

# A Socialist ACTION



Eyewitness report:  
**Beijing**  
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## NOW calls pro-choice majority to march in Washington D.C.

CINCINNATI—"Not one woman, not one girl is going to lose her life to illegal abortion," promised Molly Yard, president of the National Organization for Women to the prolonged cheers of some 1500 members at the 1989 national conference here.

At the July 21-23 conference, NOW called for one million people to rally in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 12. The demonstration is to defend abortion rights and to protest the recent U.S. Supreme Court Webster decision allowing states to restrict access to abortion.

The NOW conference took place during a time of heightened attacks on the rights of women. In recent months, the Supreme Court has ruled against abortion and affirmative action. Ominously, the Court is scheduled to hear cases from Ohio, Illinois, and Minnesota, which could overturn the historic 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion.

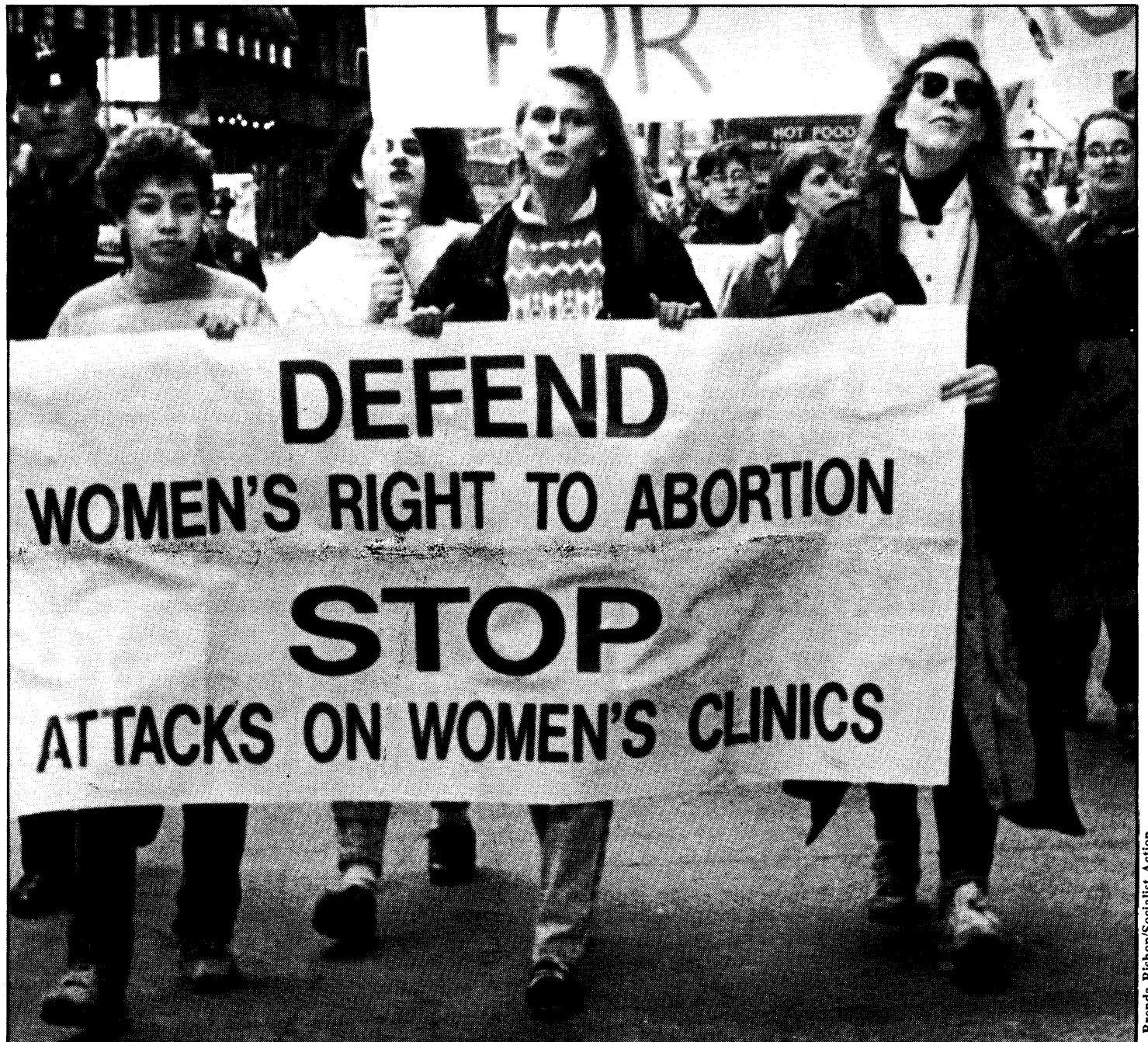
The highlight of the conference—and a preview of things to come—was a 3000-strong pro-choice demonstration on Sat., July 22. It was the largest pro-choice demonstration in the history of Cincinnati, a city considered to be a bastion of the so-called Right to Life movement.

As the six-block long march made its way to the Hamilton County Court House, approximately 300 anti-choice fanatics stood on the sidewalk singing religious hymns. They were drowned out by the chants of pro-choice supporters, who outnumbered them by at least 10 to 1.

Speakers, including Molly Yard; Judy Coughlin, a striking Eastern Airlines flight attendant and secretary-treasurer of Transport Workers Union Local 553; and the Rev. Dr. Yvonne Delk, executive director of the United Church of Christ, spoke for the need to organize and mobilize the vast majority of Americans, who support a woman's right to choose.

Throughout the NOW conference, the membership expressed its outrage at the frontal attack on women's rights. An under-

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Brenda Bishop/Socialist Action

### Soviet miners challenge government

By CARL FINAMORE

Yesterday, Gorbachev was apprehensively looking over his shoulder at events in Poland and China. Today, his eyes are glued to the homefront, where hundreds of thousands of coal miners stopped work throughout the country.

The strike wave—the most powerful in Soviet history—began last month in Mezhdurechensk, a town in Siberia's Kuzbass coalfields. The workers had been forced to work speed-up, overtime, and night shifts with little compensation. They had suffered 152 accidental deaths in the past year.

A sit-in by 77 miners spread like fire throughout the coalfields. It was a fuse waiting to be lit. The strikers joined economic demands for more food, clothing, and housing with highly developed political demands for more control over production and

for stronger constitutional guarantees for individual freedom.

Workers' control of the mines almost immediately became the central demand of the strike. Around \$46 million in profits had been produced in the six months before the strike, but only \$3.4 million had been spent locally. This disparity led directly to calls for self-management of the coal industry.

Equally troublesome for the government was the formation of strike committees outside of the official trade unions. But this was inevitable, especially since the example of Solidarnosc in Poland.

Since Stalin, the official trade unions in the USSR have functioned as partners of the bureaucratized factory management system. One local union chairman was reported to be on vacation at a rest sanatorium throughout the strike.

As the strikes continued to grow, however, the national chairman of the coal industry's official trade union tried to recoup some credibility. He told the press, "Our position is that we support the demands of the Mezhdurechensk workers."

But by that time, it was too late. The strike had already spread throughout Siberia and into the Donets Basin in the Ukraine,

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### Virginia miners stand firm as wildcat strikes halted

By ROLAND PETERSON

On July 18, 1989, the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) and the Pittston Coal Group agreed to resume negotiations after a month-long series of wildcat strikes in all of the union mines east of the Mississippi.

Along with the agreement to resume negotiations, Richard L. Trumka, president of the UMWA, urged the union membership to end the wildcat strikes. The rank-and-file union miners had been striking in solidarity with the 2000 miners who work for Pittston Coal.

In West Virginia, where the wildcats cut production by almost 90 percent, there was no let up in the strike until July 24, when all of the "wildcatters" reluctantly went back to work. It was estimated at that time that the walkout had already cost the state over \$10 million.

The rank-and-file initiatives have brought

national attention to the strike. They have also had the effect of solidifying the strike at the Pittston mines to the point where only limited amounts of coal are being produced. (The company lost \$8 million during the strike's first month.) The wildcat strikers have demonstrated the capacity of the UMWA membership to carry out a fight.

The agreement to resume negotiations came after a federal judge, Glen M. Williams, called both the company and the union into court to respond to questions about the strike. Judge Williams is one of the judges who earlier issued an injunction against the UMWA and the miners' right to picket. A federal mediator will be involved in the new negotiations.

