

The standard of living of all working people has dropped drastically and continues to deteriorate.

The rate of unionization has fallen to 16 percent of the workforce, the lowest since the 1920s.

Hundreds of thousands of union jobs in manufacturing have been lost. New jobs in the service sector are non-union and low-paying.

Cities and states are cutting social services and firing workers.

Given the worsening economic and social conditions, the identical pro-business, anti-working class policies of the Democratic and Republican parties, and the absence of any alternative political party that champions workers' needs and challenges government corruption, many millions of Americans have lost interest in electoral politics. Only about 50 percent of eligible voters participate in presidential elections. Union leaders can no longer whip up enthusiasm for Democratic politicians.

What has the AFL-CIO leadership done? They beg for help from "good" employers and "friendly" politicians.

### Labor Can Create Jobs!

- **Reduce the hours of work.** The workweek must be limited to 30 hours.
- **Launch a massive public works program** to rebuild the industrial and social infrastructure:
  - build badly needed new schools and colleges
  - build low-cost housing for the homeless
  - build a national rapid transit rail system
  - plan and build for the protection of the environment
  - construct a national health care system with all necessary facilities available to everyone
- **guarantee a job to all who are willing and able to work.** Demand the right to work!

### Labor Can Win a Majority in Congress!

- **Support the movement for a Labor Party.** Kick out the Democratic and Republican friends of bosses and bankers.
- **Support the rights of women and all minorities.**
- **Elect a labor government.**

We are seeing the beginnings of a working class fightback, a

refusal to continue the policy of concessions as evidenced by the strikes at Greyhound, Eastern, Pittston, the New York *Daily News*, and elsewhere.

Movements for union democracy and an end to concession bargaining have developed in the Teamsters and the United Auto Workers (Teamsters for a Democratic Union and New Directions). This new labor militancy and the general dissatisfaction with Democratic and Republican party politicians represent a shift in the mood of working people in this country.

This shift is finding political expression. In Kentucky and West Virginia coal miners have successfully run union candidates against Democratic incumbents in state government.

Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, who has been speaking about the need for a labor party for years, has stepped up his campaign and launched an organization called Labor Party Advocates. And the National Organization for Women (NOW) is holding hearings to explore sentiments and possibilities for a third party.

The labor movement can make gains even in times of economic downturn, which are after all not caused by any shortage of resources but by the refusal on the part of employers to fully utilize resources, limiting production to the greed of private profit. During the Great Depression of the 1930s the labor upsurge that gave birth to the CIO won social security, unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, and public works programs from a capitalist class anxious to prevent a more thorough overhaul of society.

A revitalized labor movement based on rank-and-file activism, militancy, union democracy and solidarity, and having its own political party, could do more than win reforms. It would demonstrate labor's inherent strength and change the face of American politics.



## Again Labor Begins to March!



# A Look at the Ron Daniels Presidential Campaign

by Claire Cohen

African-Americans, working class Americans, and other oppressed groups are becoming increasingly disillusioned by our two-party electoral system. And over recent months there has been an increasing interest in and receptiveness to efforts to build a third party coming from three directions: organized labor, through Labor Party Advocates groups organized by Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union; the National Organization for Women (NOW), which has held hearings on the idea and is actively investigating the possibility of participating in a third party project; and the Black community, in the form of a presidential campaign by Ron Daniels.

This magazine has published a number of articles on the efforts of Mazzocchi and of NOW. But there has not yet been any report about the Daniels campaign. My purpose here is to give a preliminary assessment, and begin a discussion of this important development.

## The History of Ron Daniels

As a Black activist, I have been following Daniels's career since my days in the Rainbow Coalition in 1987 and 1988. I've talked personally with him a few times and consider him to be a sincere and dedicated activist, with Black nationalist and socialist leanings—regardless of the flaws and merits of his overall strategy. He doesn't have the charisma of Jesse Jackson, but he is also not an opportunist like Jackson. He started out firmly believing in the "inside-outside" strategy of the Rainbow Coalition (working for social and political change through progressive candidates and policies inside the Democratic Party as well as organizing outside of it). But he seems to realize now that this policy was bankrupt, that it has failed. And he seems to be moving increasingly to an exclusively "outside" approach. Daniels also appears to be moving further to the left. In the most recent speech I heard him give, he came across as a left-wing social democrat who sometimes even tiptoes, timidly, in a revolutionary direction.

Daniels is currently president of the Institute for Community Organization and Development in Youngstown, Ohio. He is also convenor of the African-American Progressive Action Network (AAPAN) and has played a leading role in a project called the National Malcolm X Commemorative Commission. He was president of the National Black Political Assembly from 1974 to 1980, during which time he pushed strongly for independent Black candidates and politics. In the early '80s he was co-chairperson of the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP). In 1987, he was executive director of the

National Rainbow Coalition. In 1988, he served as deputy campaign manager in the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign.

On Sunday, August 18, 1991, I went to hear Ron Daniels speak at the Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Homewood, the largest Black neighborhood in Pittsburgh. Thirty-six people attended, the majority Black. Below is a report of what he said, followed by my own brief assessment of the pros and cons of his current campaign.

## Daniels's Message

Daniels says he is running as an independent candidate for president as part of a strategy to attempt to build a Black-led third party solely accountable to oppressed groups and the working and poor classes of all races. He also presents it as a means to bring a left political platform before the American public.

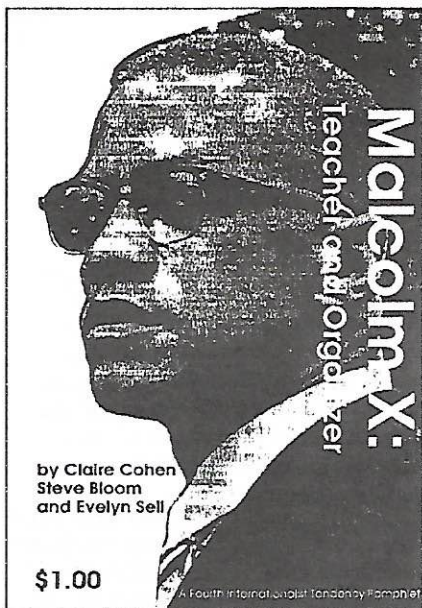
He pointed out that both the Republican and Democratic parties serve the interests of the overwhelmingly white, wealthy, privileged few, not the interests of the great majority of us who are members of the working class and/or oppressed nationalities and groups. The government provides trillions of dollars in "corporate welfare checks" to failed, corrupt savings and loans, wasteful military contractors, big business, and now the failing banks, while begrudging mere tens of millions to the unemployed, homeless, working poor, families on welfare, the majority of whom, Daniels points out, are white.

Experience, he explained, should have taught us "that it's not enough to change the pieces in the pie, we need to change the whole pie." "While a few, individual Democrats have been good on the issues," they are limited by being in a party that is oriented to maintaining the power of the ruling class. "People have been misled by the propaganda of the ruling class, in the Gulf War for example . . . you can't eat a flag sandwich." "We need to overturn the old power structure. . . . That's the only way we can make sure [our needs and interests are met]. . . . We need to take over the system . . . create a new society for [social and economic justice] and empower the grassroots."

Daniels says he is working with African-American, Native American, and other activists to develop a detailed political platform. He plans to hold "an independent, grassroots convention of working class and oppressed people in late August of next year, after the Democratic and Republican conventions, where we will present our platform and measure the platform of the two parties against it—so the people, themselves, can see how [bankrupt] the Democrats are."

A "people's platform" would be for full employment with living wages. It would include a national health service and





“quality education with a curriculum of inclusion to overcome racism. Education is political.” Daniels is also pushing for, among many other things, “a domestic Marshall Plan in which massive resources would be invested in the rebuilding of our cities and barrios where millions of Blacks, Latinos, other minorities, and working people are forced to subsist”; economic justice for Native

Americans through treaty compliance, economic restoration, and grassroots empowerment; reparations for African-Americans in the form of massive community development funds, over which the grassroots community would themselves have control.

Daniels said, “We must not retreat in presenting [an African-American] agenda in the face of racism.” He claims that if the wealthy were required to pay their fair share of taxes, the military budget was cut by 50 percent over the next decade, and there was a serious effort to more equally distribute the wealth of this country “so that 90 percent of it wasn’t in the hands of 10 percent,” “there would be enough of the pie for everyone.” He claims that working class whites would also benefit from affirmative action and reparations for African-Americans, though unfortunately he doesn’t clarify how that would be true. He stresses the need for white radicals “to do their part” by not only supporting Black efforts, but also going back to their communities and discussing effective ways to combat racism among the white working class.

On the other hand, Daniels cautions African-Americans about “the trap of skin politics.” “In the 1990s, we have to discern which Black leaders are really in our best interests . . . our [present] leaders have failed us. . . . Technicolor oppression is just as bad as white oppression. . . . We don’t want slavemasters [of any color], so we don’t want Clarence Thomas . . . who made it through affirmative action and now wants to close the doors to the rest of us. . . . We don’t want Doug Wilder either. He’s an opportunist who is always testing to see which way the wind blows. . . . His pro-choice stand was totally opportunist. He’s against labor. . . .” “Blacks need to realize that issues such as environmentalism and nuclear power are not white issues. If Three Mile Island had melted down, the radioactivity would not have said ‘Here’s a Black community, I’ll skirt around it.’ It would have gotten us too.” (Also, most toxic waste dumps are in communities of color, and the two largest are in African-American communities.)

When asked about Jesse Jackson, Daniels said that “One important thing that the Jesse Jackson campaign did show was that all people, including whites, can be rallied to the truth.”

Despite this, he believes that “Jesse has made a great mistake by sticking with the Democratic Party. The party has shown its true colors by the way it has treated [progressive populist] candidates like Jackson and Harold Washington. I see what Jackson is trying to do with his inside-outside strategy, but I don’t think it’s going to work.” Daniels says he will run whether Jackson does or not. He will consider his campaign a success if he gets two million votes, “because it’s really about building a grassroots movement to go beyond ’92—to ’96, to the year 2000.” If Jackson runs, when he loses the presidential nomination Daniels hopes to woo Jackson’s constituency to follow him “right out of the Democratic Party.” “If Jackson left the party, which I really doubt he will, I’d join forces with him. If he won the nomination, which I really doubt would happen, I’d [reassess my opinion of the Democratic Party] and come back in.” Daniels says “the real reason people don’t vote is because they don’t see anyone that represents them.” He believes that people will participate in the political process if they are offered a viable alternative that really represents their interests. “But,” he says, “elections are not enough. We must get out on the streets by the thousands [if we really want to make change].”

Daniels is supportive of other third party efforts. His major criticism of them is that he feels white racism must be dealt with and African-Americans must play a central leadership role if any third party effort is to succeed. Daniels has been talking with Labor Party Advocates about “how we can work together, even combine our efforts,” not compete against each other. He also plans to testify at the next NOW hearings on the third party issue. He has also been talking to the American Greens.

### A Perspective of Critical Support

Despite problematic areas, Ron Daniels’s overall perspective seems a positive contribution to building a mass national political alternative accountable to oppressed groups, the working class, and the poor. He is definitely correct that any such effort will not succeed if African-Americans do not play a central role from the very beginning and if whites cannot accept that this is true. On the other hand, he is too timid about calling for an end to military expenditures, and needs to clarify the issue of reparations for Blacks—especially how whites would benefit from it.

I am particularly impressed with his attempts to work with Labor Party Advocates and NOW. On the other hand, It may be that his strategy of running for president is not the most effective way to build a movement at the present time.

Revolutionary socialists ought to take an initial approach of critically supporting Daniels’s effort—especially if he continues to move decisively away from the Democratic Party. His perspectives in this area seem to be evolving in a positive, less reformist, even more revolutionary direction.

Daniels is asking for input from interested persons and groups, and is clearly open to discussion with a variety of tendencies on the left. At the very least, the Ron Daniels campaign could become an important vehicle to advance communication and solidarity between Black and white radicals and activists in working class struggles, as well as to raise political consciousness among African-Americans, working class people, and other oppressed groups. □

September 1, 1991



# New Crisis in "Black-Jewish Relations"

by Steve Bloom

Two recent events have raised, once again, the question of relations between the Black and Jewish communities—in New York City in particular. On July 20 Leonard Jeffries, head of the African-American Studies Department at New York City College (CCNY, part of the City University of New York, or CUNY system) made a speech which has been widely denounced as anti-Semitic—though it has been defended by many Black spokespeople and others. Then, on August 19, a car which was part of a motorcade for Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, leader of the Hasidic Lubavitcher Jewish sect in the mostly Black Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, hit two Black children in that community, killing one of them. This set off several days of protests by Blacks—including the killing of a young Jewish rabbinical student, conflicts with the police, and looting of a number of stores—during which some Blacks chanted "Heil Hitler" and made other positive references to Nazism.

What are progressive-minded, antiracist whites and Blacks (or Asians and Latinos, for that matter) to make of such an event? Certainly we must oppose any resurgence of anti-Semitic sentiment no matter where it comes from, just as surely as we reject all forms of racial prejudice and oppression directed against Blacks, Hispanics, and others. And there can be no doubt that a widespread anti-Jewish prejudice exists within the Black community. What is the underlying source of this? What solutions can be found for the problem? Were the Jeffries speech and the Crown Heights rebellion really stimulated by Black anti-Semitism? Or do they represent something else?

In this article I will try to look at these two specific incidents and at the general question. We will review the historical roots of anti-Semitism as well as the causes of a specific anger against Jews that exists in the Black community—all the while keeping in mind the essential backdrop of Black oppression and the legitimate hatred that exists against a racist society.

Let us note at the outset: one of the central facts that has to be taken into account in any analysis of this today is that the main leaders of the Jewish community in the U.S., especially in New York City where they represent an important political force, have at least been complicit in the

oppression of Blacks, and sometimes active participants in it. It is therefore necessary to make distinctions between legitimate expressions of anger at this real Jewish-institutional participation in a racist system, on the one hand, and genuine anti-Semitism on the other. This is not always easy.

In a situation where there has for many years been no real mass leadership among Blacks with a clear ideological perspective and a consistent program for action, legitimate protest and unacceptable ideology often mix in ways that make it difficult, or even impossible, to sort things out. In the final analysis, of course, anti-Semitism, like racism in general, has to be understood as a social problem endemic to the capitalist system. It is not some special problem, unique to the Black community.

A much more exhaustive treatment of this subject is necessary than we have the time or space to provide here. But we will try to indicate the main outlines of a revolutionary Marxist approach.

## Historical Roots of Anti-Semitism

The roots of anti-Semitism go back at least to a medieval Europe dominated by the Catholic Church, where there was both ideological/religious prejudice against Jews and economic discrimination. From the church came the idea that Jews, like all non-Christians, were something less than human—though Jews in particular were guilty as "Christ-killers." The "Christian" drive to convert all other peoples often included the physical persecution of Jews who continued to practice their own religion. Jews were also circumscribed economically, limited to particular occupations in feudal society.

Jews remained an oppressed religious and racial grouping in Europe, where most lived, as economic life made the transition from feudalism to capitalism—though the form and intensity of this discrimination varied over time. And, as we know, anti-Semitism reached its most grotesque historical expression in the form of the Nazi Holocaust.

As Marxists we approach all questions from a materialist point of view, not an idealist one. Therefore, the development and tenacious hold of anti-Semitism over the centuries cannot be explained simply on the basis of bad ideas developed by bad

thinkers. We have to understand why these ideas have been so widespread, and so long-lasting. The material roots of anti-Semitism lie in its usefulness for the dominant classes in both feudal and capitalist society—as a means of dividing those they rule and distracting attention from real problems that exist. Indeed, all of the most heinous expressions of overt anti-Semitism—when it broke out of its ordinary realm of reactionary ideas in people's heads and became transformed into a driving force for acute oppression, with masses of Jews as innocent victims (from the Spanish Inquisition to the pogroms of czarist Russia to the Holocaust itself)—have occurred as a result of intervention and/or instigation by the prevailing state apparatus.

In both its "Christian" and secular forms anti-Semitism remains very much alive, and its historical legacy continues to infect mass consciousness. This is even, or perhaps especially true, in the United States, where an "enlightened" ruling class masks its bigotry behind an ideological cloak that declares "all men (sic) are created equal." But their thin veneer of civilized thinking cannot change the racism that lurks beneath the surface—a racism that could even tolerate slavery for almost a century after these words were written in the Declaration of Independence.

