



Pro-choice majority rallies against government and right-wing attacks



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

Eastern strike faces tough challenge

By SCOTT ADAMS-COOPER

BOSTON—The strike against Eastern Airlines, begun March 4, is solid. So far, the machinists, flight attendants, and pilots have stopped Frank Lorenzo's union-busting attempts cold. Passenger manifests of three and four people on Eastern flights show the tremendous support for the strike from the public.

Machinists here project a long strike. They are visiting other unions throughout the area to keep them informed and to raise funds for the strikers. A collection is planned at the gates of the General Electric plant in nearby Lynn. And another mass solidarity rally is planned in the next few weeks.

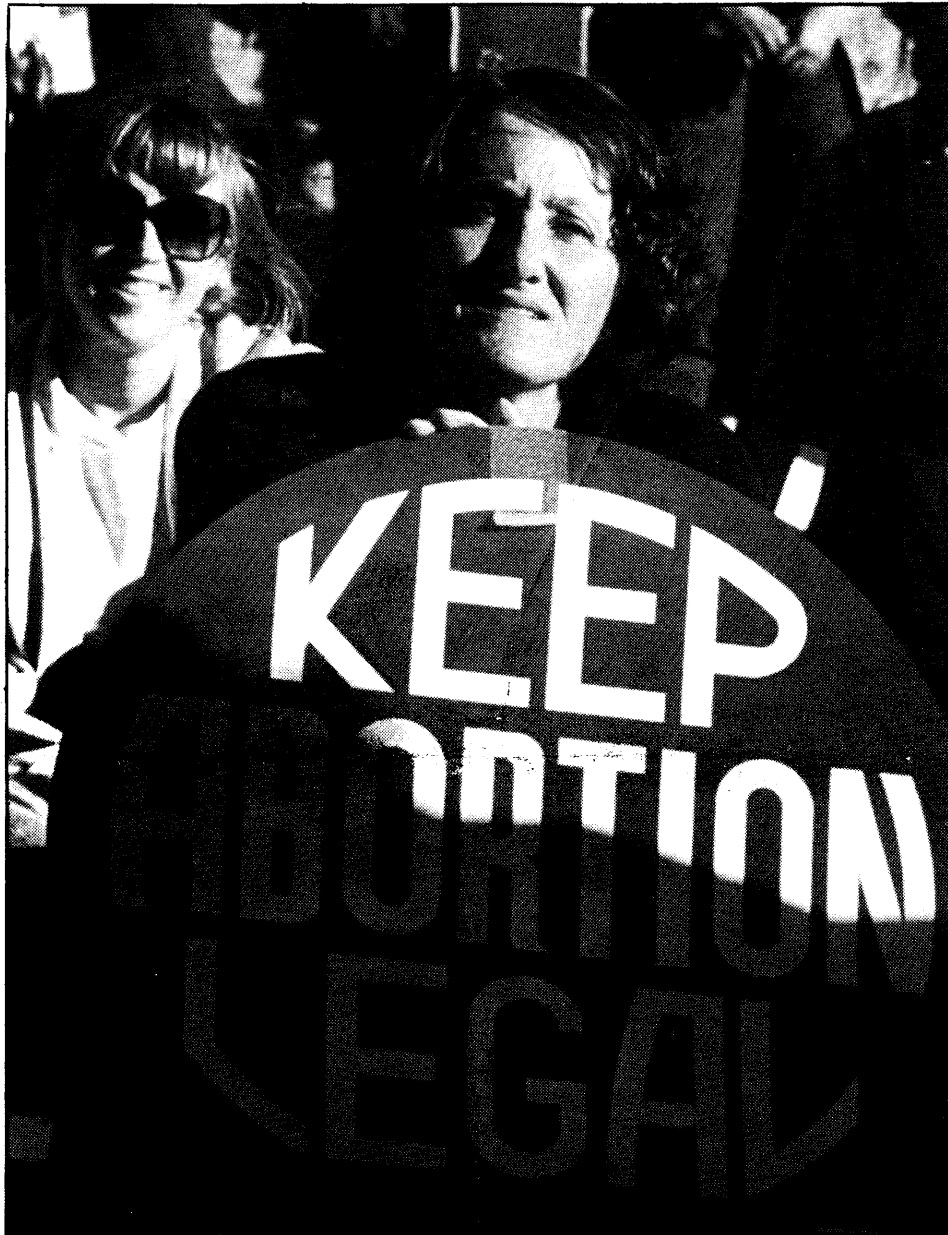
One attempt to end the strike failed when Lorenzo refused to step aside while a buyout deal by former baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth was finalized. Since then, Texas Air's board has voted to not sell Eastern, seeking to get the airline out from under the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, which has been pushing for a sale to Ueberroth, Carl Icahn of TWA, or some other "white knight."

Eastern's "reorganization plan"

On April 24, Eastern announced plans to sell off \$1.8 billion in assets over the next eight months, and "rebuild" a much smaller company—without its 8,500 machinists and 4,500 pilots. Lorenzo would stay at the helm.

Eastern has been selling off its profitable assets for some time. Workers contended that in precipitating the strike Lorenzo would try to strike the final blow against the unions—by liquidating the company. This new plan confirms this. According to *The New York Times*, "Although many Eastern workers would be hired by other airlines operating in hub cities, a liquidation would force thousands from the industry forever."

The labor movement and the flying public are still behind the strikers. The Eastern terminal here is like a ghost town; even the



Pro-choice demonstrators at San Francisco Federal Building on April 26.

Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

hourly Shuttle to New York, normally jammed, is flying nearly empty. And the depth of unity among the strikers is unprecedented.

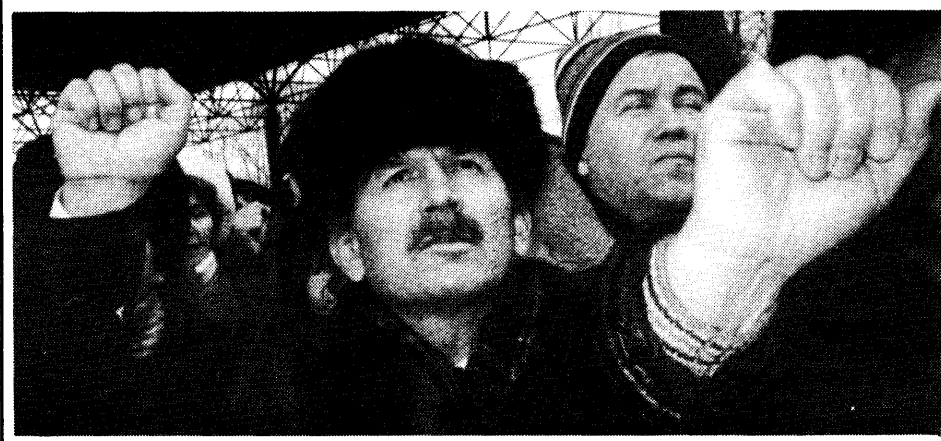
One key problem facing most strikers is money. While pilots receive \$2400 a month in strike benefits from the Air Line Pilots Association, machinists get only \$100 a

week and flight attendants get nothing. One flight attendant told *The Boston Globe* that she was just scraping by, and was eating "macaroni at the union hall every night" to save money.

John Peterpaul, a vice president of the machinists, said, "The machinist union will

(continued on page 4)

Inside the Soviet Union Today Eyewitness reports, pp. 12-17.



Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

The day after the historic 600,000-strong April 9 March for Women's Lives/Women's Equality in Washington, D.C., Molly Yard, President of the National Organization for Women, sent a letter to all NOW members that contained an important shift in the NOW leadership's strategy for defending women's rights—especially abortion rights. [See abridged version of Yard's letter on page 11.]

In the letter, Yard called on all NOW members and chapters to organize mass

Report on April 9 rally in D.C., See pp. 10-11.

actions on two important days: April 26, the day slated by the U.S. Supreme Court to hear arguments in the *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, and April 29, the day targeted by Operation Rescue to blockade access to abortion clinics in cities across the country.

Pro-choice supporters responded to Yard's appeal in the thousands.

- In Boston, over 3000 people demonstrated at the Federal Building on April 26. Three days later, on April 29, another 3000 showed up to turn back Operation Rescue's attempt to close down local clinics.

- In Sacramento, Calif., thousands turned out on April 26; and on April 29 over 1000 pro-choice supporters confronted 300 Operation Rescue fanatics who arrived after being outmobilized in the San Francisco Bay Area.

- In Los Angeles, over 1500 pro-choice supporters neutralized a force of nearly 1000 Operation Rescue zealots who were unable to shut down any clinics.

In 70 of the 100 cities hit by Operation Rescue, the right-wingers were outnumbered and defeated by pro-choice supporters. While some clinics around the country were closed by these hymn-singing thugs, it was only because of lack of organization on the part of pro-choice forces.

Today's immediate task is to build a mass movement in the streets that will make it impossible for these anti-life forces to succeed anywhere. What Molly Yard says in her letter is this: Mobilize and organize the huge majority who support a woman's right to choose.

In the past, the leadership of NOW focused its energy on campaigning for so-called "friends" in the Democratic Party. But the huge mobilization of 600,000 pro-choice supporters on April 9 demonstrated one incontrovertible fact: The only real friends the women's rights movement can count on are the millions of rank-and-file Americans who showed their readiness to march and demonstrate to protect the democratic rights of all women.

Many people believe the Supreme Court may not completely overturn *Roe v. Wade*. But whatever opinion is rendered, these justices of morality will try to put wind in the sails of the anti-choice movement.

For women, and their millions of supporters, this battle is not going to die. We have to organize, organize, and organize—as the old saying goes. Millions are waiting for just that to happen, as April 9 so graphically displayed.

We will not be moved from our goal!



By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

Recently I saw the documentary "How We Got The Vote." I had seen it many times, but this time was a little different. It was shown after the march of 30,000 abortion rights supporters on April 2 in San Francisco and after the massive march of 600,000 in Washington, D.C., on April 9.

The documentary includes news film from the early fight of pioneers for women's suffrage. It reveals the absolutely indomitable spirit of those women. They picketed, marched, petitioned, lobbied by the hundreds, participated in nationwide elections to defeat politicians who did not support suffrage, were jailed, went on hunger strikes, were brutalized in the jails, and were force-fed.

When they were finally released from their prisons, the women organized a "jail bird" train which traversed the nation. They told their story wearing their prison garb.

In the midst of the First World War, they carried out a fight against President Wilson by burning his speeches in front of the White House. Every time Wilson made a speech about "bringing democracy to Europe," they demanded that he "bring democracy home to the United States" for women. They refused to abide by unjust laws.

What is important is the lesson: Massive actions in the streets and in the factories serve to educate and place into motion those layers of the population who are waiting for leadership. From a small band of rebels, ridiculed and scorned, those women were able to reach the vast majority of people in this country, both men and women.

Giving them a bone

We are faced with a major problem today. The right of women to control their reproductive organs and to choose when to have children is being challenged.

The politicians, both Republican and Democrat as well as the real rulers in the boardrooms of corporate America, have decided to throw the radical, fanatical right wing a bone. That bone is to begin to take away the right of women to get an abortion. The ruling class needs to encourage these right-wing fanatics because they could serve as their future "storm troopers."

On April 26, the Supreme Court began its review of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that made abortion legal in this country. This review is far more than an attack by the conservative judges appointed to the Court by ex-President Reagan. Such a risky project would not be even considered without the support of decisive sections of the ruling class.

The Court has started something which will be hard for them to stop; if they whittle down the right to abortion even a little, they know from the massive marches and the repeated declarations and chants of "Never Again!" that millions will come into the streets and will threaten to further radicalize the entire population.

On the other hand, if they

completely back off and entirely reject the "states rights" challenge to *Roe v. Wade*, this will inspire women and others to demand all the human and democratic rights still being denied them.

Keep the clinics open!

Even a small victory in the Supreme Court for the right-wing anti-abortion forces will give them a shot in the arm. Although they will scream that "it is not enough," they will not be happy until they force women to go to Mexico for condoms, let alone abortions.

They will increase their forces

and—if given "states rights" by the Supreme Court—will then proceed to aim at those states that still allow abortion. Our clinics, where they remain legal, will be under siege by these potential shock-troops of reaction.

In the 1930s, there was another movement in opposition to right-wing mobs. It was the labor movement. Workers wanted to organize themselves into unions so they could face their exploiters in a united way. All of the laws in this country said that workers had no right to organize. The laws gave bosses the right to arm and deputize

thugs to intimidate and even murder striking workers.

So the workers, being of sound mind and body, said to the bosses, the courts, and the politicians, "Take your laws and shove them—we are not going to obey unjust laws. We will force you to change the law to suit the needs of the vast majority, not to suit the needs of a small minority." And they did.

They sat in, sat down, and shut down the works until the Congress changed its laws. Workers were doing just what the suffragists did. They defied in massive numbers the unjust and anti-democratic laws.

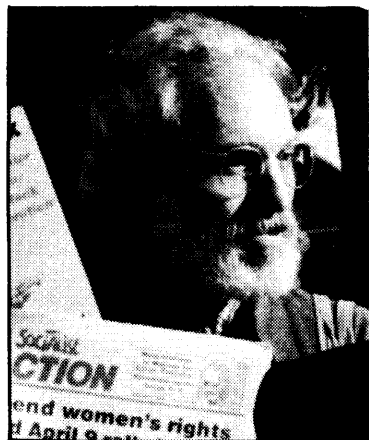
Now that's our job. We must mobilize masses of supporters at the clinics to keep them open. We have to take on the "Operation Rescue" mobs in force. We have to let the Supreme Court know that whatever it does will not force us into illegal, botched abortions.

Mass action at the clinics will let the politicians, the judges, the ruling class know that there will be defensive street actions until our right to choose legally and safely is carved in stone. We will not be moved from that goal. "Never Again!"

BEHIND THE LINES



Will the oil spill be replayed?



By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

The oil spill in Prince William Sound was this country's Chernobyl—one of the worst environmental disasters in history. To judge from past large oil spills, restoration of the once-pristine ecosystem could take at least 15 years. Some animal species may never return. The livelihood of people in the area has been wrecked.

The disaster could have been prevented. Yet the government seems bound to repeat the tragedy. Congress is debating whether to hand over Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the oil companies. This is the last stretch of Arctic coastline not already open to development.

Furthermore, the oil industry—and the government—have their sights set much further. Beaches and fishing grounds from Massachusetts to Washington state, from California to the Gulf of Mexico are under consideration for oil drilling.

Even now, supertankers (carrying

25 percent of the country's oil supplies) ply up and down the coast from Alaska to California. According to Ann Nothoff of the National Resources Defense Council, a disaster on the scale of the one at Prince William Sound could "very likely" happen along the California coast.

"Unlike Prince William Sound," Nothoff told me, "there are no vessel separation lanes off California. Once outside the ports, it's the 'law of the seas.'"

"The Exxon Valdez," she said, "was the Granddaddy of oil spills as to size. But the amount of environmental damage can depend on many other factors, such as location or the time of year."

Nothoff pointed out that the Apex Houston, a tanker that broke up a couple of years ago off San Francisco Bay, leaked only 616 gallons of oil into the ocean. But since the spill was located near an important rookery, tens of thousands of birds were killed in the incident.

"We don't have the technology to clean up major spills in this region," claims Jane Preskienis, chair of the Sierra Club's Coastal Task Force in Oakland, Calif. "Our technology may be effective in calm waters," she told me, "but not in high seas. And that's what we have off the California coast."

Test of strength

A government task force is discussing plans for oil drilling in California's waters. A memo from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has charged that the Interior Department has "downplayed" the frequency and

effects of spills in the area.

I discussed this issue with Kathy Van Velfor of the Central Coast Conservation Center. She pointed out that drilling is planned in a sensitive area between the Farallone Islands wildlife sanctuary and another one on the Monterey Peninsula.

"What is the point of establishing sanctuaries when oil drilling takes place in adjacent areas?" she emphasized. "There will have to be a test of strength between the oil companies and the public."

Oil company officials claim that plans to increase oil drilling off the California coast will pose few risks because the oil will be carried directly to shore through pipelines.

Such claims are "untrue," Ann

Nothoff told me. At least 27 California coastal communities have passed ordinances that prohibit processing facilities in their areas. For that reason, the oil will have to be carried in ships from the oil rigs to refineries further along the coast.

Proposed drilling off the shores of Mendocino and Humboldt counties alone, it is estimated, will increase tankers entering San Francisco Bay by some 250 trips a year. The tides in San Francisco Bay can be treacherous, and there are numerous shoals and reefs. Yet, conservationists warn, tankers in the Bay are not required to come equipped with double hulls.

Nationalize Big Oil!

At least two-thirds of the country's oil is carried on tankers. According to Coast Guard records, tankers are the largest single source of oil leaks. But most oil pollution results not from shipwrecks but from "routine" discharges from tankers, runoff from refineries, and even "fallout" from oil in the atmosphere.

Oil platforms are surrounded by a "dead sea," where sea life is smothered and poisoned. Lubrication for oil drills is dropped onto the ocean bottom by the ton. The oil companies dump some 1500 different industrial chemicals into the sea.

Says Jane Preskienis: "We can't trust the oil companies' assurances on safety. Only 5 percent of oil reserves are in the United States anyway—so we should stop being foolish. We need a commitment to alternative energy sources."

It is the government's responsibility to establish strict controls over our natural resources. This must include taking the oil industry (and the lumber companies and mines) out of the hands of the capitalists—whose sole concern is private profits. Nationalize these big corporations and let the workers manage them.

Socialist ACTION

Closing date:
April 29, 1989

Editor: ALAN BENJAMIN
Asst. Editors: MICHAEL SCHREIBER
 JOE RYAN

Staff: Paul Colvin, May May Gong, David Kirschner, Hayden Perry, Kwame M.A. Somburu, Sylvia Weinstein.

Business Manager: KATHY SANDS

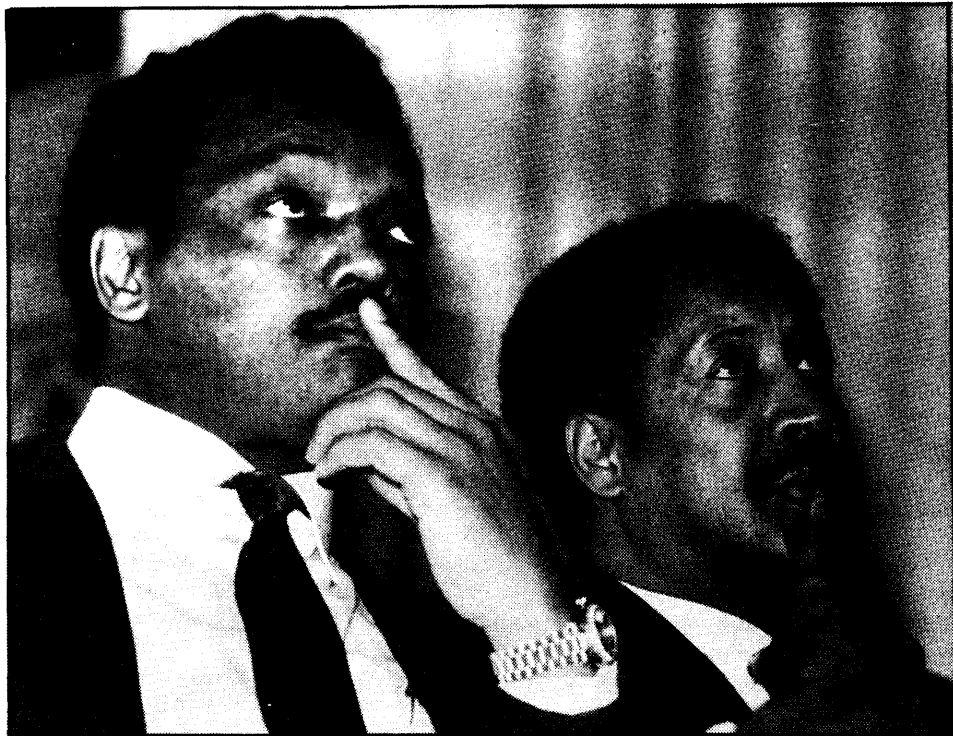
Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly for \$8 per year by Socialist Action Publishing Association, 3435 Army St., No. 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. Second-class postage is paid at San Francisco, Calif.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Socialist Action*, 3435 Army St., No. 308, San Francisco, CA 94110.

RATES: For one year (12 issues)—U.S. 2nd Class: \$8, 1st Class: \$12; Canada and Mexico 2nd Class: \$12, 1st Class: \$15; All other countries 2nd Class: \$15, 1st Class: \$30. (Canada money orders or checks should be in U.S. dollars.)

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Action*. These are expressed in editorials.

Results of Chicago elections: The 'old boys' are back again



Big losers: Jesse Jackson and ex-mayor Eugene Sawyer.

By ADAM SHILS

CHICAGO—The recent elections here have captured national attention. Many Black political activists see the election as a grave defeat, given that it is the first time in some years that a white politician has won in a major city that formerly had a Black mayor. What is involved in this situation?

On March 4, Richard Daley, a Democrat, was elected mayor with 574,619 votes (56 percent). Black "independent" Tim Evans received 412,864 (40 percent), and Republican Ed Vrdolyak 36,095 (3.5 percent).

Each candidate ran a distinctive campaign. Vrdolyak stressed the social agenda of the far right: against busing and the gay-rights ordinance. In particular, he associated himself with the anti-abortion rights movement. He called for legislation banning abortion clinics within 2000 feet of school entrances (are there many?). He also told people to withdraw their money from a bank that owned the building where a clinic operated.

Vrdolyak called for a boycott of the many businesses that financially support the Art Institute, due to an exhibition of a montage that included an American flag taped to the floor beneath a notebook. (People would have to step on the flag to look at the notebook.)

Vrdolyak's campaign was a resounding failure. As a longtime racist, it must have been particularly galling for Vrdolyak to have



Big winner: Richard Daley

come in at the bottom—beaten even by Tim Evans—in his own 10th ward bastion.

Evans' "independent" campaign

Tim Evans campaigned as an independent on the Harold Washington Party ticket. (For the background to this campaign, see the article "Little Enthusiasm for Major Rivals in Chicago Elections" in the March *Socialist Action*).

Evans was supported by many who saw him as "the continuator of Harold Washington's legacy," a campaigner for Black rights, and a supporter of progressive social causes.

A number of points have to be made about the Evans campaign. One, there was nothing

radical about his program. He frequently described himself as a "fiscal conservative."

Two, while Evans certainly gathered strong support in the Black community, it was nowhere as strong as Harold Washington's. A number of commentators have attributed Evans' defeat to the relatively low voter turnout in the Black wards.

Three, Evans' break from the Democratic Party was a very limited tactical break. His supporters have made this clear.

Jesse Jackson said, "The legitimacy of Evans' standing in the Democratic Party must be affirmed. There are two Democratic candidates in this election" (*Chicago Sun-Times*, March 30, 1989). In other speeches, Jackson compared Evans' campaigning outside the Democrats to Hubert Humphrey and the Minnesota Farmer Labor Party.