The miners themselves have no confidence that federal mediators—or any government agency—will protect their union or their livelihood. The history of the strike has demonstrated that the government is on the

(continued on page 5)

# Land of the free—Home of the brave



By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

I read in the papers that our beloved president, "Free Enterprise George," spent a few days in Eastern Europe last week hustling for those countries to try American-style "democracy." His impassioned speeches on the blessings of democracy—and capitalism—were featured throughout the American "free press."

However, in describing the copious life-style of the free citizens of the U.S. of A., he left a few details out. So as not to mislead our brothers and sisters of Eastern Europe, perhaps I should just clarify a few things for them about the blessings of our free enterprise system.

First of all, we do have democracy. For instance, a rich man or woman has as much right to sleep in doorways as do the homeless. And in reverse, a poor man or woman has as much right to hire a maid, butler, rent the best suite at the Fairmont, or purchase a Porsche (or even a congressman) as the rich person does.

A prime example of how our democracy works was best displayed in a full-page ad in *The New York*

*Times* on July 13. It was an ad aimed at the ultimate wine connoisseur.

For the very humble price of \$550,000 a whole gaggle of wine bargains were offered (including a round-trip plane ride on the Concorde to the Chateau d'Yquem, in France). Featured in the long list of wines were 36 bottles of Lafite Library wines—marked down from \$250,000 to \$125,000.

So for a paltry \$500,000 a body could wind up owning, altogether, about 500 bottles of "quality" wine. And unlike the poor comrades behind the "Iron Curtain," our poor folks in America have as much right to buy that wine as does Donald Trump or George Bush.

One of the problems between the rich and the middle class and working class in this country is that the rich seem to catch on faster than the other two groups. The common people are a bit naive.

In the U.S. of A., we have a HUD department—which stands for Housing and Urban Development. The word was sent out by HUD some time ago that this government department was to provide housing for low-income and middle-income people and that it was all to be financed by tax dollars.

Of course, the low-income and middle-income people just didn't get the concept. They actually believed this government-sponsored myth, and lost a golden opportunity. The real purpose of HUD was to help big developers, insurance conglomerates, and bankers get a little richer by allowing them to tear down the homes of low-income and middle-income people and replace them with up-to-date condos.

This improvement of free-enterprise America's living standards, of

course, didn't come cheap—even to the rich. It meant pay-offs of enormous amounts to every "born-again" judge, legislator, and government flunky—not to mention hundreds of the president's pals.

In our free-enterprise system, you don't get nothing for nothing. But if only the poor had jumped first—then they could have bought the politicians and the poor could have been sleeping in homes instead of under the trees and in doorways.

After all, that's democracy. The politicians aren't prejudiced—they'll sell out to the highest bidder.

There's one more great attribute we in the U.S. of A. have that our poor brothers and sisters behind the Iron Curtain don't. We have a Supreme Court which is bound to protect our rights under the law (except, of course, when they conflict with the rights of the rich).

Workers, for instance, have the right to organize a union and the

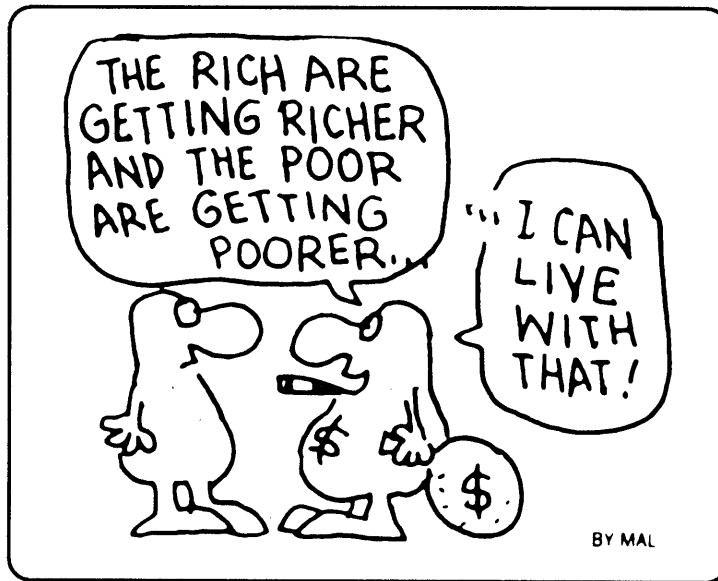
right to strike—but not if they intend to win. Then the courts step in to protect the rights of the bosses and the scabs. It's all evenhanded.

And in our country, Blacks have exactly the same rights as the wealthy whites—except when they start demanding equal opportunity and such things as that. That's when El Supremo Court steps in and re-defines the words "civil rights," which turns out to be neither civil nor right.

And what about women's rights? In this country, women have complete and equal rights—except for some little things like reproductive rights, equal pay, and equal opportunity. But our great leaders declare that if they gave us those rights, it might tear apart the "whole fabric of our free-enterprise system." Women have the same right to choose between politicians owned by the rich as anyone else.

So, dear Iron Curtain comrades, eat your heart out because you don't have our freedom. Especially the "greatest" right of all—the right to burn the flag. In fact, any American can now burn a whole barnful of flags, and the only thing that would change is we would have one less barn and a whole lot less flags.

Now, that's the magic of the free enterprise system at its best. ■



## NAACP calls Aug. 26 march in Washington, D.C.

The national convention of the NAACP, meeting in Detroit in mid-July, announced a "symbolic silent march" of NAACP members and friends in Washington, D.C. It is set for 12 noon, Sat., Aug. 26, 1989.

John Johnson, director of the Labor and Voter Education departments of the NAACP, told *Socialist Action*: "The march is designed to protest the dismantling of the civil rights gains of minorities and women in the United States." Johnson explained that the NAACP sees the event as "in keeping with the spirit of the 1917 march down Fifth Avenue in New York City to protest Jim Crow, segregation, and lynching."

The Washington protest will focus on the four recent Supreme Court decisions that gutted hard-won gains for Blacks and women over the past three decades. The Court reversed its past positions on affirmative action, racial discrimination on the job, and abortion rights. For more information, call the NAACP at (301) 358-8900.

## BEHIND THE LINES

# Court's flag-burning ruling: Bait for a trap

By NAT WEINSTEIN

The Supreme Court's decision upholding the right of the people to burn the American flag as an expression of free speech is, on its face, anomalous. This decision comes in the context of a wide-ranging attack on basic human and democratic rights.

*This month, Nat Weinstein is the guest columnist of "Behind the Lines." Michael Schreiber's regularly featured column will return in September.*

The just-concluded session of the Supreme Court reversed such previous decisions as outlawing harassment of Blacks and other targets of racism and sexism on the job, and upholding mandatory drug tests—violating the right to privacy. The latter is designed to make workers the goat for unsafe corporate practices in rail and other industries.

And topping it off, the assault on democratic rights culminated dramatically in the Court's decision gutting the right of women to choose when to give birth. American supporters of the Bill of

Rights, thus, have cause for deep suspicion over the real purpose of the high Court's "defense" of flag-burning.

The July 14 *New York Times* gives an ominous clue as to the real intent of the Supreme Court. The paper's "Quotations of the Day" features a statement by Rep. G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, Democrat of Mississippi, who sends a message to potential shock troops of capitalist reaction.

Montgomery is quoted as saying: "If we don't do something [to reverse the flag decision], I fear that Americans, and especially veterans' groups, are going to stop the desecration of the flag in their own way and people are going to get hurt."

Montgomery's statement is hardly motivated by a "fear" of violence. It constitutes a call to action!

The Court's one-two-punch strategy is apparent. Their attack on a woman's right to choose, they knew, would set into motion massive counter-mobilizations at clinics, in the streets of the nation's capital, and in other cities across the land. They needed, therefore, to maximize support for the anti-abortion shock troops of capitalist reaction. Otherwise, their attack on women's rights could backfire, forcing the Court to retreat.

Seeming to have come from out of the blue, the flag decision is calculated to entrap the impatient and unwary into this highly abstract and diversionary expression of protest. The decision serves to provoke actions that will "outrage patriotic Americans," and provide a symbol around which to justify right-wing



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

physical attacks on women exercising their right to have an abortion.