The growth and expansion of the United States of America into a premier world imperialist power was based entirely on an anti-Indian, anti-Black, anti-Brown, anti-Asian, anti-Semitic, and even anti-Southern/Eastern-European, ideology. This was necessary to get U.S. working people to accept, and participate in, the genocide practiced by their rulers against millions of people—from Wounded Knee, to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vietnam, and most recently Iraq. In terms of both numbers of victims and degree of savagery these crimes are not qualitatively different from those perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews. The difference is that no one has so far been able to force the U.S. ruling class to face judgment for its crimes. History's ultimate verdict, nevertheless, will be severe.

Today the attitude toward anti-Semitism in the U.S. has shifted somewhat. This is due primarily to the emergence after World War II of Israel as a racist state, with interests tied completely and directly to those of the imperialists. It is therefore in Washington's interests to cultivate Jewish public opinion. (We will take up this general question of Israel again shortly.) But the reactionary racist ideology bred over the past thousand years and more is not so easily uprooted. It pervades every corner of our society. Many non-Jews (including many of those same ruling class



politicians who are so outraged by “Black anti-Semitism”) will think no more of making anti-Semitic jokes when they believe no Jews to be present than whites will hesitate about anti-Black humor when they, likewise, think they are in safe company. And some of these folks will even imagine themselves to be enlightened people, as fighters against racism.

It should not be surprising in this general social context—of an all pervading racist ideology and a strong historical legacy of anti-Jewish prejudice—that people in the Black community should prove receptive to anti-Semitic ideas. Although we would like to think that those who suffer from national and racist oppression themselves would automatically be less inclined toward racist images of others, we know from long and difficult experience that this is not the case.

And this general problem has been reinforced among Blacks by certain direct experiences with Jews. These range from the presence of individual Jewish landlords, store owners, and employers, who appear to many Blacks as the visible face of white oppression, to institutionalized opposition against Black aspirations undertaken by groups representing the Jewish community, or led predominantly by Jews. The most striking example of the latter was the 1968 fight by New York City teachers against Black community control of education in public school districts where Black children represented a majority of the students. Community control was seen as a threat by the teachers union, an organization with a largely Jewish membership and led by Albert Shanker. The union actually went out on strike against the Black community.

Another process that took place during the 1960s also contributes to the difficult relations today between Blacks, especially revolutionary minded Blacks, and Jews: the emergence of a revolutionary, nationalist, Black Power movement out of the once exclusively pacifist civil rights struggle.

Left-minded elements in the Jewish community had played a leading role in the fight against Jim Crow segregation in the South. It is not unimportant to note that two Jews named Goodman and Schwerner, along with a Black youth named Chaney, were among the martyrs of that struggle—murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi, by racists because of their activity as members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). And many Jews were major financial supporters of organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and SNCC.

But when SNCC leaders like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown began to reject some of the main ideological tenets of the integrationist struggle, when they began to talk about the need for Black-led organizations, or all-Black organizations, in order to fight for a portion of political and economic power, and when they began to speak out on questions of U.S. foreign policy—especially Washington’s opposition to Palestinian self-determination and support to the racist Israeli state, making the links between this and continued racist oppression of Blacks here—most of SNCC’s Jewish support disappeared. Jewish leaders joined prominently in a widespread intellectual chorus denouncing Black Power ideology as “racism in reverse.”

Jewish leftists who made this shift, however, only revealed their own political bankruptcy. They were happy for Blacks to fight racism, as long as that fight didn’t go beyond the bounds of a liberal, integrationist, and ultimately procapitalist, struggle—and, of course, as long as the movement allowed them to play their “rightful” role as “leaders.” But as soon as their own ideological assumptions were threatened by a movement that was interested in directly challenging the interests of U.S. imperialism, such elements withdrew from the scene.

This, of course, proved very destructive to relations between Jewish liberals and more radical elements in the Black student movement, and in the Black community in general.

### *The Israel-South Africa Connection*

As we can see around the problems posed by the emergence of the Black Power movement one of the most important factors affecting relations between Blacks and Jews today is precisely the state of Israel, and the firm commitment of the overwhelming majority of the Jewish establishment to the existence and survival of a Jewish state.

Zionism is racism. By supporting it, Jews automatically place themselves in opposition to the aspirations of antiracist fighters in the U.S. Black community and everywhere else.

It is impossible to establish a Jewish state on a territory (Palestine), already inhabited by another oppressed people, without a vicious and racist policy of repression and extermination against that people. The only way Israel has been able to survive since its formation is as an armed camp, constantly making war against the Arabs who live within its borders as well as those who live in surrounding countries. No matter how much we oppose anti-Semitism this cannot become an excuse for justifying racist genocide by Jews against Arabs.

Perhaps an analogy will help to make the point. Suppose a mass current arose in the U.S. Black community demanding land on which to form a separate Black-controlled nation. This, of course, would be something that all genuine revolutionaries in the U.S. would support. But suppose the leadership of this Black movement entered into negotiations with the U.S. government, and came out of those negotiations announcing that they had reached an agreement with Washington: Blacks could form their own nation on the island of Puerto Rico. What attitude would we take toward such a solution, which would inevitably create a “Black-Puerto Rican conflict” every bit as intense as the present war between Jews and Arabs?

Zionism’s agreement with imperialism for the creation of the Israeli state after World War II was not based on any new understanding by the international capitalist class about their responsibility to help combat anti-Semitism and the oppression of Jews. If it had been, then a territory could have been found in Europe or North America for a Jewish state—a territorial concession to the Jewish people by their real oppressors. Rather, the Zionist leaders worked out a deal in which Israel would inevitably become the oppressor of the Palestinians and a staunch ally of the imperialists, aiding them in the subjugation of other nations—first of all in the Mideast, but also in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is no accident that the Zionist government, since its foundation, has supported every war of aggression by every imperialist power, and every reactionary pro-imperialist government that has emerged anywhere in the world.

One of the most extreme expressions of this, and the one that most deeply affects relations between Blacks and Jews in the U.S., is the Zionist regime’s open arming of and political support to apartheid in South Africa. This link is well known within the Black community, and combined with the ideological identity made between world Judaism and Israel—an identity promoted by Zionists around the world, their imperialist sponsors, and even by many Jews who have no real connection with Zionism themselves—it contributes to the nurturing of an anti-Semitic viewpoint.

The irony of all this should be clear. Israel, which was touted by its creators as a means of combating anti-Semitism, has become one of the prime factors defending racism actually being practiced against other peoples. Thus it alienates the Jewish people from these victims who ought to be their allies in fighting anti-Semitism, and it aids any demagogic elements parading as “leaders” of such oppressed groups who simply want to denounce the Jews.



Thus, under the influence of Zionist ideology, as well as a demographic shift which has put most Jewish workers in this country into a more privileged (and therefore more conservative) layer of their class, the American Jewish community has generally drifted to the right over the past three or four decades. There is, today, no significant Jewish-led organization or institutional expression of the Jewish community in the U.S. that is a force working in favor of Black liberation. This general context is essential if we want to look intelligently at the developments in Crown Heights or at the speech delivered by Leonard Jeffries which has caused such a fuss.

### What Leonard Jeffries Really Said

Accusations of anti-Semitism against Jeffries in his speech focused around two elements. First, he made a significant issue of the historical role of Jewish financiers and merchants in the slave trade. Second, he talked of a concerted "attack" against Blacks "coming from the Jewish community," and of a "conspiracy" by Jewish

moguls in Hollywood, financed by the Mafia, to make films presenting racist images of Blacks.

In order for our readers to judge the validity of these accusations we urge you to examine the entire text of Jeffries's speech, which is reprinted both in *New York Newsday* (August 19) and the *Amsterdam News* (August 31). (Some excerpts appear in the box on this and the following page.) An objective reading ought to conclude that the charge of anti-Semitism is unfounded.

The question of Jews in the slave trade has clearly been taken out of context by the critics. Jeffries makes the point strongly that he is not singling out Jews here, and that he is not even talking about most Jews—but rather a minority of rich Jews who, like other rich people in Europe and North America, got richer still through the enslavement of Blacks. He raises the question only in the specific context of Jews and others who have tried to deny the importance of this historical reality, pretending that responsibility for the slave trade lies

primarily with those Blacks in Africa who collaborated with the slavers.

As far as the comments about a Jewish conspiracy are concerned, it is necessary to be critical. But these remarks were hardly the central theme of his talk, and if you change the word "conspiracy" to something else, in every case a valid thought remains. It is not unreasonable for Jeffries and other Blacks to address the attitudes of Jews in Hollywood or elsewhere concerning Black issues. Because of the real oppression Jews have suffered, and the myth of Israel as a land conquered by "freedom fighters," Jewish intellectuals and leaders often give themselves pretensions in their dealings with Blacks. Therefore, the real historical role of Jews, the debunking of the Jewish-liberal myth, is a reasonable subject for exploration by Black scholars and others.

Jeffries does fall into a common logical error in his reasoning: believing that any convergence of action and opinion by a group of people must somehow reflect a conscious conspiracy. But, looking at the historical reasons for the rightward move-

### Excerpts from Jeffries Speech, Albany, July 20

And those of us who have carved out education as our area realize that we have to do a major job; major surgery has to take place in the educational arena because the educational arena was designed to support the system of white supremacy that was institutionalized in this nation. . . .

The legal system was designed to support the system of white supremacy in this nation. The economic system was the heart of this system of white supremacy in this nation. And the cultural system went along with that—movies, all the rest of it. For years—and I grew up as a youngster just like you did, going to movies where the African peoples were completely denigrated. That was a conspiracy, planned and plotted and programed out of Hollywood, where people called Greenberg and Weisberg and Trigliani and whatnot—it's not anti-Semitic to mention who developed Hollywood. Their names are there—MGM: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Adolph Zukor, Fox. Russian Jewry had a particular control over the movies, and their financial partners, the Mafia, put together a system of destruction of black people. Talk about self-image and self-esteem? This was an important part of the cultural development of any youth. We went to the movies every Saturday and saw the Native Americans being wiped out and Africans being denigrated: Sambo images, Beulah, Stepin Fetchit. That's what they put up there. It was by design. It was calculated.

So we have to see that there is a war against the African. Now, I knew it before, but I didn't know how devilish it was gonna get or could be. They're nice white people. You don't feel so bad if you got to go up against someone who is really down-and-out devilish and doggish. But if you get the smiling people like Diane Ravitch—"I'm trying to do the right thing"—deedeede—"and I have done the right thing all these years." Read Diane Ravitch's record; look at her track record. This is the ultimate, supreme, sophisticated, debonair racist—pure and simple. And when they say "Hey, you and the others called her Miss Daisy"—they did it right. And Asa said: "We're gonna let Miss Daisy drive her own damn car from now on." [Laughter and applause from audience.]

And Miss Daisy and her several partners. Albert Shanker has been holding her hand for some time, and now he's at the door of the governor, beating him up, saying you've got to go against this latest report.

In fact, she is the new standard. The old standard was a Bible Belt Texas rural family. That's the standard for the textbooks that went into the schools for generations. Now the new standard is not a Bible Belt Texas family but a sophisticated Texas Jew. And that standard is not good enough either—because many people, such as the Ravitches, who happen to be Jewish, have blinded us on the attack coming from the Jewish community—systematic, unrelenting. And until we can look at it and deal with it, there's no efforts we

can make that're going to be successful. Not anti-Semitic to raise the issue—but if you do not deal with it, you're fooling yourself.

There's an orchestrated attack by the Schlesingers and the Shankers, working with the white conservatives (the George Wills, the Heritage Foundation)—we're pinpointing their relationship; we're putting it to our African computer: the document is being prepared.

Miss Ravitch says that black people sold black people into slavery. She don't hesitate to say that, Schlesinger says black people sold black people into slavery.

Let's talk about who financed, planned, operated, maintained the slave system. Let's talk about every slave ship being blessed by a Protestant minister or Catholic priest. Let's talk about the Catholic Church initiating this. Let's talk about the Danes, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French, the Scots, the Swedes, the Brandenburg Germans that were involved in the slavery for hundreds of years—Jews and Gentiles, Arabs and Christians. Let's deal with the whole ball of wax. Let's not just say that Africans sold Africans into slavery.

And after a while he got so uncomfortable, he asked me about—"Well, what is this about you had said something about rich Jews involved in the enslavement of Africans?"

So I said "Where do you want us to start? What period of history? You want us to start in the Spanish Portuguese period of the starting of the slave trade in the 1400s and 1500s? Do you want us to move it from Seville and Lisbon on to Amsterdam and Hamburg, where the new Jewish community in those areas continued the slave trade for the Dutch, the Germans and English? Or do you want us to move it to Brazil and the Caribbean and Curacao, which became a new Amsterdam, the new center of the slave trade in the western world centered around the Jewish immigrants that moved into Curacao? Or do you want us to move it to New York and Newport, Rhode Island? Where do you want us to start?"

Newport, Rhode Island, at the time of the American Revolution was the leading legal slaving center in America, and that was the home of the largest Jewish community and most active, wealthy Jewish community in America. Newport, Rhode Island.

"Well, we have a book here, Aaron Lopez, 'Lopez of Newport.'"

In 1750s and '60s: one of the largest slavers out of Newport, Rhode Island, a community that had a number of outstanding, wealthy Jews who not only controlled a couple hundred of the slave ships—and Lopez himself controlling a couple dozen—but they controlled most, if not all, of the thirty distilleries that processed molasses from the Caribbean into rum, to be sold to the Native Americans as "fire water" and to be sold to Africa, for enslaved Africans.



ment of mainstream Jewish thought that we discussed above, it is not hard to see why many Jews came to similar ideological conclusions regarding the struggles of the Black community and what attitude they should take toward it, without any group getting together in a room and hatching out a plot.

The same can be said of Hollywood. Did Jewish filmmakers really treat Blacks any more atrociously than others in the industry? Wouldn't it be more correct to say that they simply followed the general, overtly racist stereotypes that were predominant at the time? This hardly required a conspiratorial process.

But what is most striking about Jeffries's speech is not primarily those aspects that relate to relations between Blacks and Jews. Rather it is his discussion of racial oppression in general, and the exclusion of information on Blacks and Black culture from the educational curriculum. Any honest person has to welcome his discussion of the way Black history has been distorted, and his call for a campaign to restore things to their rightful place. And

any genuine fighter against oppression will appreciate his characterization of the situation in the United States, from its earliest history to today, as "an affirmative action program for rich white men with property and power."

One has to believe that it is these aspects of Jeffries's outlook, more than any real concern about his remarks on the question of Jews, that has the white establishment upset. Indeed, the attack on this speech coincides with a generalized campaign against "multicultural" or Black-oriented "ethnocentric" education. (Of course, the goal is to keep education in the public schools oriented, as it has been up to now, toward that ethnic viewpoint which presently dominates our society.)

Despite demands for his ouster, the Faculty Senate's executive committee at CCNY has reviewed the Jeffries speech and voted to recommend that no action be taken against him. They did criticize his choice of words, but insisted that these were within the bounds of normal academic freedom. This seems like a

reasonable conclusion. While it would be wrong to characterize Jeffries's talk as anti-Semitic per se, it does seem that it adapted unacceptably to anti-Semitic sentiments prevalent in the Black community.

Revolutionary Marxists would certainly find fault with many ideas that Jeffries expressed in his July 20 speech—from a philosophical, ideological, and even purely factual viewpoint. But we welcome his raising the issues in such an iconoclastic way. This contributes to an atmosphere where *all* points of view—inside and outside of the Black community—on such questions can begin to be heard and discussed. And it is only in the context of such a rich and varied ferment of ideas that we can all sort out what is correct and what is incorrect in each individual outlook. That is one reason why the fight for academic freedom and against any victimization of Jeffries for expressing his point of view on these matters—under the pretext of "fighting anti-Semitism"—is so important.

*(Continued on page 35)*

"Where do you want to start? You want to go back into the Spanish Sephardic Jewish community? Then get Stephen Birmingham's 'The Grandees.'"

The grandees: the Jewish rich that supported the Spanish throne and helped lay the foundation for the enslavement in the 1400s and 1500s. Even after the Jewish community was persecuted in Spain with the Inquisition in 1492, many of them that converted to Christianity stayed in Spain and helped the Spanish king and queen, who was anti-Semitic (Queen Isabella)—helped her maintain the slave system against the Africans and Native Americans.

"Where do you want to start? Do you want to go to Amsterdam? Then get a book by Jonathan Israel on 'European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750.'"