In a major supportive article, Scott Marshall, the central leader of the Communist Party here, described different views concerning Evans' candidacy: "Then there are many, like the candidate himself, who see the Harold Washington Party as only a tactic to get around some immediate problems in the Democratic Party locally." (*Peoples Daily World*, March 23, 1989)

The day after the election, Vince Demuzio, Illinois State Chairman of the Democratic Party, called for Evans and his supporters to let bygones be bygones and to rejoin the party.

Daley builds a new machine

Democratic candidate Richard Daley won an easy victory. His campaign represented the needs and desires of the ruling class of this city. This class wants stability, an end to "Beirut on the Lake," in order to secure international and domestic investment.

In order to ensure this social stability, Daley painted an image of conciliation. This could very clearly be seen in his victory speech on election night, in which he held out the olive branch to his political opponents.

The capitalist class can see a good

opportunity when one presents itself. They, therefore, gave Daley an extraordinary amount of money—over \$6.1 million. This was one of the most talked-about aspects of the campaign. The money came in huge contributions; 30 percent of it came from only 1 percent of the contributors in sums of over \$24,000. (All statistics are as of March 30, 1989.)

A significant chunk of Daley's money came from real-estate interests, enthusiastic to cash in on the boom in the downtown Loop area.

These business contributors believe that significant contributions will get them an "in," an inside track, with the new Daley administration. They are certainly right about this.

A new "machine" is therefore being built. It will combine two aspects. One is the army of canvassers and precinct workers that the Daley forces can still mobilize, particularly in the southwest and northwest sides. The other is an "old boys network" of real estate and financial influence linking big business with City Hall. Daley's ability to lead these two forces is his service to the ruling class.

What kind of "balance sheet"?

The Black movement now faces a strategic impasse. There is a big sense of demoralization amongst Black political activists. Prominent community leader Lu Palmer doubts that Daley can even be defeated in 1991, the date of the next election. There is a sense that "a Black city has been lost."

Many Black activists, such as influential radical teacher Bob Stark, see the key task as drawing a balance sheet of what went wrong. What conclusions will be formed from the balance sheet? The central theme emerging is that the major problem was "disunity." It is maintained that the Evans forces should have united with forces of Mayor Sawyer, who represented the mainstream Democratic Party.

Already Jackson has said, "We know we can run without each other, but we can't win without each other." He added that "hurt and fracture in the Harold Washington coalition" was the main reason for Daley's victory. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, April 7, 1989).

But the problem facing the Black movement is the whole strategy of attempting to gain control of the Democratic Party, not the lack of unity among the candidates. Instead of concentrating on electoral maneuvers in the run-up to the 1991 election, the Black movement should go into the streets now, pressing its own demands. ■

Students fight cutbacks in Black Studies Program

By BARBARA PUTNAM

DETROIT—After the Wayne State University administration attempted to shrink the Black Studies Program and deny tenure to a Black Studies professor, Black students began to fight back.

On April 10, about 100 Black students occupied the Student Administration Building, demanding that university officials stop dismantling the Center for Black Studies and instead transform it into a full Black Studies Department named the "Africana Institute." After several days of negotiations, the university agreed to this central demand and to hire tenured faculty for it.

Linda Sanders, a Black psychology student who has been taking food to the students, said, "The students are really angry. The university wants to close down the Center for Black Studies and donate our books to a museum. The Center is a part of the Black students' heritage."

Sanders pointed out that "the 'study-in,' as the students call it, has been getting broader support each day." Many local Black leaders—such as the Reverend Holley of the

Little Rock Baptist Church, who is a Detroit city-council member—have given support to the students.

There have been several well-attended rallies outside the occupied building. On April 18, small school-children from the Aisha Shule entertained the students with their singing. Standing in front of a large black, green, and red flag, they sang "Power to the People," and "We are African, We are at War" to appreciative students and supporters.

The University has moved cautiously, afraid of arousing more Black discontent. The administration flatly refused to make Malcolm X's birthday a holiday. But it agreed to make Martin Luther King's birthday something of a holiday. Students and faculty, if they choose, may stay home that day, but the university will not officially close.

Negotiations are continuing over a wide range of demands that hinge on improved enrollment of Black students and conditions for them and Black faculty. Although the key demands have been met—or at least promised—by the university, students are continuing their "study-in," as they say, until "all their demands are met." ■

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Boston labor activists discuss Eastern strike strategy, anti-union role of courts

By SCOTT ADAMS-COOPER

BOSTON—A spirited discussion on how to build the strike against Eastern Airlines took place at a Socialist Action forum held here on April 1.

Speaking at the forum were Judy Coughlin, national secretary-treasurer of the Transportation Workers Union, which represents Eastern Flight Attendants; Paul Cannon, former president of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) Local 202 in Nashua, N.H.; and David Walsh, past president of Transportation, Communications Union District 1089 (Amtrak) and member of Socialist Action.

Coughlin began by discussing the fallout in the airline unions since the PATCO strike in 1981, which "shook the airlines to the core." She continued, "Because the AFL-CIO refused to give official endorsement to the PATCO strike, it presented a terrible dilemma to us. I had just taken office as chairperson for Boston base, and I was shocked that my union wasn't officially supporting PATCO. Not only because it was the right thing to do as trade unionists, but also because it had such a profound effect on us."

The crushing of PATCO, said Coughlin, "made an indelible impression upon everyone. It meant that it was very difficult to get any action at any airline after that, and we thought that it would be a long time before we could ever get our members to support a strike or action of any kind."

Coughlin said that workers at Eastern have been very unhappy with management since the days of Frank Borman. She said that since Lorenzo came to Eastern, there has been a concerted effort by management to bust the unions. "People just decided that they had had enough. Lorenzo turned out to be the best organizing tool we ever had."

Solidarity from airline workers

Coughlin gave the audience a glimpse of the solidarity building in the airline industry as she described the situation immediately before the strike. Flight Attendants were scattered in hotel rooms across the country when they decided to honor the picket lines, and most couldn't afford to get home.

"The day before the strike," she said, "the Delta pilots announced that they had negotiated a deal with Delta to grant our people a 75 percent discount. In the entire airline industry I know of only two people who had to pay anything to get back. They literally tapped pilots and agents of any airline anywhere on the shoulder and said, 'I



Paul Cannon

need to get home.' And they got home. And they were wine and dined on the plane."

Coughlin explained that the company had not given the pilots a contract because it expected them to cross the picket lines. "They thought the pilots weren't trade unionists," she said, noting that the pilots had learned a little about being trade unionists through this experience.

"One of the most important things about the strike," Coughlin noted, "is the solidarity shown between our three unions.... I don't think it would be as successful without it."

Lessons of PATCO strike

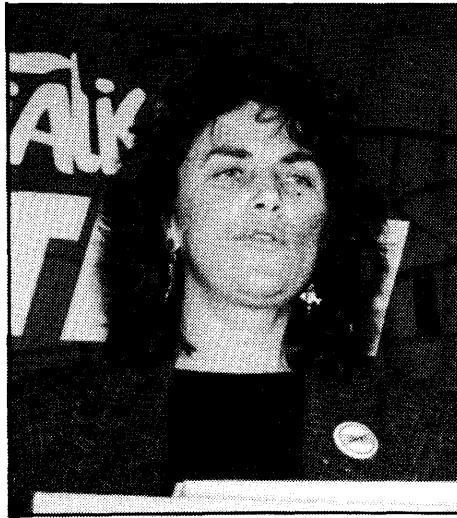
Paul Cannon traced the history of the PATCO strike and outlined some of the tactics used by the government to break the union.

Concentrating on the role of the courts, he showed how differently PATCO was treated in bankruptcy court than Eastern is. What did in PATCO was that "the organization went bankrupt because we had \$32 million in fines."

Cannon noted how the courts are used against strikers in the public sector, with back-to-work orders, injunctions, and fines. "The PATCO strike was illegal. There's no question.... But it also has to be remembered that we were coming on to that strike after the 1960s and '70s, when strikes by public employees were happening every day—and they were all illegal."

Cannon continued, "We actually had a saying at PATCO that 'the only illegal strike is the unsuccessful strike.'"

During the PATCO strike in Nashua, "a



Judy Coughlin

scab came through the picket line and hit a striker. The striker was arrested for being hit by the car." When presidents of two locals protested this to the cops, they were arrested for violating the injunction against picketing in that spot. These men were tied up in court for months, with the charges ultimately being dismissed.

"Everybody's reference point"

David Walsh pointed out that "PATCO is everybody's reference point in the labor movement today. The first thing you'll hear about any strike right now is 'we should've stopped them at PATCO.'"

Walsh drew some of the lessons of the Guilford railroad strike in New England in 1986. He pointed out that rail workers went out under the RLA [Railway Labor Act] and shut down Conrail—the number one supplier of rail freight on the East Coast. But within two hours, Reagan invoked the cooling-off period provided under the Act, thereby forcing binding arbitration by the courts.

Walsh discussed how the RLA was instituted by Roosevelt to destroy the right to strike. "They were concerned about keeping industry working during World War II, recognizing the critical nature of transportation," he said. "Congress decided to set up a 'completely fair and neutral' Railway Labor Act. Recently it's so fair and neutral that it neutralizes labor. It keeps us in court forever."

Pointing out the protection of the bankruptcy court, Walsh described how the judge "OK'ed Eastern's refusal to pay striking

workers \$9 million in wages earned before the strike." The court also approved Eastern's refusal to refund money to holders of tickets on planes that had been grounded.

Allies and so-called allies

Walsh pointed to the large contingents of utility workers, electrical workers, and other "workers who don't have anything directly to do with the [Eastern] strike," who turned out in tremendous numbers on March 14 at a Boston solidarity rally with the striking Eastern workers. [See April 1989 issue of *Socialist Action*.] "That gives you a little glimpse of the power of the labor movement," Walsh said.

But taking note of the presence on the podium of Gov. Michael Dukakis, Boston Mayor Ray Flynn, and Massachusetts Labor Secretary Paul Eustace, Walsh said, "I'm dubious of the advice these people would give us." He noted that Dukakis had helped break the power of the Boston Carmen's Union, and that Flynn had refused to help striking Greyhound workers in Boston when a Nazi-like strikebreaking outfit was beating them in the streets.

Walsh also noted that Eustace had recently suggested that the management of General Motors—which is shutting down the Framingham, Mass., assembly plant and laying off thousands of workers—was "totally different from Lorenzo."

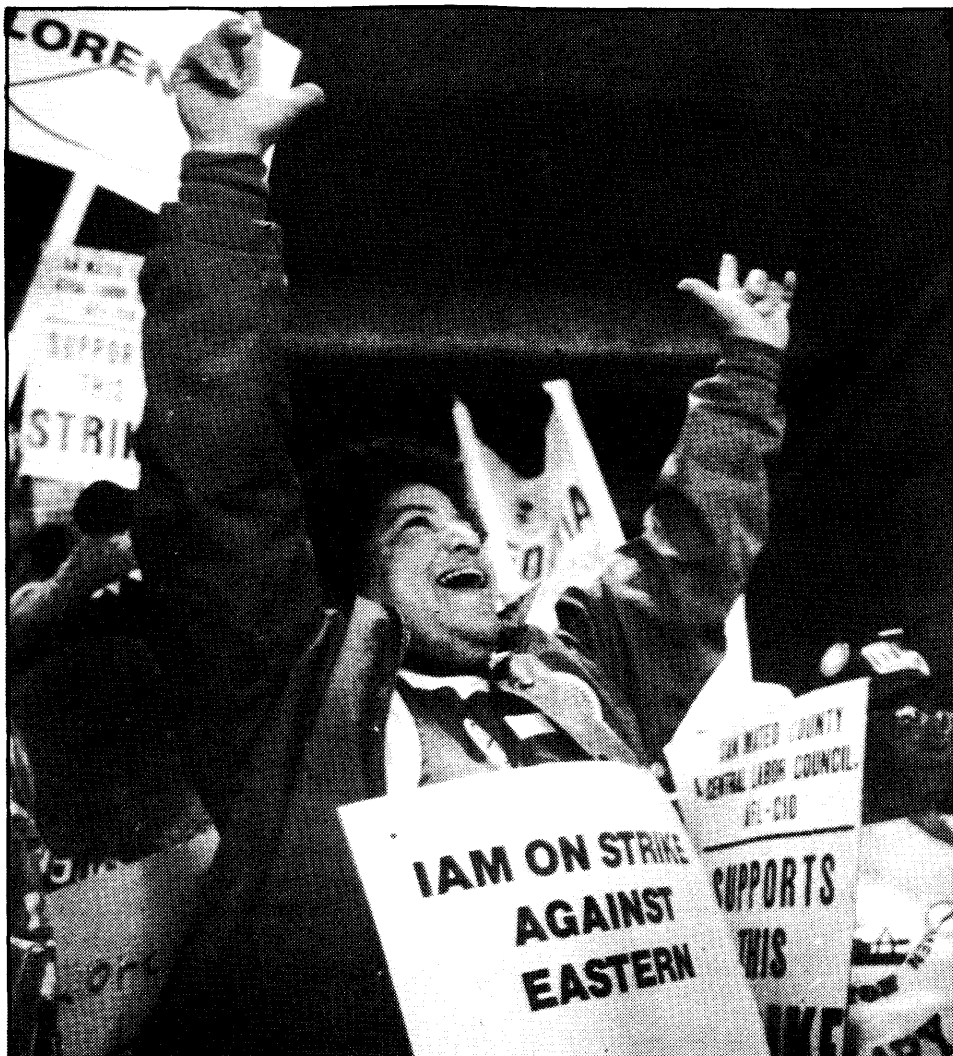
"I'd point to some other allies, like Molly Yard and NOW," Walsh said. Walsh concluded by referring to his co-workers in rail, who, if a secondary boycott is called, "are ready to a woman and a man to not go to work."

Help from other unionists

Audience discussion focused on how workers in other industries could help the strikers. One unionist encouraged Coughlin to call on his IBEW local. "I mentioned to many of our brothers that you are restricted from leafleting. They said, 'Let's go leaflet. What are they gonna do, arrest us for leafleting in support of the Eastern Airlines workers?'"

"You've been out about a month," the unionist continued. "It's time to have a rally where we can explain the issues. Take your case right to the union membership, and organize them to help support you in your strike."

During the discussion period the audience took up a collection for the Flight Attendants strike fund. ■



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

... Eastern strike

(continued from page 1)

not go back to work for Frank Lorenzo under any conditions." But as the strike drags on, and Eastern tries to bust the unions once and for all, a bigger showdown is likely.

Expanding the solidarity is central to winning this strike. Eastern workers still have a lot of untapped resources. There's the secondary boycott of East Coast commuter rail lines—and lots of evidence that rail workers are ready to go out in solidarity.

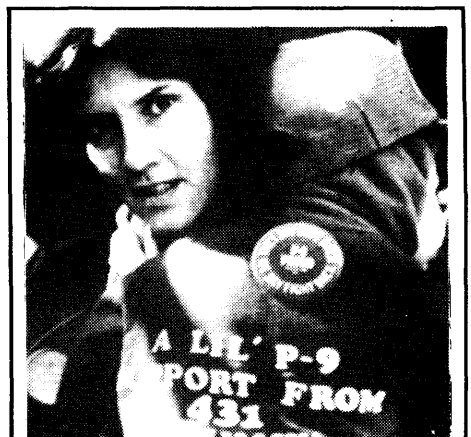
Building a strike fund for the flight attendants, and expanding the benefits for machinists, is key. Plant gate collections, like the one planned for GE, can help raise both money and the consciousness of the labor movement. More rallies, and sending speakers to address meetings of other unions, can do the same. The labor movement is ready to come to the aid of Eastern strikers.

Restrictive picketing regulations at airports such as Logan are making it difficult to get the union's message out to the public. But an all-out boycott of Eastern and Lorenzo's Continental would galvanize public support for the strike. (Such limits on democratic rights at airports are appalling. As one worker pointed out, the Hare Krishnas and followers of Lyndon Larouche have more of a right to bother you than an airline worker has to hand you a leaflet.)

Solidarity rallies in Boston, San Francisco, Washington, Miami, and elsewhere show the

tremendous potential that exists to put pressure on the bosses. Working people need to put pressure on the bosses' courts, too. So far the courts have shown their allegiance by issuing injunctions against the unions.

The stakes in this strike are high. The labor movement has taken a beating since the crushing of PATCO in 1981. A victory in this strike will be a strong beginning to a long climb back. ■



'Lessons of the P-9 Strike: A balance sheet of the militant struggle against Hormel'

A pamphlet by Jake Cooper (\$1.50)

Ollie North: The fall of a homespun hero

By HAYDEN PERRY

Lt. Col. Oliver North must have harbored bitter thoughts as he awaited the verdict on 12 felony charges against him. He had soared so high—wheeling and dealing, and moving and shaking. Now he has fallen so far, so fast—indicted and facing possible imprisonment—deserted by friends and patrons.

Life is so unfair, he must think. But it was not bad luck that put North where he is today. It was arrogant contempt for the American people, and serving a ruling class that ultimately had contempt for him.

North served as a kind of super-James Bond Agent 007. He had an office in the White House where the imperial presidency ruled. North found the tone in the White House in harmony with his views as a Marine colonel.

Executive power was to be pre-eminent—exerted in any way necessary. Lying and cheating were legitimate tactics to overcome your enemies: the enemy being the American people, who opposed White House policy. The Iran-Contra scam appealed to North as a "neat scheme" to get around Congress, which, he believed, had no business vetoing White House plans.

As he flew back and forth across the Atlantic, planning strategy, dealing in millions and negotiating with foreign governments, North must have imagined himself to be a man of power—instead of just a point man for the White House gang.

North's delusion of grandeur peaked when the contra scam unraveled and he was called before the Senate investigating committee. Here the bemedaled Marine colonel lectured the Congressmen on the proper political order for America. The executive and military would decide policy, and Congress would have to go along.

Committee members, who wanted only a partial and half-hearted investigation of the scandal, gave North a platform from which to harangue the nation. The American right saw a homespun hero in North and whipped up support across the land. Overnight teeshirts with North's picture were produced, cries of "Ollie North for Congress," were heard. It seemed the new-found hero was on his way.

Second thoughts

Then came the morning after. The teeshirts remained on hangers. People had second thoughts. Was lying to the



people consistent with democracy? Did the people really want to support the murderous contras?

Then all the air leaked out of the pumped-up figure, North was reduced to the size of a pawn in American power politics. Having failed in the role of hero, North was now to become a fall guy in the trial that became inevitable.

President Reagan had called North a hero. But he had

fired him the minute the scandal broke. He refused to pardon the patriot as Ford had pardoned Nixon to head off a trial.

Abandoned by the White House, North vowed to tell all. He subpoenaed carloads of documents and called the former president to the stand. But Reagan refused to stand by his friend and hero, and made a deal with the court to release a few selected documents.

North used the "Nuremberg" defense. He was only carrying out orders; President Reagan approved of what he was doing and knew the details.

North produced the documents to prove it.

Nicaraguan sabotage

A summary of the documents showed that Bush was sent to Honduras in March 1985 to offer benefits to President Suazo if he would support the contras by basing them in his country.

It was also revealed that in August 1986 President Noriega of Panama volunteered to assassinate Sandinista leaders if the United States would boost his image. He presumably meant: overlook and cover up his drug dealing.

The administration reportedly said "no thanks" to the assassination offer, but suggested that sabotage of key Nicaraguan installations would be welcome.

An oil refinery and an airport were suggested as priority targets.

Evidence offered at the trial alleged that the Iran-Contra gang hired an airline, run by the international drug cartel, to deliver arms to the contras. On the return trip, they carried cocaine.

The administration hopes, by sacrificing North, to put Iran-Contra behind them. Congress, which has just signed an agreement to send the contras "humanitarian" aid, would also like to bury the past. One Washington insider observed that further investigation of the scam will not go very far because the ultimate result would be Dan Quayle in the White House.

But more trials are scheduled, more facts will come out. George Bush may be limping along as a discredited president. More important, more Americans are coming to realize that capitalist rule means government by a minority that lies and cheats and has only contempt for the American people.

By ALAN BENJAMIN

On April 13, the Democratic-controlled Congress voted \$49.8 million in "non-military aid" to the contras. This vote was not unexpected.

Three weeks earlier, the Bush administration had signed a policy accord with Democratic Party leaders that would continue aid to the contras at the rate of \$4.5 million a month through February 1990, when presidential elections are scheduled in Nicaragua. House Speaker Jim Wright strongly endorsed the contra plan, calling it a "peace program, not a war program"—typical Democratic Party "double-speak."

The Sandinista government correctly denounced the U.S. contra-aid agreement as a violation of the regional accord that had been signed on Feb. 14 by the five Central American presidents at Tesoro Beach, El Salvador.

Under the agreement, the contra bases in Honduras would be closed in return for "open elections" in Nicaragua. As part of the accord, the Sandinista government agreed to release

Democrats in Congress vote new aid to contras

most of the 3000 former Somoza National Guardsmen still in prison.

Nicaragua also agreed to a four-month period during which opposition parties would organize, followed by a six-month campaign, culminating in presidential, legislative, and municipal elections on Feb. 25, 1990. Finally, it agreed to allow opposition political parties full access to the press, television, and radio.

Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry official Alejandro Bendaña Rodríguez warned that "The U.S. Congress and the American presidency cannot have the contras as a military force on one end and pretend to be supportive of the Central American peace plan on the other."

Costa Rican President Oscar Arias,

however, did not agree with the Sandinistas' assessment of the proposed contra aid. After a meeting with President Bush in Washington, D.C., on April 4, Arias hailed the new U.S. president's willingness "to give diplomacy a chance" in Central America.

According to *The New York Times*, "Mr. Arias went out of his way to say that the Bush administration's plan to continue aid to the contras was not at odds with the most recent regional agreement, reached by the presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, in Tesoro Beach, El Salvador, on Feb. 14."

It was therefore no surprise when White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater called Arias "a very valuable ally to whom we look for leadership as we try to apply diplomatic

pressure to Nicaragua to live up to its promises."

Secretary of State James Baker spelled out the meaning of this "diplomatic pressure." He said that without the "contra option" there would be little pressure on the Sandinistas to enact the 17 constitutional reforms demanded by the contras and hold elections that would turn power over to the internal capitalist opposition front.

House Speaker Jim Wright explained the need for contra aid in similar terms: "This vote says to Nicaragua that we are very earnest about you fulfilling these commitments that you made to internal democratization."

By "internal democratization," the U.S. warmakers mean only one thing: the reversal of the Nicaraguan Revolution. That is why they want to keep the contras on the back burner. The latest contra-aid vote, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, "gave [President] Bush and Secretary of State James Baker ... an assurance that the contras will be kept intact for at least 10 months."

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- 'The Nicaraguan Revolution Ten Years Later,' by Alan Benjamin, author of upcoming Walnut Publishing Co. book *Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution*, and Nicaraguan economist Rolando Urrutia.
- 'Report Back on Soviet Tour: The Meaning of Gorbachev's Reforms,' by Carl Finamore, Paul Siegel, and Ralph Schoenman.
- 'Marxism and Feminism,' (teachers to be announced).
- 'Marxist Economics and the Current Crisis of Capitalism,' by Lynn Henderson.
- 'Marxist Dialectics and its Application to the Class Struggle Today,' by Cliff Conner.