The Court's decision already has served to bait a small minority of outraged supporters of women's rights. At mass protest rallies held on the day of the Court's anti-abortion decision, a few people swallowed the bait. That night and the next day the media—as was to be expected—focused their attention on images of American flags being burned by supporters of abortion rights.

The ruling class of America lost no time in mobilizing their forces for putting down a developing mass movement in defense of women's rights. The news coverage of the pro-choice demonstrations further illustrates how the capitalist-controlled media mis-handles reporting

of such events.

Operation Rescue (OR) leader, Randall Terry, lost no time taking advantage of the Supreme Court's attack on *Roe v. Wade*. On the day of the decision, he announced from the steps of the Court a big escalation of his right-wing extra-legal-action group's attempted blockade of abortion clinics.

But despite massive news coverage of Terry's declaration, OR's attacks on clinics the following Saturday, July 8, were decisively defeated by much larger pro-choice counter-mobilizations.

This writer was fortunate enough to be present at the confrontation between pro-choice and anti-abortion forces in Orange County that Saturday [see story on page 5]. Of the nearly 2000 defenders (who out-mobilized OR by as much as four to one), not one person was foolish enough to burn a single flag.

True enough, without any flag-burning to feature on TV screens, the media barely covered this genuinely news-worthy event. And to the extent they did cover it, they gave the false impression that the contending forces were evenly divided. They suggested, as well, that OR had succeeded in their goal of preventing clients from entering the clinic.

But over 2000 defenders of the clinic know better. We celebrated this important victory—in which the pro-choice forces kept the clinic open without depending on the treacherous support of the police. A model example was given of how to defend women's rights without swallowing the flag-burning bait. ■

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By HAYDEN PERRY

# HUD scandal reveals crisis of U.S. housing

At a time when desperate homeless men and women are seeking shelter in old cars and packing cases, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has opened its doors to profiteers and sleaze artists who have looted the agency in an orgy of fraud and larceny.

"We have influence peddling, ... we have theft, we have fraud, we have embezzlement, we have malfeasance, we have mismanagement," declared Rep. Tom Santo of California, who is heading a Congressional investigating committee.

"You name it, HUD has it." Millions of dollars have been diverted from the needy to the greedy.

Dismayed citizens are asking how a government department charged with housing the poor became the agency that has virtually destroyed public housing. And why are HUD programs being terminated when the country faces the greatest shortage of affordable homes in its history?

The answer is to be found in the 50-year history of public housing in America. Before 1937 there was no federally sponsored housing. Personal home needs were supposed to be met in the spirit of the pioneer who felled the trees and built a log cabin. Public housing was considered "socialistic."

The Depression changed a lot of attitudes. The unemployed were living in "Hoover-villes" of cardboard shacks, thousands of building-trades workers were idle, and the lumber and construction industries were prostrate. As part of the New Deal, the Housing Act of 1937 put federal money into slum clearance projects.

There was a mix of motives behind these projects: to put the unemployed to work, to bring profits to the building industry, and lastly, to get the homeless out of their cardboard shacks.

With this order of priorities, slum buildings that were home to thousands of the poorest were torn down. But they were replaced by privately owned apartments the displaced tenants could not afford. Blacks who were often victims of this kind of urban renewal called it "Black removal."

## "Great Society"

With President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" in 1965 public housing was built in many cities. But the program was administered in such a way that private enterprise reaped maximum profit, and public projects turned into worse slums than the buildings they replaced.

Speculators sold the government waste land at inflated prices. Contractors put up the buildings as cheaply and profitably as possible. Repair and maintenance problems plagued many of the buildings from the day they were opened.

But this was not the federal government's problem. Operation of the buildings was turned over to the cities where Local Housing Authorities (LHA) were set up. Washington gave the cities no money for maintenance. That was supposed to come out of rental income. But poor tenants could afford only low rent.

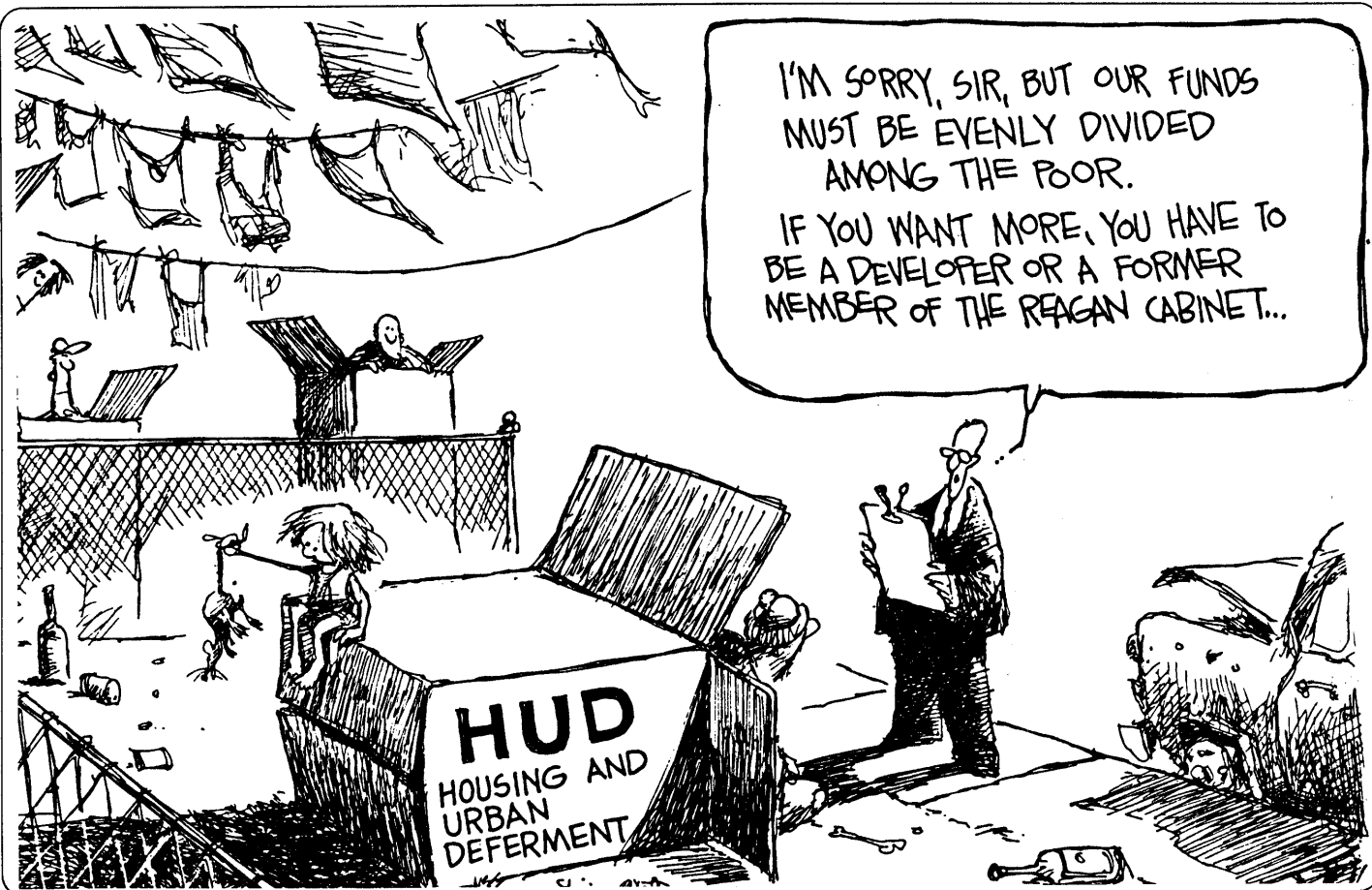
Small scattered housing projects would be cheaper to maintain, but no one wanted public housing in their neighborhood. So the poor were concentrated in multi-story ghettos of poverty down by the railroad tracks. Here all the elements that lead to decline and collapse went into motion.

First the Housing Authorities kept raising rents to generate income for maintenance. Some tenants were soon paying as much as 75 percent of their income. In 1969 enraged tenants in St. Louis went on a six-month rent strike. As a result Congress placed a ceiling on rents at 20 percent of the tenant's income. (Later raised to 30 percent.)