And there's a picture of the Amsterdam synagogue, which was the center of slave trading for the Dutch. Amsterdam became a leading port in this period of time for slaving. And it was around this synagogue that the slaving system was established.

Now, we're not talking about most Jews. Most Jews were being beat—up and down Europe—persecuted for being Jewish. We're talking about rich Jews, and we specifically make that distinction. We're not talking about white folks in general when we talk about oppression; we're talking about the wealthy white folks, the powerful white folks that make the decision.

In Spain there were the grandees, managing the money of the Spanish throne. In Germany, in the 16- and 1700s, there were the court Jews, managing the political and economic apparatus of Europe, the Hapsburg empire, the German states, etcetera. We have the names. We know who they were, what they were, what they controlled. We know when they set up the Dutch East Indian Co., Dutch West Indian Co., the Portuguese company, the Brazilian company. We know who and what documents. We know the family connections. We know that even when they converted to Christianity, they maintained links with their Jewish community brothers who had not converted; and that's why they had a network around the world.

But even more than that, if you keep digging on and—as quiet as it's kept, a number of Jewish scholars from around the country sent me documentation on the Jews' involvement in slave trade. Not one wrote to me contesting what they thought I had said. A dozen sent me information, including a SUNY professor.

And then we discovered—in my copy room—I don't know. The African Holy Ghost works in wondrous ways. The African Holy Ghost put a book in my copy room called "The Jews of Germany" by [Marvin] Lowenthal. And it details the movement of the Jewish community into Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire, along with the Syrians and Lebanese; and they became the lifeline of the fallen Roman Empire in the 15- and 1600s. And they began to institutionalize a trade link with the Middle East. A trade link dealt with:

Number One—

Number Two: Furs.

And Number One: It dealt with humans, the humans that it dealt with for hundreds of years, with the Slavic peoples of central, eastern and southern Europe, the Czechs, the Poles, the Yugoslavs, the Russians—an alliance between the Catholic Church and rich Jews selling white central, eastern and southern Europeans into Arab slavery.

The truth will set you free.

Did you hear what I said? The white slave trade in Europe—because the central and eastern Europeans were pagans; they were not Christians. Catholic Church has no allegiance to them. And the Jewish community didn't care either which way. So rich Jews and the Catholic Church had an alliance for hundreds of years, selling white folks from central, eastern and southern Europe into slavery in the Arab world—the white slave trade, which is the precursor of enslavement later.

In fact, the term "slavery" is rooted in the word "slavs." You see why we're in trouble?

America was founded by rich white men with property and power. It was founded on an affirmative-action program for rich white men with property and power. From the very beginning of the founding of these colonies, rich white men with property and power were given affirmative action and set-asides—whole land set aside for them to develop and whole people set aside to work it for free, including white folks who came as virtual slaves under indentured servitude. There was a set-aside and affirmative action for rich white folks with property and power in the beginning of this nation, and that tradition under the British and under the Dutch was maintained. And when independence was established, the independence was established, and the Constitution put in place in 1787 is a document of affirmative action for rich white folks with property and power.

Because we do not have the critical analysis we need—and that's why we need study groups, serious study groups for the adults and for the teachers—we continue to go around talking about there was a three-fifths clause put in the Constitution and we have three-fifths the rights of white folks. You have no rights in the American constitutional frame of reference. Women have no significant rights. The Constitution does not speak to them and poor whites, men, did not have any significant rights in the Constitution. The Constitution speaks to rich white men with property and power. It is there for you to read with your eyes open and put on to it.

Three-fifths clause and affirmative action are set aside for the slave owners. A slave owner who had 200 of our people enslaved, had three-fifths more votes, voting power for them, than a normal rich white man. That's democracy? That's oligarchy.



## Founding Statement of the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group

A new socialist organization was formed in June. We've taken the name Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group. Most of us are former members of the Socialist Workers Party. Some have a history in other left groups. Each of us fell to the wayside as the 1980s advanced, victims of an unfavorable political climate and a loss of confidence in the organizations posing a challenge to capitalism, in particular the SWP. Changes in the world have drawn us back into politics. Now we're back and ready for a new round in the battle for socialism.

The process that led to the founding of our group began at the SWP convention in June 1990, which some of us attended. After the convention the SWP National Committee decided that the SWP would end its more than half-century association with the Fourth International. The news of this break came as a shock to several of us who had been active supporters of the party in recent years. We began to reassess our relationship to the SWP. The more we talked amongst ourselves the more we came to realize the extent of the party's sectarian drift.

As the SWP left the FI, the leadership of the party convinced formerly independent revolutionary groups in several countries to dissolve and reconstitute themselves, in effect, as foreign branch offices of the SWP. Microscopic groups were set up in other countries as a result of split operations directed against sections of the FI. The party leadership has set up what it calls an "International Communist League" as an alternative to the International. A more accurate name for this current, which has no apparent organizational structure, no democratic functioning, and no stated program, would be the "International Socialist Workers Party." In search of "revolutionary convergence" for a decade, the party leadership has finally achieved its goal: The SWP has fused with itself!

To those of us schooled in the Cannonist politics of the pre-1980s SWP, this project seems more a caricature than a model of international collaboration. With Stalinism in a state of collapse in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, with this grotesque obstacle to revolution being pushed aside worldwide, the political openings for revolutionary Marxists to regroup and move forward seem apparent. In this contradictory period of big defeats and promising opportunities revolutionary forces need unity and political clarity, not some new episode of sectarian diversion. And the best place to start would be to unite the disparate forces of the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution. This would provide a basis on which to build a possibly broader revolutionary unity, a unity with those coming out of political traditions other than Trotskyism, a mass Leninist International. The SWP leadership, however, has moved in the opposite direction, toward hermetically sealing off its shrinking membership from any sort of meaningful collaboration (or even contact) with revolutionaries from other countries or currents, in particular those grouped in the FI.

The SWP's sectarian drift of recent years is evident not only in its international relations (its attitude toward the FI and other revolutionary left currents) but also in its domestic political practice. An abstentionist propagandism has come to replace the militant interventionist and mass-action orientation of past years.

The SWP's involvement in the organizations and struggles of women, oppressed nationalities, students, and in the movements against war and in solidarity with peoples oppressed by imperialism today is more often to sell party publications than to build and help lead the fights themselves. Its active participation in these struggles is quite modest when compared to the party's resources and past record. Even in the trade unions, the primary focus of the party's activity and concentration in the last decade, propaganda not struggle is the order of the day.

The SWP's turn to industry in the late 1970s was a correct step and an important accomplishment. A Marxist workers' party needs to root itself in the industrial working class and its organizations. But long-term serious work in the trade unions need not result in *de facto* abstention from other important social struggles and movements. A proletarian orientation does not need to end in workerism.

In the early 1980s the SWP leadership projected building a "new mass Leninist International" as the result of a political convergence between our forces and new revolutionary currents then emerging, most notably in Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. The party also sought closer ties with the Cuban revolution and its leadership, which has played an exemplary

vanguard role in defending the colonial revolution, most notably against the forces of South Africa in Angola.

Those of us who were in the party at the time were enthusiastic backers of this strategy. To this day we feel that its adoption by the party leadership was not evidence of "revisionism" or "adaptation to Stalinism" but a healthy desire to break out of our movement's historic isolation, in much the same way that Leon Trotsky sought to unite with broader forces in the 1930s, or the Fourth International's orientation toward the Yugoslav leadership following its break with Stalin in 1948.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to say that the SWP leadership misestimated the new revolutionary leaderships. More serious to us, however, are the *political* consequences of the party's orientation. The formal abandonment of the theory of permanent revolution and breaks with the method of the Transitional Program are of serious concern to us. The overall de-emphasizing of Trotsky's contributions to revolutionary theory is especially tragic given that the collapse of Stalinism in recent years has proven their validity a thousand times over. The damaging consequences of this are shown in the political paralysis shown by the party leadership in the face of the earthshaking events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The sectarian evolution of the SWP has found expression in its internal functioning as well. The party leadership has adapted to some of the weaknesses of the Cuban Communist Party, which has serious shortcomings in matters of organization. Minority voices in that party cannot form tendencies and debate differences as in the Bolshevik party under Lenin. This weakens the Cuban Communist Party. It doesn't strengthen it.

Whether consciously or not, the SWP leadership has come to adopt some of these bureaucratic shortcomings as its own. It has increasingly come to rely on harsh administrative methods to resolve political disputes, some involving seemingly minor points

## Who We Are and What We Want



## New Revolutionary Organization Calls for FI Unity

of disagreement. After driving from the party's ranks every known dissident in the early 1980s, the central leadership purged itself, expelling or driving out leaders like Malik Miah and Barry Shepard over minor organizational or tactical differences.

A leadership cult has begun to emerge around SWP national secretary Jack Barnes in recent years. The right to form tendencies in the party no longer exists in actual practice. The very concept of democratic centralism has been all but discarded. In its place has come "revolutionary centralism." The change is not just terminological. With wagons drawn in a circle military-administrative methods ("revolutionary centralism" and "proletarian discipline") have come to supplant many of the democratic norms of functioning that characterized the party's internal workings in the past.

We have stated some of our reservations regarding the political course of the SWP in the last decade. But *as an organization* we have no worked-out analysis of, no line on, these questions. The Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group is *not an ideological tendency*. While we have parted ways with the SWP primarily over organizational questions, that does not mean there is no *political basis* to our group.

In the case of the SWP, as in the case of any revolutionary group, errors in organizational method can and have led to serious political errors. By suppressing organized dissent in its ranks, the party eliminated the kind of democratic checks needed to keep a revolutionary party of the working class on track. By tending to absent itself from important organizations and struggles, the party has abandoned the test of practice in affirming or correcting its political line.

The evolution of the Socialist Workers Party over the last decade, the strangling of the party in the hands of its own leadership, has led us to change our orientation to the SWP. It is still a revolutionary party, but its organizational degeneration and its general sectarian drift have today placed it on the sidelines of revolutionary politics.

Two factors or events brought the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group (MRSRG) into existence:

- 1) The SWP's decline into sectarianism and subsequent departure from the Fourth International; and
- 2) The Persian Gulf War

The first caused us to take a new look at the SWP and to begin the search for a revolutionary alternative. The second threw us back into active politics and posed for us once again the pressing need for a revolutionary party to fight for socialism.

A revolutionary proletarian combat party is needed to overthrow capitalism, to disarm and destroy U.S. imperialism, to build a just society, a society organized to satisfy human needs. It must be organized along democratic centralist lines. The degree to which it is internally democratic is not a matter of secondary importance to us. This is a critical question. A flourishing internal democracy is an important safeguard against political degeneration. The right to tendency and faction must be rigorously preserved.

At present no such party exists in the U.S., but elements of that party are in place. Small revolutionary groupings are carrying out

sustained work, laying the basis for a revolutionary party of workers. Unfortunately, much of this effort has been ineffective due primarily to a dispersion of forces. Revolutionary unity is an objective necessity, socialist regroupment a pressing task.

The SWP could make a substantial contribution to any party-building effort in terms of cadres, resources, and experience. But the party leadership views the SWP as the *only* communist organization in the U.S. All other groups are considered the "petty-bourgeois left." This sectarian stance places the SWP outside any possible regroupment process, at least for now.

The FI recognizes three groups in the U.S. as fraternal sympathizing organizations: Socialist Action, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. All three have their origins in the purges of the SWP carried out in the early 1980s. A fusion of these three groupings into a united fraternal sympathizing group of the FI is not only desirable, but necessary.

The Fourth International, despite a variety of imperfections, is still the only international revolutionary current that groups together real national organizations from every continent. It is a vital organizing center and a vehicle to build a mass revolutionary International. The Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group intends to be part of this

International, and we want to be united in a single party with all supporters of the FI in the U.S.

We have no *principled* objection to organizations or individuals not associated with the FI being part of a regroupment process. If the SWP, a part of it, or the non-FI wing of Solidarity wanted to fuse with groups linked to the FI to build a common democratic centralist party, that would be a huge step forward for the revolutionary movement in this country. We realize that this is an unlikely scenario at this time. What is more likely and realistic at present is a regroupment process involving most or all of the partisans of the FI grouped in SA, FIT, and the FI Caucus of Solidarity. We want to be part of that process.

The MRSRG is committed to socialist regroupment. There is little valid reason for our organization to exist other than to advance this process. We will stay in existence until we reach that goal. We hope that is sooner rather than later.

In any case, we do not intend to sit on our hands until that day arrives. We plan to build our organization. We will intervene in the class struggle and in the political life of Milwaukee and the region. We intend to strengthen our work in the trade unions (the majority of our members belong to unions). We want to deepen our collaboration with all three revolutionary groups—SA, FIT, and Solidarity—as well as with organizations like the Wisconsin Labor-Farm Party. We plan to continue our study of the publications and documents of the various organizations so as to clarify the political views of our group. Above all, we're going to step up our agitation for revolutionary regroupment.

August 3, 1991

***"The MRSRG is committed to socialist regroupment. There is little valid reason for our organization to exist other than to advance this process."***



# Marxism and Gay Liberation

by Jeff Brown

Today Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and women have achieved at least token representation in some important areas of American society: the media, government, educational institutions, some corporations, etc. Today it is considered legitimate for these groups of people to at least fight for their civil rights, for their liberation, and for some measure of power over their own lives. But gays and lesbians, for the most part, still suffer the terror of the closet, the threat of being exposed in their workplaces and in society. Gay-bashing and lesbian-bashing are still acceptable in broad circles. Overt violence against gays is on the rise (as is violence against Blacks, other racial minorities, and women—especially rape). And it is still not considered legitimate to be gay or lesbian in many, if not most, businesses, governmental and educational institutions, and the media. To quote from a recent issue of *Outweek*, the new and sometimes radical gay and lesbian “nationalist” New York newsweekly:

There is not now, nor has there ever been, an openly gay or lesbian person writing in a regular column of political opinion in any magazine or newspaper in America. There is not now, nor has there ever been, an openly gay or lesbian television-news commentator, reporter or talk-show host. There is absolutely no place in the mainstream press where the public can, on a regular basis, hear the arguments for gay and lesbian equality and civil rights.

### **Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression**

The roots of gay and lesbian oppression lie in what the gay movement has come to refer to as the gender system—a system that is based on the domination of females by males and their resultant subordinate role in society. This phenomenon of gender appears as a social pattern of organization which seeks to cope with the biological division of sex. Gender roles spring up around the established sexual division of labor in society: man as provider, woman as child-rearer. This situation leads to significantly different expectations from the two sexes with regard to temperament, personality, even to the creation of different subcultures. Heterosexuality is institutionalized around these gender roles, between persons not simply of different biological sex, but between persons of different “gender.” Heterosexuality means attraction of woman to a “hunter,” and attraction of man to a “homemaker.”

The gay movement appears as a challenge to gender roles and the family matrix which capitalism, as the last major stage of class society, tends to undermine. This creates at least the space for alternative forms, and the preconditions for a new social order to appear. David Fernbach, co-founder of *Gay Men's Press* in London, is one of the few activists who have tried to analyze the struggle from a Marxist point of view. He writes:

The gay movement, like the movement of women, is a challenge to the existing configuration of gender. The gender system stipulates that, if you are female, you must be a certain kind of person, in behavior and temperament, and if you are male, you must be a certain other kind of person. In the form that we know it today, the gender system places women in a subordinate position vis-a-vis men. Because this is not just the result of men's

arbitrary action, but a structural element in the over-all pattern of social organization, it is by no means always possible for women to wage a struggle for liberation, or even to conceive of a change in their situation. If such a struggle develops, it generally indicates that the existing social pattern is in crisis and the time is ripe for its replacement. But because women are indeed oppressed by men in the gender system, a liberation struggle invariably does develop once the conditions are ripe. What this struggle demands, as a minimum, is a significant redefinition of the gender division, allowing women to develop in ways that were previously proscribed. Gay men start out from a very different relationship to the gender system than do women, and the same applies to lesbians insofar as they struggle on the specific basis of their gayness. While women are oppressed by being what the gender system requires them to be, offering them a certain reward of legitimacy for being a “proper” woman and accepting oppression, gay people are oppressed by our inability—or refusal—to be “proper” women or men. For our homosexuality, unlike the prevalent forms of homosexuality met with in other societies, or even some marginal forms found in our own, is incompatible with the gender definitions of femininity and masculinity. [This and all other quotes of Fernbach are from David Fernbach, *The Spiral Path, a Gay Contribution to Survival*, Alyson Publications.]