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James Kutcher (1912-1989): The man who never gave up

By FRANK LOVELL

Following are excerpts from an article in tribute to Jimmy Kutcher that appeared in the April 1989 issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Kutcher died on Feb. 10 in Brooklyn, N.Y., at the age of 76.

James Kutcher suffered more than his share of misfortune and adversity, but he never stopped fighting against injustice. He met every challenge with quiet determination to win.

His life was more willful than accidental, more satisfying than frustrating. The decisions he made distinguished him from ordinary men, even though he described himself as an ordinary man "in most respects."

He came of age during the Great Depression. There were no jobs for a young man of 19 in 1932. He had hoped to become a teacher, but the family had no money for his education.

After a succession of low-paid temporary jobs, he began first to question his own ability and then the capitalist system that divides society between a few rich people and the poor.

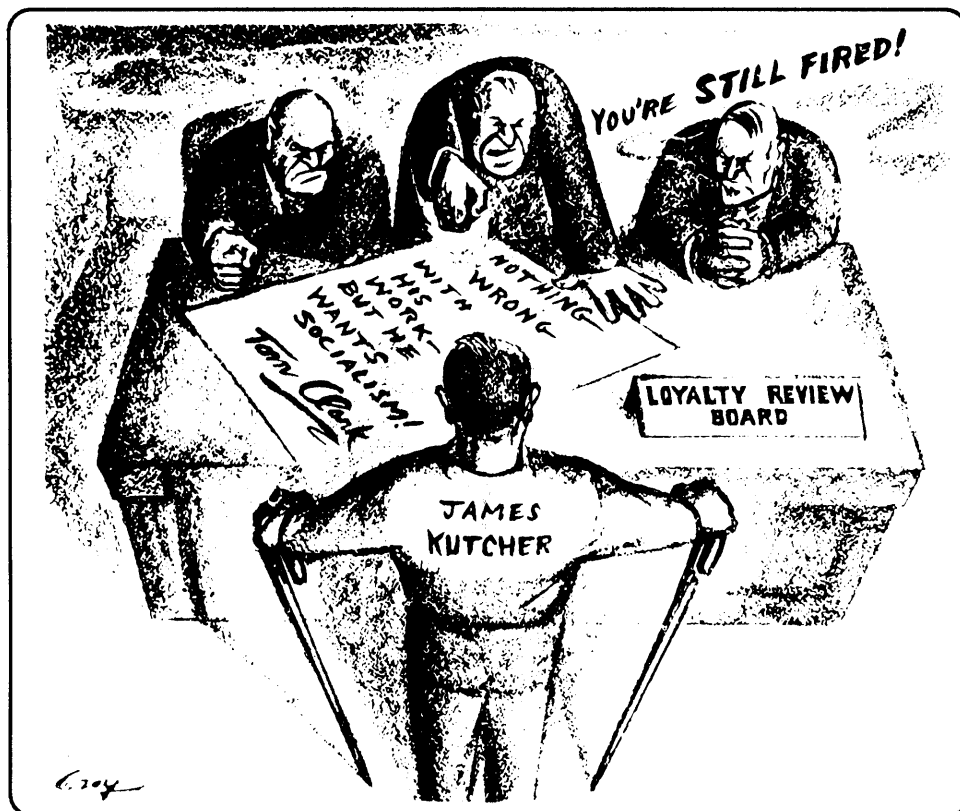
Jim began to read about these questions and in 1935 joined the Socialist Party. His basic education began there when he was introduced to the political writings and organizational work of Leon Trotsky. He became a Trotskyist in 1936 and remained so for life.

Challenging consequences

In retrospect, Kutcher said his life was shaped by three man-made catastrophes: the Depression, the war, and the Cold War—each with consequences both tragic and challenging.

The Depression cut off his right to work, but it gave him a new outlook on the world. World War II cost him his legs. He had to learn to walk again on artificial legs, like a child learning to use stilts. "But," he said, "it also brought me a job I expected to keep for the rest of my life, and for the first time, I got a sense of personal security."

The Cold War cost him his job because he was a member of the Socialist Workers Party and decided not to renounce his socialist principles. The day he was notified by the Veteran's Administration that he was slated to be fired was when his illusory sense of security vanished. He felt it as a personal blow, but he understood it as a blow to civil



liberties in this country.

From 1948, when he was fired from his clerk's job in Newark, until 1958, when his case was finally settled and he was securely back on this job, Kutcher conducted a tireless campaign against the government's unconstitutional blacklist. During that decade, he became the most prominent witch-hunt victim and the only completely vindicated champion of civil liberties in this country.

"The people are on our side"

He made two national tours. The first began early in June 1949.... [In his book, "The Case of the Legless Veteran,"] he talked about what he had learned on tour.

"Of course, it wasn't only the unions that helped me, although they took the lead," he said. "In addition, there were scores, hundreds, of liberal, civil-liberties, veterans, civic, religious, student, old-age, Negro, Jewish, Japanese-American, Slavic-American, fraternal, academic, political, and social groups and organizations who came to my aid morally and financially, although the overwhelming majority of their members disagree—and

sometimes violently—with the social and political views for which I was purged from my job."

His conclusion: "...the people are on our side. And if we redouble our efforts and reach them with the truth, they will come to our aid and guarantee that the liberties won in the Bill of Rights will never be destroyed in this country."

Jim left from Newark May 17, 1954, on his second national tour. Driving alone from city to city, he made his way across the country and back, returning to Newark on Nov. 8. One purpose of this six-month journey was to sell his book and get the widest possible distribution of it. It had been published in England the year before because he was unable to find a publisher in this country.

Reception at the Lawyers Guild

He spoke at a National Lawyers Guild luncheon and got a good reception, which was somewhat surprising because the guild was influenced by Stalinist ideology. In the past, the Stalinists had tried to block support to his case. He had confronted them on several occasions, most memorably at a meeting in San Francisco of 2800 longshoremen in the Local 10 hall of the longshore union on his first national tour.

By 1954, the witch hunt had caught up with the Communist Party—with a vengeance. They were finally beginning to realize that their attacks on Kutcher were harming them more than him. Guild members who earlier might have been prejudiced against Kutcher by Stalinist falsification of his case were now ready to listen to him with open minds and buy his book.

While in Detroit, Kutcher worked on the draft of a letter to top CIO officials, hoping to dispel the false rumors against him and his defense committee. His log shows that on June 15, he spoke to a meeting of laid-off Dodge workers at their UAW hall: "Couldn't sell book because CIO is sabotaging sale of book."

Meanwhile, the government struck another

blow. Two days before Christmas 1955, Kutcher's disability pension was bureaucratically terminated. His only income was gone. This focused public attention on the case as never before.

Public hearings were held for the first time in a "loyalty" case of this kind. Kutcher's testimony was widely publicized, the baseless charges against him exposed.

On April 20, 1956, a federal appeals court ordered Kutcher restored to his job. He went back to work at the Newark VA on June 26; and finally, two years later, on June 4, 1958, he got a settlement for back pay. The famous "Case of the Legless Veteran" was closed after nearly 10 years.

Bureaucracy in the unions

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

The sad fact is that the union movement during World War II was subjected to government controls, and enactment of the Taft-Hartley Law in 1947 codified and extended those controls. Under these conditions the unions became highly bureaucratized. Bureaucrats do not risk their soft jobs for the sake of principles.

Kutcher came to the conclusion that "the unions were in a state of transition, starting around the time my case began." He said he hadn't sensed this in 1949 but it was clear in 1954, during his second tour. "Bureaucratization of the unions made enormous strides in those five years," he said. "That, and the impact of McCarthyism, had frightened some and served as a pretext for others."

Kutcher's defense of socialist principles did not end when he won back his government job. After he retired from that job, he took up the work of explaining those principles, what it means to defend them, and how best to do this. That was the purpose of the 1973 edition of his book.

He thought by that time, after all his experience of nearly half a century in the Trotskyist movement, that he could face any challenge. But even then another challenge, both personal and political, was still to come.

Expelled from the SWP

In 1983, a new generation of leaders in the Socialist Workers Party, headed by the national secretary Jack Barnes, charged Kutcher with "hitting a comrade" at a party membership meeting (a charge that was later demonstrated to be patently false, based on the testimony of the individual allegedly hit) and expelled him on the grounds that he refused to appear when summoned to stand trial (when in fact he was ill and unable to appear, and had merely asked for a delay).

Kutcher was not sure at the time what the real reason for his expulsion was, but it soon became clear that he was deemed to be a Trotskyist when the party leadership was seeking to establish its own anti-Trotskyist credentials.

A list of comrades who remained loyal to Trotskyism had been prepared, and Kutcher happened to be one of the first purged, soon to be followed by more than a hundred others. Kutcher was among the victims of the purge who organized the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT) as one current in the U.S. Trotskyist movement and began publishing the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.

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

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

Kutcher memorial meeting



Dottie Breitman, long-time friend and comrade of James Kutcher, speaking at April 22 New York City memorial meeting, which drew over 70 people.

The following letter was sent by the Political Committee of Socialist Action to the April 22 memorial meeting in New York for Jimmy Kutcher.

Dear comrades,

Jimmy Kutcher, without ever pausing to contemplate taking life's safer road, devoted his full attention to the struggle for socialism. Hounded and despised by the capitalist witchhunters and Stalinists alike, he lived to see his own ideas—the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky—again emerge for the consideration of today's youth and revolutionary fighters.

Let it be remembered that our Legless Veteran fighter stood tall in the face of great personal adversity and political calamity. Jimmy prevailed against the odds. He left his mark on us all, which is why we are here today—to draw strength from his example, to continue the fight for his dreams without missing a beat.

We will never forget you, Jimmy. Our best to all his comrades, old and new, and to his organization, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Comradely,
Jeff Mackler and Nat Weinstein,
National Secretaries, Socialist Action

Coming in our next issue:

- The meaning of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan
- Behind the upsurge of the Chinese students and workers
- Exclusive interview with ex-Star Wars Dir. Dr. Robert Bowman
- Inside Operation Rescue
- The struggle for land in Nicaragua today
- Interviews with leaders of Soviet dissident movement
- The tasks of socialists in the women's movement
- Grocery clerks in S.F. Bay Area organize for decent wages

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In March 1989, *Socialist Action* staffwriter Hayden Perry visited Belfast, Northern Ireland. While there, he interviewed John McNulty, who is a former Belfast city councilor and the editor of *Peoples Democracy's* newspaper, *An Reabhlóid* (*The Revolution*). *Peoples Democracy* is the Irish section of the Fourth International.

S.A.: What is the situation in Ireland today?

John McNulty: The main political factor at the present is the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed three years ago between the southern Irish establishment and the British. Basically, it confirms Britain's right to occupy this part of the country. There are promises to control discrimination against Catholics and to moderate Loyalist rule here.

S.A.: Has this agreement actually affected life for Catholics here?

J.M.: No. What there has been is a lot of cover for the continuation of Loyalist domination. There is the appearance of change without the reality.

S.A.: I understand unemployment is very high here. Is there still a great disparity between Catholic and Protestant joblessness?

J.M.: Yes. Two-and-a-half times as many Catholics as Protestants are out of work. The proposals of the British to correct this disparity won't change anything because they oppose any form of affirmative action.

S.A.: I understand the Six Counties are ruled directly by Parliament in London.

J.M.: Yes, that is correct. There is a Secretary of State who is appointed directly by the British government as a sort of civil commander—backed up by British troops.

The local Stormont government became unworkable after the rise of the civil rights movement.

S.A.: What would the British like to see in place of their military occupation of the Six Counties?

J.M.: They would like the establishment of a devolved [local] government in Northern Ireland that would maintain Protestant ascendancy but take away some of the more objectionable features of their domination. They would also like to co-opt sections of the Catholic middle class.

S.A.: Why does the British government persist in occupying Northern Ireland? Why not pull out and leave the problem for the Irish to solve?

J.M.: There are a number of reasons the British cannot do this. The British have substantial investments in the North. Also they are expected by other imperial powers to keep order in this subordinate territory. They also see a parallel with Cuba and the United States. They realize the ultimate resolution of the problem of partition must be a socialist Ireland. This would be the end of any British influence or control.

S.A.: I understand Protestant workers enjoyed a monopoly of the good jobs in shipbuilding and textiles, but these industries are closing down. Doesn't this put the Protestant unemployed on the same level as the Catholic?

J.M.: The Protestants are still in a better position. Their rate of unemployment is lower and they have a better chance at any job openings.

The security apparatus employs a great many, who are almost exclusively Protestant. The Catholics are confined to the peripheral sectors of the economy.

S.A.: Is it possible for Protestant and Catholic unemployed to unite in struggle?

An interview with John McNulty:

Belfast Trotskyist emphasizes need to build a mass movement



Irish nationalists gather in Belfast on August 10, 1988, to protest the anniversary of the imposition of internment by the British in 1971. Thousands of Irish Catholics have been summarily imprisoned for periods ranging from six months to several years without charges being brought against them.

J.M.: Protestant workers look to Westminster for help because Northern Ireland's economy has always been dependent on Britain. Protestant workers will turn to the Republican workers only when they see genuine class struggles that seem to be going somewhere, gaining important victories in the Twenty Six Counties as well as the North.

S.A.: How much of a problem is the cultural factor, the deep animosity between the two communities?

J.M.: It is hard to assess that factor. There is a saying: "The Catholics know who they are—Irish—but don't know what they want. While the Protestants know what they want—partition—but don't know who they are (Irish or English)."

If Protestants go to work in England they soon find they are not accepted as native-born Britons, despite their protestations of loyalty.

S.A.: What is the relation of the Unionists to the British in Northern Ireland?

J.M.: There are a number of Unionist parties, but they do not make decisions concerning events in the Six Counties. The British do that. But the British try to secure their agreement. When the Loyalists violently opposed the Sunningdale scheme for joint

Protestant-Catholic rule, the British dropped it.

S.A.: I read an article in the Dublin press suggesting partition would be OK if the Catholics got equality and all their civil rights. Is this sentiment widespread among the Irish ruling class?

J.M.: First we have to stand this analogy on its head. If we had equality and freedom, there would be no need for partition. It exists to prevent equality and freedom.

The civil rights movement did not push the national question. They demanded equality and civil rights first of all.

Another aspect is clear to Trotskyists, but not to many on the Left. That is that England controls the Irish Republic as well as the Six Counties. They express their interests through the Irish bourgeoisie.

Uniting the country involves raising the class struggle. The national movement must involve the working class and its demands. Both the British and the Irish ruling classes fear such a development.

S.A.: Why did the civil rights movement decline?

J.M.: The movement was oriented toward the middle class and the Catholic Church. It was a sort of popular front, with considerable Communist Party influence. It had a minimalist program. After the attack of Bloody Sunday, the leaders gave up the perspective of building a mass movement.

S.A.: Was the hunger strike of Bobbie Sands and others a defeat?

J.M.: No. It developed a mass movement that gave the British all kinds of trouble. They had to admit the hunger strikers were not criminals but political prisoners.

S.A.: Since the decline of the civil rights movement and the hunger strikes, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) seems to take center stage in the struggle.

What is the place for a military campaign?
J.M.: The IRA say to themselves that they are an army fighting the British. But it has become clear that the war is not successful. Some say the IRA must be more determined, and extend the range of its targets. But if they do that too much, they get into situations their supporters say are not justified—bombings where people get killed.

Other IRA leaders realize that military action alone is not enough. There must be a political component as well—a mass movement that involves workers in the Twenty Six Counties and their demands. But the IRA leadership does not know how to build a mass

political movement.

S.A.: Sinn Fein is the political arm of the IRA. Why don't they build the mass movement?

J.M.: For a long time, Sinn Fein was content to let the Irish bourgeois parties represent the Republicans, while they concentrated on supporting the IRA. They refused to take seats when elected to office.

Now they want to build a professional electoral party on both sides of the border. They are getting elected to city councils and taking part in civic affairs. They still boycott Parliament, since taking seats in Westminster would recognize Britain's right to rule Ireland.

S.A.: I understand their vote in the last two elections was disappointing, a drop from 5 percent to 2 percent.

J.M.: One problem is that Sinn Fein did not come to grips with the question of program. A demand that the British leave is not a program. What do you propose after the British have gone?

They consider themselves socialists, but take a very cautious approach. Their proposals are merely reformist. They don't understand how to use elections to build a mass organization that continues to grow between elections.

They had a lot of young people participating in the last election, but they did not have the program to hold on to them.

S.A.: You are saying then that a mass workers' movement must be mobilized on both sides of the border?

J.M.: Yes. And the economic crisis in the North and the South demands a socialist character to that movement.

S.A.: The IRA and Sinn Fein get a lot of support from the Irish in America.

J.M.: It happens that the movement in the States is part of our problem. In order to be successful, the Republicans need a democratic movement of support that goes beyond the Irish community in the United States. Limited to the Irish, it becomes only an Irish issue.

In the case of Nicaragua, the agitation is not confined to the Nicaraguans in the United States. It has become an issue concerning all Americans.

S.A.: Of course, the American government is deeply involved in Nicaragua.

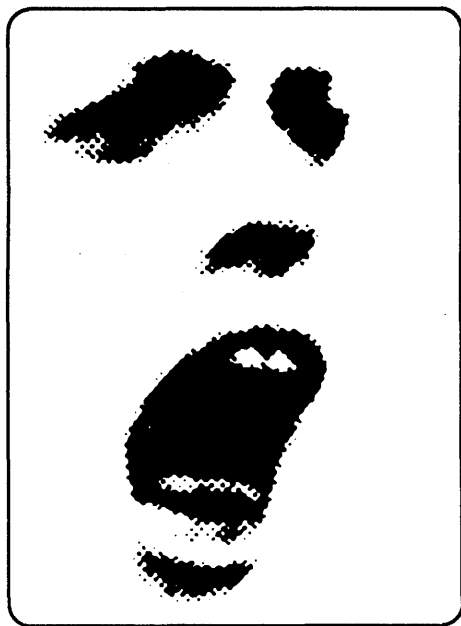
J.M.: The U.S. government is also deeply involved in Ireland. They have been the strongest backer of British policy in Ireland. This is an issue all Americans can be concerned over.

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Canadian activists mobilize to defend abortion rights



By SHIRLEY PASHOLK

On Sat., May 27, supporters of women's right to choose abortion will march in Toronto, Canada, from the Morgenthaler clinic to the Campaign for Life Coalition headquarters, organizers of Toronto Operation Rescue. The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) called this demonstration around three demands: Stop Operation Rescue, oppose any new abortion laws, and full access to free abortions.

Cherie MacDonald, OCAC spokesperson and a member of Socialist Challenge/Gauche Socialiste, described the assault on reproductive freedom launched by the Canadian government and right-wing bigots. She emphasized that it was a massive women's movement with strong support from organized labor that led to increased availability of safe, legal abortions. She stressed the need to continue visible protests to defeat the current attacks.

The 1969 "liberal" law

Before 1969, abortion was illegal in Canada unless the woman's life was in immediate danger. In 1969, as part of a new law regulating sexuality, the Trudeau government backed a so-called liberal abortion law. Under this law, a woman needing an abortion would present her case to a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC) composed of three doctors, not including the doctor who would perform the abortion, at an accredited hospital. The woman could only obtain a legal abortion if this committee ruled the continuation of the pregnancy would endanger her life or health.

Given Canada's large expanses of sparsely

populated areas, many communities don't have accredited hospitals with four doctors and therefore couldn't possibly provide legal abortions. Where such accredited hospitals existed, very few set up TACs. In others, the TACs approved less than one abortion per year.

MacDonald said the women's movement organized against this law from the beginning, explaining that allowing a committee of doctors to decide whether a woman could have an abortion denied women their democratic right to control their own bodies. They also stressed the law's discriminatory aspects since legal abortions were largely limited to women in metropolitan centers like Montreal and Toronto. They pointed out that the TACs resulted in unnecessary delays, forcing women to have abortions later in their pregnancies, thereby increasing the health risks.

In 1970, women organized a cross-Canada march to Ottawa to demand access to abortion. This caravan started in Vancouver and stopped in cities and towns along the way to hold tribunals and gather testimony from women. This action put the federal government, which had prided itself on its "liberal" law, on notice that women would not settle for laws that continued to deny them their basic rights as human beings.

Dr. Morgenthaler's clinics

In the early 1970s, Dr. Morgenthaler opened his first abortion clinic in Quebec. MacDonald emphasized that this clinic grew out of the active women's movement and strong nationalist movement in Quebec.

Morgenthaler was arrested and tried. Even though the jury was entirely composed of Catholics—and all women of child bearing age were excluded—it found Morgenthaler innocent. Although two later juries also found Morgenthaler innocent, he was imprisoned when an appeals court overturned the jury verdict.

As a result of increasing pressure from women and labor, the ruling Parti Quebecois overturned the charges against Morgenthaler and wrote a letter to the federal government saying the abortion law couldn't be enforced in Quebec.

In 1982, women in Toronto mounted a campaign to force the Ontario government to issue a similar statement declaring the law unenforceable. Before Dr. Morgenthaler

opened the first abortion clinic in Toronto, the Ontario Federation of Labor and a broad spectrum of women's organizations expressed their support for reproductive freedom.

When the clinic opened, Morgenthaler was arrested. He admitted to violating the federal abortion law by performing abortions on the demand of individual women, but argued that this was necessary. Again, a jury found him innocent and again the government appealed.

In February 1985, buoyed by this government appeal, anti-choice bigots organized a week of actions demanding that the clinic be closed. On a few days' notice, over 8000 people turned out to counter these attacks and demand the clinic remain open.

OCAC spokesperson Cherie MacDonald stated that such visible mass support allowed two clinics to remain open for five years even though they were clearly illegal.

New ruling, but more attacks

In January 1988, in a ruling that echoed many of the objections of the women's movement, the Canadian Supreme Court declared the abortion law unconstitutional. Since then both the Conservatives and Liberals have pressed for a new federal abortion law.

MacDonald explained that an impressive list of endorsers supports the unanimous position of the women's and labor movements that there should be no new abortion law.

MacDonald pointed to the various restrictions which have been discussed in Parliament, from bills based on gestational age to a return to the pre-1969 ban on abortions except to save the woman's life to attempts to protect fetal "rights."

MacDonald explained that there has also been an attempt to whittle away at the Supreme Court decision on a province-by-province basis. In many provinces, access remains severely restricted. Nova Scotia recently passed a law outlawing free standing abortion clinics and threatened to impose a \$500 per day fine on a clinic scheduled to open in Halifax in June. Other provinces have attempted to deny funding under the provincial health-insurance coverage.

MacDonald stated that the best way to counter these attacks is by a well-coordinated campaign in both English Canada and Quebec. Abortion rights activists are working toward coordinated binational demonstrations

in all major cities in the fall.

Clinics in Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg have been targeted by Operation Rescue. Although Operation Rescue has attempted six blockades in Toronto since last Oct. 29, they have been unsuccessful in shutting down the clinics or canceling the appointments.

In every instance, the women's movement has taken to the streets in sufficient numbers to prevent this from happening. The breadth of support has been shown by the participation of labor officials and Metro City councilors.