This further starved Housing Authorities of money for repairs, and maintenance virtually ceased at some larger projects. Then an inexorable process of decay and collapse set in. Tenants, who could, moved out; vandals moved in and reduced the building to an empty shell. Housing authorities were helpless to stop the rot. In St. Louis they dramatically brought a conclusion to this kind of housing program by dynamiting the largest housing project to a pile of rubble.

Other cities have had the same experience. In San Francisco hundreds of units stand vacant because the Housing Authority does not have the money to rehabilitate them. Meanwhile the homeless grow ever more desperate.

After the fiasco of dynamited housing projects, the government got out of the business of building them. Henceforth HUD would only make loans and grants to private



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action



***'Instead of spending \$300 billion on the war budget, a crash public works program should be implemented to (1) put people to work, and (2) provide decent housing for every American citizen. Housing should be a right—not a privilege. Rent should not exceed 10 percent of a renter's income.'***

industry to build projects for profit. Some provision was made for non-profit groups to participate. Government support was offered in various forms in over 28 programs authorized by Congress.

In one plan, apartment builders were lent money at 3 percent interest if they rented one-fifth of their apartments to low-income tenants at subsidized rents. The rents would go up to market rate when the mortgages were paid off. In another program HUD lent money to low-income home buyers. In a third program HUD guaranteed mortgages for developers who put up housing for seniors. Congress voted as much as \$26 billion for funding.

When Reagan took office, he saw HUD as an example of unwarranted government interference in private enterprise—a prime target for budget cutters. He cut the \$26 billion budget down to \$4 billion, and its staff from 16,000 to 11,000.

To head this much diminished department, Reagan chose a federal judge who knew nothing about housing. Samuel R. Pierce's lack of qualification suited Reagan perfectly. He did not want a strong advocate of subsidized housing heading that department.

Reagan found one use for HUD. He found it to be a great place for housing deserving Republicans in bureaucratic comfort. "The

White House used HUD as a dumping ground for the dregs," said a HUD official. "We just had a lot of slimy people...."

These "slimy people" and their friends outside found there were great opportunities for profit in many of the 28 HUD programs. The trouble was HUD now had only \$4 billion to spend. This meant keen competition to get a project approved.

## Foreclosure scams

"Consultants" like former Interior Secretary James Watt, who knew nothing about housing, collected \$300,000 for a few phone calls to the right people. But how could a project generate enough profit to justify such a fee?

One way was through plain larceny. Reagan fired HUD appraisers and gave the job to the banks that made the loans. The banks would appraise land and buildings at two or three times their true worth. Then HUD would guarantee loans on these inflated values. By manipulating these projects skillfully the developers could become millionaires.

Now the financially overburdened projects are going into default, and HUD has to pay the tab. The whole scandal has not yet completely unraveled, but it is estimated that HUD may lose up to \$2 billion.

An even more brazen scam is the

foreclosure swindle. Again an important HUD task was farmed out to private enterprise. Real estate agencies were hired to rehabilitate and resell houses that were in default on HUD loans. Some of them resold the houses but failed to turn the money over to HUD. No one asked for it, they said. One agent said she gave \$5 million of HUD money to charity.

Watt justified his \$300,000 fee by saying he was helping house poor people. But few people found happy homes in the projects that enriched Watt and his friends. In one case developers wanted to transform an old warehouse down by some railroad tracks into a home for the elderly. One project in Florida, built as low-income housing with HUD help, charged tenants \$2100 a month for a two-bedroom apartment.

In Los Angeles, funds were denied for projects in the poverty-stricken Compton area, but were granted for "slum rehabilitation" in Beverly Hills. The number of subsidized apartments is falling as many developers pay off their mortgages and convert to market-rate apartments. Elderly tenants then find their rents go up from \$200 to \$600 or \$700 a month.

Jack Kemp, the new Secretary is now cleaning out HUD. But what will be left when he is through? Low-cost housing has never been a priority for either the Democrats or Republicans. How else could so much corruption have gone on for so long with no one noticing? The ruling class now sees an opportunity to get the government out of housing entirely.

Jack Kemp says he wants to preserve HUD, but he is closing programs down one by one. Even when running at its best, HUD never made more than a small dent in the housing shortage. A weak, emaciated agency, headed by a secretary who does not believe in public housing, will never solve the horrendous housing crisis facing America.

Instead of spending \$300 billion on the military war budget, a crash public-works program should be implemented to (1) put people to work, and (2) provide decent housing for every American citizen. Housing should be a right—not a privilege. The cost of rent should not exceed 10 percent of a renter's income.

The fight for housing programs has to be organized by working people, the poor, and the homeless themselves. Millions are personally concerned with this crisis, from the homeless on the street, to the working poor who are paying as much as 70 percent of their income, to young middle-class people who can never afford to buy a home of their own.

Here is a coalition of millions of people. Only they have the power to enforce a rational solution to one of the most serious problems facing America. Meanwhile we will continue to be confronted with the scandal of HUD and the scandal of the homeless sleeping on our city streets. ■

# O.R. routed—as 2000 defend clinic in L.A.

TUSTIN, Calif.—On July 8, with military-like precision and planning, nearly 2000 pro-choice demonstrators from the Los Angeles area once again routed Operation Rescue (O.R.).

There have been six attempts by O.R. in the past five months to shut down L.A.-area clinics. Never knowing which of the clinics might be "hit" until O.R. car caravans begin moving out at around 7 a.m., the Coalition to Keep Abortion Safe and Legal has developed an exceedingly complex and efficient system of communications to move defenders of women's rights into place.

So far in each case, we have arrived before the anti-choice zealots in sufficient numbers to secure the doors to the medical facilities. Massive reinforcements then arrive in record time. In the most recent "hit," at the Santa Ana-Tustin Medical Pavilion in Orange County, activists traveled from other clinic mobilization sites as far as 50 miles away.

Linking arms, we physically prevented Operation Rescue from sitting in at the door and were able to maintain access until the last patient was seen and safely escorted out of the clinic.

Robin Schneider, executive director of the California Abortion Rights League—South (CARAL), announced on July 8, "We confronted them today and we beat them. Not only did we beat them, but we beat them with style."

## Stepped-up violence

We had seen an increase of violence at the previous hit in Los Angeles on June 10, when anti-choice forces kicked, punched, elbowed, and gored people in the spine with

their car keys. While the determination of our forces had prevented these stratagems from being very effective, we were resolved once again to minimize injury to our side.

Hundreds of people were trained in defensive techniques while we waited to be

mobilized in the pre-dawn hours. Peacekeeping monitors were ready to break up attacks on individuals by groups of O.R. fanatics.

Most important was our sheer weight of numbers, having again outmobilized O.R.



Kathleen O'Nan/Socialist Action

by more than 3 to 1. We literally encircled attackers, dividing them into smaller groups and forcing them onto the street.

We had learned that creativity plays a large part too. At the June 10 confrontation, one of the most violent attackers was a Catholic priest. As he attempted to kick his way to the clinic door, dozens of people chanted, "Father Leo is kicking, Father Leo is kicking!" This proved to be very embarrassing to him, as it exposed the hypocrisy of O.R.'s self-proclaimed comparison to the non-violent civil rights movement.

Operation Rescue purports to be non-violent, yet instances of violence are increasingly common. At O.R. training sessions, some individuals show each other how to pinch, elbow, and "car key" clinic defenders without being caught in the act by the police or media.

## A new threat by O.R.

During the week of Aug. 8-18, O.R. has asked anti-abortion forces from all over the country to come to Los Angeles to close down the clinics in the area.

Their so-called "Live-In" will coincide with the beginning of trial proceedings for O.R. leader Randall Terry, who is charged with conspiracy for his role in the March 25 "Holy Week of Rescue."

This major threat by O.R. must be met by a major mobilization of pro-choice forces from all over the Southwest. Once again, we will let Operation Rescue and the Catholic Church know, "Not the Church, not the state, women will control their fate."

For information on how to join us, call the American Civil Liberties Union pro-choice hotline at (213) 487-INFO or Socialist Action at (213) 250-4608. ■

## ...Operation Rescue

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ominously: "Time is running out for America. If we don't end this holocaust very soon, the judgment of God is going to fall on this nation. Judah was destroyed because some Jews killed their own children and others stood passively by and didn't try to stop them."