The gender system of social organization originally arose as an outgrowth of the sexual division of labor in primitive society. That division of labor became transformed during the period of transition from hunter/gatherer to agricultural societies. The agricultural revolution created the possibility of procuring larger amounts of food. This allowed populations to increase to the extent where neighboring groups of people began to compete for land. The masculine specialization in warfare was a preadaptation that helped people respond to this crisis. The original sexual division of labor in hunter/gatherer societies had simply been a division of tasks (the males hunting large animals, the females gathering plant foods and small animals while shouldering the greater burden of childcare) not a division of status. Now, however, the females' dependence on the males for protection (in warfare) and their primary burden for childcare resulted in their subordination to the males. The masculine specialization in violence came to have a higher status than the productive role of women (foraging, childcare).

When the modern women's movement began to challenge the gender division, especially in the late 1960s when the gender system and sexism came under attack, this struck a responsive chord in gay men especially, and in lesbians. It contributed to our awakening self-consciousness and the beginning of a militant struggle for liberation. We ourselves were being put down for being inadequately masculine, less than “proper” men. In a sense, gay men really are “effeminate,” as pejorative a connotation as this word has.

### **The Gay/Lesbian Movement and Marxism**

Since its inception, the gay and lesbian movement has had an uneasy relationship to Marxism. Backwardness on both sides has contributed to this. The early homosexual rights advocates in the modern sense—Magnus Hirschfeld, a physician; Max Spohr, a publisher; and Erik Oberg, a civil servant who founded the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in 1897 to fight for human sexual



rights and decriminalization—enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the German Social Democratic Party. The Scientific-Humanitarian Committee at that time launched a petition and campaign to garner support for the abolition of Paragraph 175 of the legal code of Imperial Germany under the monarchy, which subjected homosexuality to legal penalties, and to educate Germans about “uranian” men and women. In 1898, the petition received support from one of the central leaders of the party, August Bebel, who stood up in the Reichstag to urge members of that parliament to sign it. The petition received support from Karl Kautsky, Rudolph Hilferding, and Edward Bernstein, among others.

However, this propitious beginning could not resolve some key issues in the understanding of homosexual oppression. The early homosexual rights movement believed homosexuality to be innate, and not the product of learned behavior. This made it easier to argue for the abolition of criminal penalties, but it was a conception at odds with the oversimplified appreciation (not uncommon then or now) of Marxism’s insistence on cultural dominance over nature in forging human behavior. On the Marxist side, classical Marxist theory lacked a grasp of the gender system, the roots of gender oppression, and thus the totality and depth of women’s oppression. In the words of David Fernbach:

Orthodox Marxism has always recognized women as an oppressed group in class society, and championed their “emancipation.” The problem is simply that the Marxist understanding of women’s oppression has been very limited. Marxism has grasped the relationship of economic dependence that is typical of relations between the sexes among classes of privileged private proprietors, and to a lesser extent also among the working class of capitalist society, but it has no concept of the gender system that underlies this. For this reason, the relationship of Marxism to the gay movement has been altogether different from that to the women’s movement. Even the “bourgeois feminist” wing of the women’s movement could be seen by Marxists as a potential ally in the right circumstances, but never has “orthodox” Marxism risen above regarding the gay minority as mere “victims of capitalism,” deserving more humane treatment, perhaps, but in no way having anything positive to contribute to the new society.

At times Marxism has viewed gays and lesbians in a far more negative light. From a perfunctory reading of Engels it might seem that hostility to homosexuality is built into the doctrine of historical materialism. But the reality is more complex. In the *Origin of the Family* Engels refers to the “distasteful practice of boy-love” among the ancient Greeks, and to the gross, unnatural vices of the early Germanic tribes. This was written in 1884. Yet only a few years later the Marxists showed themselves to be in the vanguard of progressive opinion on the rights of the gay minority. Bernstein, who was Engels’s literary executor, wrote a particularly vigorous defense of Oscar Wilde in the party’s theoretical journal *Neue Zeit*.

Liberal tolerance for the “gay minority” was based on seeing gays as a “biological anomaly.” Yet when a *form* of homosexuality is practiced by an entire male population, this explanation falls apart. Engels’s moralistic labels of “distasteful” and “unnatural” clearly reflect his own subjective feelings. Yet in his reference to Greek homosexuality, there is a genuine social criticism which cannot be reduced to homophobia. The reference appears in connection with his discussion of male domination in Greek antiquity, where he goes on to add that “this degradation of the women was avenged in the men and degraded them also till they fell into the distasteful practice of boy-love and degraded alike their gods and themselves with the myth of Ganymede.” Here, male homosexuality was associated, not altogether wrongly, with male domination.

Male homosexuality was glorified in ancient Greece and elsewhere as the highest form of love precisely because it did not involve those “inferior” beings, women. Engels’s critique of this can be seen as progressive, whereas, unfortunately, the defense of “Greek love” that played so great a part in the apologetics of the early gay movement was ultimately reactionary. This only added grist to the classical Marxist mill: Greek homosexuality was confined purely to the slave-owning class, while being proscribed for the working masses. Homosexuality was thus seen as a practice of leisured men who oppressed women and lived off the backs of the producers. To quote Fernbach again:

If Engels and the classical Marxists had known more about primitive societies, they would have had to abandon this characterization as grossly simplistic. Yet without gay comprehension of the gender system, it was quite impossible for Marxism to understand homosexuality in general, or gayness in particular. There was simply no way it could advance beyond a liberal tolerance in relating to the movement of gay people that began to get underway at the turn of the century.

The situation was not improved by the fact that the early homosexual rights movement in Germany, concentrated under the leadership of Magnus Hirschfeld, adhered to the theory of homosexuality as innate. If gay people regarded themselves as “born that way,” then who were the Marxists to contradict them?

Freud did contradict them, in spite of the fact that he was a vigorous champion of Hirschfeld’s and his disciples’ campaign. Freudian ideas of how psychological characteristics are acquired rather than innate was attractive to Marxists and historical materialism, which stresses the ascendance of culture and history, not just nature, in determining human behavior. This brought them into an ambiguous relationship with the gay movement of the time. While stressing that there was nothing anti-social about homosexuality, in modern terminology that it was a “victimless crime,” spokespeople for the gay cause were still unable to argue that being gay was a completely normal state of affairs that could be part of a positive and healthy psychological makeup. This explains the attraction of the theory that a homosexual disposition was wholly innate.

The Russian Bolsheviks however, prefiguring a pattern that would be adopted in the modern world as more “advanced” social policy, actually saw tolerance for the homosexual individual as the best way to combat the “sickness” and promote a healthy heterosexuality. (This is a wrong position, but it just shows what happens when any science fails to develop past a certain point. The Bolsheviks had no help in this since they were abandoned by Western social democracy, which left them in isolation, although this is not to apologize for their error.)

Such a social “cure” for homosexuality was the explicit purpose of the Bolshevik legislation on this subject, as explained in 1922 by Dr. Grigori Bathis. (His pamphlet is often quoted by Marxists today to demonstrate the “pro-gay” position of the Russian revolutionaries!):

While understanding the wrongness of the development of homosexuality, society does not place and cannot place blame for it on those who exhibit it. This breaks down to a significant degree the wall which actually exists between the homosexual and society and forces the former to delve deeply into himself.

This is insidious and reactionary trash, better suited to the subtle “mind control” and “social engineering” that the capitalist ruling class tries to use in dealing with its opponents. But it just goes to show that science (Marxism in this case) is cumulative, provisional, and never finished. That even people like Lenin and Trotsky, being humans instead of gods, are not omniscient or infallible authorities who were always right on every question. In this case they were unable to rise above the general scientific



understanding of their time. On this as on all other questions they have to be critically evaluated and dealt with like all other scientists, not slavishly and uncritically worshipped—as is the general practice of sectarians and dogmatists.

This insensitivity on the part of Marxists caused their already ambiguous relationship with the gay movement to take a turn for the worse in the inter-war years. Male homosexuality already had an association with male supremacy and parasitism in the eyes of many Marxists, so it was not surprising that the exposure of homosexuality in the fascist organizations—especially the Nazi SS—was taken up by the left as an added stick with which to beat the enemy. These Nazi practices were a descendent of the homosexual traditions of Prussian militarism, and cousin to its counterpart in the British public schools and elite universities.

What's even worse, the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR meant that what had up to then simply been a mistaken viewpoint of honest Marxists could now be cynically utilized to reinforce bureaucratic rule. The result was that while in 1929 the Socialist and Communist parties had voted solidly in the German Reichstag for the abolition of the anti-homosexual law, by 1934 homosexuality had got firmly "tarred with the fascist brush." This was the background against which homosexuality was again outlawed in the Soviet Union.

Withdrawal of left support helped to end the early homosexual rights movement, which was always far more fragile than the gay movement is today. It took a long time to shake off the vicious charge that there was something fascist about homosexuality. Even in the early 1970s, the left-wing Greek students opposing the fascist junta could still taunt the police with the dreaded accusation "pustis" (someone who gets fucked in the ass).

It is important to stress that this slanderous attack of the CPs against homosexuality cannot simply be attributed to Stalinism, as it is by John Lauritsen and David Thorstad in the pamphlet *Gay Liberation and Socialism*, put out in the 1970s by the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP did not understand gay oppression or the importance of gay liberation because classical Marxist theory lacks an appreciation of the gender system based upon the primary sexual divisions of labor, and this is essential to explain the roots of gay and lesbian oppression. That is why the SWP had a policy excluding gays from membership until the 1970s—when it became impossible to ignore the gay movement any longer. But even after that the party still lacked the ability to take gay liberation seriously.

Without understanding this question of gender, classical Marxist theory has great difficulty explaining some aspects of women's oppression and gay/lesbian oppression. Women are oppressed for what the gender system requires them to be. Gays and lesbians are oppressed for not being "proper" men and women as the gender system demands. Lesbians are oppressed in the double sexual/gender sense. The class system, the class division of labor and class-divided society is a necessary prerequisite for women's oppression and gay and lesbian oppression; it consolidates it, keeps it going, and secures it. But it is still essential to understand this oppression in its own right, and not simply as an appendage of the "class struggle." Some Marxists have, since the 1960s, tried to develop theory along these lines, especially in terms of the women's movement. But I believe that such an effort cannot succeed until the concept of "gender oppression," like that of "national oppression," becomes an accepted part of Marxist theory. Then we will be able to fully explain the emotional hostility and violence that society has for women—for their femaleness—that society has for gays and lesbians—for their gayness. This will also help us to incorporate gender-specific and gay-specific democratic and transitional demands into our transitional program (more on this below).

Even revolutionaries and the far left could not admit for decades and decades that homosexuality was a valid and legitimate com-

ponent of humanity (human personality)—it was an embarrassing component of human psychology that was not recognized as a legitimate object in political discussion. It was the love that dared not speak its name.

Gender roles are so deeply ingrained in bourgeois society that even most revolutionaries, until recently, took for granted that liberated men and women would still be overwhelmingly heterosexual in their relations. Men and women, even revolutionary men and women, for the most part subconsciously tended to accept (or at least not fully resist) their assigned gender roles for reproduction and their contribution to it—the gender roles which defined male and female relations to the reproductive process (the reproduction of life)—and thus towards profit production which largely controls it. After all, bourgeois ideology ingrains in us that you are not really a "man" (a legitimate human male) unless you were interested in sex with women (and domination over them). All males were one way or another supposed to be interested in treating women as their objects of sexual desire—no other possibility was even admitted. The same is true more or less for women (that men would be their sexual objects of desire). Thus there are only two types of human individuals according to bourgeois ideology and class society—two sexes defined by the definition of two genders—heterosexual "men" and "women."

### *Lesbians/Gays and the Labor Movement*

This reactionary ideology has been used to prop up bourgeois society when capitalism is challenged in the field of economics (the rising labor movement), and/or in the field of culture and ideology (a rising social movement). The family was starting to disintegrate, for example, towards the end of the 19th century when the workers' movement began to mature. This is why male homosexuality was not outlawed in Britain until 1885 along with abortion. It was hoped that the (patriarchal) family at least could remain as a prop of security for bourgeois society in the face of the surging militant labor and socialist movements. The bourgeois conception of the family based upon private property and patriarchy continues to disintegrate today as a larger and larger percentage of the female population become wage earners. But heterosexist gender roles still undermine the labor movement and reinforce ruling class ideology.

The fact that most unions, and the labor movement as a whole, have not so far taken up the struggle for gay and lesbian liberation has also contributed strongly to a channelling of the gay struggle into more conservative avenues, ones that are less threatening to the bourgeoisie. The majority of gays and lesbians have the same interests as those of the labor movement because the majority of them are wage and salary earners (they are part of the proletariat) just like most Blacks and most women. Gays and lesbians can strengthen the labor movement not only because they are part of it but also because as a movement they can provide valuable support to strikes and other struggles by combining an emerging anticapitalist consciousness (class consciousness) with an emerging antisexist (profeminist), antiheterosexist consciousness which can break down the ideology of class society.

Lesbian and gay support of the miners in Britain in the 1984-85 coal miners' strike is an outstanding example of this. As was explained in a 1988 article on lesbian and gay rights in *International Viewpoint*, Feb. 1988:

The single most dramatic illustration of these developments occurred during the historic miners' strike of 1984-85. As often in the past, lesbian and gay activists organized to win solidarity for the embattled mining communities. For the first time, the striking miners opened their hearts and their homes to Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners activists and established links that were historic for the labor movement and dramatic in the effect they had on the advance of the lesbian and gay rights struggle.



Such activity raises the consciousness of the proletariat as a whole, tends to radicalize it, and lead it in an anticapitalist, revolutionary direction. These are all good reasons why the labor movement should see the gays and lesbians as their allies.

But even more important, the labor movement must come to support gay liberation because it is the right thing to do. Any and every struggle against oppression within this capitalist system weakens the ruling class, which is the enemy of labor, Blacks, Latinos, women, and other social layers as well as of gays. If we combine our forces we can win. If we fight alone even the smallest victory is much more difficult to achieve.

### ***Gay/Lesbian Oppression Is Rooted in Class Society***

The fact that gay rights ordinances and antidiscrimination clauses and laws have been passed in many cities with regard to education, employment, and housing, constitute important victories. But they have not ended the oppression of gays and lesbians. This underlines the fact that gay/lesbian oppression is deeply rooted in class society and will not end unless class society itself is overthrown. Victories at the electoral and legislative levels are temporary and precarious. They only partially address gay/lesbian oppression. And they do not eliminate the roots of this oppression, which are in bourgeois production and the patriarchal class system based on that production.

Such victories can be taken away at any time, or nullified in practice, as soon as the ruling class sees fit and feels powerful enough to do so. That class controls the courts, the laws, the state repressive apparatuses. The only way to secure lesbian/gay rights and lesbian/gay liberation is to combine the fight for anti-discrimination reforms—which are in the interests of gay/lesbian liberation and self-organization and independence—with a fight for measures leading beyond the present framework of capitalist society, of patriarchal class society, of sex for reproduction based upon private property and the bourgeois patriarchal family.

Transitional, anticapitalist demands can be forged for the gay movement which go beyond the framework of the patriarchal class system of production. Such a program has to link up with immediate demands arising out of today's circumstances and the developing consciousness of masses of Americans, whether gay or straight. One example is the realization that massive resources need to be shifted from "defense" to AIDS research, drugs, and treatment, and to other forms of health care. This ties in with the general (and widely held) idea that health care is a right. But that right can only be fully secured when a society is set up with production oriented towards human needs, not profit for the health care industry. This cannot be created within the present framework and existing structure of society. Thus, a consciousness by the gay movement of how its fight for AIDS research and funding links up with the broader fight for a different kind of social system is a crucial link in both the fight for gay liberation and the fight for socialism. Similar programmatic links will no doubt be forged as revolutionary Marxists pay more attention to the gay struggle, and as that struggle continues to grow and develop.

The idea among many liberal feminists and liberal gay activists that present bourgeois society, present capitalist society, can gradually be modified through an extension of civil rights and other reforms to eliminate sexism and gay/lesbian oppression is a hollow dream. In particular, it lacks an historical perspective. Gay oppression, like sexism, has not always existed. It has had different levels, different degrees, and different manifestations and expressions, in different societies. Some societies have known no gay oppression. (Woman's status also has not always constituted a category of oppression or inferiority, as honest anthropologist

have pointed out.) The strict heterosexual identity as we know it today, based upon strict opposite sex relations and upon the nuclear family and reproductive-oriented sexual monogamy, barely existed (mostly for upper-class women) before the 19th century.