In March, 4000 people participated in an International Women's Day rally in Toronto. They marched to the Campaign for Life Coalition headquarters where they presented a black coffin filled with wire coat hangers as a dramatic statement of what abortion restrictions mean for poor women. MacDonald said such actions have helped increase public support by exposing the anti-choice activists as harassers of women.

Full access to free abortion!

MacDonald said that OCAC opposes the privatization of health care. Currently only the doctors' fees at abortion clinics are covered by the provincial health plan. Individual women patients must pay for the other expenses.

Although Dr. Morgenthaler has offered to turn his clinics over to the provincial governments to be run as public clinics, his offer has not been accepted. OCAC demands that the provincial government take initiatives to set up public clinics, similar to those in Quebec, providing the full range of reproductive health service.

MacDonald added that OCAC seeks full access to abortion for all women and that this can only be accomplished if no woman has to travel a great distance, speak a foreign language, or pay in order to have an abortion.

MacDonald ended by stating that over 100 people participated in the Canadian contingent at the April 9 March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives in Washington. MacDonald, who helped organize participation from Toronto, explained that whatever the U.S. Supreme Court decides will be reflected in the decisions of the Canadian Supreme Court and Parliament. ■

D.C. conference focuses demands for Black, Latina, and Asian women

By ZAKIYA SOMBURU

On April 7-8, 150 women of color gathered in Washington, D.C., at the Women of Color Partnership Conference. The conference was sponsored by the Women of Color Partnership Program, the ACLU, and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

The participants were in Washington to march in the April 9 demonstration for

Zakiya Somburu is a member of the San Francisco Bay Area Black Women's Health Project. She attended the WCP conference in Washington, D.C. on April 7-8.

Women's Equality/Women's Lives. The conference was called to discuss the issue of reproductive rights and its importance for women of color.

The Women of Color Partnership Program made it possible for many of us to be in Washington and to participate in this historic beginning. The "vision statement" of the WCPP describes its origin and purpose:

"The Women of Color Partnership Program was created by the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights in 1985 as a vehicle for which African-American Women, Latin-American Women, Asian-Pacific Women, Native American Women, and Women of

Color in this country can be actively involved and decision-makers in the reproductive choice movement. This program seeks to identify and address not only reproductive rights issues but also the reproductive health-care concerns from the unique perspective of women of color."

The conference agenda was really quite intense in terms of time—all of our time on Friday and Saturday was involved in strategy. This was not a spectator conference.

The conference participants put together "wish lists" of demands. The lists took up the issue of reproductive rights in its broader context.

I can't think of a single group that didn't have universalized national health care and 24-hour day care on its agenda. The lists also included union-scale minimum wage, the revamping of the foster-care system, and the

repeal of all immigration laws.

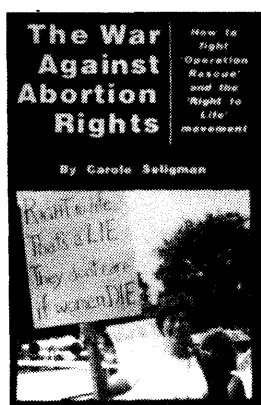
The lists also included a demand for paid parental leave from work for childbirth. Right now there is legislation for unpaid parental leave for six months. All of us at the conference said, "We have to do a reality check right here. How many of us can afford to be off six months, both Mama and Daddy, or even just one of us, to stay home with our baby? That's unreal." We all wanted six months' paid leave, and some people wanted a year leave.

Unfortunately, the conference did not project any specific national actions to fight for these demands. For instance, South African Women's Day on Aug. 9 could have been targeted as a date to organize around. Instead, conference participants were encouraged to go back to their groups and continue organizing on a local level.

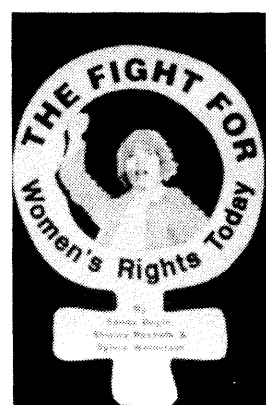
However, through raising the demands of women of color, we broadened the definition of "reproductive rights." As women of color begin organizing on a broader scale, these demands will be posed more sharply for the women's liberation movement as a whole.

The proceedings of the conference will be published soon to serve as a working document for the conference participants and others in the reproductive rights movement.

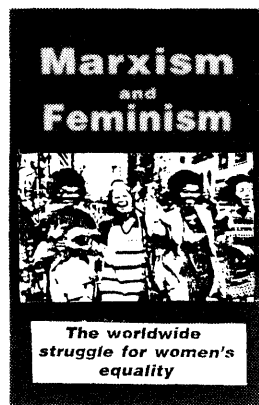
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30,000 march in S.F. to defend right to choose



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

By SANDY DOYLE

SAN FRANCISCO—Despite ominous-looking clouds which threatened rain at any moment, over 30,000 people came out to march and rally here on April 2 to defend abortion rights. Billed as the March for Women's Lives/Women's Equality, it was the largest pro-choice demonstration in San Francisco history.

The day-long event was organized by the April 2 Committee, a coalition that included the National Organization for Women (NOW); Planned Parenthood, Calif. Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL); Coalition of Labor Union Women; Bay Area Black Women's Health Project; American Civil Liberties Union; Bay Area Coalition Against Operation Rescue (BACAOR); and many other women's rights organizations. Over 100 organizations endorsed the march.

The demonstration was called to augment and build the April 9 march in Washington, D.C., and provide an action for West Coast pro-choice supporters who couldn't attend that historic mobilization.

Significantly, the April 2 demonstration was endorsed and actively supported by a large number of trade unions, some of whom contributed money to publicize the event. These included the California Teachers Association (CTA); California Federation of Teachers (CFT); International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU); American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; among others.

The union contingents, including striking Eastern Airlines flight attendants, received enthusiastic applause from onlookers as they marched up Market Street—the city's main commercial thoroughfare.

The catalyst for the demonstration was the upcoming Supreme Court decision on *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, a Missouri case that can reverse the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which legalized abortion. This case involves a Missouri law which states that "the life of each human being begins at conception" and applies strict limits to access to abortion.

Another factor which contributed to the size of the April 2 demonstration is the increased attacks against abortion clinics by the misnamed Operation Rescue forces, who blockade access to family planning centers. Locally, confrontations have occurred between these right-wing anti-choice fanatics and pro-choice forces.

Many marchers were also responding to the continued attacks on the rights of poor women to obtain abortions. The April 2 Committee publicized the fact that Medicaid does not pay for abortions in 37 states, leaving poor women with few choices.

First demonstration for many

The composition of the 30,000 marchers reflected new forces that want to defeat the government-inspired right-wing attack against abortion rights.

People from as far south as San Diego, and as far north as Portland, Ore., converged on San Francisco for the April 2 march. For many, it was their first participation in a

public protest. By far the largest and most militant group present were young women. They have no desire to experience first hand the horrors of the "back-alley" abortions that prevailed when abortion was illegal—and potentially fatal.

"Keep Abortion Safe and Legal!"—"Abortion: A Woman's Right to Choose!" and "Never Again, We Won't Go Back!" were the phrases chanted and the signs held aloft by thousands of young women as they marched and rallied. About one-third of the demonstrators were men.

Civic Center rally

As marchers poured into the Civic Center for a spirited rally, they responded to appeals for donations by depositing nearly \$16,000 into barrels held by monitors.

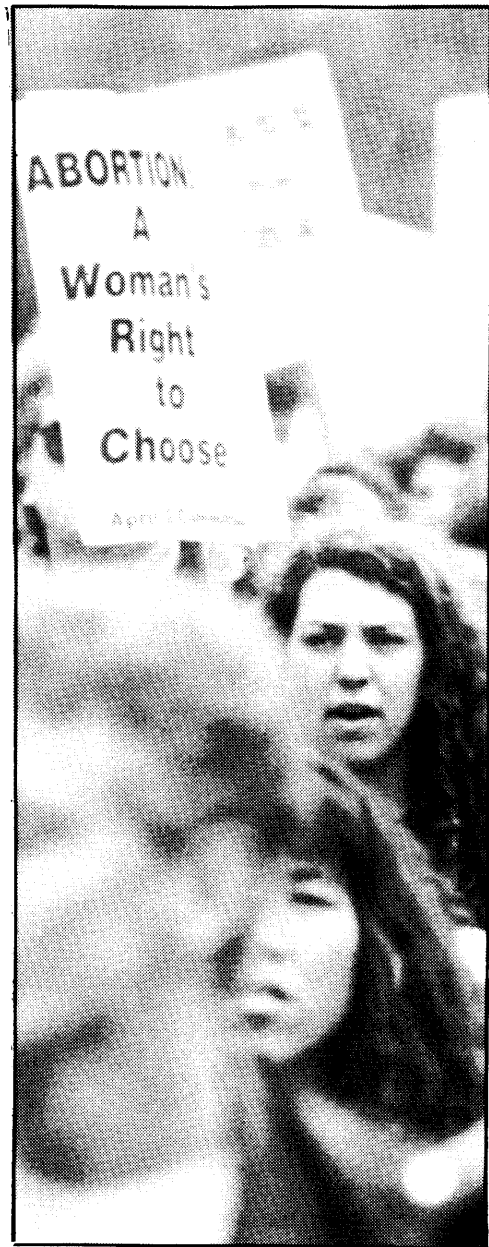
The array of speakers on the stage were representative of the broad support that exists for the right to choose. Major speakers included Holly Near, who also provided

entertainment; Nomonde Ngubo, international representative of the United Mineworkers of America; Frances Kissling, Catholics for a Free Choice; and Patricia Ireland, vice-president-executive of NOW.

Other speakers included Nancy Walker, member of the S.F. Board of Supervisors and board member of CARAL; Tandy Isles, Black Women's Health Project; Luz Alvarez Martinez, Nat'l Latina Health Organization; Willie Brown, Calif. State Assemblyman; Rabbi Dan Dorfman, Hillel Foundation; Merle Woo, Radical Women; Pat Norman, a lesbian rights activist; and Sylvia Weinstein, *Socialist Action* columnist [see speech on this page].

During the rally, hundreds of people signed up at various tables to volunteer for future pro-choice activities, including the defense of abortion clinics.

Operation Rescue bragged that they would strike at clinics in the Bay Area on April 29. But after they were outmobilized by more



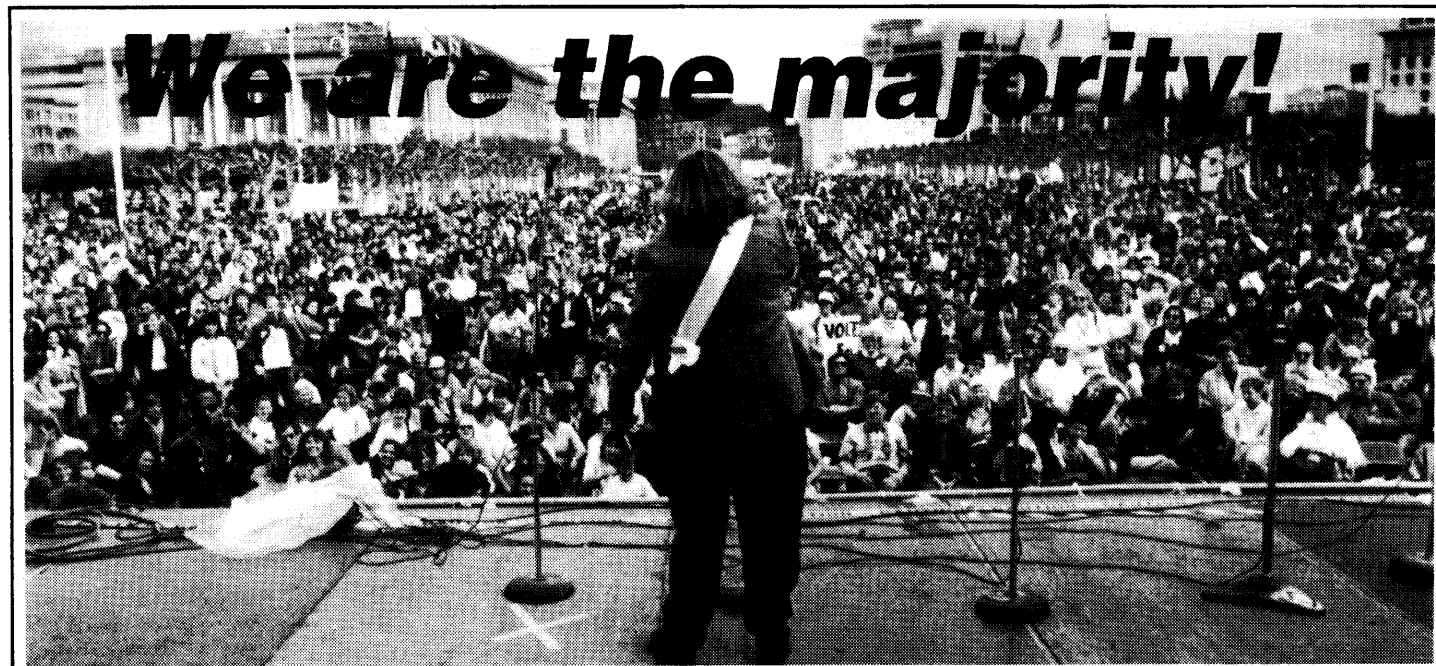
Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

than 1000 pro-choice activists at the clinics, Operation Rescue withdrew to Sacramento, where they picketed a clinic that was already closed for the day.

At least 100 Bay Area pro-choice activists followed the right-wingers to Sacramento, where they joined other activists defending the clinics.

The coalition also held a rally of close to 500 people at the S.F. Federal Building on Wednesday, April 26, the day the Supreme Court heard arguments in the *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* case.

For more information call (415) 255-1989.



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

The following is an abridged version of the speech by Sylvia Weinstein at the April 2 San Francisco rally for Women's Lives/Women's Equality. Weinstein is a staff writer for Socialist Action newspaper and was the 1988 socialist candidate for the San Francisco Board of Education. Her speech was received enthusiastically by the assembled crowd.

WE ARE THE MAJORITY! And I'll tell you I'm very glad to see some politicians on this stage. I want them to look out there and see that we are the majority! But what I want them to do is go back into the legislature and fight for our rights. They don't have to talk to us about our rights. We know our rights. What I want them to do is act on our rights.

You know, last month the Senate confirmed [Dr. Louis] Sullivan as the head of the Health and Human Services Department. The title alone is enough to

make you puke. This man, who is now the head of health and human services, wants to do away with *Roe v. Wade*!—which is probably the most important health and human service that women have ever won in this country.

And not one, not one liberal, not one Democrat, and only one Republican, voted against this bum. Not one said: "Hey Sullivan, you're opposed to *Roe v. Wade*; we're not going to support you for that office!" The only vote against Sullivan came from Jesse Helms [R-N.C.]. And he didn't vote for him because he thought that women shouldn't get abortions even in the case of incest, rape, or death.

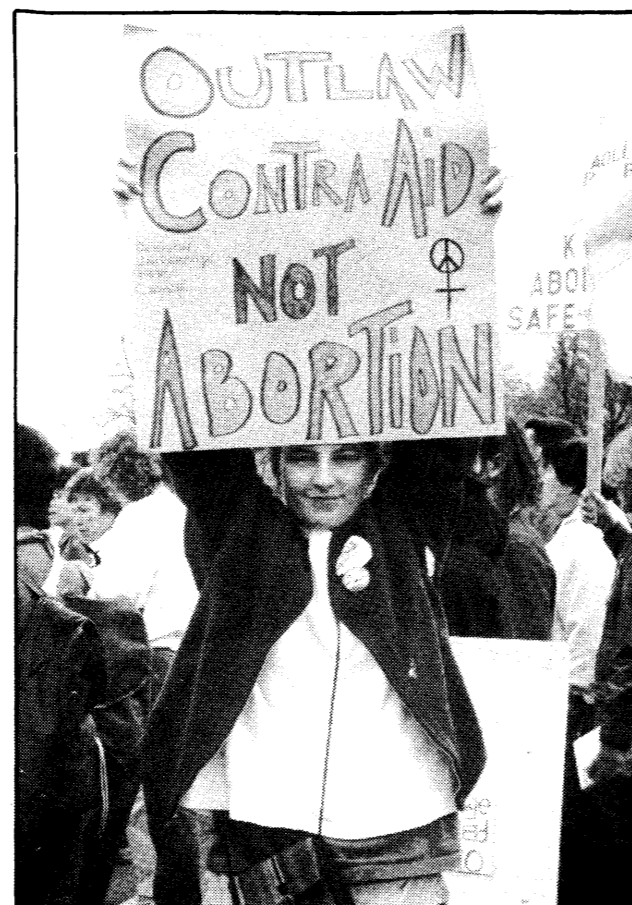
I know what illegal abortions are. I went through two of them. And I would love to see Jesse Helms walk into an empty apartment on Staten Island and have the local Midas man give him a vasectomy.

I want to talk about the government's drug policy. They're drugging us to death! I want Bush to "Just Say No" to Exxon! I want him to say "NO" to the pesticides they're putting in the air, in the water, in our children's food. And I want him to say no to the pesticide of Operation Rescue. I want the government officials to know: **WE WILL NOT STAND FOR THOSE CRIMINALS BLOCKING OUR CLINICS AND BLOCKING OUR RIGHTS!** If we have to do it, we'll remove them ourselves.

Now listen. This is the beginning. This is not the end. This march of 30,000 people is the beginning. Go out there and sign up for defense of our clinics. There are tables out there. Join the National Organization for Women [NOW], join NARAL, CARAL, whatever you can. Join us and fight. We're together in this. **WE ARE THE MAJORITY IN THIS! WE AIN'T GONNA LOSE!**



Tina Beacock/Socialist Action



Alexei Folger/Socialist Action



Brenda Bishop/Socialist Action

Eleanor Smeal speaks

The following are major excerpts from the speech to the April 9 rally by former NOW President Eleanor Smeal. Smeal currently heads the Fund for a Feminist Majority.

In 1970, in New York City, the women's rights movement marched 50,000-strong. In 1978, right here in Washington, D.C., for ERA extension, we marched 100,000-strong. In 1986, for reproductive rights, we marched right here in Washington, D.C., 125,000-strong. And today, we are marching over 600,000-strong.

I want you to look at this crowd. Turn around and look at this crowd. I want you to look at them as far as you can see. We're over in that direction. We're way over in that direction. We are on the streets. We are still coming off the parking lots at this moment. We are all over Washington, and we are saying, "Mr. President," we are saying to the Supreme Court of America, "We will never go back again. Never. Never go back again!"

I want you to feel the strength of this moment. And I want you to make a pledge with all of us together. We are not just going home. We are going home, and we are going to make sure that this country stops the harassment of abortion clinics. We are going to stop Operation Rescue. And we are going home to spread the truth about women's rights and to spread the truth that we are the majority.

If the newspapers and if the police count rob of what we have seen today, we will call those newspapers, we will call those television stations, we will shut down their switchboards because we were here—and we saw America pour out.

We're at a turning point because the majority is going to fight back. Fight back. Don't take "no" for an answer, and do not allow the opposition to spread any more lies.

This week I debated some of the leaders of the opposition on television shows. One of them, and you will recognize her name, Phyllis Schaffley, said that we were, in the United States right now with abortion clinics, "killing-women."

She said they go in there for an abortion with knives and pliers. I don't want you to laugh, and I don't want you to take these false statements lightly.... We are not killing babies. We're not killing anyone. We're saving women's lives.

As we stand here today, and as we marched off the Mall, in the space of time that we have been here and will be here, over 1400 women will have died in the Third World because of botched, illegal abortions.

Yes, right now one woman is dying every three minutes because of botched, illegal abortions and because of the American foreign-policy position that denies U.S. aid to those countries that would perform abortion services or give abortion information—even information. We are denying them freedom of speech on the threat that we will pull out U.S. aid money. Those are our policies today....

As you stand there, there are facilitators trying to sign you up in an official march count. Please sign those sheets. Don't let anyone deny our numbers....

And then do more.... Dip into your pockets and help us pay for the cost of this demonstration. I know you want us not only to organize today, but you want us to organize every day until women's rights are secure. Help us. We intend to keep on building and building and building until we not only guarantee reproductive rights, but we also pass the Equal Rights Amendment. We intend to pass it.

We intend to keep moving forward. Never to go back!

600,000 tell U.S. government: 'Keep abortion safe and legal!'

By SHIRLEY PASHOLK

WASHINGTON—It was the largest women's rights demonstration in American history. Led by a banner stating, "Keep abortion and birth control safe and legal," some 600,000 demonstrators packed the mile-long stretch between the Washington Monument and the Capitol for over four hours.

The huge crowd which turned out for the April 9 march for Women's Equality/Women's Lives was spirited and confident. Chants of "We won't go back" and "What do we want? Choice! When do we want it? Always!" expressed the participants' determination to maintain this important democratic right.

Organizing for the march was sparked by the recent escalation of legal and extra-legal attacks on reproductive freedom. Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, this right has been chipped away through laws denying funding for poor women and imposing parental-consent restrictions on young women.

There have been 24 court challenges to *Roe* in the last 15 years. The last time the Supreme Court considered a *Roe*-related case, in 1987, the vote was five to four. Now the challenge to women's rights is even more urgent.

The Supreme Court is reviewing *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which involves a Missouri law severely limiting access to abortion. The Justice Department has urged that this case be used to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

The march was initiated by the National

Organization for Women (NOW). Over 400 national labor, religious, women's, civil rights, and political organizations endorsed the event.

Labor organizations which had never taken a public stand on abortion—ranging from the United Mine Workers and the United Steelworkers of America to the Minnesota AFL-CIO and the Cleveland AFL-CIO Federation of Labor—supported the demonstration.

Groups chartered buses, trains, and planes to bring people to Washington. The march clearly reflected the fact that the overwhelming majority of the American people support women's right to safe and legal abortions.

This sentiment was expressed vocally by the marchers as they filed past the many government buildings lining the parade route. They chanted: "Supreme Court, hear our voice, the majority is for choice!"

Many demonstrators carried coat hangers to symbolize the women who will die or be maimed if abortion is declared illegal. As they passed a group of about 200 anti-choice pickets on the march route, the protesters chanted: "Right to Life, your name's a lie. You don't care if women die."

As the crowd assembled for a rally near the Capitol, NOW President Molly Yard told them, "Our voices will be heard. We're still coming to Washington. The avenue is full of people as far as the eye can see!"

"We are here to say," Yard announced, "that American women will safeguard their constitutional rights to legal and safe birth control and abortion, and we will work to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. American women and girls will

be free, and we will be equal to the men in this country."

Deen Leonard, representing the Association of Flight Attendants, described the Eastern Airlines strike to the rally.

Faye Weddleton, president of Planned Parenthood of America, lambasted Operation Rescue's claim to stand in the tradition of the civil rights movement. "Operation Rescue," she said, "has nothing to do with civil rights, just civil wrongs. We faced church bombings to win civil rights, and we will do whatever is necessary to win women's rights."

Other speakers included Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) Vice President Anna Padia, Planned Parenthood President Faye Wattleton, former NOW President Eleanor Smeal, Vermont Governor Madeline Kunin, Jesse Jackson, and numerous members of Congress and entertainment personalities.