These fanatics are not satisfied with adhering to their own religious beliefs. They want to impose their religion on the entire population—to make it the law of the land. And they have counterparts among mainstream religious organizations. The Catholic Church hierarchy, in the person of Archbishop Roger M. Mahoney of the Los Angeles diocese, presented himself in person on June 10, 1989, at an O.R. blockade and praised O.R. as people of "great commitment and courage."

If this logic were similarly applied by all religious groups (and fortunately it is not), we would see conservative Methodists demanding that dancing and card playing be outlawed; Amish would push to ban cars, electricity and buttons; Christian Scientists would blockade everyone from using doctors and hospitals and so on and so forth.

These acts would obviously be in violation of one of the most basic principles we have observed in this country—the separation of church and state and the prohibition against the establishment of a state religion.

Operation Rescue has resorted to illegal acts to prevent women from exercising their right to an abortion because they do not have the popular support necessary to build a genuinely massive movement to attain their goal. But they are seriously trying to build such a movement and we cannot take them lightly.

The threat posed cannot be ignored, especially since it is echoed at the highest levels of government. Any success these fanatics have will embolden others who seek to limit or abridge the rights of Blacks and other minorities in this country.

Ultimately, any O.R. success encourages those who seek to prevent workers from protecting their hard-won rights as well as their living standards.

We should make no mistake about the fact that the ruling class and its surrogates first attack those it perceives to be the most vulnerable. But as the recent Supreme Court decisions against affirmative action and workers' rights to return to their jobs after a strike demonstrate, the ruling class is ultimately interested in undermining the democratic rights of women, Blacks, other minorities, and the working class as a whole.

They constantly press to lower our living standards in their drive for greater profits and control over the organizations which are formed to defend our rights.

The gut reaction of women, and all those who support women's rights, to Operation Rescue and to the renewed government attacks on abortion has been one of complete indignation and disgust. The anti-abortion forces have inadvertently generated the kind of renewed commitment on a mass scale that can stop them in their own tracks.

What kind of a movement can we build that will do just this? History is replete with lessons on how truly significant advances for women's rights (such as the right to vote, the ending of child labor, etc.) were won. These are the main elements:

### We represent the majority!

1) Women are a majority of the population and women's rights are in the *direct interest* of a majority of men as well. Our movement can and must reach out for support to the majority of the population and expect a sympathetic and supportive response.

For this reason building the National Organization for Women (NOW) and *broadly representative action-based coalitions* that include every possible organization and individual is an important tactic.

At the very least, the movement should begin by reaching out to the vast numbers of women from all walks of life who have had abortions, those men who supported that personal decision, and those young women who have grown up since the Roe v. Wade decision with the expectation that abortion is an option if the need arises.

At the least, the movement should reach out to those organizations which support women's rights. These include labor unions, Black and Hispanic and lesbian and gay groups. Educational, professional, medical, and legal organizations should be approached.

In short, we should involve the broad spectrum of the population that makes up the pro-choice majority indicated in public opinion polls.

### No reliance on Democrats

2) The wealthy rulers of society whose representatives in the two political parties—the Democrats and the Republicans—fundamentally control the government, cannot be entrusted to protect or guarantee, much less grant us, our rights. *Our movement must be fiercely independent of both political parties.*

Rights are won, not granted. They are the product of vast social forces, of workers and their allies, of the oppressed in general, who mobilize in powerful movements against the *status quo* of inequality, discrimination, and poverty. As a rule, the codification of these rights is resisted by the political parties of the wealthy. This is the lesson of the defeat of the ERA.

After a promising beginning of passing the ERA in Congress and winning a majori-

ty of the State Legislatures through a massive, visible, public campaign punctuated by massive street demonstrations, many central leaders of the women's rights movement made a fatal error. They relied on the Democratic Party instead of continuing and deepening the massive street demonstrations which brought the ERA to public attention in the first place.

They adopted as the main strategy the trading of political support to candidates of the Democratic Party for a promise of a pro-ERA vote in state legislatures.

The "pro-ERA" candidates, once safely in office, frequently dropped their support and betrayed the women's movement, voting down the ERA. Not only did we lose this important battle, but the movement was demoralized and demobilized. It lost membership and sustained other losses as well, in-

erate. The larger the mobilizations of all supporters of women's rights, the less effective Operation Rescue will be, and more important, the harder it will be for the Administration and courts to get away with chipping away at our rights.

An editorial in the January 1989 *National NOW Times* states, "...landmark Supreme Court decisions that affect the course and direction of American life are as much, if not more, political decisions than they are 'legal' decisions."

This is the crux of the matter. The ability of the women's movement to create a strong pole of attraction for all those who sympathize with our cause will be the decisive factor in the months ahead.

The mobilizations which renewed the pro-choice movement on April 9, 1989, cannot end. Our strategy must be one of ever broadening and building mass actions. The larger our actions, the more power we have to enforce our right to access to the clinics.

The aim of mass actions is to create a political climate in which both legal and illegal attacks against a women's right to choose *will not be tolerated.*

Mass demonstrations to stop Operation Rescue from their campaign at the clinics will make it impossible for them to operate and will at the same time demoralize them. Local police forces, under the scrutiny of a mobilized movement, will have to clear out the Operation Rescue blockaders far more expeditiously than they have up to now or we will have to do it ourselves.

The size and determination of our mobilizations will also have the effect of providing moral support to those women who have been compelled to bear the brunt of the O.R. invasion of the right to privacy.

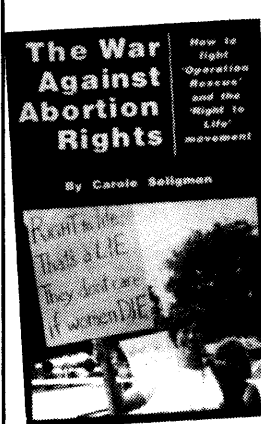
Petition campaigns and campaigns in support of pro-choice legislation can be good tactics that go hand in hand with efforts to mobilize mass actions at the state and national level. But they must not be seen as substitutes for the direct involvement of powerful social forces, of women and all their allies.

Mass action is the *key* to winning because it is active, not passive. It is done in concert with others instead of alone. It therefore has the effect of diminishing the sense of powerlessness that the anti-abortion zealots would like us to feel. Mass actions can also be the vehicle for recruiting clinic defenders in the numbers needed to render O.R. totally ineffective.

Mass action is already revitalizing the movement after its long slump. A mass-action strategy will give impetus to the movement to expand from one that defends our endangered rights to one filled with renewed efforts to win the ERA, childcare, equal pay, job rights, and more.

Through such a process we can begin to organize a movement that can fight for and win genuine equality for everyone. ■

**A key pamphlet**



**The War on Abortion Rights: How to Fight 'Operation Rescue' and the 'Right to Life' Movement**

By Carole Sellgman

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cluding federal funding for abortion, affirmative action programs, and more.

History has proven that we cannot rely on the Republicans or Democrats to defend our rights. We can only rely on organizing our own power. Hopefully the movement will learn from these defeats and not repeat mistaken strategies.

### Power in numbers

3) Though we struggle through the legislature and the courts to defend and extend our rights, we must recognize that our real political power lies in *our numbers*. Thus, the strategy of building a highly visible, public, mass-action movement, through powerful and nationally coordinated demonstrations is most important.

The Oct. 29, 1988, mobilization in Boston against Operation Rescue and the national actions initiated by the National Organization for Women for abortion rights and the ERA on April 2 and April 9, 1989, are a stunning example of the power we can gen-

# ... NOW national rally

(continued from page 1)

current of urgency and readiness to build a militant mass movement flowed among the delegates.

Many delegates were young women who had recently joined NOW and had assumed reproductive freedom to be a birthright. Many others, experienced activists, were looking for a new strategy to reverse the recent series of defeats suffered by women.

The NOW leadership traditionally has had a strategy of supporting Democratic Party politicians who pay lip service to women's rights. But the pressure of the membership is causing them to respond in a more militant fashion to these defeats.

Since the historic April 9, 1989, march in Washington, D.C.—which mobilized over 600,000—NOW has grown dramatically. It has close to 200,000 members.