It is no accident that sodomy laws and anti-abortion laws came into being about the same time in England and America. They were both reactions against the threat to private property, to the bourgeois nuclear family, and to patriarchal-controlled reproduction, constituted by "free" love, or sexual freedom, or birth control. The point is that gay oppression, like sexism, cannot be eliminated as long as capitalist society is not overthrown; it is deeply rooted in it. These things can be made less severe by reforms that weaken capitalist society, but they cannot be wiped out as long as capitalism survives, or bourgeois social relations remain deeply rooted—for example in countries even where capitalism has been overthrown.

Liberal and reformist gay and lesbian activists are wrong, therefore, when they assert, in response to "moral majority," right-wing thinking, that gay and lesbian rights and liberation are not a threat to the existing order. These things are a threat because gay and lesbian alternative lifestyles challenge the "normal family life" and "family values" that the right-wing/liberal establishment is fighting to maintain. After all, if lesbians and gays were just a small, fixed minority of sexual deviants, why would we generate such hatred on the part of these petty-bourgeois fanatics? Are these reactionaries wrong? Liberal gay activists tend to answer that lesbian and gay rights/liberation is completely compatible with a liberal capitalism, or at least independent from a struggle against it. But this attempt to appease the right wing, this failure to challenge basic positions of the existing social order, are condemned to defeat, because in fact the reactionary morality campaigners have a better understanding than those on the liberal, progressive left, of the challenge being posed to traditional norms.

If big capital has sometimes seemed to take a hands-off attitude toward certain progressive struggles or social questions (or even to jump on their bandwagon) in its search for profits at whatever social cost, the depth of the present capitalist social crisis means that government will increasingly find ways to take a reactionary social stand. Jesse Helms rages against the "sick homosexual," the militant homosexuals, destroying America's family values. But what he won't admit is that capitalism itself created this situation, by instituting a policy of compulsory heterosexuality as a response to the direct threat that sexuality outside of the institution of bourgeois marriage posed to its private property and nuclear family. By consolidating the strict heterosexual identity in the bourgeois patriarchal nuclear family—often codified in laws prohibiting certain sexual practices not conducive strictly to reproduction (sodomy laws, etc.)—capitalism itself created the conditions fostering and stimulating a spirit of resistance and rebellion: the appearance of the modern gay and lesbian identities (and also the variations of bisexual identities).

Gay and lesbian oppression, woman's oppression—like the oppression of the working class—were created and/or consolidated by capitalism, by the triumph of bourgeois society. But bourgeois society has also given rise to something new, to possibilities for liberation that never existed before, to conditions that for the first time since the foundation of class society make possible sexual liberation, women's liberation, lesbian and gay liberation, and indeed liberation from all forms of sexual and gender oppression. The rise of the modern lesbian and gay men's and women's liberation movements are both a testimony to this potential and important locomotive forces for achieving it. □



# Nicaragua Revisited

by Lisa Mockler

When I first arrived in Estelí at the beginning of July of this year, I thought briefly that I could have been in the same place and moment I had left two years ago, just after the 10th anniversary of the Sandinista revolution. There were the same red-and-black 7's painted on the side of every other building, reminders of the 7th anniversary celebration which took place here in Estelí. Everywhere were pre-election FSLN slogans, just as I'd imagined: "Con el FSLN en Estelí, todo será mejor" (With the FSLN in Estelí, everything will be better). Murals of Daniel Ortega on horseback, Daniel and Sergio his vice-president with the ghost of Carlos Fonseca peering over their shoulders. And there were the same black-market money-changers, waving wads of cordobas like decks of cards at me as I passed.

But then I saw the first few UNO slogans on the walls—"UNO sí puede" (UNO yes it can), the first few revolutionary murals spattered with globs of cement which looked like shit, but which were so hard they could not be removed.

It was when I got to the house and began to talk to the family that I had come to visit, the family with whom I had lived two years before, that I began to realize that Nicaragua will never be the same place that I and so many other internationalists saw from outside, briefly. Nicaragua can only go forward now; it can't go back.

The Aguilero family (all names in this article have been changed) had problems. Luis, the father, like so many Nicaraguans right now, could not find work. He was a highly skilled construction worker, but the company for which he had worked for years had recently gone under. Although he got hired for a couple of week-long building projects that took him away from Estelí while I was there, the family of eight was largely surviving on the mother, Luisa's underpaid salary as a public health worker.

Often the family did not eat well, Luisa told me immediately upon my arrival, and they wondered if I could help them obtain a visa for one of the children into the United States, where they could get work as two of Luisa's sisters had already done. This hit me very hard—like so much of the population of Central America, their economy devastated by the United States, they were being forced to leave behind their country and lifelong history in one place in order to try and earn enough to live a little better. Luisa said that they did not want to leave Nicaragua permanently, only for a year or so, but we all knew that very few of those who left for the North ever came back.

All this was entirely new. In fact, during my first stay I had been struck by the relative indifference of the family to United States culture—it was so contrary to the assumption, promoted by the U.S. media, that the majority of the world looks to us for political and cultural guidance.

If Luis could not find work, it was representative not only of the fact that construction has slowed to a crawl in a deadened

economy, but also of the general fact that most Nicaraguans could not find work. For someone like the family's oldest son, Jorge, who finished veterinary school one year ago, the prospects were very grim. When I arrived Jorge had been working for two months, unpaid, at a cattle slaughterhouse where they employed veterinarians to check the cows for pregnancy. He explained that this was so that he did not forget his skill, and in the expectation that the company would begin paying him when they had an opening.

When I arrived a government policy of austerity measures had been put into effect. All state employees had the option of being voluntarily laid off in exchange for a lump sum of money, which presumably they would use to finance some entrepreneurial venture. In fact, many people did not open stores or transport goods from Guatemala to sell with this money but used it to travel to the U.S. instead. Luisa, as a state-employed nurse, was offered this option but saw it as no use to her with a family to feed.

Another blow was struck against my memory of a Nicaragua still defying imperialism after ten years of economic pressure when I heard a description of the present educational prospects which the four Aguilero children and their cousins could look forward to. Two years ago when I left, Jorge was finishing his final year of veterinary college, and all the younger children who had not yet finished secondary school spoke of studying to be doctors, psychologists, or veterinarians, spoke of scholarships to study in the USSR and Cuba. None of these opportunities would have been possible for their parents, who were respectively drawn from the working class and the peasant class. Today, because of reduced government subsidization policies and changed admittance policies, none of these fields of study are foreseeable financially for the children. And so, when they speak of the future, Juanita talks of her training as a hairdresser, Lina of her job as a secretary, and Teresa of the computer course she is taking. Douglas, the second son, is at a slight advantage over the girls and is studying a course of animal medicine which is different from, and less skilled than, that which Jorge followed. He was tracked out of medicine, which is what he hoped to study, on the basis of his grades.

Luis and Luisa were well aware of what this signaled for their children, who they had hoped would have the opportunity to follow a different path than they themselves had done. Luisa spoke to me about this as we walked to the house of the family who sold propane gas, with whom she had to discuss some paperwork regarding her bill. This gas was used for the small stoves which many people in Estelí owned as a supplement to the main stone ovens found outside the kitchen, usually in an open-air space. When we arrived we stood silently in the foyer of the large apartment which we had entered in the center of town. The man to whom Luisa explained her problem looked



her over suspiciously, disappeared into one of the back rooms for a time, and returned with the paper she needed.

As we left, Luisa recounted with bitterness how the man we had dealt with had been able to demand servility from her, because he knew she needed something from him. After the revolution, she recalled, the wealthy families of Estelí had no longer felt confident in their hold over the poor, but felt fear, while the poor were bold with their new-found power and were servile to no one. But now these same wealthy families, many of whom had returned after ten-year absences, felt once again that they had the upper hand. Of course we hoped that her children would never know what it was to be a servant to anyone, as she had been, but UNO was not Somoza, and because it meant the end of the war and because the people had voted for Violeta, in Luisa's view it was best to wait out the next elections rather than take up arms again. No one wanted any more war.

That night Luis and Luisa argued about whether war would break out in the north, where resettled contras were killing peasants and believed Sandinista supporters as acts of political revenge. A moment later Luisa told her husband to keep his voice down, because there were unfriendly ears abroad now. She referred to the ears of the thousands of resettled contras or "recontras" who have moved to Estelí since they were readmitted into the country after the elections.

And indeed when we climbed up to the roof the next day to collect the crop from the avocado tree, I could see the two new barrios (neighborhoods) that spread out behind and far to the left of the house, where the fields used to begin and continue up into the mountains as far as the eye could see. These barrios were largely constructed using UN funds, administered by an arm of this organization charged with the rehabilitation of demobilized contras and Sandinista soldiers. Today it is widely reputed to have devoted the majority of its funds toward the resettlement of ex-contras, when the money is supposed to be divided equally with projects for ex-Sandinista soldiers.

With the newly introduced population of ex-contras have arrived drugs and an increased crime rate in the city—particularly in the incidence of rape.

It was on the edge of one of these new barrios—which the youngest girl of the family, Juanita, described to me as being populated by recontras, thieves, and newly resurrected prostitution quarters (the old red-light district in Estelí was closed down after the revolution)—it was here that we attended a small "culto" or service of the Evangelical Church. This is a religion that has been making great inroads among the traditionally Catholic Latin American poor. Nicaragua, it seems, is no exception to this trend, and half of the block we lived on had recently converted to Evangelicalism. Once a family converted, Juanita told me, they often stopped speaking to neighbors and friends whom they had known all their life, regarding them now as devils and sinners. This was because of the strict rules of conduct which were described somewhat during the culto, and which entailed the women abstaining from the use of make-up or pants, and forbade music unrelated to religious subjects or dancing outside of the religious experience. Music and dance seemed to be an integral part of the church service, however, which took place in a tiny shack decorated with two sheets of lace and paper roses hung above the altar, and a microphone which plugged into a ghetto blaster on the floor.

The radio boasted "Dios Te Ama" and "Piensa en Dios" bumper stickers, and the speakers were reminiscent of U.S. television evangelists, with greased and waved hair, working the congregation into a frenzy with their shouted appeals. The congregation itself was largely Indian and extremely poor, and sang fervently about the sensation of power which Jesus gave them. The subject of the pastor's speech was obedience to church leaders, which he expounded on through parables.

Around the city square drove "chicos plasticos," the male children of wealthy families recently returned to Estelí, many educated abroad. These young men are also associated by many people with the new abundance of drugs and several rapes of working class girls, and spend much of their time driving their families' cars up and down the main streets of town. Jorge told me (somewhat bitterly) that though the girls died for these white-skinned, expensively dressed types, they were generally suspect among the poor, especially the adults, and were considered to be social trash. I thought this was a very respectable reaction to the new bourgeoisie, which in most places is emulated and envied.

The influences of North American popular culture were not so easily resisted, however, as can be seen by the new influx in Estelí of U.S. music, clothes, and television programs such as "911 Rescue" and "Alf." I was also struck on my return to the States after this trip by the fact that the music stations of the New York Spanish-speaking community play the same pool of music as the stations in Nicaragua, something that was not true two years ago.

During my stay, I worked with Luisa at the tiny health center which served the barrio in which we lived, an outpost of the main health clinic in the center of town. This "puesto de salud" boasted a full-time staff of two doctors and four nurses, and offered medical consultations, vaccinations, and infant diarrhea treatment. Urgent medical cases which were considered outside the ability of the clinic's facilities were sent on to the hospital. The health center's head doctor calculated that their staff had served more than two-thirds of the barrio's population so far.

While I was there, each barrio's health center was taking a census of the number of malnourished children and pregnant women among the population which it served. Our clinic was no exception, and the weighing and measuring of children when they came to the center for their immunizations, so that they could be classified according to the normal weight for their age, was added to Luisa's list of duties. This then became my responsibility while I worked with her, and although she stated from her experience a figure of 90 percent malnutrition among the children of our barrio, one of the poorest in Estelí, on the basis of my few weeks recording their weight classification I would put the figure closer to 70 percent malnutrition, with a very high percentage of children considered at risk. For these children we offered a UNICEF-supplied nutritional supplement (a powdered serum composed of salt and sugar), and required monthly visits so that their development could be monitored. But the real problem, the families' lack of food to give their children, could not be addressed from our position with more than a warning of special attention to the children at risk.

I volunteered at the clinic for three and a half weeks. During that time a Nicaraguan medical student was also working for



less than full pay, completing the last of the internships required for his degree. A Spanish medical student arrived to work as his assistant for three weeks, with a brigade of 36 Spaniards who fanned out over various health facilities around the city. Another North American woman arrived at the clinic just as I left, working with the San Francisco Sister-City Project and observing how some funds donated to the clinic by that organization were to be spent. This was only in the tiny local health center, and in spite of the general feeling among Estelians that the number of visiting internationalists has dropped off since the elections.

Each week a group of us traveled to one of the farming communities in the mountains outside Estelí, where the doctor held consultations and we gave vaccinations and distributed medicine at little or no cost. The populations of the barrio's schools were regularly immunized by health workers. All this was very encouraging, and provided a ray of hope amidst Nicaragua's devastated economic situation.

It was encouraging despite the story of one of the health workers who took me aside to tell me of the struggle to keep her children in school while she lived on the pittance that was her salary, the husband who had left her to support her family after a caesarian section rendered her sterile. It was encouraging despite the daily newspaper's report that 70 percent of Nicaragua's population is officially considered below the poverty line. Despite the fact that one of the doctors at the clinic, a very intelligent man educated in Mexico and a fervent Sandinista, had been offered a work exchange in Germany for

a year with his family, but thought the thirty dollars necessary for the visa application might prohibit him from accepting.

The activities at the health center were encouraging in spite of these things because as Luis told me one day "we have to go on living, Lisa." The FSLN lost, the country buckled under to foreign economic pressure and promises of aid that were never kept, the revolution is over. But Luisa insisted that the revolution had planted a seed in the minds of the Nicaraguan people that cannot be removed. They will never again endure a "patrón."

Nicaraguans have an entirely new set of problems—their president's attempts to turn back the land reform which distributed private land to the peasants, rampant acts of political revenge. The arms distributed to the populace by the Sandinistas were recalled shortly after the elections. But for the moment they do not have the problems of the past—dictatorship with no popular election in sight, the government death squads that El Salvador and Guatemala still endure.

And there are small victories. The government has voted against returning land to ex-Somocistas. The FSLN is still the most widely supported party in Nicaragua (it won 41 percent of the vote in 1990; UNO, composed of 14 different parties, won 55 percent). The Frente has also been forced to examine the policies that caused it to lose the majority of the peasant vote—the imposition of a collective system which had no roots in the tradition of the rural population, petty corruption among lower Sandinista officials—in preparation for the next election. This cannot be a negative thing. As it stands, the FSLN is in a position to "rule from below," as Daniel Ortega promised in his concession speech, and exert influence with Chamorro to minimize attacks on the gains of the revolution.

Lester, a student of social sciences who was living in our household while he attended school in Estelí, was a member of the Sandinista Youth organization, and spoke to me about its goals in the interim until the 1996 elections. Primary among these, he told me, was its responsibility to educate the next generation, a generation which will never have seen Nicaragua under Somoza, about the significance of the revolution and the Sandinista Front.

Though on the surface much has changed since my last visit to Nicaragua, in the larger picture the country still suffers under the same economic and cultural imperialism which it has known for three centuries. In this sense, Nicaragua's political reality under UNO is very much continuous with the country's situation under the Sandinistas—the identities of both regimes have been defined by their respective attitudes toward U.S. intervention in domestic policies. The FSLN was never given a chance to see what it could do in the absence of a U.S. created civil war, a U.S. economic blockade, a U.S. run election campaign.

In his concession speech of February 1990, Daniel Ortega told his people, "Nacimos pobres y moriremos pobres." "We were born poor and we will die poor." From what I saw people have little choice but to agree with this sentiment, whether they were Sandinistas or UNO supporters. Nevertheless, to be in Nicaragua is to go on living and fighting, surviving without the hopefulness and idealism that marked the years under the FSLN, in a political climate now quite unremarkable in the context of Central America. □

## The Anti-War Activist

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### The Gulf War and Arab Anti-Imperialism

Salah Jabbar

As is widely known, despite the scoundrelous bias of the media, the Gulf war was the occasion for a huge upsurge of anti-imperialist consciousness and creativity on the part of the Arab masses.