All age groups march together

Liz Ling, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, told the rally: "When a small group of us at MIT got together to organize for reproductive rights and to mobilize for April 9, we were afraid it would be like pulling teeth." Instead, she recalled, they received an "overwhelming response. People are proud to be supporters of women's rights."

A campus contingent included student delegations from over 500 colleges. Although these young people had come of age after abortion and birth control were legalized, they recognized that visible action is needed to maintain reproductive freedom. For most, it was their first national demonstration.

Although most of the marchers were

women, a sizable number of men also took part. In many cases, entire families participated together.

Special labor and women-of-color contingents took part. A delegation of striking Eastern Airlines workers was well received by other marchers. Large contingents were organized by NOW, CLUW, the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), and Planned Parenthood.

The fight continues

Although most signs and chants related to abortion rights (since oral arguments on the *Webster* case slated for April 26 fueled the sense of urgency on this issue), there were also many signs supporting passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. March organizers emphasized the interconnection between these demands, explaining that women cannot possibly have equal rights unless they are able to choose when and if they will bear children.

Like the suffragists of the early 1900s, many demonstrators wore white clothing to express the continuity between the demand for women's right to vote and the demand for women's rights today. They explained that although the suffragists succeeded in winning certain democratic rights, the fight for women's rights continues.

Just as the suffragists organized 486 marches before winning the right to vote, today's supporters of women's rights cannot stop with the success of April 9. Instead, this must be a starting point for continuing visible pressure to force the government to back down on its assault on women's right to abortion.

'Keep the clinics open!'

A letter Molly Yard sent to NOW members following the April 9 demonstration indicates the possibilities for involving supporters of reproductive rights in an ongoing campaign to secure these rights. In the letter, Yard states:

"Our March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives was just the first step.... We've put the Bush Administration, the United States Supreme Court, and the anti-choice, anti-women's rights extremists on notice that you and I will not be denied, intimidated, or turned aside. That we will NEVER return to the dark days of illegal butchery instead of safe, legal abortion. That we will fight for our rights!"

"We are taking the unconventional—and critical—action of directly petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court. We will rally at the Court on April 26, when *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* is argued.

"We've learned that 'Operation Rescue' is planning a national day of terrorism very soon. A day in which they plan to blockade women's health clinics all across the country, harass patients and staff, and generally try to prevent the legal operations of medical facilities.

"To counter them, NOW is alerting its grassroots leadership across the country to

protect the clinics by turning out massive numbers of pro-choice Americans.

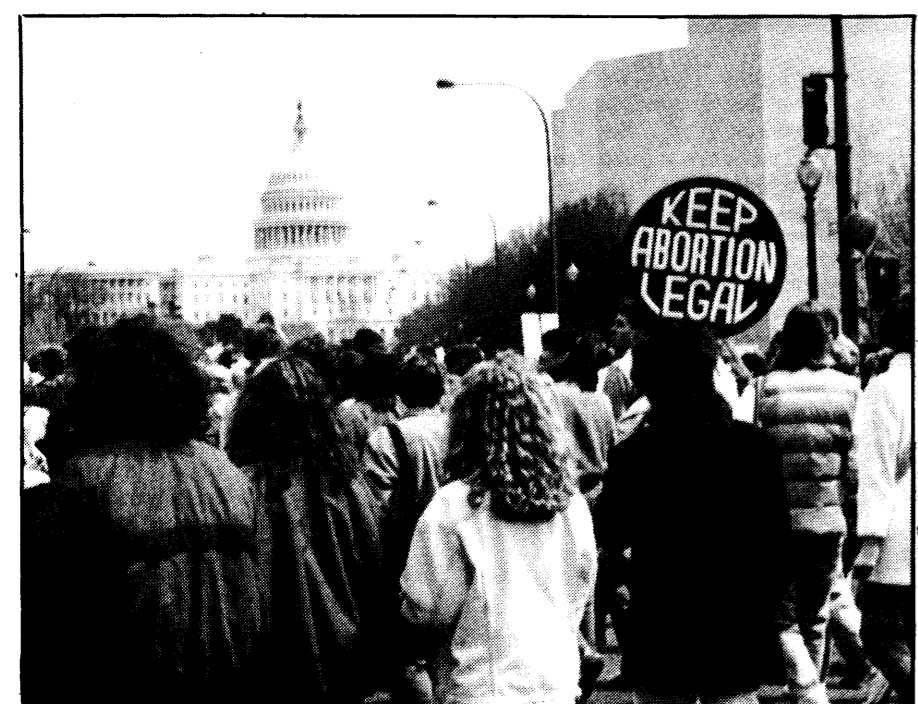
"We want to be there standing up for women in larger numbers than the anti-choice terrorists! We will organize and channel into action the tens of thousands of volunteers who have signed up on April 9 to stand up to 'Operation Rescue.' This is our chance to put 'Operation Rescue' out of business. We will keep the clinics open!"

"We've tried this in Boston, Washington, and Los Angeles—and it works!"

"Soon the Supreme Court will begin deliberating the *Webster* case—and with it the fate of our constitutional right to abortion.... Members of Congress, and the Bush Administration are watching to see what we do.... and the anti-choice terrorists are launching yet another massive assault on women's health clinics from coast to coast.

"You and I cannot—must not—let up.

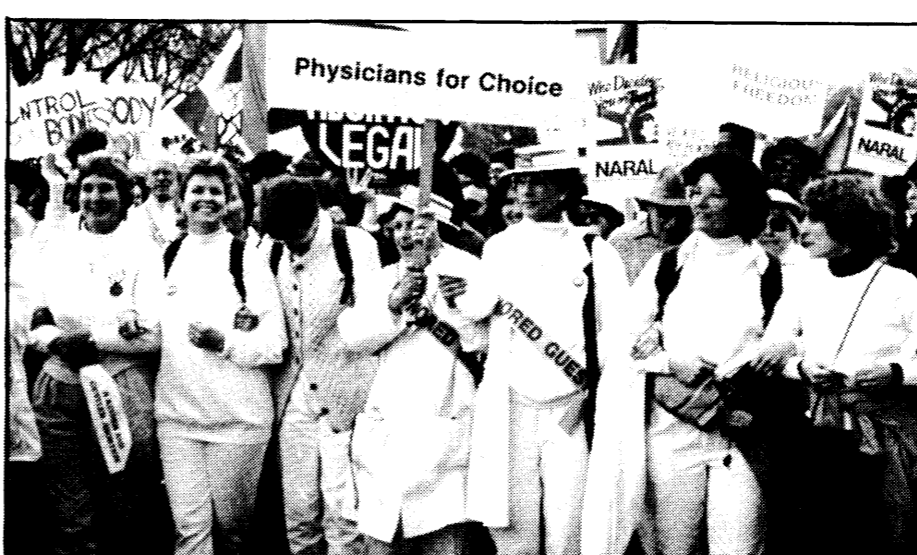
"We're in a battle that can't be won by a single demonstration. We must make a long-term commitment to the struggle for reproductive freedom of choice. And full equality for women."



Tina Beacock/Socialist Action



Tina Beacock/Socialist Action



Brenda Bishop/Socialist Action



Tina Beacock/Socialist Action

Soviet elections give a jolt to Gorbachev

Carl Finamore/Socialist Action



Moscow citizens rally to condemn Stalin's crimes on March 5—the anniversary of Stalin's death in 1953.

By CARL FINAMORE

"If the political system remains immobile and unchanged," Premier Gorbachev warned the 19th Communist Party (CPSU) Conference in 1988, "we will not cope with the tasks of *perestroika*." Gorbachev was looking for a political boost for his lagging economic program. National elections were the vehicle.

Ten months later the results are in and it appears Gorbachev got more of a jolt than a boost. Twenty percent of the CPSU candidates were defeated. This is quite remarkable considering that 85 percent of the candidates were CPSU members and that 25 percent of them had no opposition.

In these latter cases, millions of Soviet

voters had no way to express themselves other than by crossing out names—in many cases denying unopposed candidates the necessary 50 percent margin. The humiliating rejection of several top CPSU leaders who ran unopposed was an extremely damning indictment of the Stalinist single-party system.

Other losers included party leaders in six major cities and in the national republics of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and the Ukraine—where nationalist sentiment against forced Russification is on the rise. A large number of pro-nationalist candidates won in these regions.

Another big winner was Boris Yeltsin, former Moscow regional CPSU leader who has recently cultivated a populist image. He

received 89 percent of the vote in Moscow running against a candidate backed by the government apparatus. [See accompanying story by Ralph Schoenman.]

Marxist dissident historian Roy Medvedev and Sergei Stankievich, a CPSU member who is also a leader of the Moscow People's Front, also received a large number of votes. Both placed first in their races and were winners in the runoffs.

"Too much democracy"

More than once Gorbachev complained that the people were taking the elections too seriously. "As you know, we have lately more than once encountered attempts to use

democratic rights for undemocratic purposes. There are some who think that in this way any problems can be solved—from redrawing [national] boundaries to setting up opposition parties."

On election day, Gorbachev again warned against taking "great leaps." What is he afraid of? The report on the March 4 Boris Yeltsin election meeting in this issue answers that question. Mass participation in politics threatens to go beyond the narrow boundaries imposed by the bureaucracy.

Most political activists understood that the elections were orchestrated from above. One person at the Yeltsin meeting aptly described it: "When the government says 'we have given you democracy, why don't you act?'—it is like saying 'we have the orchestra, why don't you march?'"

Yet these same activists correctly used the elections as a forum for their own proposals. Debate and discussion of social, political, and cultural issues is no longer the exclusive province of the bureaucracy or its "official" organizations.

In this sense, the elections were a thundering success for the Soviet people. Local municipal elections in the fall will be another opportunity. The opposition movement will undoubtedly sharpen its political skills in these contests.

But, ultimately, success will depend on the opposition's ability to clearly present an anti-bureaucratic program representing the interests of the majority:

- for the right to form opposition political parties;
- for an economic plan decided through democratic participation of the majority, and not by managers or bureaucrats;
- for mass, local control of food and materials distribution;
- for full defense of the national rights of oppressed nationalities struggling for self-determination;
- and for an end to all forms of bureaucratic privilege.

Many of these ideas were openly discussed in hundreds of meetings and rallies during the March elections. This is clear evidence of growing confidence, militancy, and consciousness among broad sections of the Soviet population.

Much of this sentiment is unorganized. There is no dominant ideological trend. Yet even at this early stage, it is clear that the political evolution of this new opposition movement can have a decisive impact on the future course of the Soviet Union and of world politics. ■

Greetings to People's Front Conference

On March 11-12, the delegation of U.S. Trotskyists who traveled to Moscow attended the founding conference of the Moscow People's Front, the largest unofficial political group in that city.

Greetings to this conference were presented on behalf of Socialist Action and the delegation itself. The following are excerpts from these greetings.

GREETINGS FROM SOCIALIST ACTION

We come here today to present congratulations and warmest fraternal greetings from Socialist Action in North America to you, our comrades of the People's Front of the Soviet Union on the occasion of your founding Congress.

Socialism, as a vision of justice and the most complete workers' democracy, has suffered incalculable harm at the hands of Stalin and the bureaucratic dictatorship he imposed on the peoples of the Soviet Union.

It is not just the blood of countless millions of people and the physical liquidation of the Bolshevik leaders which has stained the revolution. It is the false association of socialism with autocracy, privilege, corruption, crude chauvinism, and open sabotage of self-determination for oppressed nations within the Soviet Union.

There is an awesome responsibility to restore socialist democracy, workers' control of production, freedom for ideas, and democratic control of planning by working people in their factories, farms, and social institutions and in all elected bodies.

Now as in the past this is an international task. We in North America salute you and offer full participation and solidarity in our common struggle. ■

GREETINGS FROM THE DELEGATION

We come to Moscow on behalf of the families of Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge, two of the seminal figures of the 20th century. They have been honored throughout the world as men who have shaped the moral, intellectual, cultural, and political life of our era....

It was, however, the people of your country who produced them. The working people of Russia gave rise to these great men. Who then can deny that it is long overdue for Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge to be restored to the peoples of the Soviet Union to whom they belong?

We come here in the conviction that the day has arrived when working people in the Soviet Union will once again read, discuss, organize and, yes, fight openly for the ideas of these men, ideas forged in the furnace of revolutionary conviction. Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge embody the never-ending battle against exploitation, oppression, political enslavement, and, under its infinite disguises, the rule of the lie.

Thus, comrades, we come to you on behalf of the families of two of your own great leaders whose ideas must be heard here, no matter the consequences for those who have usurped power. We call out for the restoration of their good name, for the recovery of their rightful role in your history....

Thank you comrades for the warmth of your reception. We salute you on behalf of Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge, who embody the best of your past and who remain, we feel certain, not only an integral part of your present valiant struggle, but beacons of a glorious future. ■

Nadejda Joffe to join fall U.S. tour



Nadejda Joffe (left) and her son-in-law (right) receive photo book about Trotsky from delegation members Suzi Weissman (left) and Carl Finamore (second from right).

Nadejda Joffe, the 82-year-old daughter of leading Left Oppositionist Adolf Joffe, has agreed to join part of the fall 1989 U.S. tour sponsored by Walnut Publishing Co. and Socialist Action.

This tour, scheduled for Oct. 15 through Nov. 15 in 12 cities—will hear a report back from trips to the Soviet Union by international leaders and supporters of the program of Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International.

Nadejda Joffe was herself a member of the Left Opposition, which was founded by Leon Trotsky in the mid-1920s to fight against the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. In 1929, she was sent to Siberia for three years, after which she was sent for 10 years to the notorious Kolyma labor camp near the Bering Straits.

In 1949, Nadejda was arrested for the third time and sent into permanent exile. She was released in 1956 during the Khrushchev thaw.

Other featured speakers on the fall 1989 U.S. tour are Esteban (Seva) Volkov, Leon Trotsky's grandson; Pierre Broue, French historian and director of the Paris-based Leon Trotsky Institute; and the U.S. participants in the March 3-13 tour of the Soviet Union: Paul Siegel, Ralph Schoenman, Suzi Weissman, and Carl Finamore.

Walnut Publishing Co. has launched a \$30,000 fund drive to help finance the March 3-13 tour of the Soviet Union and the fall 1989 report back.

Contributions payable to "Walnut Publishing Co." can be sent to 3435 Army St., suite 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. ■

From March 3 to March 13 I was in Moscow as a member of a committee that went there to discuss with prominent anti-Stalinist intellectuals the prospects for clearing the name of Leon Trotsky and publishing his writings.

We also went to present to the government authorities a letter addressed to Gorbachev from Trotsky's grandson, Esteban (Seva) Volkov, and other surviving descendants that calls for Trotsky's exoneration and the publication of his work. We also presented a petition to the same effect from the U.S. Moscow Trials Campaign Committee, of which I am co-chair. [For more complete report on tour, see April 1989 issue of *Socialist Action*.]

We presented the letter from Seva and the petition to Otto Latsis, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the deputy editor-in-chief of its theoretical magazine *Kommunist*.

Latsis told us that he regards the rehabilitation of Trotsky as inevitable, but that, because of political considerations, it will only come about as a result of a lengthy process. The publication of Trotsky's writing, he added, is a separate matter that can proceed independently of this rehabilitation. [See accompanying photo story.]

Meeting with Medvedev

We also saw Roy Medvedev, the historian who 20 years ago was expelled from the Communist Party for the publication in the West of his "Let History Judge," an analytical expose of Stalinism. Medvedev is now an influential figure, and his book will shortly be published in the Soviet Union.

He gave me the impression, as he does in his writing, of being an honest, learned, and independent man—but one who believes in measured reform handed down from above.

Medvedev stated that struggle around Trotsky's figure is just beginning, as his rehabilitation, unlike Bukharin's, is causing political problems. Nevertheless Deutscher's biography of Trotsky will be published with

Will the Soviet bureaucracy ever clear Trotsky's name?

an introduction by Medvedev.

We heard from another source, Mikhail Marmer-Vilner, the husband of the granddaughter of Adolph Joffe, the Left Oppositionist and close friend of Trotsky, that at a public meeting Soviet historians present stated that Trotsky's "Literature and Revolution," "Revolutionary Portraits," and extracts from his biography of Stalin are scheduled to be published.

Evidently Trotsky's literary criticism and biographical studies are believed to be publishable now, but not his trenchant analysis and criticism of the growth of a privileged bureaucracy, to whose policies he was opposed. It is this to which Latsis and Medvedev were alluding when they spoke of the special problems connected with the rehabilitation of Trotsky.

It is easy to understand the authorities' hesitation about rehabilitating and publishing Trotsky in view of the intensity of anti-bureaucratic feeling that we observed. At a Congress of Peoples' Deputies electoral campaign meeting for Boris Yeltsin, the populist opponent of bureaucratic privilege who was demoted from his previous post, this feeling was manifested. [See accompanying article by Ralph Schoenman on this meeting.]

In view of this strong anti-bureaucratic feeling, Trotsky's rehabilitation must, as Medvedev phrased it, be "prepared." This is being done right now by such persons as General Dimitri Volkogonov, who is writing a biography of Stalin, for which purpose he has been granted use of archives to which no one else has been given access.

A second assassination

Volkogonov has written in *Pravda* that the conflict between Stalin and Trotsky was purely personal and that Trotsky would have been just as bad as Stalin if he had won. Trotsky, he said, did not have "firm Marxist convictions" and attributed all the ills of Soviet society to a single person, Stalin.

The irony is that it is Volkogonov who writes in personal terms without social analysis; Trotsky always insisted that it was the isolation of a poor, backward country surrounded by capitalist enemies that produced the Soviet bureaucracy that was Stalin's social base.

Other articles in the Soviet press have been even more crass. An article in *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, for instance, attacked Trotsky with the ludicrous misrepresentations that Trotsky opposed anti-fascist struggle and worked to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union. It made use of anti-Semitic innuendo, giving his birthname, Bronstein, in parentheses, an old Stalinist trick to call attention to the Jewish origin of the person being written about.

Other newspapers made ill-disguised chauvinistic remarks about Trotsky such as "Trotsky is the man most alien to the Russian people and to Russian history."

This campaign might be called an attempt at a second assassination of Trotsky. Its purpose is to render him politically dead by the time he is finally rehabilitated.

When we raised the question of this campaign with Medvedev, his reply was that he disagrees with Volkogonov—although Medvedev has made clear that he does not accept Trotsky's political position—and that the official critics of Trotsky are ministering to anti-Semitism.

The reason that the authorities seem to be proceeding with plans to publish Trotsky, if only in selective, piecemeal fashion, is the great pressure from politically aware intellectuals that we observed.

Desire to read Trotsky

Even those who are affected by the campaign against Trotsky share the desire to read Trotsky.

The young reporter from the *Moscow News* who interviewed us asked us one or two questions that echoed Volkogonov. He cited an article that appeared in *Izvestia* two or three days before that quoted Trotsky as opposing Lenin's New Economic Policy.

After Suzi Weissman, a member of our delegation, replied that actually Trotsky had been the first to propose a NEP, I made the point that one can prove anything by selective quotation and that this made more



Roy Medvedev speaks



Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

Roy Medvedev, prominent Soviet dissident and Marxist historian, met with our delegation and discussed the prospects for Trotsky's rehabilitation. He told us:

"In Stalin's time the god was Lenin, Stalin was his student, and the devil was Trotsky.... Trotsky and the Jews were blamed for the hardships of the revolution. People began to think that all the bad things from the revolution came because of Trotsky. All kinds of stories appeared.

"Today Trotsky has again been called the 'Demon of the Revolution' by people such as Volkogonov. The older generation who grew up on these tales cannot get free from the lies that Trotsky is the demon of the revolution, that because of him the revolution was not successful.

"But the real demon of the revolution is Stalin. The masses have heard nothing but lies about Trotsky for so long that the rehabilitation of Trotsky has many political problems.

"Today, with some of the articles on Trotsky, there's also an element of rehabilitation of Stalin: 'Stalin was a tyrant and repressed many people, but if Trotsky had come to power it would have been even worse.' This point of view is very widespread. I disagree with this view.

"The struggle around Trotsky is just beginning. In order to break free from these stereotypes we need time and preparation. It is more difficult to fight stories than real facts. But the struggle must start with the victory of historical truth."

than ever necessary the publication of Trotsky's works. He answered that he was in full agreement with us on this.

On a much less sophisticated political level, the woman who acted as our interpreter during the founding conference of the Moscow People's Front, which we attended, asked me a question that revealed the influence of Pamyat, the organization with pronounced anti-Semitic tendencies, although I don't think that she herself is anti-Semitic.

She described herself as one not knowledgeable about politics who had volunteered to interpret out of a desire to practice her English and to meet Americans. The question she asked was if it was true that Trotsky was a part of a secret Masonic conspiracy.

This question is obviously derived from Pamyat's charge that the Jews and the Masons are allied in a conspiracy against the Russian people. Yet she thought that Trotsky should be published.

In the maelstrom of competing ideas Trotskyism is bound to become a current that will grow in strength. Trotsky's perception of the direction in which the Soviet Union was going was remarkable in its prescience and must prove influential once people gain wide access to his work.

"A life-and-death need"

In "The Revolution Betrayed" Trotsky wrote:

"It is possible to build gigantic factories according to a ready-made Western pattern by bureaucratic command—to be sure, at triple the normal cost. But the farther you go, the more the economy runs into the problem of quality....

"Under a nationalized economy quality demands a democracy of producers and consumers.... Behind the question of quality stands a more complicated and grandiose problem which may be compromised in the concept of independent, technical, and cultural creation.... Soviet democracy ... has become a life-and-death need of the country."

Superficially, this may seem to resemble much of what Gorbachev has been saying 50 years later, but this is a similarity of diagnosis, not of remedy. The Gorbachev reforms, coming from the top down, aim to streamline the bureaucracy, not to eliminate it as a specially privileged, self-perpetuating layer of the population.

This explains the halting and self-contradictory character of the reforms, including the guaranteeing of one-third of the seats in the Congress of Peoples' Deputies to members of the party bureaucracy and the continuance of the one-party monopoly.

Bureaucratic reform must be bureaucratic in nature.

Trotsky, on the other hand, wrote: "Soviet democracy ... assumes revival of freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of the Bolsheviks, and a resurrection of the trade unions."

He foresaw a political revolution that would retain the economic foundation of Soviet society, the nationalization of the means of production, but would completely

Otto Latsis speaks



Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

Otto Latsis, Central Committee member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and editor of *Kommunist*, its theoretical journal, met with our delegation and said he would bring our letters from the family of Leon Trotsky before the Central Committee of the CPSU.

The delegation asked Latsis for his opinion on the prospects for Trotsky's rehabilitation. He said, "As far as Trotsky being a spy, a murderer of Kirov, etc.—in these cases his rehabilitation is inevitable. But as far as political rehabilitation—this is something else." Latsis said that Trotsky's works must begin to be published independently of his rehabilitation.

When asked about recent Soviet articles on Trotsky, in particular a piece by General Dimitri Volkogonov that was filled with slanders against Trotsky, Latsis stated, "Even in Volkogonov's article there are some corrections from previous articles. Volkogonov reported facts on Trotsky's life which had been unpublished. This process will continue and we will get new information."