Delegates from around the country reported that thousands of women have contacted their chapters seeking to join and find out what they can do. Since the *Webster* decision, NOW's volunteer staff has had trouble keeping up with the flood of phone calls.

## Population control?

The majority of women who attended the conference want to fight for the democratic right to control their bodies. Unfortunately, NOW President Molly Yard's keynote address linked abortion rights to population control in the context of concern for the environment.

Claiming a need to change the argument for legal abortion in order to "reach out to new allies," Yard said that legal abortion is necessary to stop "the population bomb [that] is accelerating rapidly and, if not checked, will destroy this planet."

"There is a direct connection between the environment, population explosion and the need to stabilize population growth," said Yard. "We must have a two-child family worldwide, and to achieve it we must have family planning and birth control."

This stand represents a retreat from defending abortion rights on the basis of women's democratic rights. Many of the delegates were not happy with this population control focus, which has racist overtones.

Advocating population control as a solution for the destruction of the environment blames the victims of poverty and ignores

the role of the multi-national corporations. Their drive for profit is stripping the Third World of its resources and, in the process, impoverishing its people and fouling the planet.

## Dissatisfied with Democrats

Moreover, Yard stressed the need to mobilize people to continue voting for "pro-choice" candidates on the local and national level. These candidates are part of a political party—the Democratic Party—that has continuously betrayed the women's rights movement. This fact has become increasingly troublesome to many members.

At various workshops the membership expressed more enthusiasm for building protests and coalitions than for getting out the votes for Democrats.

At the "Who's Invited to the Party?" political workshop, Molly Yard and Eleanor Smeal, head of the Fund for the Feminist Majority, opened what they called an "exploratory" discussion on forming a feminist party.

They stated that they were "flabbergasted," when the over 200 delegates in the room demanded that the convention go on record in favor of organizing a third party immediately. "We thought we were writing a resolution for you to explore," Smeal said, "we didn't know you wanted it right now."

One delegate said, "I'm tired of trying to change the friggin' Democratic Party." Another delegate, a member of the Democratic Party Executive Committee of Dade county, Fla., stated that working in the Democratic Party "was a waste of time."

*Socialist Action* columnist, Sylvia Weinstein, a NOW delegate from San Francisco, received a standing ovation in the workshop when she stated that the only way women have ever won their rights is when they or-

ganized mass action outside of the two capitalist parties. She was later quoted in *The Cincinnati Enquirer* and *The Boston Globe*.

The workshop expressed a desire to drop the losing strategy of reliance on the Democrats. The conference resolution approved the day after this workshop called for NOW to "form an exploratory commission to investigate the formation of a new party dedicated to equality for women."

## "Not a states' rights issue"

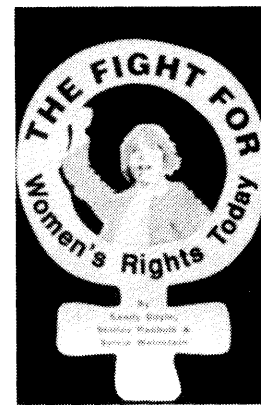
NOW Vice President Sheri O'Dell introduced a "Freedom Campaign for Women's Lives," which called for the Nov. 12 demonstration in Washington, D.C. Some delegates opposed this plank, saying that a national march conflicted with their campaign to get local Democrats elected.

Both the national NOW leadership and the overwhelming majority of delegates in the room opposed this retreat to a state-by-state fight. "The fight for abortion rights is not a states' rights issue," said O'Dell, comparing the women's rights struggle to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. "States rights is a code word for segregation."

In the Southwest Regional Caucus, Janet Cook, California NOW action coordinator, further explained the need for a national focus. "We lost the ERA when we went state-by-state," she said. She contrasted this defeat to the victory of the anti-Vietnam War movement, which kept its fight on the federal level.

Other delegates emphasized that their chapters were clamoring for a national march to keep the focus on the federal level, and said the time to strike was now. The Nov. 12 national march was approved overwhelmingly.

The conference passed resolutions with strong support for the striking Eastern Airlines flight attendants and the Pittston coal miners, affirmative action, the NAACP August 1989 March on Washington, the legal



## The Fight for Women's Rights Today

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distribution of and further research into the new abortion drug RU486, militant defense of family planning clinics against the terrorist attacks of Operation Rescue, and lesbian and gay rights.

Clearly, the conference was proof that the women's rights movement is not only alive and well, but is ready to fight. All supporters of women's rights should make it a priority to ensure that the Nov. 12 abortion rights demonstration in Washington, D.C. is the largest in history.

Joni Jacobs, Joe Ryan, and Carole Seligman contributed to this article.

## S.F. NOW starts plans in high gear

SAN FRANCISCO—On July 15 (a sunny Saturday afternoon when they could have been enjoying the outdoors) 300 people, mostly women, packed standing-room-only into the Women's Building to volunteer for the campaign to secure the right to safe, legal, accessible abortion.

The meeting, organized by the San Francisco chapter of the National Organization for Women, was portrayed on Channel 4 evening news as a meeting of NOW activists called to respond to the Supreme Court's *Webster* decision. Many people in attendance had never before been involved in the abortion rights struggle or the women's movement. But they sure were involved now!

They signed up in the hundreds to help defend the abortion clinics against Operation Rescue and to staff information tables that NOW will send to 25 different locations throughout the city for the next 10 Saturdays. They also signed up to help build the mass demonstrations called by National and California NOW for this fall and to participate in NOW's legislative and electoral activities.

Thirty-six people joined San Francisco NOW at the meeting, and \$1300 was collected to help carry out this ambitious campaign of pro-choice activities. You can get involved by calling (415) 861-8937.

California NOW has called a march and rally for Oct. 15, 1989 in San Francisco. The action will be a major West Coast demonstration to keep abortion safe, legal, and accessible and will be a building action for the Nov. 12 Washington, D.C., mobilization. One goal will be to raise funds to help get people from the West Coast to the Washington action. For more information, call S.F. NOW at (415) 861-8880. —C.S.



Pittston strikers and supporters rally in St. Paul, Va., on July 4.

## Miners' rally warns Boston bankers

By SCOTT ADAMS-COOPER

BOSTON—Richard Trumka, president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), visited here recently to build support for the struggle of miners who have been on strike against the Pittston Coal Group since April 5.

Pittston shares a director with Shawmut Bank, headquartered here, and Trumka met at City Hall with councilors who have introduced legislation calling for Boston to suspend all dealings with the bank and pull its deposits if Shawmut does not sever its ties with Pittston. He also addressed the national union convention of the American

Federation of Radio and Television Artists (AFTRA).

Trumka was joined in Boston by 40 Pittston miners who have been doing strike support work in Greenwich, Conn., where Pittston is headquartered.

A high point of the visit came on July 13. The Boston Building Trades Council—in three days—built a militant picket line and rally at Shawmut's downtown office tower that drew close to 400 unionists. Members of the three unions on strike against Eastern Air Lines—as well as hotel workers, rail labor, and others—joined the building trades at the rally.

Arthur Osborne, Massachusetts AFL-CIO president, addressed the rally, as did Trumka and an Eastern machinist.

Representatives of the Communications Workers of America, moving closer toward a telephone company strike, announced a support rally at Faneuil Hall for July 29, followed by picketing at the Nynex headquarters.

With the miners and the Eastern strikers

looking to participate, as well as Massachusetts' public employee unions, under attack from the state's budget crisis, it promises to be a large and militant outpouring of fightback sentiment.

## ... Va. miners

(continued from page 1)

side of the officials. (There have been over 2000 arrests and the UMWA faces fines with a potential cost of \$1.4 trillion.)

Although the miners are now hurting Pittston Coal economically, the strike will most likely continue for some time. It will be a test of strength and determination.

Although the strike has now lasted three months, the moral of the strikers remains high. In order to organize the support necessary for victory, the UMWA leadership must demonstrate that it has the same fighting capacity as the membership.

# What did the French Revolution achieve?

By CLIFF CONNER

The tumultuous events of the French Revolution obviously had an immense impact on French and European society during the decade following 1789. But after the dust had settled, what had been accomplished? Had a fundamental social transformation occurred or not? Were there any positive and enduring results, and if so, what were they?