The reasons are easy to understand. The Arab region is an area where resentment against western imperialism, and US imperialism in particular, is at its deepest. Not only was the region submitted for decades to a European colonial yoke wholly alien to it, but this domination is perceived as being responsible for the present back-writhes of the Arab economy and society, and inseparably linked to the fragmentation of the Arab nation. In addition, the creation of the Zionist state on the banks of the Arab east established a permanent source for the radicalization of national and anti-imperialist consciousness.

Thus, when the US and its British and French allies engaged, in the name of "international law," in the infamous militarization which led to the disaster "Desert Storm," the masses—whatever their previous views about Saddam Hussein's horrendous dictatorship—could only find a deep solidarity with Iraq. They could have no sympathy for the obvious double standard of those who organized a crusade for the liberation of Kuwait while de facto supporting the occupation of Arab soil by Israel.

From the outset this provided a great opportunity for a left-wing radicalization of national consciousness. Anti-imperialism, which had been in decline as a result of an accumulation of defeat since the late sixties, emerged in a very acute manner, with all the passion that characterizes the Arab masses' cultural pattern. This occurred at a time when Muslim

fundamentalism, which had flared the wild left by the decline of progressive anti-imperialism, found itself engaged in difficult contradictions.

The fundamentalists' dilemma was that they need to consider the Iraqi Ba'athist regime as a vehicle, as one of their worst enemies, while many of their groups were backed by Saudi Arabia. Moreover, non-Muslim western troops were deployed on Saudi territory, although it is supposed to be sacred. However, the theological issue was not at the heart of their problem: the real question was whether to be cut off from the masses, overwhelmingly for Iraq, or from Saudi society.

Before they resolved this issue, there was a great opportunity for their left-wing opponents. Unfortunately this opening was squandered by a crucial shortcoming of the Arab left. The latter either kept silent about Saddam in the name of the "mass contradictions" with imperialism, or even supported him, maintaining that he had become the champion of the Arab anti-imperialist struggle. There was therefore no break in the unfolding of great illusions among the masses about the Iraqi dictatorship.

These illusions were in turn against the left, and benefited the fundamentalists. Saddam—a champion demagogue—played the religious card after having fought "materialism" for eight years in a noisy war against Iraq. He adopted "Islamic" discourse in his speeches, inscribed a declaration of faith on the Iraqi flag, and organized a fundamentalist party in Baghdad before the war. This also greatly helped the fundamentalists overcome the problems created by their leftist hesitations.

The negative effect of the left's shortcomings was that the masses maintained their illusions about Saddam, despite his tactics of deceit and ipse Dixit capitulation to the US-led coalition. They were misled superficially, if not in an openly hostile way, to the upstaging of the Arab and Kurdish masses against Saddam. This high point of the democratic struggle in this part of the world was rejected by most Arabs for reactionary reasons, stemming from anti-Kurdish chauvinism or anti-Shi'a conservatism (the majority, though certainly not all, of the Arab insurgents were Shi'a's).

The balance-sheet of all this is quite contradictory. On one hand, the deep radicalization of the masses' anti-imperialist and pan-Arab national consciousness has reached a new height from which it is not likely to quickly fall. On the other hand, the general direction of this consciousness is still unambiguous: whether it will turn left, or continue to be distorted and fossilized by fundamentalism, as happened in the eighties, remains to be seen. The outcome of the ongoing confrontation in Algeria will be decisive. A fundamentalist victory there could considerably boost their whole current all over the Arab region and even further. The shape of the Arab region in the nineties is at stake.

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# The Gulf War: An Unremitting Catastrophe

by Dan Fine

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The Gulf War has been an unmitigated disaster for public health, medical care, and human life. Sufficient information has now become available from reports and studies of reliable non-governmental organizations and unofficial sources to define its dimensions, despite the aggressive secrecy of the Bush administration and the Iraqi government and the silence of the largely subservient news media.

Direct military action caused a huge death toll according to Greenpeace: 100,000-120,000 Iraqi troops; 5,000-15,000 Iraqi civilians; 343 allied troops (145 Americans); and 2,000-5,000 Kuwaitis. The 88,000 tons of bombs dropped in the 43-day war produced an intensity of destructive power much greater than in the Vietnam or Korean wars. Of the tonnage dropped by the allies, 93 percent was in the form of highly destructive conventional gravity bombs, not precision-guided weapons, including 80,000 cluster bombs that released close to 16 million bomblets, daisy cutters that produced vast overpressures, and fuel-air explosives that mimic small nuclear weapons. The small percentage (7) of laser-guided "smart" bombs and cruise missiles was aimed primarily at the civilian infrastructure (electric power system, roads, bridges, etc); however, 20 percent of the "smart" bombs and 50 percent of the conventional bombs missed their targets.

Civilian death and disease as a delayed consequence of the destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure will greatly exceed that from direct military action (according to the Harvard study team which returned in May from on-site observations in Iraq). Gastroenteritis, cholera and typhoid, combined with severe malnutrition (marasmus and kwashiorkor due to calorie and protein deficiency), are now epidemic throughout Iraq. Conservatively, there has been a 100-percent increase in the mortality rate of children under five; by May, excess deaths of 55,000 such children. The study team predicted an additional 170,000 excess

deaths of young children in the coming year. The rise in water-borne diseases is caused by failure of water purification and sewage treatment systems and the consequent flooding of the streets and the Tigris River with raw sewage, all due to destruction of most Iraqi electric-generating capacity. These diseases are expected to surge during the warm summer months. While the Harvard team focused on young children, they stated that similar large increases in death rates is likely in the rest of the older population.

Widespread malnutrition has resulted from a tenfold increase in prices and severe shortages of food due to destruction of food-processing plants and distribution resources plus the allied embargo. The high prevalence of malnutrition, exacerbated by gastrointestinal disorders, is an indicator of the potential of famine. The medical care system is in a desperate state because of lack of electricity and clean water, closure of facilities, and severe shortages of staff and medical supplies, such as IV fluids and antibiotics for treatment of typhoid.

Widespread suffering, disease, and death have also occurred among more than 1,000,000 refugees and displaced persons created by the war and the postwar uprisings encouraged by the Bush administration.

Greenpeace reported that 2,000,000 migrant workers left Kuwait and Iraq, 500,000 Iraqis left Baghdad to escape bombings and vast numbers of Kurds and Shiites fled their homes. More than 20,000 Iraqis died in the civil war. Refugees and displaced people die at greatly increased rates from diarrhea, respiratory disease, and malnutrition. They experience physical and mental trauma, crowding, dehydration, exposure, and lack of safe water or sanitation. Greenpeace estimated that 15,000 to 30,000 Kurds and other displaced persons died along the roads or in improvised camps and that at present there are approximately 1,000 deaths daily among refugees.

Finally, the Gulf War created vast environmental degradation that will almost certainly produce substantial, although unpredictable, consequences. The huge oil spills, hundreds of oil well fires, residual unexploded bomblets and mines, and toxic dumps are all elements endangering health and life in the region. Given the immense production of smoke, toxic hydrocarbons and other noxious chemicals inhaled or deposited in the soil, direct and delayed toxicity, interference with the food chain and serious adverse medical and public health consequences can be expected in the future.

Despite the touting of the beneficent, life-sparing virtues of hi-tech warfare, its aftermath continues to produce terrible consequences for the innocent civilian population. The destruction of the infrastructure, displacement of civilians and degradation of the environment will result in disease and death for many hundreds of thousands long after the military action has ended. Modern, high intensity conventional warfare, even when brief and non-nuclear, is an unmitigated human disaster.

Clearly, concern for loss of life is largely a "collateral" issue in the calculus of offensive warfare. It affects tactics and information management, primarily because mortality rates influence the morale of the military and civilian population and the residual strength of the contending forces. On both sides, the managers of the Gulf War have deliberately withheld the facts concerning the military and civilian losses in Iraq. They clearly believe, and we agree, that the people of the United States and Iraq would both reject this and future wars if they were fully confronted with the human tragedy engendered. □

## Imperialism and the Psychology of War

by Evelyn Sell

*The following was presented as part of a panel entitled The Struggle Against War and Imperialism at the FIT National Educational Conference held in July of this year in Pittsburgh.*

My comments will focus on the psychological war carried out by U.S. imperialism—the psychological war directed at the population in *this* country. This kind of war started years before Operation Desert Shield was in place. During the 1980s, the tiny elite that rules this country picked the most favorable situations to launch offensive actions—favorable in the sense of choosing targets that were not likely to arouse intense public opposition. In 1983 U.S. military forces invaded Grenada, in 1986 Libya was bombed, and in 1989 Panama was invaded. Encouraged by their success in pulling off these military actions, the warmakers set up the psychological basis for sending hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to the Middle East for the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein was painted as another Hitler, and



the public was promised a quick and painless conflict carried out by advanced technology.

The media was carefully controlled and manipulated. The reports given out to the public and the images seen on television were designed to confirm the boasts about U.S. surgical strike capabilities, happy troops eager to carry out military missions, and an overwhelming rally-around-the-flag fervor within the United States.

Given these conditions, the remarkable thing was that an antiwar movement sprang up immediately—all across the United States. The protests against the Gulf War involved a broad cross section of our society: racial and ethnic communities, families of the troops overseas, labor and feminist organizations, lesbian and gay rights groups, immigrant workers, religious groups, older people who were veterans of the peace and anti-nuclear movements, environmentalists, and a new generation of young activists. Antiwar coalitions blossomed in cities and on campuses around the country. A wide variety of protest activities were held. When President Bush declared the cease-fire, the antiwar movement was in a healthy condition.

We're now beginning to hear about some of the facts that were suppressed—facts which show just how orchestrated the news was during the war. It is now revealed that only seven percent of the explosives dropped on Iraq were the highly praised "smart bombs." It turns out that the same pictures of a "surgical strike" demolishing an Iraqi structure were shown over and over and over on television! There weren't lots and lots of pinpoint bombings, there were relatively few—but those examples were broadcast again and again to support the idea of a high-tech/push-button war.

A coalition of editors, publishers, and television news directors recently sent a report to Defense Secretary Cheney about the way the media was squelched. The report presents cases of reporters put under military arrest and having their copy "sanitized" for political reasons which had nothing to do with military security. There were incidents where military press officers finished sentences for soldiers being interviewed, and military escorts for media pools stepped in front of television cameras if they didn't like the way an interview with troops was going. The homecoming troops were welcomed with big parades designed to sustain the image created during the Gulf War—but those returning troops are now telling their families and friends and associates what *really* happened during the war. And the military can't censor those kinds of firsthand reports.

In addition, the warmakers have not been able to sanitize or cover up the devastation

in Iraq caused by the war, the many thousands of civilian deaths and injuries, the horrific slaughter of Iraqi troops trying to leave Kuwaiti territory, the refusal of the U.S. government to aid the Kurdish and Shiite rebellions, and the terrible suffering of Arab children, women, and men caused by the war and its aftermath. The lack of democracy in Kuwait, and the gross discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in Kuwait, have exposed the lie that the U.S. government launched a war to protect human rights.

The rapid rise of a broad antiwar movement, the increasing disillusionment over what really happened, and the dismay over the results of the war, means that ruling class efforts to win "hearts and minds" are not as successful as President Bush claimed when he boasted, "We've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." The huge welcome home parades and the polls about President Bush's popularity do not erase the fact that for working people—the overwhelming majority in this country—there is a deep continuing distrust of the motives and real goals of business, political, and military interests; the majority of people in the U.S. do not feel that direct military action is the preferred method for settling problems; and significant sections of the population are not willing to sacrifice their needs and their hopes for the future in order to make the United States the dominant power in the world.

In addition to objective evidence, I base my evaluations of current reality on my own personal experiences. I was a teenager during World War II. I lived through a war which had wide and deep popular support for *four years*. I was a fervent supporter—as a young patriotic American who believed everything my government told me, and for personal family reasons. That was the last truly popular U.S. war I witnessed. The same fervent and sustained support did not reappear during the Korean War, during the Vietnam war, nor during U.S. interventions around the world such as in Central America. And—in spite of the overwhelming bombardment of the media's coverage of yellow ribbons, prowar demonstrations, and flag displays—what we saw, heard, and read during the Gulf War did not in any significant way equal the support expressed during World War II over many years—not just seven months or 100 hours.

I was born on the eve of the Great Depression and I've seen the U.S. engaged in wars and military actions throughout my life. Both my personal experiences and the understandings I have developed as a revolutionary socialist tell me that the Gulf War will not be the last time the decision-makers in this country will choose the military option. And when they do, they

will have to take the Vietnam syndrome into account once again. The rise and rapid growth of the antiwar movement proved the shallowness of evaluations about the "me-too" generation that was supposed to be apathetic about social, political, and economic issues—a generation that was supposed to be interested only in making money. We saw a new generation of antiwar activists tested under fire. They marched and demonstrated alongside veterans of protest struggles. That, in and of itself, is living proof that antiwar sentiments are deeply rooted in the consciousness of people—and will bloom once again when fertilized by interventions and military campaigns.

This is a continuing problem for the U.S. ruling class. The technology they control cannot be adequately utilized without the support and the labor of human beings. Missiles can be devastating—but it's still a truism of warfare that only living human troops can actually seize and hold onto land, people, and resources. Those troops have to be backed up by workers producing the stuff of war—armaments, ships, uniforms, food rations, and so on. The population has to be willing to pay for the war through taxes, cuts in wages and social services, and a host of sacrifices. The imperialist warmakers are a tiny, tiny minority in this country—they are dependent on the overwhelming majority, and that spells trouble with a capital "T" for their "New World Order" plans.

There are many who point to the polls showing 90 percent approval ratings for President Bush, who point to the cheering for General Shwarzkopf, and who point to the many welcome home parades as proof that people in this country are easily brainwashed into backing military actions. When the cease-fire was announced and antiwar events diminished, a number of activists were disappointed and somewhat demoralized. You can tell by the remarks I have already made that I do not share those views. My revolutionary optimism was confirmed by what happened: the immediate eruption of antiwar activities, the rapid rise and growth of a broad movement, the healthy democratic formations which sprang up around the country to organize demonstrations and other events, the consciousness involved in keeping the focus on the U.S. government, and the prompt adoption of the key demand to bring the U.S. troops home now.

Without downplaying the gains made by the U.S. ruling class, the antiwar response showed how swiftly and strongly people in this country can raise barriers to imperialist plans and goals. The protest against the Gulf War constitutes a significant chapter in the ongoing struggle against war and imperialism. □



# Rosario Ibarra on the Campaign Trail

*Rosario Ibarra was the senatorial candidate of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores), Mexican section of the Fourth International, in the Mexican general elections of August 18 this year. The PRT participated in an electoral bloc, the Frente Electoral Socialista, and fielded PRT candidates for the Senate, Chamber of Deputies, state governors, and local posts.*

*To the surprise of no one, the ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), claimed a sweeping victory. It ran the elections in typical fraudulent style with as many or more irregularities registered than usual. Pronasol, to which Ibarra refers in her talk, is the acronym for Programa Nacional Solidaridad, a so-called government program of aid for the poor. It was used as a prime PRI propaganda tool in its campaign.*

*Despite the character of the elections, and a low turnout of about 50 percent of the eligible voters, the PRT expressed great satisfaction with the gains it made through the energetic conduct of its campaign.*

*Rosario Ibarra delivered this speech at the final election rally in Mexico City on August 13. It was printed in the Mexican daily newspaper *La Jornada* from which the following is taken. Translation by Sarah Lovell.*

### Compañeras and Compañeros:

We are at the point of concluding our election campaign. It would seem that all that happened in 1988 has not changed anything. In the last months we have seen the same panorama as before and as always, only now augmented, magnified, intensified.

We have seen the PRI using the country's money for its own election campaigns, boasting of its resources in its advertising displays, while the people go hungry. We have seen Salinas de Gortari making his election tours to distribute, supposedly, land to the campesinos, or to return the decrees of Zapata to Anenecuilco, or to develop new highways, appearing as the best activist of the PRI. Beyond his speeches about modernization and about pluralism, he operates as a true priista.

This performance by Salinas illustrates the system of domination based on a state party. In order to maintain its domination it takes money from the country's coffers, it utilizes public facilities for its own ends, it denies the civil rights of society. Only the naive can think that we live in an "open and pluralistic society." We live under a dictatorship! Perhaps, as the Peruvian novelist said, the perfect dictatorship, because it seeks (and sometimes secures) the endorsement of the opposition so that it can speak about democracy without blushing.

This has always been the game of pretense played in our country. The PRI government infringes on our democratic rights, tramples on them, and then wants us, those of the opposition, to create a perfume of incense and declare them innocent.