The "process" referred to by Latsis is tantamount to a second assassination of Leon Trotsky. The Soviet bureaucracy wants to ensure that Trotsky is "politically" dead before they allow his "rehabilitation." It is incapable of clearing Trotsky's name and restoring him to his rightful place in Soviet history.

That task is inseparable from the struggle to remove the parasitic bureaucracy and replace it with the direct rule of the Soviet masses through their own democratically elected councils.

Boris Yeltsin rally reveals deep ferment in Moscow



March 5, 1989, anti-Stalin rally. Soviet people will no longer be intimidated by the bureaucracy.

An eyewitness account of the resentment—and new self-confidence—that burst out at an election rally for the self-styled 'maverick' of the Soviet bureaucracy

By RALPH SCHOENMAN

When our delegation arrived in Moscow carrying a letter to the Soviet leadership from the family of Leon Trotsky, we were unprepared for the intensity of oppositional ferment and the readiness with which people spoke of the need to transform and even replace the regime.

No one was under any illusion that the limited elections on March 26 were intended by those in power to permit effective challenge to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and state machine. But all were prepared to seize the moment. The fervor with which people spoke of repression, endemic corruption, chronic shortages of the most basic necessities, endless lines, and the scale of privilege for party and state functionaries was matched by a sense of determination that this time there would be no turning back.

"Anything is possible in this dangerous country," said our 17-year-old interpreter, Artyom Artyomovich, "but if they try to shut down the opposition now, there will be civil war."

The elections added urgency to the prevailing mood. Artyom was a member of the newly formed Moscow People's Front with whose leaders, notably Boris Kagarlitsky, we were in daily contact. The People's Front was preparing its founding conference and we were to attend. But for now, the nightly election meetings were an adventure.

Much interest centered on the fate of Boris Yeltsin, the former head of the Moscow CPSU and member of the Political Bureau who had been removed in November 1987.

Nominated in over a dozen districts by supporters who saw Yeltsin's fight within the bureaucracy as an opening for broader and deeper protest, Yeltsin was astonished by the support he found in a public hungry for an avenue of challenge to the regime. He decided to run in the most prestigious arena, the at-large territorial Moscow district, a super district representing Moscow as a whole.

His opponent, Yevgeny Brakov, personified the Stalinist insider as a director of the factory making Zil limousines, the black chariots of

the party elite. Yeltsin's successor as Moscow party chief, Lev N. Zaikov, regularly attacked Yeltsin as did party publications and functionaries. Each attack brought Yeltsin new support.

The regime sought to withhold permits for meetings, to cancel meeting halls previously booked for Yeltsin rallies, and to control the audience attending these events by issuing tickets to Yeltsin organizers at the last minute.

One consequence of this tactic was to prevent the general public from attending the meetings, as Yeltsin organizers made tickets available to those already known to them. But the people would learn of the meetings and show up in numbers larger than the seats available inside the meeting halls.

Soap-box rally

We drove to a Yeltsin meeting on a cold March night and found a crowd of several thousand milling around outside the hall. Spontaneous soap-box rallies were erupting everywhere. The People's Front candidates were addressing the crowd, who shouted questions and interrupted with lists of grievances and denunciations of the regime.

Sergei Stankievich, a member of the CPSU and a candidate for the People's Front, spoke spontaneously and engaged in heated debate with an enthusiastic crowd. "How can you fight this party mafia, Sergei, if you are a member of it," shouted a middle-aged woman.

"The press has awakened the people," he tells the crowd, "and the People's Front opposes bureaucratic privilege, arbitrary rule, and the old ways." Stankievich tells us it is necessary to work inside the party to win over sections of its youth and to give critical support to Yeltsin. He says that the attacks must be concentrated on the "conservatives" in the party who "oppose *glasnost* and the press."

The crowd is sympathetic to Stankievich but quick to challenge his assumption that the party can be an instrument of change.

Using press cards, we are able to get into the Yeltsin meeting, running a gauntlet of guards checking for tickets. We manage to get into the main hall, an enormous auditorium

with a balcony, which alone holds some 2500 people. In the middle of the stage is a table where the meeting's organizers are seated together with the chairperson.

Yeltsin feels his way

Yeltsin is attacking Ligachev, the Stalinist member of the Political Bureau who opposes Gorbachev. Ligachev, Yeltsin tells the audience, is an unreconstructed opponent of *glasnost*, of popular participation in the political process, of the awakening sweeping the Soviet Union.

Yeltsin is surprisingly pedestrian as a speaker. Slow, methodical, unemotional and rather monotone, he seems to be feeling his way. The atmosphere in the audience is dramatically different. People are leaning forward in their seats, reacting with asides and shouting out comments to Yeltsin: "What newspapers are you reading, which ones do you favor?"

Yeltsin interrupts his prepared remarks to respond, citing *Novy Mir*, *Yunost*, *Ogonyok*, and *Znamiya*, but not *Nash Sovremennik*. He has mentioned publications that support *glasnost* and pointedly omitted a conventional party organ. Now a member of the audience shouts out "Ogonyok may be liberal but they won't publish you!"

Yeltsin finds himself in a give-and-take with his audience, and his set speech has instead become an attempt to respond to the aggressive but critical and irreverent support from the hall. He is becoming more personal, human, and relaxed—and he proceeds:

"Korotich [the editor of *Ogonyok*] promised me he would publish their interview with me but later informed me there were 'personal problems.' When I asked what they were, I couldn't get an answer but I found out that it's because my wife uses the normal shops."

This gets a roar of approval from an audience familiar with the special shops for the party elite. The chairperson is getting restless and confers with Yeltsin. Yeltsin decides to walk from the podium to the table with his organizers and sit facing the audience to field their questions. This in itself is unusual as questions are normally required to be in writing, allowing the chair to pick and choose among them.

Microphone in the aisle

A microphone is set up in the aisle. People crowd around it to fire questions. "You were Minister of Housing, comrade Yeltsin. How come the Ministry didn't carry out your orders?"

Yeltsin becomes animated: "Because my enemies are strong, because they pervade every ministry and drag their feet over every change for the better. If you knew how

violent are my fights with Ligachev and the apparatus which supports him, you would be frightened. You can't imagine the mentality of these people."

"Yes, we can!" a voice booms out from the balcony. Yeltsin now speaks of the necessity for a five-year plan of reform that must be carried out if the system is to be workable. But before he can finish the thought a member of the audience takes the aisle microphone. "How do you expect to do that with one party? What about a multi-party system, comrade Yeltsin?"

"Society," says Yeltsin, "is not ready for the creation of a new party. This process is only now unfolding in our society. We must open the bureaucratic filter for this to happen."

There is silence in the hall. Yeltsin hesitates and then continues, "The possibility of many parties should be discussed in all the media and before the entire population. Society must be prepared to solve this problem." There is shouting and applause in the hall. Yeltsin adds, "I am not *against* a multi-party system." People now shout encouragement from all parts of the audience.

The flow between Yeltsin and the audience is clear. He improvises in response to them and is being pushed along by the intensity of feeling and a radical impulse he seeks both to contain and to represent.

People now speak about the national demands for self-rule, and Yeltsin is asked his opinion. He replies that he believes in working with the Republics. He states that he supports the People's Fronts in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia and sees no contradiction between national expression and the democratic demands of the People's Fronts. He says that supporting this will prevent people from turning to nationalism *per se*.

Yeltsin now declares that there are two wings to the state machinery—the bureaucrats and progressive thinking people—and he urges the audience to support him and oppose the others. There is mild applause.

"Let us decide"

At this point the chairperson proposes that questions should be sent up in writing. The audience erupts, "Let us decide!" "We should speak directly, not through you."

Yeltsin intervenes to support people coming to the microphone. "The people should decide things," he says. He is asked about the prosecutor, Gdlyan, who has indicted corrupt officials. "What about the Mafia which runs our economy?" someone asks. Yeltsin speaks in general terms about the need to overcome corruption while people are yelling out that speculators run the real economy.

The meeting is rapidly becoming a public forum. Speaker after speaker takes the microphone, but now from the stage itself. One speaker attacks Yeltsin from the right. "Why do you attack our state and party?"

The audience begins a rhythmic applause, drowning out the speaker. Yeltsin holds up his hand, silencing the audience, and comments: "Because the highest machinery of control, the state bureaucracy sits on top of our people like a dead weight." Thunderous applause echoes through the hall.

Yeltsin now warns, "There are many Komsomol [CPSU youth organization] and party apparatchiks sent into our meetings. Expect provocations from them such as questions about my contradictions with Mikhail Gorbachev, my tactical differences. I am against such methods. Only our enemies avoid stating our views accurately."

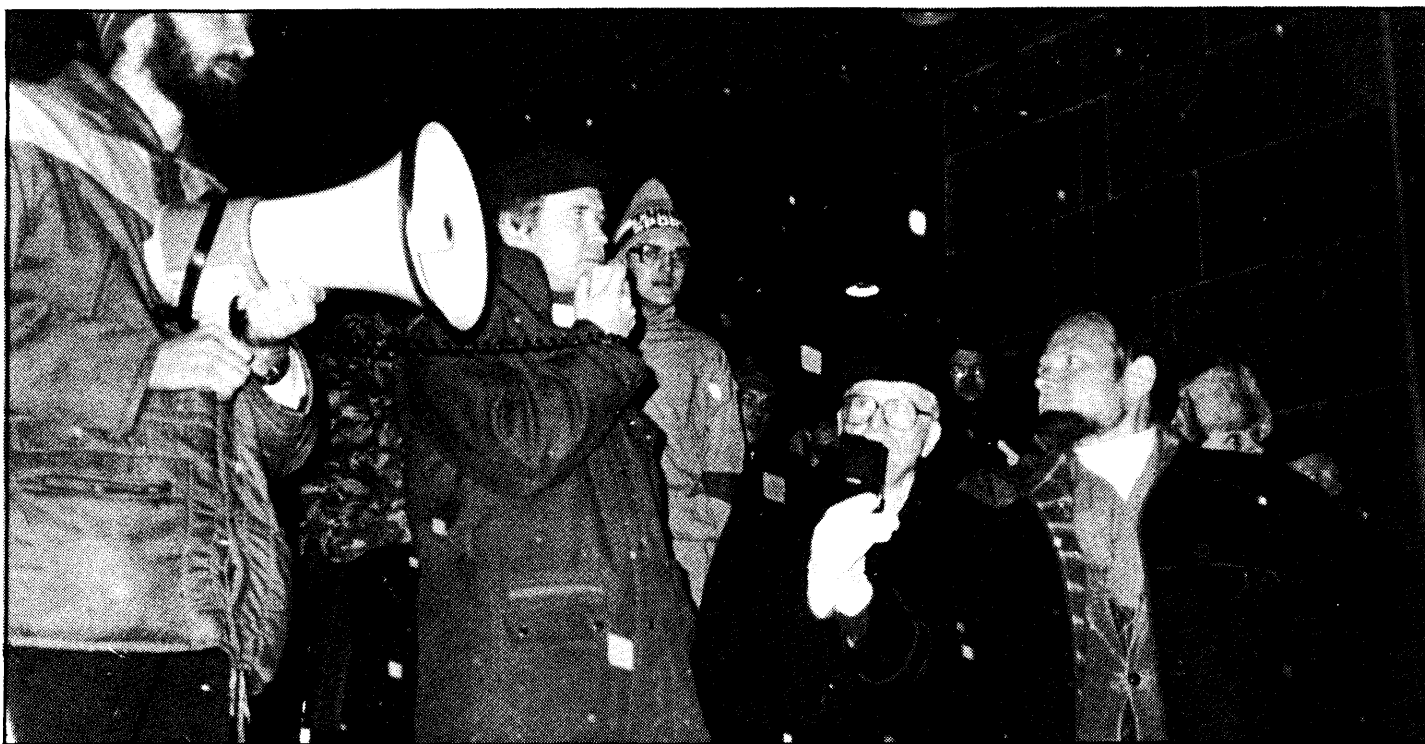
Yeltsin tries to align himself with Gorbachev and to attribute presumptive differences to their mutual opponents. A speaker from the aisle asks Yeltsin about his attitude toward private property. He states, "Our attitude is wrong. We must discuss private property. If a farmer buys a tractor and uses it for public purposes, that does not make it private. Don't call it private property. I'm against exploitation by owners."

Asked about his differences with Brakov, his opponent in the elections, he calls Brakov his enemy and describes how when he gave a speech on division within the party, Brakov managed to cut his remarks from a Canadian broadcast. "We must have more democratic discussion in this society."

"We should meet in Red Square"

There is a line forming now to use the microphones, and the chairperson proposes that there should be no more comments from the floor. There is an outcry from the audience and someone yells out, "We should be having meetings like this in the Palace of Congresses and in Red Square."

People start to approach the stage. Yeltsin stands up now and seizes the microphone, intoning in a loud voice, "You are right to



Sergei Stankievich speaking at spontaneous soapbox rally outside Yeltsin rally.

Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

Speak from this platform. Stand up. People stand up. Don't be afraid of the bureaucrats. Speak openly. We must learn the culture of discussion!" The audience cheers him. His face is flushed.

One person yells out to Yeltsin, "Comrade Yeltsin, could Ligachev answer such questions?" "I hope so," Yeltsin answers. Now a person comes up to the stage and faces Yeltsin, asking, "Fifteen thousand people get 10 tickets. Who is isolating you from the people?" Yeltsin turns to the chairperson and says, "You must answer to them. You explain it."

A questioner now asks Yeltsin to tell the audience what the party budget is and Yeltsin replies that the party budget should be open to every member. "The CPSU must not be a collection of people paying dues but a group of individuals who have ideas and whose ideas are openly debated."

Another speaker asks Yeltsin sarcastically if it is ethical for the highest echelons of power to be "living under conditions of communism while speaking of 'reforming' socialism?"

Yeltsin answers:

"The first action I took upon assuming the position of first secretary of the party in Moscow was to remove every placard proclaiming Moscow to be a communist city. Then I took away all chauffeured cars from the bureaucrats and closed the special shops. It lasted one week! Our first problem is to democratize the CPSU. The number of candidates alone shows there is no democracy in the CPSU. In many cities and districts there are 100 people nominated for 100 seats. The local party cells provided 3100 candidates. The Komsomols picked 102 candidates for 75 seats."

Yeltsin's entire demeanor and manner of speech have changed. There is a current flowing back and forth now between him and the audience, and one can feel that something is taking place that is surprising Yeltsin himself. The audience feels it too, and the questions take on an almost intimate tone.

"Why did you leave the Political Bureau. Why didn't you fight to stay?" Yeltsin replies, "Things were so hard it was impossible for me to continue. I had to leave. I could not change my principles as Ligachev and others demanded of me. My name became taboo in the mass media for one year."

Many people now come to the microphone to express support for Yeltsin. "Bring more Yeltsins. Organize support for him. Let's control the counting of votes so they don't steal the election. The mere fact of a Yeltsin victory will mean the bureaucracy is losing control over our people." It is a theme repeated for the next half-hour. Yeltsin has broken through to people.

"Bring them all to justice!"

Now a speaker stands up and criticizes anarchy and chaos. There is anger in the hall. People try to drown out the speaker. But many others shout that they must answer the apologists, not silence them. The next speaker calls for putting party and state leaders on trial for their criminal repression of the people. "Bring them all to justice." There is thunderous applause.

The next speaker declares that he represents the city of Dnepropetrovsk where, he states, the Mafia is stronger than it is even in Moscow. The chairperson nervously states that only Moscovites should speak in the

meeting. There is an explosion of anger from the audience.

The speaker continues, "Ours remains the party of Brezhnev, Sholokov and Tcherbitsky [the latter is a Brezhnev holdover and party boss in the Ukraine; Sholokov was the corrupt Minister of the Militia who killed himself.] Comrades, we must create another party in order to control the CPSU." There is vast applause.

Now a worker takes the microphone and states, "Three years ago we Moscovites associated our hopes for change, for *perestroika* with Yeltsin. Do not make idols of our leaders," he shouts while facing Yeltsin. "If we do, we shall wind up with 1937, not 1991. We support you, Yeltsin, but critically and with our eyes open." There is prolonged applause, and Yeltsin nods his approval to the speaker.

An older man stands up and says, "The new Congress of Deputies should make regular evaluations of every minister. They should be graded. Any who don't work in the interest of

remove from the constitution the words that in the Soviet Union we have developed socialism. We all know this isn't true. And remove the words of Article Six, which state that the CPSU plays the leading role in society. We have no Communist Party. We have 20 million people who pay dues and have no control."

The next speaker turns to Yeltsin and says, "Let's tell the plain truth. We haven't built a socialist society. We have built a terror state. If you speak out, Yeltsin, you will fulfill our hopes."

Now a young apparatchik takes the microphone and begins to attack Yeltsin for opening up the mass media. "The means of communication," he states, "must remain under the party's control. This should not be given to just anybody. That is dangerous for both the party and society."

The audience begins a rhythmic applause to drown him out. People yell out "provocateur!" Others protest the audience response, declaring, "Don't fall into their trap."



One of the three rows of bureaucrats (apparatchiks) who walked out of the Yeltsin meeting in a huff.

Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

the working people should be kicked out."

An elderly woman follows him to the microphone and states, "I am a common person. I want to tell you that *Pravda* equals prostitution. When people from this so-called government say 'We are giving you democracy, why don't you act,' it is like saying to people without legs, 'We have an orchestra, why don't you march?'" Laughter and cheers fill the hall.

"We have built a terror state"

The next speaker tells the audience, "The central issue is this. When someone earlier spoke about the Mafia running Moscow, the apparatchiks in the audience jumped. We know who you are and why you are in this hall. But you can't intimidate us anymore!"

"Ordinary communists," says the next speaker, "will not support the handpicked deputies of the party apparatus. The people decided on the political rehabilitation of Boris Yeltsin by nominating him."

"Our society," states the following speaker, "must be a constitutional society. We must

Let them speak. We must know the views of the enemies of *perestroika*. Others try to drown out those criticizing the attempts to silence the former speaker.

One speaker now says, "When you act like this, you undermine the democratic views of Yeltsin." Another speaker, a member of the party, shouts into the microphone, "Silencing others is the provocation."

Now the chairperson appeals to the audience, "Allow people to speak in the spirit of *glasnost* and democracy." Yeltsin takes the microphone, "Let's listen to everyone—and answer them when necessary."

The next speaker says, "If there is any attempt to halt our campaign for democracy, we must organize a general strike. If Gorbachev is removed, we must act. We must make laws to prevent Gorbachev from being removed."

Artyom, our interpreter, yells from the audience, "What about when Gorbachev changes his mind and begins repression as he already did with the Karabakh Committee?" [The Karabakh Committee is the leadership

body of the Armenian nationalist movement that is currently detained in a Moscow jail.] Many now support Artyom's remarks. A pensioner asks people who intend to vote for Yeltsin to raise their hands. Another speaker states, "If Yeltsin doesn't win, the People's Front is waiting for him to join."

"We shall expose you all"

The next speaker urges people to write in Yeltsin's name wherever there is only one candidate. Now a man in his thirties takes the microphone and informs the audience, "I am a former worker in the regional party committees. I was critical. I am now unemployed. Let's cut out the bullshit. I see the very KGB and apparatchik controllers of the regional party committees. I will name them for you."

He proceeds to reel off their names while pointing to rows 8, 9, and 10 in the audience. There is cheering. The speaker concludes, "We shall expose you all," and raises a clenched fist.

At this point a man who describes himself as an artist whose work could not be shown in his own country takes the microphone. "We have in this society a ruling group of bureaucrats. I denounce you all and the power you have usurped, the power of feudal lords and kings and tsars. We must take the homes from the bureaucracy and give these palaces to the several million orphans in our country. The Central Committee is composed of thieves."

The artist faces Yeltsin, walks over to him, and says, "Comrade Yeltsin, I am critical of you too, but I support you against the feudal lords even though you are not really for their complete removal." He now turns to the audience, gives a clenched fist salute, and declaims, "Down with all the feudal lords. Remove them from our national life."

This is too much for rows 8, 9, and 10. In unison they stand up and attempt a hasty exit from the hall to wild applause, foot stamping, and cheers from the audience. A look of amazement crosses the face of Boris Yeltsin.

The chairperson seeks now to gain control of the meeting. He proposes to the audience a series of votes on the sense of the meeting. "In the U.S.S.R.," he states, "candidates for the position of deputy to Congress should be obliged to carry out a 'nekaz' [mandate]. Voters should impose specific duties which candidates perform. Such duties should be decided upon at meetings such as ours tonight."

"I propose that we demand of candidates that they call for a referendum on the government. Everyone in favor of demanding a referendum on the government, raise your hands in support."

As the entire hall is covered in raised hands, the chairperson continues his proposed demands: "Deputies must ensure that all people receive decent housing—flats, apartments that are adequate for their needs. Deputies must devote at least 15 percent of all profit from alcohol to building houses of culture for the youth. Deputies must support laws permitting freedom to the mass media to discuss any subject."

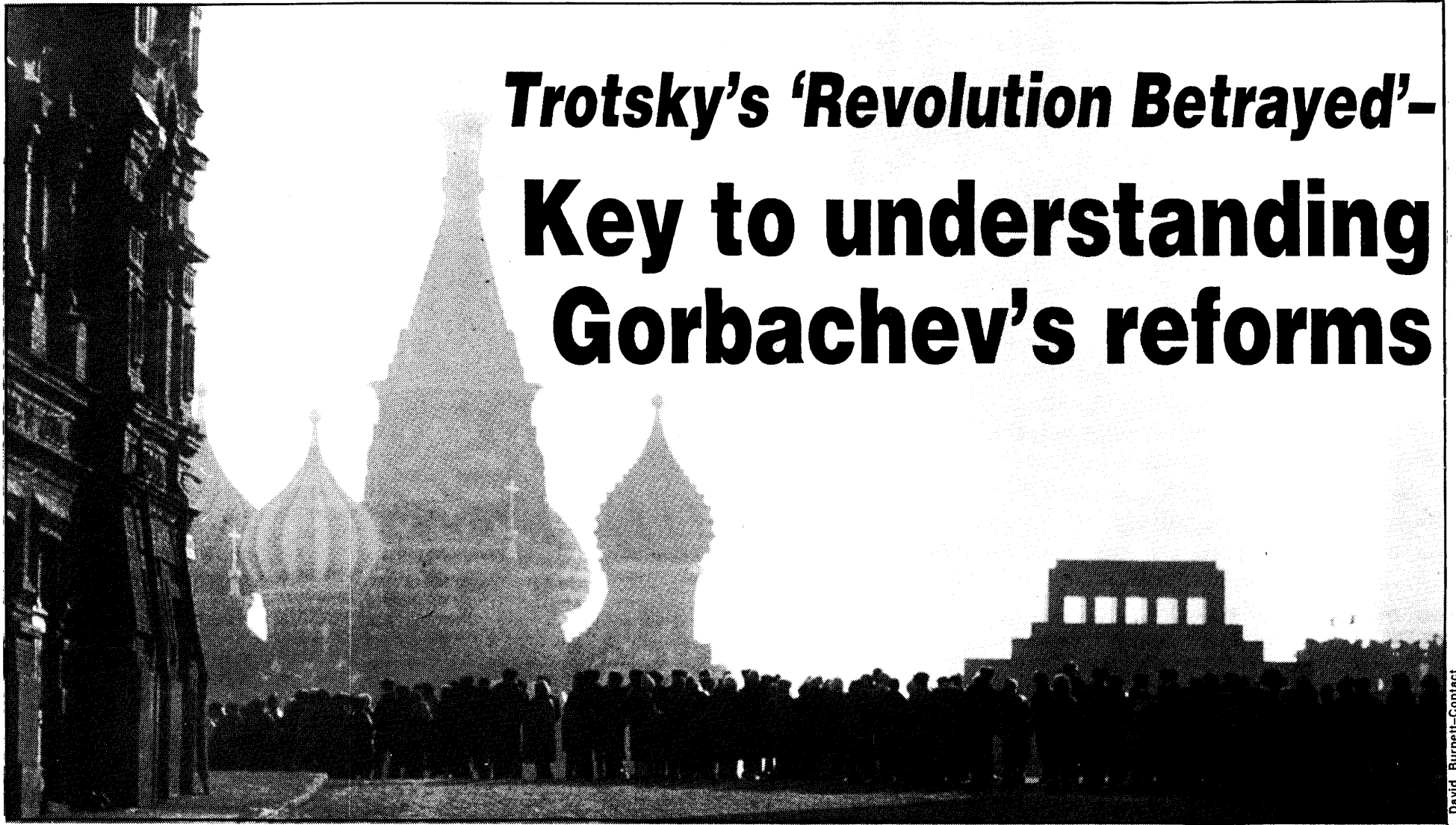
The hall rings with cheers of support. The chair now calls for hands in support of laws defending the rights of all citizens, not only against individual officials or functionaries but from abuse by state or collective institutions. There is unanimous support. The chair next proposes that laws should be passed permitting individual citizens to sue any functionary and governmental institutions as well. The audience responds with full support.