Historians have usually taken for granted the proposition that the French Revolution was "the great turning point of modern civilization." Since the 1950s, however, a school of "revisionist" historians has challenged this assumption. We shall consider their arguments in more detail in the third and final article in this series.

For now, let us restrict ourselves to noting that the primary focus of their attack is Karl Marx's contention that the French Revolution was a bourgeois revolution—the triumph of capitalism over feudalism.

According to the Marxist view, the essential causative factor underlying historical change is class struggle. In the case of the French Revolution, the struggle was between a hereditary nobility that had emerged as the ruling class in the feudal system and a rising bourgeois—or capitalist—class.

In earlier centuries the feudal system that the landed aristocrats presided over had been economically progressive, but by the 18th century it had run its course and was incapable of further expansion. Within the framework of feudalism, however, urban centers had developed and with them a new, dynamic social class based not on landed wealth but on "movable" wealth.

The two classes had irreconcilable interests; feudal property relations acted as a brake on capitalist development. As the wealth and social importance of the capitalists grew, the conflict intensified until a showdown was unavoidable.

Which of the counterposed social systems would prevail? The Revolution decided in favor of the bourgeoisie, and the way was cleared for the development of France—and much of continental Europe—along capitalist lines.

The critical reader will notice that this brief summary of the Marxist view is a series of generalizations without much reference to conditions as they actually existed in 18th-century France. The revisionist historians have seized on such abstractions to claim that Marxists base their analysis not on historical evidence but on metaphysical principles.

The rest of this article will attempt to demonstrate the historical basis underlying the generalizations.

## The bourgeois revolution

What, precisely, was the "bourgeois revolution" that occurred in France at the end of the 18th century, and why did it make a difference?

Economic activity—the production of the necessities of life—is the basis of all human culture. Let us begin by considering how production was organized in France before the Revolution and who benefited from the way it was organized.

First of all, production was predominantly agricultural, and the producers were almost all peasants. Of France's total population of about 25 million, considerably more than 20 million were peasants. Non-agricultural production included the varied output of urban and rural artisans plus textiles, a small iron industry, and a small chemical industry producing such things as soap, dyes, and gunpowder.

In 1789, however, the industrial revolution was still three-quarters of a century in the future for France, so both agriculture and industry were characterized by very small productive units.

## Feudalism in the 18th century

In what sense was agriculture organized according to feudal relations of production? Just as capitalist rule has taken many forms—from totalitarian dictatorship to parliamentary democracy—so has the term



A 1789 caricature lambasts the brutality of France's privileged classes—the nobility, clergy, and army officers—who were enriched by riding on the back of the 'common man.'

"feudalism" covered a variety of social arrangements.

Classical feudalism legally bound the serfs to the land and subjected them to the arbitrary rule of local landowners. By the late 18th century, classical feudalism had vanished from large parts of Western Europe, although it had been maintained in varying degrees of rigidity in the East.

Generally speaking (and ignoring the Iberian peninsula), the farther east one looked in Europe, the harsher the lot of the peasant was—from Austria, through Prussia, to Russia, where serfs were virtual slaves well into the 19th century.

In France, the face of feudalism had changed considerably by 1789. Only about 5 percent of French peasants were still serfs in the classical sense; the rest were legally free. Almost three-quarters of peasant heads-of-households owned at least some of the land they cultivated, but because their holdings were so small, most also had to work as sharecroppers or tenant farmers on land they did not own. The one quarter who were completely landless worked as rural laborers.

That minority of peasant landowners who owned enough to survive without sharecropping or tenant farming were the furthest removed from classical serfdom. Even these freeholders, however, were far from free in their role as agricultural producers.

## The peasantry suffers

No one has ever surpassed Alexis de Tocqueville's description of the status of the landowning peasant in relation to his aristocratic "neighbors." This peasant, Tocqueville wrote, is:

"A man so passionately devoted to the soil that he spends all his earnings on buying land, no matter what it costs. To acquire it, he must begin by paying certain dues, not to the government but to other landowners of the neighborhood.

"When at long last he has gained possession of this land . . . the neighbors aforesaid put in an appearance, drag him away from his cherished fields, and bid him work elsewhere without payment. When he tries to protect his seedlings from the animals they hunt, they tell him to take down his fences, and they lie in wait for him at river crossings to exact a toll.

"At the market there they are again, to make him pay for the right of selling the produce of his land, and when on his return home he wants to use the wheat he has put aside for his daily needs, he has to take it to their mill to have it ground, and then to have his bread baked in the lord's oven.

"Thus, part of the income from his small domain goes to supporting these men in the form of charges which are inprescriptible and irredeemable. Whatever he sets out to do, he finds these tiresome neighbors barring his path, interfering in his simple pleasures and his work, and consuming the produce of his toil. And when he has done with them, other fine gentlemen dressed in black (tithe-collectors) step in and take the greater part of his harvest.

"When we remember the special temperament of the French peasant proprietor in the 18th century, his ruling interests and passions, and the treatment accorded him, we can well understand the rankling grievances that burst into flame in the French Revolution." (Alexis de Tocqueville, "The Old Regime and the French Revolution," originally published in 1856.)

Feudal extractions in money, in kind, and in forced labor continued to define and delimit the economic activities of even these "free" peasants. One can only concur with Tocqueville's conclusion that, "even after it ceased to be a political institution, the feudal system remained basic to the economic organization of France."

The landowning peasants in particular had the glories of capitalist agriculture dangled before their eyes, but their hands were tied by all the encumbrances described by Tocqueville. Under those conditions, the incentive to improve their land or increase production was limited, since the benefits would go more to their hated "neighbors" than to themselves.

They could see, however, that if they could get the nobles off their backs—if they could take full advantage of the free market without the burden of feudal dues and taxes—greater crop yields would redound to their own profit. Aristocratic rule in the countryside, then, was the primary obstacle to the further development of agricultural productivity.

Despite their differing conditions, all of the peasants were united in their opposition to

the feudal system because all faced the same enemy. The freeholder's "neighbor," the sharecropper's landlord, the agricultural laborer's boss, and the serf's lord were all members of the same aristocratic ruling class. The peasants, in alliance with urban revolutionaries, freed themselves by defeating their common enemy in struggle from 1789 to 1793.

## A potential proletariat

The most far-reaching result of the liberation of the peasantry was not its effect on agriculture but its impact on the production system as a whole.

The essential prerequisite for the development of a capitalist economy is the existence of a free labor force—a pool of propertyless proletarians. As long as the vast majority of the population is unable to leave the land, no such labor force is possible and capitalist development must necessarily be sharply restricted.

As we saw in last month's article in *Socialist Action*, the moderate revolutionaries of 1789 ended feudalism as a legal system, but proposed that the peasants compensate the nobles by paying a heavy price for their emancipation. Such an arrangement would have replaced the bonds of feudal law with debt bondage; the peasants would still have been tied to the land for a long, long time—as in Russia following the 1861 emancipation of the serfs.

The development of a modern proletariat would have been severely impeded. That is why the 1793 decree cancelling all of the peasants' obligations without compensation was the decisive act of the bourgeois revolution. It put an end to the feudal mode of production once and for all and transformed the peasantry into a *potential* proletariat.

## Changing the tariff system

The transformation of property relations in the countryside, then, was the key to the bourgeois revolution. But the system of non-agricultural production was in dire need of change as well. Urban petty production was hamstrung by royal monopolies, internal tariffs, the guild system, and the lack of a uniform system of weights and measures.

The internal tariffs were economic obstacles in a very literal sense: The most notorious case involved a wall built around Paris to prevent smugglers from avoiding certain tariffs. Although smuggling was a capital offense, the death penalty was apparently an insufficient deterrent; it has been estimated that before the wall was built about 20 percent of the goods entering Paris entered as contraband.

A great deal of money was spent constructing fancy buildings along the wall to serve as customs posts. The whole project became a focus of popular odium. The customs posts were perceived as fortresses for the oppression of the people, and the tariffs were resented because they added appreciably to the cost of food and wine entering the city. During the insurrectionary days of July 1789, the Parisian *sans-culottes* systematically demolished 40 of the 54 customs posts.

The internal tariff system was much more than a wall around Paris, however; it formed economic walls separating all of the provinces of France. To sell a commodity more than a few miles from where it was made meant crossing a tariff barrier and paying a fee. It also meant paying exorbitant tolls for transportation on roads and rivers. The farther a manufacturer or merchant tried to extend the market for his product, the more tariffs and tolls he would encounter.