It takes a lot of money, money to buy consciences, to offer ambassadorships to ex-priistas, who never really changed; to buy off the militants of the left or the leaders of social organizations, organizations of human rights. And for them it designed Pronasol.

We have never before seen such cynicism by a Mexican regime. It plays with the hunger of the people, it ridicules and mocks them. It pretends to build an ideal society—for its own crooked ends—a society in which one not only is poor but has

to apologize for being poor; a society where one has to grovel, to humble oneself in order to have land, a house, electricity.

If we had had forces on hand to carry on our fight, we would not have had to look at those TV announcements about Pronasol that fill us with indignation and rage. The fight against the philistine charity of the PRI is part of the struggle, because people will forge their own destiny; because they are the owners of the riches they produce; because they don't have one handful of petty bureaucrats who benefit from the productive labor of others. In this cave of Ali Baba that is Pronasol are found old (in the literal sense of the word) ex-militants of the left who want to redeem their old socialism with charity. They are proof that the system of domination has not changed, that it continues in the manner of Alvaro Obregón, under the gun.

Yet there are many who do not sell themselves, many who, yes, resist the gunfire. Not simply because of individual choice (it's that and it is very important) but because we have confidence in our people and in our ideas.

We are seen as an anachronism; yes, anachronistic we are. We continue thinking, we remain convinced that the capitalist system is a system of hatred, of competition, of oppression, discrimination, and exploitation. Things we detest. We don't share the idea that to enjoy democracy there must be exploitation. According to this argument, if the democratic human right to exploit others is violated, all human rights are violated. If we were to agree with this view of democracy, we would also have to accept the idea that the state can detain, can disappear a dissenter without any regard to legality.

We are opposed to any democracy that isn't democratic, any pretense of democracy, or, to be more precise, against the dictatorship of simulated democracy. Because, we say again, you cannot have democracy in Mexico while there is one disappeared. If this view about the theories of reconciliation and modernization is "ultimatism," well, good, we accept that. We are "ultimatists": we want 100 percent democracy, not 5 or 10 or 20 percent, because democracy can't exist in percentages. It exists or it doesn't exist!



To confirm that nothing has changed, we are now presented the Free Trade Treaty (TLC) with Canada and the United States as a panacea for us to reach—finally—the first world. The TLC, together with Pronasol, are the great Salinista projects.

What will the consequences of the TLC be for the people? In Europe, in the United States, in Japan the two-thirds theory is being elaborated. According to this theory there is a market, a capacity for consumption by two-thirds of the population. And in Mexico this theory is gaining acceptance. The difference for our country is that it is being introduced in an inverted fashion. A third of the population will have the capacity for production and consumption and it is for them the TLC is arranged. For the two-thirds remaining, there is Pronasol; that is, only the crumbs of charity.

The big beneficiaries of these policies will be the Mexican bourgeois lackeys, the 300 families that rule our country, according to what they themselves say. They can enter the first world, they are already there. It's of no importance to them that Mexico must pay the external debt; that doesn't hurt them. These are the supporters of the PRI, these are their candidates and those who support the PRI candidates. These are the ones for whom the TLC is designed.

All this has caused electoral apathy. The people have no confidence in the elections, no confidence that their votes will be respected. And this suits the PRI. The principal promoter of abstentionism is the PRI. They're the ones who, with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), the Government Secretariat, and the National Palace, obstructed the registration of nine million Mexicans and failed to assign credentials to three million; they are the ones who control the entire electoral process. The PRT was the only party which refused to sign an accord with the IFE about credentials and registration. All the other parties signed, some with "reservations." But what do reservations mean? Nothing more nor less than playing the game of the state party, only with a bad conscience. We don't owe them anything.

Again, for some, this will be an example of anachronism. But for us it is an example of solid principle. And we know that this sooner or later will pay. It's precisely this firmness that allows us to participate in the elections without being accomplices in the politics of the state party.

### **Compañeras and Compañeros:**

Nevertheless, things are not the same since 1988. Not because the popular will is being respected, but because the

people have matured in their methods of struggle, in their methods of organization.

The Ford workers who have created the most important strike movement of recent times represent more than anyone the new forms of struggle. Not the power of one of the largest companies in the world, not the hatred of the big "charro" (phony) Fidel Velásquez, not the rebuff of the federal authorities, etc., have been able to defeat them. They represent the new Mexican proletariat. They understand the importance of linking themselves to their North American and Canadian brothers, they understand that the only way to confront the policies of international capital is by the internationalism of the working class. There, in the most basic cells of society, change is being generated. There, the new social subject is being forged that is going to change our Mexico. And that's

where, I am sure, the central focus of the forces of the Electoral Socialist Front belongs.

We should transform this Electoral Socialist Front into a Fighting Socialist Front if we really want to fulfill our fundamental conviction that the principal changes of the country will come in social struggle.

In this epoch, where some think that everything is up for sale, we, men and women, remain proud socialists. Our socialism did



not collapse with the collapse in Eastern Europe. This was the socialism of others; as the song goes, "ese muerto no lo cargo yo" (that death is not my burden).

The socialism that we represent is profoundly democratic and self-governing; it is plebeian and emancipating; it is subversive and radical. Yes, radical, we are going to the roots of social phenomena and at the roots of capitalism are exploitation, oppression against women, slow and brutal destruction of the strategic resources of a nation—its youth and its environment; the prevalence of old and new diseases; the marginalization of ethnic peoples, and so many, so many injustices. Therefore we want a radical change, because it will be necessary to go to the roots to form a new society. Our basis is socialism, democratic, feminist, ecologist, that is, fundamentally humanist.

The PRI thinks it's winning, but doesn't know how to measure the bitterness of the people. They want this election campaign to go down in history as the campaign of the Pronasol. They don't realize, or they don't want to know, that it will be recorded as the election campaign in the time of the cholera. □



# "I'm Alive, and I'm Red"

by Ginny Hildebrand

*First sung, with a pinch of humor and a dash of passion, at the FIT Socialist Education Conference, Pittsburgh, July 13, 1991.*

Karl Marx did not predict  
That revolution would arrive  
First in a backward land  
Where toilers barely could survive,  
Where bureaucrats could seize control  
Betraying ends and means.  
They killed so many dreamers  
But they could not kill the dream.

Now the "socialist" economies  
They haven't worked that well,  
And preachers preach  
That revolutionaries burn in hell,  
And pundits from the East and West  
Say Communism is dead,  
But I know that ain't true  
'Cause I'm alive and I'm a Red.

Yes here I am alive,  
And I'm a Red.  
I'm scientific proof  
That Communism ain't dead.  
And I don't care  
If I do offend ya,  
Struggle's still on my agenda.  
I've got nothin' to lose but these chains,  
And a whole wide world still to gain.

Eastern European workers  
Want a true democracy,  
But many think this won't include  
A planned economy.  
Their detour may be long,  
But it is not without an end:  
They won't exchange Joe Stalin's chains  
To be wage slaves again.

'Cause capitalism generates  
Some things one can't ignore,  
Like bigotry, pollution,  
Unemployment, greed and war,  
And scruples, sex and violence—  
The kind that are for sale,  
And Thatcher, Cristiani, Bush,  
Sununu, Nunn and Quayle,  
And Frank Lorenzo, Iacocca,  
Steinbrenner and Quayle,  
And Andrew Dice Clay, Tammy Faye,  
Wayne Newton and Dan Quayle.

They are why I am alive  
And I'm a Red.  
I'm scientific proof  
That Communism ain't dead.  
And I don't care if I offend ya'  
Struggle's still on my agenda.  
I've got nothin' to lose but these chains,  
And a whole wide world still to gain.

Now things at home, I must admit,  
Are really quite a mess.  
There's every kind of consciousness  
Except class consciousness.  
The sit-coms, game shows and the news  
Can turn a mind to mush.  
But struggles still erupt and show  
That spirits are not crushed.

So if tomorrow you're at work  
And the discussion's not  
About a labor party,  
Luxemburg or Feuerbach,  
Take heart, knowing this system  
Simply can't learn to behave—  
So every day it spawns  
Another digger of its grave.

That's why I am alive  
And I'm a Red.  
I'm scientific proof  
That Communism ain't dead.  
And I don't care if I offend ya'.  
Struggle's still on my agenda.  
I've got nothin' to lose but these chains,  
And a whole wide world to gain . . .  
A world without borders,  
A world that lives peacefully,  
A world with green trees, and whales,  
And children growing strong and free . . .  
Yes, a whole wide world still to gain!

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Ginny Hildebrand has been a revolutionary socialist, feminist, and labor activist for many years. For a review of Ginny's music group, Cross Current, see *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*, September, 1991, p. 26. Tapes of some of the group's songs can be purchased for \$7.50 from: Ginny Hildebrand, 7114 Meade Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15208.



# Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

## 48. A Puddle and the Watchtower on Its Shore

In camp regimes like ours there were plenty who were close to death. However, there were also ZKs who were exceptionally well fed, like Gnatyuk. Former common criminals, “transferred” to Article 58, always had enough to wolf down—they knew how to steal and wrangle. The political prisoners from the Baltic region and Western Ukraine—in their overwhelming majority young and healthy—also ate fairly well. However, their method was different: slave away with all your strength, overfilling the norm, and get the very highest pay that a ZK can get. Those who really excelled had no parcel restrictions. These young fellows, sitting on their plank beds, could almost every day put slices of homemade lard on their bread.

They cannot be blamed for the fact that they spoke about nothing but women. In this case, the blame belongs on those who forced these men to live like monks for decades. The barracks walls were decorated with the sheerest vulgarity and this was a sign of the low cultural level. However, it was not simply the traditional Russian profanity; it was sexually refined to the highest degree. This came from the particular conditions of a camp where young men went for years seeing women only in their imagination. How could these men in their sex-starved fantasy world be expected to see women?

Self-righteous tracts endlessly circulated in our country expose the information that sex is flourishing in America. In our very own camps with their millions of men, forcefully torn away from women, we never noticed the sex. Our camp barracks, like thousands of such barracks, were unadulterated dens of sexual bestiality, the more vicious because they were based on a sex-starved imagination, sterile and without hope.

The camp was a hotbed of sex in a straightlaced society, which believed and still believes that these camps for reeducation by work would cure all the evils of criminality. Here, by the way, is another difference between the camps and Makarenko’s commune: the commune was a normal human living setting where young boys and girls could socialize and develop a normal love for one another. The camp, however,

perverted the very idea of communal living. It is no surprise that pederasty and prostitution flourished there.

In the barracks I constantly heard talk about some heater attendant. The heater was situated in a remote region of the mine where the officials did not look. The ZKs could move about the mine freely, and this woman accepted all volunteers to her post.

Vorkuta remained for many years a closed city. The wives of prisoners could go there only if they had a pass. Every day, during the entire winter of 1953, a woman ran alongside our column as we quickly strided from our Special Camp Point (OLP) to the mine and even more quickly back the other way. Her husband was in the column. The convoy crew apparently got used to her and did not make her go away. Be there frigid weather or blizzard, she always ran alongside our column, calling back and forth with her husband. About 100 steps from the OLP she stopped. She was afraid to go any further: those on surveillance will see and report her.

In the spring of 1954, rumors circulated that wives were to be allowed to come to the Rechlag for short meetings with their husbands, as had long been the case at the Vorkuta camp for wives of common criminals. Alongside the guardpost, they built a “meeting house” with several private rooms. News of this quickly flew around the camp—and not only the camp but outside it, reaching the women. Then several campmates were granted passes and there began to be talk that we might be allowed to leave the camp zone.

Subsequently, I became acquainted with a number of couples who got married through an exchange of letters between a bachelor campmate and a single woman on the outside. She then came to visit him and became his wife. What the future had in store, they did not know. But they hoped for a review of his case and an amnesty.

That year the population of the country was 106.2 million women and 84.8 million men. Every fifth woman was single. But if we recall that there was a particular shortage of eligible men who had perished in the war, and that in addition to this,

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.



about ten million of these men, although included in the statistics, were in prison camps; then we can understand what the correlation between the sexes really was. There were so many husbandless women in the prime of their life that marriages through correspondence with prisoners occurred rather often.

First came old women: several women from Western Ukraine and the wives of comrades convicted in connection with the "Jewish cases."

For a long time, I went back and forth in my mind: should I summon Asya or not? I had no sooner written her to come than I sent right after the first letter a second one saying that I was not insisting; she didn't have to come if she didn't want to. But she came all the same; Mama sent her money for the journey.

I am writing these lines fifteen years afterward. Our attitudes have changed beyond recognition. Surely I am no longer the fellow who went into hiding after the war to a faraway settlement and was happy with a mouselike existence. However, I do not want to cast the shadow of today's attitudes over that happy week I had then. True, the happiness of the meeting was clouded by the need to work my shift. Our officials did not consider it possible to give us even one day off. Money was transferred to them from the bank and they were to provide slave labor in return. There could be no departures from the formula "money-commodity," about which they had heard something-or-other once in the study groups on party history. However, the assignment supervisor Chumakov came up to me as I was going on my shift and said: "OK, go back home; I'll take care of it."

I have not yet discussed the assignment supervisor. This was a functionary from among the prisoners who was directly linked with each brigade. The assignment supervisor kept lists of the brigades, transferred people from one to another, kept a chart of it all and fought against absenteeism. The assignment supervisor could place you at a good site or send you to a bad one, regardless of the state of your health as established by the doctors. In the honeymoon years of the camp system, when they seriously proposed that to save those who were drowning one had to attract ever more drowning people, the assignment supervisors were always common criminals, preferably from among those "twisted into line," i.e., those who had sold out to the camp officials. They came into the barracks, took up a position by the door with a club (a dryn, it was called in the camp) and declared:

"Get going and nobody better be the last one out!"

Then the last person to leave received the full weight of the dryn.

In the 1930s, those accused of counterrevolutionary Trotskyist activities were never appointed to the post of assignment supervisor and none of them would have accepted the post anyway. After the war, the composition of the camps drastically changed. Now only criminals began to be appointed to lower-level posts. Now the assignment supervisors reigned supreme in a more restrained way. For a small payment the assignment supervisor Vernigor, a former village headman for Hitler's forces, would place your name on the active work chart while you lay on your plank bed all day.

Chumakov was the only OLP assignment supervisor who did not take bribes. A former military officer, he acted independently and with dignity. Workers on his shift whose wives

were visiting them got listed on the work chart because Chumakov's conscience told him that was the right thing to do.

\* \* \*

The seven-day visit flew by as if it were seven minutes. Was it really time to part? Asya went to the official in charge of the camp, Major Zakharov, to ask for three more days. There was a rumor that if a woman herself went to the trouble to ask for it, they granted an extension.

In Zakharov's office sat four people: he himself, the godfather, and two other deputies, including the one who always smelled like eau de cologne. Asya presented her request and they all together began to try to make her believe that she had journeyed there for nothing.

"You still don't know what kind of a man he is," said one.

"He'll be in the camps his whole life; he'll never get out of prison," said the second.

"He is a criminal and a recidivist," explained the third.

"After all, you are a Russian woman," the fourth added with authority. "Why are you hooked up with a Jew? Don't you know what kind of people they are?"

She tried to respond.

"You love him? A Jew? You are a mindless woman."

All the same they let her stay three more days. However, they clearly hinted that nothing was stopping her from keeping an eye on me and reporting to them.

She left the office flushed and shaking, with tears streaming down her cheeks. I waited for her in the corridor; she ran past me and threw herself into our room. She told me everything. I could see that she was having doubts. Should she believe them or not? Could her husband really be imprisoned forever?

How could an ordinary, poorly educated woman who had never read Marx or studied Lenin, how could she not have doubts if an enormous number of others who had read Marx and Lenin, and even taught others Marxism-Leninism for dozens of years, did not doubt the investigators and camp officials when they said that I really was an incorrigible criminal?

How could she understand it all? Her face covered with tears she looked at me as if she could learn from my face whether or not I would ever get out of the camp. Years of indoctrination had taught her to trust people invested with confidence from above, solid workers with stripes of rank on their shoulders and an air of importance. Meanwhile, I was poorly shaved, thin, with dark spots on my peajacket where only a few days ago my number had been sewn. The numbers were abolished not long before this all happened. I did not persuade her and proved nothing. She stood up, wiped her eyes and said:

"What vile people they are all the same! To think that I would be an informer for them!"