Yeltsin now takes the microphone and begins speaking at once, more confidently and in radical tones decidedly different from the tenor and hesitancy of his earlier remarks:

"Ours is a fight not for words but to engage in action against the bureaucratic enemy of the Soviet people. It is not just a fight for democracy but against an entrenched bureaucracy still very powerful. We have been too long traveling over roads not made by us. At long last we have reached a rupture, a break, a new direction. There can be no turning back."

The Soviet people swept Boris Yeltsin to victory with a majority of nearly 90 percent of the votes cast. It was a generalized repudiation of the party apparatus, of the ruling order. Even, as in Leningrad, where one candidate was on the ballot, voters defeated them by crossing out their names.

Boris Yeltsin is riding the tiger of their discontent and is powered for now by their passion for change. But both he and his bureaucratic opponents are increasingly aware that they have very little time in which to meet the needs, expectations, and determination of the mass of Soviet working people who "will never go back again." ■



David Burnett-Contact

Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed'— Key to understanding Gorbachev's reforms

By NAT WEINSTEIN

Leon Trotsky's analysis of the degeneration of the Soviet state remains the only coherent theoretical basis for understanding the crisis in Soviet society today. Trotsky, co-leader with Vladimir I. Lenin of the October 1917 revolution, wrote his analytical work, "The Revolution Betrayed," in 1936—only months before the beginning of Stalin's mass purges was announced.

"The Revolution Betrayed" is more than an analysis of the social and economic foundations for Stalinism and its counter-revolutionary role. It is a powerful and unqualified defense of the conquests of the first successful workers' revolution and its consolidation on a national scale. The author shows how, despite Stalinism's policy of systematic betrayal of the class interests of the working class inside and outside the country, the Soviet Union remained a powerful objective force for economic development, and has set an example that is still changing the world.

The importance of this work cannot be overestimated; world capitalism has utilized the crimes of Stalinism to discredit socialism. The propagandists of capitalism have convinced many that a workers' state and bureaucratic dictatorship are indivisible. Trotsky fought tirelessly against this false conclusion. He brilliantly argued that *political* revolution—the overthrow of the bureaucratic dictatorship and the restoration of the proletarian democracy that flowered in the first five years of the Russian Revolution—is the way forward.

"The Revolution Betrayed" begins on the very first page by comparing the "unprecedented tempo of Russia's industrial development" with the dismal rate of development of countries like India and China. The author goes on to explain how since the end of the 19th century backward nations can no longer carry through their own democratic revolutions and enter the era of industrial development on the basis of capitalism. "The bourgeois revolution," Trotsky writes of the dynamic of the October Revolution, "was directly bound up with the first stages of a socialist revolution."

Now, in the 72 years of its existence, the Soviet Union has risen to become the second most powerful nation on earth. It did this despite massive destruction to its economy caused by World Wars I and II, and a civil war assisted by a 14-nation imperialist military invasion during its first five years of existence. And despite Stalin's mistakes and crimes, Soviet economic development has left the super-exploited vassal nations of the world far behind.

This feat, moreover, was accomplished in the context of world capitalism's rigidly imposed exclusion of the Soviet economy from free access to the world division of labor. Imperialism, fearing the success of the great historic test of the system of planned

production—for society's needs, not profit—consistently worked to cripple it by all means at its disposal. Meanwhile, capitalist India remains where it was in 1917, relative to the developed countries. And China, even more ravaged by imperialist invasion and civil war, only began to emerge from its era of famine and plague after capitalism there, too, was overthrown.

How bureaucratic dead-weight drags down the socialized economy

In the face of the dreadful burden of bureaucratic mismanagement, the Soviet Union was able to make enormous gains through a series of five-year plans, which put the resources of the entire nation at work to build a modern, industrial economy. But bureaucratic methods which exclude workers from control and management of the workplaces and the economy as a whole have increasingly slowed the tempo of Soviet development.

While the Soviet Union was constructing its basic industrial infrastructure—where none

was yet in existence—its rate of growth easily outpaced any similar attempt by a backward country, despite bureaucratic inefficiency, bungling, and waste. But this initial advantage has been exhausted. Moreover, many of the shiny new factories have long since gotten old and rusty, and in too many instances bureaucratic management has proved unable to keep them abreast with the rate of technological development in the imperialist centers of world capitalism.

Furthermore, the swift march forward in the first stages of industrialization was fated to prematurely exhaust its possibilities because of a short-sighted failure to develop the economic infrastructure for long-term development. There was no real effort to divert a sufficient portion of the surplus product to such basic needs as developing the network of roads, railroads, and other means of transportation indispensable to continued industrial progress.

A remarkable consequence of this lapse is that an enormous proportion of Soviet agricultural production—grains, fruits, vegetables, etc.—rots before it can be brought to consumers! Even capitalism in its hey-day had the foresight to put a necessary portion of the surplus value expropriated from the workers into development of the infrastructure required for sustained economic expansion.

The huge proportion of the surplus product consumed by the privileged bureaucracy, moreover, robs the Soviet economy of capital that could be put to social use. And the sight of special stores loaded with quality goods for the bureaucratic elite, while the masses must endure long lines for poorer-quality goods, is infuriating. This demoralizing consequence of bureaucratic privilege, undermining a sense that hard work results in a better life, does

class by substituting democratic control over the planned economy in the place of the existing hierarchical system of top-down bureaucratic command. The other points toward capitalist restoration.

Socialist-oriented planning requires the input of workers at every step in the process of production. Only an uninhibited democratic system of workers' control over every aspect of the economy can break the bureaucratic log-jam. The workers, as producers and consumers, are the eyes and ears of the socialist system of planned production, and must be empowered to democratically elaborate, adjust, and alter the plan; oversee the standards of quality and the setting of prices; and regulate the distribution of goods.

Neither Gorbachev nor any other representative of the ruling elite can take this course. The reason is simple. Once allowed to exercise even limited control over economic and political life, the workers wouldn't stop until they wrenched complete control from the bureaucratic dictatorship.

Gorbachev knows that with the workers in the driver's seat, a process would begin that could not be stopped until social parasitism was expunged and the bureaucracy excluded from all positions of political power. Those guilty of crimes against the workers and farmers would be punished, and others, less guilty, would be re-educated and reintegrated into the economy as productive workers.

The Soviet bureaucratic caste is incapable of even risking such a profound reform. It would amount to political suicide. History has never seen such a ruling group voluntarily give up its privileges. And there is no reason to expect it now. Gorbachev, as the authentic representative of the privileged caste of bureaucrats, has opened the door to capitalist market methods for regulating the faltering Soviet economic system. *As the representative of the bureaucratic caste, he has no choice but to risk the restoration of capitalism in his desperate attempt to forestall the rising wave of working-class opposition.*

The real purpose of Gorbachev's "democratization"

Gorbachev's new parliamentary system, in sharp contrast to the governmental system inaugurated in October 1917, guarantees the dominance of the middle classes—and in the last analysis, the bureaucracy—over this capitalist-type democratic institution. The bureaucracy's base of support in the population narrows in proportion with its economic failures. Gorbachev's "democratization" is intended only to win allies from the middle class against the kind of threat foreshadowed by the mass worker upsurges in Poland and other Eastern European countries.

The middle classes are favored by the parliamentary electoral system, which atomizes the workers by organizing them on the basis of geographical districts rather than occupational units. And the division of exec-



'The first act of Stalin's political counterrevolution was to strip the soviets (councils) of all power...'

even greater damage to the Soviet economy.

The April 17 *New York Times* reports a dramatic confirmation of this underlying factor causing Gorbachev's desperation. The headline tells the story: "Moscow Importing Consumer Goods To Appease Public, Emergency Fund Set Up, Government, in Switch, Buys Items from Razor Blades to Pantyhose in West."

Socialist versus capitalist incentives

There are two, opposing, objective solutions to the faltering Soviet economic system. One points forward, toward unleashing the creative power of the working

utive and legislative powers permits the state and Communist Party functionaries to remain free from control by any democratic institution.

The new government established by the October Revolution went beyond the parliamentary system of developed capitalism. In the parliamentary system, in place here in the United States, those who control the printing presses, the radio and television systems—and other instruments for forming "public opinion"—determine the outcome of elections. This control is far more difficult to exercise when elections take place in the workplaces of the nation, where every voter is accessible to every candidate for office—and where all candidates are known to their co-workers; that is, their constituencies.

Completely free and democratic election of delegates from their workplaces to the soviet governing bodies was the single greatest conquest of the October Revolution. This *soviet* form (the word means "council") of representative democratic government, unlike the parliamentary system, combines both the legislative and executive branches in one decision-making body composed of delegates, subordinate only to the workers and farmers who elect them, and subject to immediate recall by their electors.

The true soviet system of democratic rule by the working class is directly and immediately responsive to the changing consciousness and changing needs of society. It also provides for full democratic control over state functionaries at every level.

The soviet system also works to block the degeneration of the people's representatives into a privileged caste by limiting their pay to the levels paid to workers. These qualities are what defined the new Soviet government as *the workers' and farmers' government*, in the sense of what Marx called "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The first act of Stalin's political counterrevolution after he defeated the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky, was to strip the soviets of all power and transform them into decorative institutions, entirely under the control of the Stalinist Communist Party. At the same time, democracy in the Communist Party, itself, was obliterated by Stalin along with the defeat of the Bolshevik cadre that led the October Revolution. And, of course, limits on the incomes of the bureaucracy were abolished, and bureaucratic privilege institutionalized.

Gorbachev's apologists claim that he has begun a process of "revitalization of the soviet system." Nothing could be further from the truth. His "democratization" is entirely in tune with Stalin's self-proclaimed "most democratic Constitution in the world." And Gorbachev's economic reform is entirely on the order of Bukharin's and Stalin's ill-fated policy in the 1920s of encouraging capitalist accumulation among rich peasants. This policy gave a powerful stimulus to regenerating a new class of capitalists from among this group, and from the traders that sprang up from the middle classes and the bureaucracy itself.

In "The Revolution Betrayed," Trotsky analyzes Stalin's new Constitution, inaugurated in 1936, in detail. He reveals its thoroughly anti-democratic character from beginning to end. The purge trials, mass imprisonment, and execution of Trotsky's supporters, which followed on the heels of Stalin's own "democratization," was grisly confirmation of the analysis in this book.

How Soviet workers see *perestroika*

The whole world is watching the big changes taking place in the Soviet Union with great interest. Working people everywhere approvingly react to the nearly universal hatred being voiced by the Soviet peoples to the new revelations of the crimes of Stalin's bloody dictatorship and to the freer political atmosphere, being ever-widened by mass mobilizations. Despite Gorbachev's intentions, *glasnost* is providing a semi-legal cover for revolutionary opposition to the bureaucratic dictatorship.

Thus while many in the Soviet Union credit Gorbachev for the new freedoms being permitted, even more are tensely watchful and openly critical of the iron grip still being held by Gorbachev's machine over Soviet society. The most critical, and the least impressed by the bureaucracy's promises, are the workers—especially in the oppressed Soviet Republics.

While the capitalist world can hardly conceal its gleeful anticipation, Soviet workers are extremely dubious that any benefits will come to them from economic "reforms" which are based on the introduction of capitalist-type incentives. These so called



Cooperative farmers selling vegetables at Moscow's Rizhsky Market.

David Burnett-Contact

"market mechanisms" are designed to punish "lazy workers" with unemployment, while the bureaucracy, a notoriously overpaid and underworked parasitic formation, is exempted from any equivalent sacrifice.

Capitalist "incentive" also means higher prices, as greed increasingly becomes the mainspring of the productive process. And while the bureaucracy can raise its pay by its own edict, and entrepreneurs can increase profits by raising prices, workers will be compelled to struggle to catch up with the resulting inflation. And, as is the case everywhere in the world, the workers who will suffer greatest are those in the oppressed nations.

Gorbachev's economic program is not restricted merely to encouraging small enterprises to fill in the gaps in a democratically controlled and managed, centrally planned economy. (Such small privately owned service enterprises are not inconsistent with a socialized economy so long as the state is unable to provide these services.)

Perestroika goes far beyond such gap-filling; it threatens to break up the state-owned, planned economy. It would permit individual bureaucrats to make unilateral decisions over production, buying, selling, and pricing, which would conflict with a centralized and planned economy, and threatens its ultimate destruction.

Perestroika further undermines the socialized basis of the Soviet economy by permitting imperialist capital to be invested in unregulated deals with state enterprises. Moreover, Gorbachev's plan allows foreign capitalists to own—and control—majority interest in soviet economic enterprises. This would open a door in the state monopoly over foreign trade that would give imperialism powerful levers for making further inroads into the conquests of the October Revolution.

Foreign capital would inexorably bring individual bureaucrats under its influence, much as so-called compradors (small-time agents and junior partners of imperialism in developing countries) are transformed into puppets serving the interests of their imperialist "partners."

"Democratization" and the repression of national minorities

The hopes of oppressed nationalities in the Soviet Union that *glasnost* meant an opening to genuine self-determination were dashed when the Gorbachev-led bureaucracy revoked a long-standing Soviet Constitutional right to independence. So far Gorbachev-style democratization has led to maiming, murder, and imprisonment for Soviet national minorities attempting to peacefully demonstrate their wholly progressive aspirations for self-determination.

The most recent manifestation of "democratization" occurred on April 8, when Red Army tanks were dispatched into Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, a nominally "independent" Soviet Republic. The Soviet Foreign Ministry has admitted to the killing of 19 Georgian demonstrators in an assault by troops early on the morning of April 9, after a week of strikes and peaceful protest demonstrations. The Stalinist regime insists on imposing severe penalties for "undermining the Soviet state."

On the contrary, it is the undemocratic,

forcible repression of mass peoples' movements for the right to self-determination which undermines the Soviet workers' state. The April 12 *New York Times* reports a conversation between Georgians, now settled in Moscow, which eloquently illustrates this.

Two of these people were *perestroika* enthusiasts; they had opened a restaurant specializing in Georgian dishes. They defended Gorbachev against a third Georgian, a patron named Tengiz:

"I was home one month ago and they were praising Gorbachev," Mrs. Karchava said, praising the Soviet leader herself because her one-year-old family enterprise restaurant has become a booming success here under his economic program. "I think he has many enemies everywhere, and they stirred up the students in Tbilisi. The people should be calmed and told eventually there will be freedom. Don't pour gasoline on a fire."

Tengiz asked: "If they mean freedom, then why are they shooting at people?.. Beginning from the Czar, there's been a system of boot rule for Georgians, of the military deciding everything... I think there will be more deaths because the people will not be stopped... If the majority of the people vote to be free, why not?"

Here too, "The Revolution Betrayed" explains how the Great Russian chauvinism of the Soviet bureaucracy disrupts proletarian internationalism, the glue which binds all the peoples of the Soviet Union together in their class interests. The founders of the first workers' state provided for the right of nations to separate as the only guarantee for maintaining the unity of Soviet people. This guarantee has been violated by the bureaucracy from the days of Stalin to Gorbachev.

The Bonapartist character of the Soviet bureaucracy

Bonapartism is the name given to a regime that appears to rise above the nation when the sharp struggle of opposing camps in bourgeois society is stalemated. Such a regime has the appearance of being independent of opposing classes. Bonapartist regimes, characteristically, maneuver between classes to keep their grip on the state apparatus, but defend the form of property upon which the state is based. Classic Bonapartist regimes may repress individual capitalists along with the workers as a class, but they do so in order to defend capitalist property forms, upon which their power rests.

Soviet Bonapartism is something new in history. It differs from previous varieties in that it rests on the socialist forms of property established by the October Revolution. It defends the conquests of October with its own methods, and moreover, only to serve its own privileged interests.

There is no capitalist class in the Soviet Union. But in the context of encirclement by world imperialism and scarcity, neo-capitalist tendencies are steadily being regenerated; primarily from the middle classes and from the bureaucracy itself. The Bonapartist bureaucratic caste continues to preserve state property only to the extent it fears the proletariat.

When threatened by the workers, the bureaucracy leans on those forces inside and outside the Soviet Union to protect its privileges. And when threatened by im-

perialism it leans on the socialist institutions created by the workers' revolution to defend the material basis of these privileges. But it hasn't, and can't have, an independent policy. Its very existence is dependent on the perpetuation of the world status quo between socialism and capitalism.

Soviet Bonapartism differs from the capitalist variety, to sum up, in that its basis for continued independent existence disappears with the victory of either of the opposing classes between which it balances itself. Even upsurges of class struggle, especially in the imperialist centers of world capitalism, undermine the grip on Soviet society by this parasitic formation, and conversely setbacks spur bureaucratic retreats toward fundamental accommodation with imperialism.

The trade union analogy

The essence of scientific analysis of any phenomenon requires the most careful differentiation between its contradictory parts; like a surgeon who must distinguish between cancerous and healthy tissue. The contradictory character of the bureaucracy is better seen by comparing it to reformist bureaucrats at the head of trade unions everywhere in the world. Even in the case of gangster-domination, such unions are an objective instrument for the defense of class interests.

No trade union can be perpetuated if it does absolutely nothing to defend class interests. Workers would in that case drop out of the union and stop paying dues. Without members there can be no material base for a privileged bureaucracy. So even gangsters must justify the continued existence of the union by not allowing wages and conditions to be driven to the level of those in the unorganized sectors. But bureaucratized, class-collaborationist unions become ever more vulnerable to outright destruction by its capitalist antagonists.

Bureaucratic misleaders, like deadly parasites, must be removed by a resurgent membership or unions will continue to be drained of their life juices and die. Similarly, the Soviet workers must remove their parasitic ruling caste or else the socialist revolution begun in 1917 will be ultimately undermined and crushed by world imperialism. ■

Coming next issue: New situation in Poland

With unbridled enthusiasm, President Bush has announced plans to provide economic aid to Poland in response to the "round-table" accords reached between the Polish government and the top Solidarnosc leadership.

The "round-table" accords legalized Solidarnosc but removed its independence from the bureaucracy. The accords were based on a political agreement between the Polish government, Lech Walesa, and the Catholic church that the key to economic recovery is to step up the penetration of capitalism into Poland.

In our next issue, we will feature an in-depth analysis of the new Polish situation by Solidarnosc activist Zbigniew Kowalewski.

The 'Wright Stuff' still has its benefits

After denying that any problem existed, the Democrats have had to confront the charges of "unethical" behavior against Speaker Jim Wright. But they point to one favorable side effect. The new brouhaha has pushed the embarrassing question of pay raises for congressmen off the front pages.

Concern has been expressed that incumbent members of Congress have such heavy advantages over their opponents that they get re-elected time after time. In recent years, between 98 and 99 percent of those seeking reelection have succeeded—a higher rate than in the Supreme Soviet under Leonid Brezhnev.

In the meantime, life in the federal bureaucracy goes on. U.S. agencies stamped "top secret,"



Jim Wright

"secret," or "classified" on 2.5 million original documents in 1988. That was 24 percent more

than during the previous year, a presidential report said.

Texas officials have announced that National Guardsmen will patrol the U.S.-Mexican border camouflaged as cactus plants to help fight drug trafficking and illegal immigrants. The innocent-looking plants will reveal their true identity and snap on the handcuffs when the unwary undocumented traveler passes by.

Meanwhile, a ditch four miles long, 14 feet wide and five feet deep will be dug along the U.S.-Mexico border near San Diego. The Immigration and Naturalization Service assures us that it will not harm air, water, wildlife, or vegetation in the area. And what about harm to people?

Should American Drug Enforcement Administration agents

get a search warrant when raiding houses in Mexico? Yes, says a federal court in San Francisco, in suppressing evidence obtained in search of the home of Rene Verdugo Urquidez, a suspected Mexican drug dealer. President Bush declared he will appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court.

Many might wonder how American drug agents can carry out police operations in another sovereign country. The DEA has agents in 45 countries and has participated in investigations that led to 1200 arrests in foreign nations.

The Reagan administration undercut efforts to halt the drug trade when it conflicted with foreign-policy objectives, a Senate sub-committee has charged. The State Department paid \$806,401 to four companies that distributed

aid to the contras but "were owned and operated by narcotics traffickers."

It actually costs the taxpayer money to sell federally owned timber to private lumbering operations. For example, the government receives only 26 cents in revenue for every dollar it spends on timber sales in the Beaverhead National Forest in Montana. Much of the loss comes from the cost of roads the Forest Service builds for the lumber interests.

An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report states that 10.4 billion pounds of pollution is spewed into the air in this country every year. That's 42.5 pounds for every man, woman, and child.

New book gives closeup view of '60s civil rights movement

By BILL O'KAIN

Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63, by Taylor Branch. Simon and Schuster, 1988.

Some books you borrow from the library. Others you wait for until they're in paperback. A few, like a favorite novel or book of poetry, you want to have in hardcover.

Taylor Branch's new history of the civil rights struggle is such a book. This is because the events described in this book in such a moving way represent a part of what we are. This is a biography not just of people but of an entire generation.

For many of us who are part of the baby-boom, the civil rights movement was an integral part of our growing up. The lessons learned from the civil rights movement carried over into other political activities, such as the antiwar movement and the women's liberation movement.

Students who enter college this year, however, will have been born after the death of Martin Luther King Jr. Most will know very little about his life or about America during the years of the civil rights movement.

For those of us who were too young to remember—or for those who never knew—the history of the early years of the civil rights movement lives in Taylor Branch's "Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63."

Events that were once blurred memories are now vividly recreated. Important historical figures of the day are no longer pictures on a textbook page.

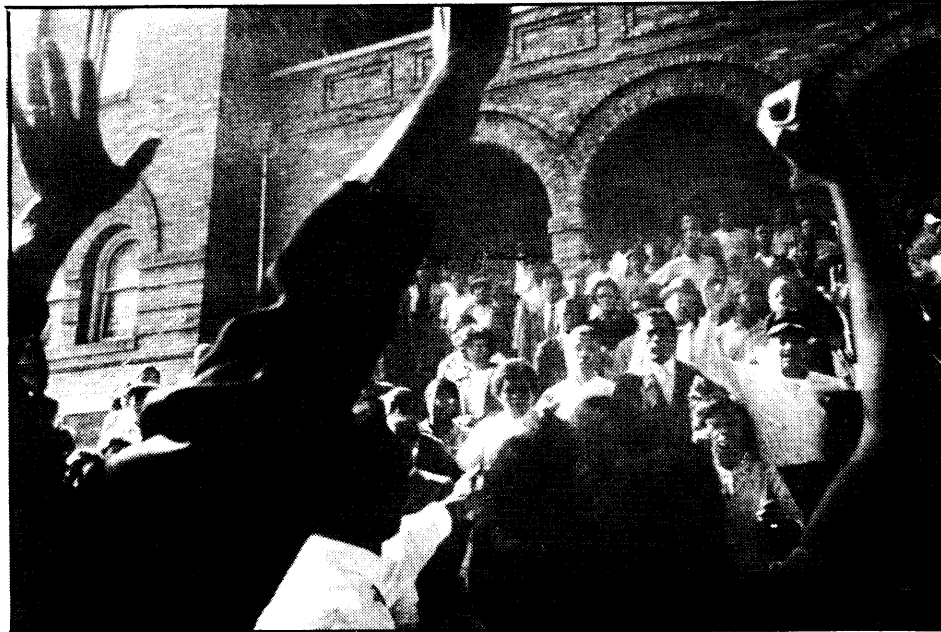
Leaders, virtually regarded as saints in some quarters, become real people—subject to all the fears and doubts as the rest of us. Secondary figures, most of whom have remained anonymous to the general public, become major figures in the day-to-day struggle. And the heroism and dignity of the movement's unknown rank and file receives its proper recognition.

A partisan of the cause

In this massive work of 1064 pages, Taylor Branch has written the definitive history of the first 10 years of the civil rights movement. While it revolves around the life of Martin Luther King Jr., it is a history of America during some of its most turbulent years.

The author is obviously a partisan of the cause he chronicles, and he makes you share all the emotions of it.

The scope of research in this work is impressive. Facts that are little known or in dispute are documented. The range of sources is broad, from the papers of Sheriff "Bull" Connor in the Birmingham Public Library to



Summer 1963: As part of their campaign to end segregation in Birmingham, Ala., civil rights activists rally outside the local Black church.

the files of the FBI.

Every aspect of the civil rights movement is covered in detail: the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the student lunch-counter sit-ins, the freedom rides, voter registration, the Albany struggle, James Meredith and the integration of "Ole Miss", the Battle of Birmingham, and the March on Washington.

An understanding of the importance of the role of students in the movement is given in his description of the start of the sit-in protests. Something had changed in America; you are aware of it from the atmosphere he creates with his writing.

Throughout the book, there is detailed coverage of the relationships between the different groups in the movement. For example, he spends considerable time on the disputes between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The bitter fights on major issues of strategy and tactics (legal vs. activist, the courtroom vs. the streets) are carefully documented.

Government disruption attempts

The duplicitous role of the Republican and Democratic parties during this period receives much attention. Particular attention is given to the work of the FBI, who (with the complicity of Robert Kennedy and the Department of Justice) attempted to red-bait, ham-string, and eventually destroy the civil rights movement.

One of the more interesting aspects of the book is the recounting of the treacherous role played by the upper strata of the Black

community in attempts to defame King, blunt the politics of the civil rights movement, and in some cases stop the movement dead in its tracks. Numerous incidents—such as *Ebony* and *Jet* knowingly printing attacks on King fed to them by the FBI—are given by Branch.

In the introductory chapters of the book, Branch recounts the role of the Black church in America. He tells stories of a few of the congregations that had an influence on King. He points out that King's father, popularly known as "Daddy" King and the minister of a large Atlanta congregation, continually tried to act as a brake on his son's activism.

While much that has been written of King paints him as a virtual saint, Branch gives us

what is probably a more realistic picture. Branch details King's education and gives us insights into the development of King's philosophical outlook.

King emerges in this book as a gifted, talented, thoughtful, intelligent person who is thrust by history into a role that would make him one of the most important Americans of modern times. It was a role, we find out, that King is not comfortable with.

We see him beset by anxieties and frustrations. Branch also shows us that King did not always make the right decisions on important issues. One of the more illuminating parts of the book explains how King succumbed to intense pressure and virtual blackmail as a result of red-baiting tactics used by the FBI and the Kennedy administration.

"Tired of being trampled"

Tying this period of history together is Branch's prose, his ability to describe scenes so vividly. This is not only great history but great literature as well. In a description of one of King's first major speeches, Branch writes:

"He paused slightly longer. 'And you know, my friends, there comes a time,' he cried, 'when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression.'

"A flock of 'Yeses' was coming back at him when suddenly the individual responses dissolved into a rising cheer, and applause exploded beneath the cheer—all within the space of a second. The startling noise rolled on and on, like a wave that refused to break, and just when it seemed that the roar must finally weaken, a wall of sound came in from the enormous crowd outdoors to push the volume still higher.

"Thunder seemed to be added to the lower register—the sound of feet stomping on the wooden floor—until the loudness became something that was not so much heard as it was sensed by vibrations in the lungs. The giant cloud of noise shook the building and refused to go away."

It is fitting that this book recently won the Pulitzer Prize for History. It should be required reading in every high school and college across the land. A second volume is to follow. It will be titled *Pillar of Fire* and will cover the remainder of King's life. ■

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U.S. tobacco industry: Killed more Americans than all wars combined

By HAYDEN PERRY

Merchants of Death, by Larry L. White. Beech Tree Books, 1988. 241 pages. \$17.95.

The merchants of death Larry White writes about are not arms dealers. But the product they peddle kills as surely as bombs and bullets. It killed at least 350,000 Americans in 1986 through self-administered poisoning.

These merchants of death deal in cigarettes and other tobacco products that, White tells us, "have killed more Americans than all the hostile armies from the British to the Vietnamese."

The author does not spend much time arguing the case against tobacco. He agrees with Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who says the debate is over. He quotes Koop: "The only scientists in the world who take a position opposing the 50,000 published articles opposing smoking, are those in the employ of the tobacco industry."

In the face of these devastating facts, however, "The tobacco industry is not only surviving, it is actually becoming richer and more powerful than ever," White says. How these dealers in a product that kills, manage to thrive in the face of so much hostility is the subject of this study.

Little government regulation

The tobacco industry is an oligopoly, White points out. Seven companies have been producing tobacco products for nearly 100 years. In that time, tobacco interests have developed such clout in Congress that tobacco is unique among consumer products.

It cannot be regulated for wholesomeness by the Food and Drug Administration, or for safety by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. No government agency has the power to ban any of the hundreds of additives put into cigarettes, no matter how toxic.

Augmenting the clout of the tobacco tycoons is the humble tobacco grower, tending his few acres in the hills of the Mid-South. Tobacco has never been a big plantation crop, and government price-support policy has kept it a small-scale enterprise.

So the family farmer in his coveralls stands beside the corporate giant as a "partner" in the tobacco family. Together they condemn taxes on tobacco and restrictions on

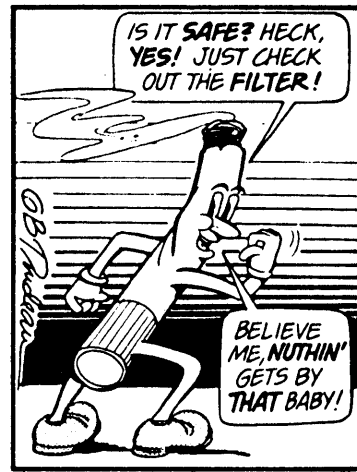
smoking.

But actually the interests of the grower and the manufacturer diverge, White tells us. The price-support system, which has operated since 1933, guarantees the grower a minimum price for his crop, and limits its production.

Every farmer must file for an "allotment" that may be as little as a few rows. However, these few rows may bring in more money than any other crop he might raise. This situation has not been to the liking of the manufacturers who are faced with a controlled supply and price. They have been looking to cheaper tobacco in Brazil and parts of Africa.

To the dismay of their "partner," the small farmer, the tobacco magnates have been strangely silent when

DOONESBURY / Garry Trudeau



anti-smoking groups oppose price support for the killer weed. The manufacturers are content to see price supports and the small grower go under. Their concern is not with supplies and production, but with sales.

Getting young people hooked

Since they kill 350,000 people each year, and many smokers quit, the tobacco industry must recruit young smokers or it will face extinction. This means getting young people hooked.

Industry spokespeople routinely deny that they market cigarettes to young people. But cigarette advertisements continue to appear in magazines with large teen-aged readerships. The industry spent \$6.3 million in 1985 advertising in *Glamour*, with its large readership of girls under 18.

T.V. Guide informs its clients that it reaches 8.8 million young people aged 12 to 17. This publication gets more cigarette advertising revenue than any other publication—\$36 million in 1985.

Documents subpoenaed from the industry indicate the advertising game plan is to associate cigarettes with the lifestyle of "young adult males—masculine, contempo-

rary, confident, self-assured, daring/adventurous, mature." The Marlboro Man in Marlboro Country epitomizes the clean-living, self-reliant character the industry wishes to associate with smoking.

The mass magazines

The tobacco magnates did not fight the ban on TV advertising too vigorously. This was because TV stations were also running anti-smoking ads. The industry could not stop these counter-ads that blunted their high-priced campaigns.

They could, however, control the editorial content of the print media that get their advertising dollars. *Cosmopolitan*, which carries cigarette ads, printed only one article on smoking in five years. Their reasoning was revealed by an account executive who said, "who needs somebody you're paying millions of dollars a year to come back and bite you on the ankle?"

Ms. magazine, which once called itself "the undisputed leader in reporting on women's health," carried 583 pages of cigarette ads in 151 issues—but no articles on smoking.

When the tobacco industry diversified into food products and other lines, they had additional leverage against the media. The *Readers Digest* turned down a proposition to run a special supplement for the American Heart Association, even though they take no tobacco ads. They were

afraid they would lose valuable accounts from food divisions controlled by the tobacco conglomerates.

Some people think diversification means investors are getting out of the killer-weed business. Not at all, says Larry White. The tycoons are using their huge profits to legitimize and partly conceal their tobacco interests. All the cigarette companies have dropped the word "tobacco" from

their name.

Tobacco is by far the most profitable division of these conglomerates. As an oligopoly, the industry has little fear of price competition. They also know the addicted smoker will always pay a few cents more to get his fix.

Phillip Morris, who made \$910 million (9 cents a pack) in 1981, raised its profit to \$2.05 billion (or 19 cents a pack) in 1985. These super-profits enable the industry to spend nearly \$2 billion a year in advertising. It is ironic that cigarettes, which kill people, are the most widely advertised product in the nation.

However, says White, the tobacco tycoons are on the defensive as more and more health conscious Americans get the message. White does not have any magic bullet to slay the smoking dragon, but he offers some helpful potshots.

Court suits charging the industry with liability for deaths are threatening tobacco profits. Concern over second-person smoke widens the arena for struggle. White thinks the price-support program could be modified to wean the small farmer away from tobacco growing.

His book itself is another argument, if more are needed, to create a smoke-free America. We should no longer pay these merchants of death to kill us off.

Our readers speak out

N.R.A.?

In two letters below, we continue last month's exchange of opinions by our readers on the topic of "gun control."—The editors

Dear editor,

While I agree the anti-gun people are pathetic, the two pro-gunners [see "Our readers speak out" in the April 1989 *Socialist Action*] sound like supporters of the right-wing NRA. I see no reason to have semi-automatic rifles in the United States. (Send them to the FMLN. They really need them.)

The only people who benefit from these are the rich arms merchants, while poor Blacks and Hispanics (95 percent of whom are innocent) die. As for hunters, too bad! Stop murdering animals and do something constructive.

L.A.M.,
Hawthorne, Calif.

Disarmament

Dear editor,

Since the end of World War I, there have been innumerable disarmament conferences in the world, all without any result. On March 7, however, the U.S. government began implementing a unilateral disarmament program—the dis-

arming of the American people.

Using drug-related crime as an excuse, Secretary of the Treasury William Bennett banned the import of semi-automatic weapons into the United States. All existing stocks were bought up within a few days. Along with Colt's closing of its AR-15 production, semi-automatic weapons are effectively unavailable through legal channels in the United States today.

Liberals are pressing for a ban on semi-automatic weapons. (Automatic weapons and "machine guns" are already illegal.) At the same time, there are plans to send U.S. troops into the Black community of Washington, D.C. These troops will be armed with automatic weapons.

One thing should be clear. Banning guns will not deprive criminals of weapons. The sawed-off shotgun has been illegal since 1938, but criminals continue to use them. The Thompson sub-machine gun used by the gangsters of the '20s and '30s were illegal as well. The actual effect of a gun ban is to disarm honest working people.

The leaders of the American Revolution and the founders of the United States wanted to codify the right of the people to rebel against tyranny. The Second Amendment is a statement of that.

The right of the people to bear arms is the right to defend itself against its own government. If the Chilean workers had been armed, the army coup of 1973 may well have turned out much differently.

Some people will argue that there are other firearms that can be legally owned if semi-automatic weapons are banned. These are bolt-action rifles. These have not been mass-produced for armies for 40 years. Permitting the ownership of bolt-action rifles today is not much different than permitting pikes; it is not a right to bear arms but a right to collect antiques.

The most heavily armed organization on earth is intent on disarming working people in the United States. Only the future can answer whether this move will save it and its predatory economic system from their well-deserved replacement.

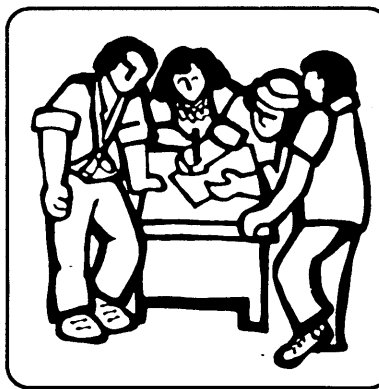
Vinnie Longo,
Chicago, Ill.

Thanks!

Dear editor,

Thanks for the informative reading provided by *Socialist Action* during the past year. It is certainly refreshing to read alternative, insightful perspectives on pressing contemporary issues.

While there is room for



disagreement on these issues (rads don't necessarily have to march in line, do we?), I have found *S.A.* thought-provoking at the very least—which is much more than one can say for mainstream rags in our geographical area.

Keep up the good work. I'm enclosing a check for a subscription renewal.

E.V.,
Baltimore, Md.

Soviet tour

Dear editor,

On March 31, over 80 people attended a Los Angeles Socialist Action forum to hear Ralph Schoenman and Suzi Weissman

report back on their recent visit to the Soviet Union. [For more on tour, see April 1989 *Socialist Action*.]

Weissman described how the intellectuals, while not completely familiar with Trotsky, know enough about him to appreciate his strong and unyielding stance against Stalin.

Schoenman pointed out how the workers are getting squeezed by *perestroika* market reforms. He said that the Soviet left should boldly address the workers, but noted that the left in general lacks a program for doing so. Many of the dissident organizations, if not most, romanticize the market economy and are interested in experimenting with *perestroika* reforms.

He concluded by noting that a workers' explosion is in the offing, as the Soviet workers seek to defend the gains of the October Revolution against the policies of Gorbachev and the bureaucracy.

Marty Denzel,
Los Angeles, Calif.

We welcome letters from our readers. Please keep them brief. Where necessary, for reasons of space, they will be abridged.
—The Editors

South Africa drops charges against trade union leader Moses Mayekiso

By TINA BEACOCK

After an 18-month trial, South African union leader Moses Mayekiso and four other activists from the Black township of Alexandra were acquitted of charges of treason, sedition, and subversion. On April 24, a packed gallery in a central Johannesburg courtroom erupted in cheers of "Viva!" as the judge found the Alexandra Five not guilty.

Mayekiso is general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). The defendants also included Mayekiso's brother Mzwanele, Paul Tshabala, Richard Mdakane, and Obed Bapela.

The judge rejected the state's contention that the Alexandra Action Committee, of which Mayekiso was chairman, had attempted to turn the township into an ungovernable "liberated zone." Instead, he affirmed, a rent boycott promoted by the Action Committee in early 1986 was intended to protest township conditions and corrupt town councilors.

Mayekiso described the verdict as a victory for the "struggle for a better society." He promised to pick up where he had left off before his arrest in June 1986. He will work to rebuild the Action Committee, Mayekiso vowed.

In a remarkable admission, on April 3, the prosecution acknowledged that it had failed to prove the treason charges. According to Mayekiso's wife, Khola Mayekiso, the government was forced to drop the treason charge as a direct result of an international campaign on the defendants' behalf.

International pressure also played an important role in the court's decision last December to release the defendants on bail—after they had spent over two years in jail.

Street committees

Last month, Khola Mayekiso toured three U.S. cities, telling trade-union members about her husband's case and calling for continued solidarity with all South African political prisoners.

The Alexandra Action Committee was formed, Khola Mayekiso explained, because of intolerable living conditions. From 200,000 to 300,000 people live in Alexandra, only blocks away from some of Johannesburg's wealthiest whites-only districts. Although the township lies within Johan-



Moses Mayekiso and his wife, Khola, leave the Johannesburg Supreme Court after being granted bail in December 1988.

nesburg, Black residents must obtain a permit to get a job in the city.

Up to 20 families, each in one-room houses, must share a single water tap. There is no electricity and no sewage system.

The Alexandra Action Committee organized street committees, electing block representatives. In a country where Black people are allowed no vote, everyone in the community participated, including the youth. The committees organized many tasks, from digging latrines (previously done only with official authorization) to establishing day-care centers, soup kitchens—and people's courts.

They organized along the lines of trade-union structures—with accountability of all officials and with elections every year. They planned to form committees throughout the entire township. This posed a serious challenge to the authorities.

Khola Mayekiso said that in February 1986, after a youth was killed by the police, Alexandra residents organized a night vigil. The police fired on the vigil, resulting in many deaths. In what they called the "Six Day War," the people defended themselves by hurling stones and gasoline-filled bottles.

The official government town council resigned. Right-wing vigilante attacks, in which out-of-uniform police took part, were stepped up. A state of emergency was extended.

While Moses Mayekiso was in Sweden, police detained the organizers of the committee organization. Soon after Mayekiso returned to South Africa, in April 1986, he was thrown into jail and refused bail. The trial began in October 1987.

From the beginning, the prosecution tried to deflect much of the testimony away from

what really happened in Alexandra. Instead, in true witch-trial fashion, a focus was placed on quotations from certain political pamphlets—most of which had been seized from Mayekiso when he returned from abroad.

International labor defense

Many people and organizations around the world contributed to the defense effort. Amnesty International declared Mayekiso a "prisoner of conscience." Several international labor organizations paid for the five-person legal team that represented the Alexandra Five in court.

The United Auto Workers union (UAW) spearheaded fund-raising activities in the United States and formed a committee of American lawyers to monitor the case.

Khola Mayekiso's meetings during her U.S. tour reflected the significant union backing the case received. In New York, 175 people attended a meeting at the AFSCME District 37 hall.

In Detroit, UAW President Owen Bieber joined Mayekiso in addressing the 200 unionists representing 50 union locals who gathered there. Local unions gave \$1000 and pledged another \$8000 to support the campaign.

In Chicago, Mayekiso spoke to 250 people at two meetings along with UAW District Director Bill Stewart, United Steelworkers of America District 31 Director Jack Parton, and Chicago Coalition of Labor Union Women President Johnnie Jackson.

The speakers pointed out that the attack on Mayekiso was part of a more extensive attack by the South African government on the militant trade-union movement. Mayekiso was the highest ranking trade unionist to be tried for political subversion and sedition in many years. The apartheid regime hoped that a guilty verdict would intimidate other union leaders and activists.

"The international labor movement will not be silenced," said Bill Stewart. The government has tried to silence the people of South Africa. It has tried to shut down the international news media. But there are other voices that cannot be silenced."

Because the labor movement and numerous friends of civil liberties raised their voices in protest, Moses Mayekiso and the Alexandra Five are free.

By ADAM WOOD

SAN FRANCISCO—Nomonde Ngubo, a representative of the United Mine Workers of America's Shell Boycott Committee and a founder of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa, toured the San Francisco Bay Area late last March.

Ngubo spoke to several meetings about the international boycott of Royal Dutch Shell, which provides oil to the apartheid regime in South Africa. She also spoke at the April 2 rally for "Women's Equality/Women's Lives" in San Francisco.

On March 31, Ngubo spoke at a Socialist Action forum titled, "An Update on the Black Workers' Movement in South Africa." She began her talk with a brief description of her own experiences. After leaving college, she became an organizer for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

"From a membership of zero," she stated, "eight months later we had 400,000 members. There are 790,000 mineworkers in South Africa. About 600,000 are Black workers."

"In 1985," she said, "the NUM, together with about 33 other trade unions, came together to form a super-federation called the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)."

"COSATU is still the biggest federation in the labor movement in South Africa. And you have the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU)—COSATU being non-racial, NACTU being non-racial but calling for Black leadership."



Nomonde Ngubo speaking at March 31 Socialist Action forum in San Francisco.

Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

S. African unionist explains rising workers' movement

Ngubo outlined the offensive against the labor movement which has intensified over the past two years. On Feb. 24, 1988, 17 organizations—including COSATU, the United Democratic Front, and student groups—were banned from activity. The government then passed a repugnant labor reform act.

The labor act "winds back the clock to prior-1979, before unionization," Ngubo pointed out. "Employers can sue workers who are out on a legal strike for loss of productivity and man-hours lost."

NACTU and COSATU called for a three-

day demonstration (May 6-8, 1988) to protest the act. "The students did not go to school," said Ngubo, "The factory machines were down. The Johannesburg streets and all the central cities became ghost towns."

In the aftermath of this and other successful actions, the idea of trade-union unity was raised, she reported. Some 700 workers from all the COSATU unions, from NACTU, and from 17 independent unions met on March 4-6 to discuss unity in one coalition "similar to the AFL-CIO."

"They are going to come together again on May 2," Ngubo said, "the deadline is May 8,

to deliberate on the recommendations that came out of the summit talks as to whether they want to form a super-federation or not.

"Of course, certain things need to be worked out, especially in terms of ideology. The COSATU federation at their congress last year adopted the Freedom Charter, thereby giving tacit recognition to the working document of the ANC.

"The NACTU organizations and other independent federations came out and said they would like to have a workers' document or a 'Workers Charter' format rather than adopt the Freedom Charter. They have a problem with some of the planks of the Freedom Charter."

Ngubo concluded her presentation by calling for three things from American workers: "Sanctions, solidarity, and education—so that we never allow the media to black out the fact that South Africa is still not free."