Now, after 15 years, they have surely managed to restructure themselves several times. Moreover, they have raised their ideological-theoretical level and do not now speak so directly as they did then. They now know to use other words.

On a gray, rainy, cold autumn day, the door of the guardpost stood between us. We agreed that she would return to Vorkuta in the spring. By that time, perhaps they would issue me a pass to live outside the camp zone.



In May 1955, Asya left the proud Caucasus and moved to the land of humiliation. A permanent pass was still only a dream to me. Voronov had already lived outside the camp zone for a long time. An acquaintance of mine, an old German, offered Asya a corner to live in. Many exiled Germans worked in our mines—not from the Baltic nobility but from the Tomsk and Kherson regions, from the liquidated Volga German Republic, and even from Moscow. Some were descendants of peasant colonists, others had been Russified long ago but retained on their passport the dangerous line: “Nationality—German.” Because of this, they were all picked up one night and shipped to the Arctic Circle. This caused an interesting situation: a member of the CPSU, exiled with them while still a member of that same CPSU, felt compelled to defend its nationalities policy to nonparty prisoners.

You have to be completely blinded by short-term goals not to see the subsequent irreparable damage done when you place an entire nationality under suspicion. From this we see the growth of nationalism: among those under suspicion it grows due to a natural sense of protest; and among the others it grows due to a sense of one’s purity, immunity, innocence, and superiority.

With time, the exiled Germans adjusted. From the crowded, rat-infested barracks, they moved to decent houses and began to earn a living wage. In our mine some Germans worked at demolition. They had the right to rest and to work, were not afraid of unemployment, received free medical care, and elected Stalin as their deputy. But they did not have the right to go any further outside Vorkuta than the first railroad station. If they willingly did so, they could expect a trial and a minimum of five years’ deprivation of freedom—freedom of the type they enjoyed in Vorkuta. Or penal labor for up to 20 years.

Aunt Amalya ended up in Vorkuta and like all the Germans went through the era of barracks housing and received a new profession—a sweeper. They gave her a room and it was to this room that she, having learned that my wife was coming to visit, invited Asya.

In 1955, Germans got the right to leave the camp and, in addition, the requirements that they register at the commandant’s office and carry a special stamp on their passports were abolished. (A passport, you will see, has three pages for special stamps.) It is true that Aunt Amalya had nowhere to go. She had no shack or relatives left in the Tomsk region. All the same, however, she had to sign a paper stating that she had no property claims against the state and in exchange they issued her a new passport.

Not all of the Germans liked seeing on their passports this word “German,” because of which people had been exiled. Some set out to get this word changed. One man I know succeeded. He proved that he was not German but Ukrainian,

that his name ended with “-sky.” Another, whose name ended with “hoff,” proved that he was Jewish and was also pleased with his success.

Aunt Amalya remained German.

Asya lived with Amalya and I visited her there. From the window of their room one could see the mine, the watchtower, and a huge puddle—two hectares by one—between the house and the mine. The never-setting but barely warm sun was not able to dry up this puddle. All spring and all summer a monotonous, dreary ripple ran across its filthy yellow water. What a miserable puddle it was! You left the broad and free dreams of the Black Sea for the shores of this hopeless puddle in the shadow of a labor camp watchtower with armed guards.

The sun-lit polar days and nights came to an end, the Vorkuta autumn darkness began, and the view from the window became still more depressing: the mine, the watchtower, and the filthy grayish-yellow puddle with the ripple ceaselessly running across it. There was a gray sky overhead from which fell a cold light rain.

Everything around us kept saying to Asya: there was a reason that Zakharov and his deputies tried to convince you. There will be no end to the rain, the sorrow, the camps, the terms of imprisonment. Your husband will be a prisoner forever. She received in the mail a slip of paper—the answer to her complaint. What does a plaintiff know about the case of the condemned who very possibly could have even more charges added on to his case?

The paper said: “The case of your husband has been checked. It has been established that he was rightly convicted. This has been proven by the materials of the case. Signed—Counselor of Justice Samsonov.” Justice confirms it!

Fall passed and winter came. In honor of the 38th anniversary of the greatest revolution in history, I received the long-awaited pass which we ZKs called our passport. It gave us the right to leave our Special Camp Point for the city we had built, and also to live with our wives—without forgetting, of course, about the guard post, where we had to appear every day to get our passport stamped and to which we could at any moment be summoned to have our passport revoked and to again be locked up in the zone. “Be ready for the unexpected!” my life experiences had taught me. And my response befits a young, never-aging pioneer: “I am always ready!”

To be ready does not mean you are not afraid. You may be afraid but you cannot think about or share your fear. To share it would be agitation! Never! Never! They frightened us for decades on end. How many generations will still tremble? □

### End of Notebook Eight

[Next month—Notebook Nine: “*Empty Chatter, Present and Accounted For.*”]



### Lubavitchers and Crown Heights

The incident in which the Lubavitcher-driven car killed seven-year-old Gavin Cato was simply the trigger that unleashed a rebellion of pent-up anger against the role of this religious sect within the Crown Heights community. And of course it also reflects the deepening anger within the Black community at the do-nothing attitude of New York City's capitalist rulers—some of the richest in the world—as conditions continue to deteriorate in the Black community. These are the folks on whose backs the city's budget is balanced through cutbacks in education and other vital social services. If this particular event had not happened, something else would surely have touched off a rebellion in Crown Heights.

There are good reasons for the community to feel the anger that it does against the Lubavitchers. The religious teaching of this sect inherently treats all other peoples with contempt, and this is translated in innumerable ways in its relations with Blacks. The August 31 issue of the *Amsterdam News* reports on a Black resident of the neighborhood who was harassed by Lubavitchers when he refused to sell his home to Jews. Rev. Canon Heron A. Sam, rector of the St. Mark's Episcopal Church, told in the same article about how, in 1972, he sent a note to Rabbi Schneerson, as one spiritual leader to another, pledging "cooperation for a strong and healthy community in which peace and coexistence would be realizable objectives." The Jewish leader's answer came in the form of "a very curt note, handwritten, in which he said our communities had nothing in common and there is no need for us to meet." The Jewish organization also sponsors its own vigilantes, "community guards," which often stop and harass Black youth.

The Lubavitchers make deals with local politicians—in exchange for Jewish votes—to advance their interests at the expense of others in the community. The late Black state senator Vander Beatty even put some members of the sect on school boards, despite the fact that there are virtually no Lubavitcher children in the New York City public schools. They are also given favored treatment by the police. For example, Blacks are randomly stopped by cops for unprovoked searches; Hasidic residents never. And the police give Rabbi Schneerson an escort whenever he goes to visit his wife's grave. Needless to say, this is not a practice applied to the Black clergy. In the early 1980s, in response to a threat made by another Hasidic sect, a 24-hour uniformed police guard was set up for Schneerson. *This remained in place for eight years*, despite the fact that the threat was never acted upon or repeated. Even after the guard was removed—in response to complaints from the community and some embarrassment by city officials over the waste of

money—an unmarked police car was kept on the job.

Two aspects of Cato's death in particular served to further the resentment of the community against the Lubavitchers. First, a private Jewish ambulance company was called to take care of the driver of the car. It arrived while Cato was still alive and still pinned underneath, but ignored his more serious injuries in order to whisk the driver away from the scene. Different explanations have been given for this action, but whatever the reason it was understood by the Black community as an affront. And it remains a fact that Cato had to wait some additional minutes for the arrival of a New York City Emergency Medical Service ambulance. Secondly, Rabbi Schneerson treated the incident with such indifference that he did not even take the trouble to make a statement apologizing for Cato's death, or expressing his regrets. This reflects the genuine contempt with which the Lubavitchers treat their Black neighbors.

So we can see how we might begin to understand why, to a large degree, this rebellion was directed against the presence of the Lubavitchers in Crown Heights (though it is clear that many Blacks who participated focused more specifically on the cops). A comparison seems apt: It is reasonable to say that the role of the Lubavitchers in collaborating with the police and otherwise promoting the oppression of Blacks within Crown Heights is, on a small scale, analogous to the collaboration of Israel with the imperialist governments around the world in the oppression of Arabs and others. This is not altered by the different historical origins of the two situations. (The Lubavitchers were originally part of a larger Jewish community in Crown Heights which predates Black settlement of the area.) If this is true then a rebellion which directs itself against that oppression—whether it be rock and bottle throwing and even attacks against individual Jews in Crown Heights, or the Intifada in the occupied territories—has to be seen as a normal and positive response on the part of the oppressed people concerned—regardless of whether the specific tactics used are effective, and regardless of whether an anti-Semitic ideology may play a role.

One is also tempted to draw an analogy between the opposition of the Black community in Crown Heights to the Lubavitcher's *institutional* presence in their community, on the one hand, and the opposition of gays or pro-choice organizations to the reactionary role of the Catholic Church on the other. No one has ever accused gay or women's groups of "anti-Catholic racism" on that account. To some extent such an analogy is appropriate, but it has limits—because no gays or pro-choice fighters have ever chosen to direct their attacks against individuals who

only happen to be Catholic. They have restricted themselves to a fight against the church as an institution, its specific institutional representatives, and its reactionary ideology.

Some would like to address the individual killing of a Jew by Blacks in Crown Heights, in apparent retribution for the death of Gavin Cato, from a purely moralistic point of view. We must reject this, just as we reject any "moral condemnations" of Palestinian fighters driven to desperate terrorist acts against individual Israeli Jews. In particular, the hypocritical politicians and others who wail over these few deaths but ignore the thousands of Palestinians tortured and even murdered by the Israeli government, or who march in parades to celebrate the killing and maiming of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis during the Gulf War, deserve only our contempt.

But it remains necessary to think about this from the point of view of the strategy of Blacks in their fight for liberation. Such actions make it much harder for potential allies outside of the Black community to see the justice of the Crown Heights struggle. And they make it easier for Mayor Dinkins—playing his role of "responsible" Black leader for the white, capitalist establishment—to denounce those who participated in the rebellion and call out more cops to "keep the peace" (i.e., to protect the interests of the Lubavitchers). Meanwhile, the city does nothing to address those problems inside the Black community which are the real cause of things.

### What Is the Solution?

As long as U.S. Jewish institutions continue to identify themselves with the Israeli state and therefore with the imperialists, as long as they try to advance the interests of their constituency through the protection of white privileges in America at the expense of Blacks and others, as long as Jewish-led unions like the teachers in New York continue to counterpose narrow, parochial, job-related questions to demands of the Black community for control over the public educational process, then relations between Blacks and Jews can only be expected to get worse.

The solution is for significant numbers of Jews to begin to identify with the oppressed, not with the oppressor, and to join in and support the fight for Black liberation in the USA and around the world. One obvious place where such a development could begin would be through Jews enlisting actively in a renewed campaign against the reality of apartheid in South Africa—which continues despite the recent legal reforms in that country. Another would be for Jewish workers to be part of a general upsurge of the U.S. labor movement, which, to be effective, would have to address the issues of discrimination and racist oppression against



Blacks in the workplace and in society as a whole.

At the same time it is essential to note that in a situation like the one that has prevailed in the Black community for many years—little or no conscious, revolutionary leadership able to gain a mass following for a coherent program of struggle directed against the capitalist state apparatus—the appeal of “quick and easy” answers (like blaming the Jews) increases considerably. Therefore, honest revolutionaries have a responsibility to take the lead in trying to develop a consistent political approach, fighting for real solutions to real problems.

An example of what can be done was provided within days of the Crown Heights

events when Samori Marksman, head of the African-Caribbean Resource Center, organized a meeting with 450 community residents in attendance. The subject was Black-Jewish relations. Three Jewish leftists addressed the gathering and explained that most Jews think the Lubavitchers are fanatics and want nothing to do with them. The Jewish speakers completely solidarized themselves with the Black community, against the Jewish establishment, on the question of affirmative action. And they denounced the Israeli arms traffic with South Africa. Elombe Brath of Harlem's Patrice Lumumba Coalition explained how nonsensical it was for Blacks to be shouting “Heil Hitler” at Jews, given Hitler's intense white racism. Don Rojas, as-

sistant to the publisher at the *Amsterdam News*, New York's leading Black paper, chaired the meeting and hailed it as the beginning of a serious educational process within the community.

A similar educational process and political fight against anti-Black racism must be carried out by leaders of the Jewish community and more broadly among whites. Through such actions we can forge a united struggle of all those who want to fight against the effects of this racist, oppressive system—from Crown Heights, to Palestine, to South Africa, and every other corner of the globe. □

## Russian Revolution (Continued from page 7)

46—At the same time, the mainstream of the top bureaucratic leadership will attempt to utilize the shock value of the coup to justify far-reaching measures they have been unable to implement in the past. The self-discrediting of a major sector of the more conservative wing of the bureaucracy, combined with the partial collapse/partial repression of the Communist Party, creates a new balance among the contending elements within the bureaucracy. Those who favor an all-out restoration of capitalism will obviously be strengthened and emboldened. To the extent that “economic reforms” are advanced at the expense of the masses, however, elements among the working class can be expected to utilize any and all democratic freedoms to struggle for defense of their economic interests and the rights won in 1917. Mass action against the antidemocratic coup may pave the way for mass actions in the direction of genuine socialism. Such a collision between glasnost and perestroika may well cause some of yesterday's partisans of “democracy” to once again take up the banner of authoritarian “law and order.” In many “newly industrializing countries,” the cause of capitalist “modernization” is advanced by dictatorships intolerant of trade unions, opposition parties, and free speech. It is hard to see how the ex-USSR could move decisively towards the restoration of capitalism without similar measures.

47—Contrary to what is implied by the Western bourgeois media, neither “democracy” nor the partisans of a “free market economy” have consolidated their hold in the post-coup USSR. The situation in the Soviet Union is extremely fluid. Powerful elements will attempt to plunder state property, unleash foreign investment, slash social benefits, and provide a bourgeois legitimization of already existing economic inequalities within Soviet society. In some cases there have been very reactionary manifestations of nationalism, usually encouraged behind the scenes by the bureaucracy itself. There is a potential for immense class struggles waged by the Soviet working people, often coexisting or combined with national liberation struggles. There is also potential for destructive inter-ethnic conflicts and the emergence of right-wing, fascist-like movements. In more ways than one, there is a possibility of civil war.

48—The outcome of this struggle is yet to be determined. While the fighting capacity of the Soviet masses cannot be doubted, they so far lack mass organizations, such as socialist workers' parties and effective unions, needed to organize a successful defense against the counterrevolution. In the more open conditions of glasnost important groupings have been created—not only mass nationalist movements and the powerful Independent Miners Union, but also incipient socialist vanguard formations, attempts at organizing other independent unions, as well as women's and environmental movements.

These vanguards are now challenged to quickly find a way to win genuine mass influence.

### Program for Future Struggle

49—Key to developing successful mass movements is program. Soviet workers must, of course, develop their own program. In doing so they will be greatly assisted by studying the true history of the Russian Revolution along with experiences of the workers' movement throughout the world. A program for defeating counterrevolution should include:

- Defense of glasnost against attack from any corner. Democratic rights—such as freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, travel, religion, etc.—are not “bourgeois” rights as the capitalists claim (and some foolish “leftists” echo). These are rights needed by the working people and where they exist have been achieved through the struggles of working people.

- Extension of glasnost by returning to the institution of factory committees to assert workers' control in the workplace. Reestablish genuine, democratic soviets, in the tradition of the 1917 revolution, as the real governing power. End all bureaucratic privileges. Reinstate the limit on officials' salaries to that of no more than a skilled worker's wage. The right of immediate recall of officials by their electors.

- Unconditional support for the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities. There can be no real socialism based on national oppression.

- Support for an independent feminist movement to attack the sexism promoted by the bureaucracy. There can be no real socialism for men only.

- Irreconcilable struggle against any attempts to plunder state property or to cut or eliminate social benefits. Roll back the inroads made into the monopoly of foreign trade.

- There can be no socialism in one country. For active international solidarity with all struggles of the workers and oppressed. Immediate restoration of trade and aid with Cuba. Repudiate the New World Order and Gorbachev and Yeltsin's shameful complicity in Bush's war drive in the Middle East. Full rehabilitation for the slandered martyrs of the Left Opposition. For a revolutionary Marxist workers' party, joining with parties in other countries for a revival of the kind of internationalism promoted by the Communist International before Stalin.

50—Workers everywhere have a stake in the fight of the Soviet workers to defend and renew the conquests of the Russian Revolution. Fourth Internationalists will throw all of our efforts into solidarity with these historic struggles. □

September 8, 1991



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