This system prevented the development of even regional, let alone national, markets and set sharp limits to economic growth and development.

In addition to these restrictions on commerce, the guild system directly hampered production by forcing artisans to pay heavy fees for the privilege of plying their trades.

In 1776, Jacques Turgot, Louis XVI's finance minister, tried to introduce reforms

(continued on next page)

that would abolish these "arbitrary institutions" that "stifle industry."

Turgot issued an edict stating that "by means of the inordinate expenses artisans are compelled to incur in order to acquire the liberty of labor, by the exactions of all kinds they must endure, by the multiplied penalties for so-called offenses" the guilds "surcharge industry with an enormous tax" and "give rise to schemes whose effect is to increase beyond all natural proportion the price of commodities which are most necessary for the subsistence of the people."

Turgot's diagnosis of the problem was accurate, but his reforming efforts were to no avail; they led only to his removal from office.

Turgot was but one of the many would-be reformers who failed. It took the dynamite blast of the Revolution to dislodge the entrenched interests defending the status quo. By February 1791, the National Assembly had introduced a uniform system of weights and measures, abolished the internal tariffs, eliminated private tolls on roads and rivers, and suppressed the guilds.

**"Open careers to talent!"**

Another critical social problem in pre-revolutionary France had affected what today are called "yuppies:" young urban professionals.

In spite of all the handicaps placed upon trade and production, capitalist wealth had continued to expand during the 18th century, primarily on the basis of international commerce. The distortion of the economy and the social restrictions of the old regime combined to generate a layer of educated bourgeois youth with limited prospects for employment. Some found occupations as lawyers, doctors, teachers, or writers—but many more remained on the fringes of the professions.

Success often depended upon finding noble patronage. The prestigious positions at the top of the professions—especially in politics, law, and the military—were reserved for nobles. As a result, the members of the marginalized intelligentsia became the most vocal proponents of the bourgeois democratic revolution, raising the powerful slogan: "Open careers to talent!"

Representatives of this social layer—including Brissot, Marat, Danton, Robespierre—predominated in the leadership of the Revolution from 1789 forward.

And, in fact, the democratic aspects of the Revolution very quickly answered to the career interests of the bourgeois professionals. Freedom of the press stimulated employment in publishing and journalism; equality before the law and the extension of the legal system required an increase in the number of lawyers and judges; and of course vast opportunities in politics and administration were created with the birth of a parliamentary government.

Most important, the Revolution succeeded in "opening careers to talent" by breaking the social dominance of the nobility.

These, then, in summary, were the primary accomplishments of the bourgeois revolution: the peasants were liberated from feudal exactions, the guilds and internal tariffs were swept away, and careers were opened to talent. Furthermore, the extensive landholdings of the Church were expropriated, and the very definition of "property" was profoundly transformed.

**Good for business**

All of these measures created a relatively free-market economic environment conducive to the development of capitalism: one that was good for business.

The principal long-term beneficiaries of the Revolution were the business class: entrepreneurs, manufacturers, merchants, and bankers. The new society was geared to serving their class interests rather than those of the landed aristocracy. That is what is summed up in Marx's phrase: "bourgeois revolution."

This is not to say, of course, that a full-blown capitalist economy immediately sprang into existence in France. The destruction of internal tariff barriers, for example, created the possibility of a unified national market, but the actual development of the national market would have to wait almost a century until railroads were able to connect all parts of France.

Likewise, the loosening of the traditional ties holding the peasants on the land provided a potential source of urban industrial workers, but the actual conversion of peasants into proletarians was a lengthy process. Paradoxically, the sale of nationalized

Church and emigré lands tended to retard that movement by strengthening the position of the rural petty producers. But again; regardless of the pace of capitalist growth after the Revolution, the Revolution was the indispensable action that cleared the way for capitalist development.

**Contradictory democratic legacy**

Although the socio-economic transformation was the essential achievement of the Revolution, it was certainly not its only important legacy. Most bicentennial commentators, in fact, have concentrated more on the Revolution's democratic features as symbolized by the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen."

The old regime had been founded on the principle of natural inequality; that some people were by birth superior to others and thereby entitled to special privileges. The Revolution produced a social order based on the opposite premise of human equality. From this premise were derived the rights to equality before the law, representative government, and guarantees of civil liberties.

The importance of the democratic legacy of the French Revolution to the cause of human progress is undeniable. But those who focus solely on the democratic achievements are seeing only the surface of events and missing the underlying dynamic.

The Napoleonic experience bears this out. The export of the French Revolution to the rest of Western Europe began before Bonaparte came on the scene.

Sister republics were created in Holland, Switzerland, Northern Italy, Naples, and the Papal States by means of revolutionary action led by local "Jacobins" with the crucial support of French arms. Thus was the social transformation of Western Europe initiated, later to be consolidated and extended by the Napoleonic wars.

Bonaparte, however, was anything but a democrat. He did away with the republics and converted them into kingdoms ruled by his brothers, other relatives, and assorted sidekicks. At home he scrapped the French Republic, crowned himself Emperor, and even created a new titled nobility.

By naming his brother Jerome as King of Westphalia, his brother Louis as King of Holland, and his brother Joseph as King of Naples (and later Spain), he intended to create a new royal dynasty to rule Europe long into the future.

**Essential differences**

Nonetheless, the Napoleonic system differed in key respects from traditional monarchies. For one thing, the titles of his newly created nobility were not based on birthright or landownership but on merit: military, administrative, or scientific "talent." It is also significant that this aristocracy was only about one-seventh the size of the old Bourbon nobility.

Second, he imposed a unified body of law, the Napoleonic Code, on the conquered territories, based on the principle of equality before the law (i.e., the negation of legal

aristocratic privilege).

But most important, he exported the *bourgeois revolution* to those areas he controlled: The essence of the Napoleonic Code was the principle of bourgeois property rights, which supplanted the old-regime system based on birthright and the feudal system of production.

In 1807 Napoleon sent a constitution for Jerome to impose on the newly created Kingdom of Westphalia. The main point, he wrote to Jerome, was "that every trace of serfdom, or of a feudal hierarchy between the sovereign and the lowest class of his subjects, shall be done away with."

Bonaparte's armies, in short, reproduced throughout Western Europe that new social order that was good for business. Again, Bonaparte's regime did not create capitalism out of nothing, nor did it produce fully developed capitalist economies, but it did liberate peasants and clear away obstacles to the future development of capitalism.

**Spread of new social relations**

The spread of the dynamic new social system extended beyond the bounds of Bonaparte's conquests. After his victory over Prussia at Jena in 1806, he directly abolished serfdom in territories wrested from Prussian control.

But Prussia itself, which was defeated but not conquered or occupied, also experienced a social transformation. The Prussian Reform Movement came to power and abolished serfdom throughout its remaining territories. The French Revolution had created a new Europe, and Prussia was forced to modernize or cease to exist as a sovereign state.

What Bonaparte's armies carried with them of the French Revolution was not democracy or republicanism, but bourgeois social relations. That was the essential legacy of the French Revolution to human progress. Bourgeois democracy and stable republics were far in the future for most of Western Europe.

After Bonaparte's final defeat, the Bourbon monarchy was reimposed on France, and the Metternich era of reaction descended upon Europe. But for all the superficial, symbolic reversals, the essential achievements of the Revolution survived, both inside and outside France.

Some of the French aristocratic families got some compensation—hush money, really—but never got their lands back. Nowhere were freed serfs returned to serfdom; nowhere were the results of the peasant rebellion undone.

(These generalizations must be qualified with regard to two countries—Poland and Spain—where the bourgeoisie or "middle class" was relatively small and weak. In Poland, Bonaparte had emancipated the serfs but was unable to liquidate the aristocracy, so *de facto* feudal relations persisted. Spain was the only country where Napoleonic reforms were actually reversed after the final defeat of the Napoleonic empire.)

**Revolution of 1830**

Fifteen years of Bourbon restoration in France vanished with hardly a trace in 1830 as a relatively small insurrection dispatched the Bourbons once and for all and allowed Louis Philippe, the bourgeois king, to come to the throne.

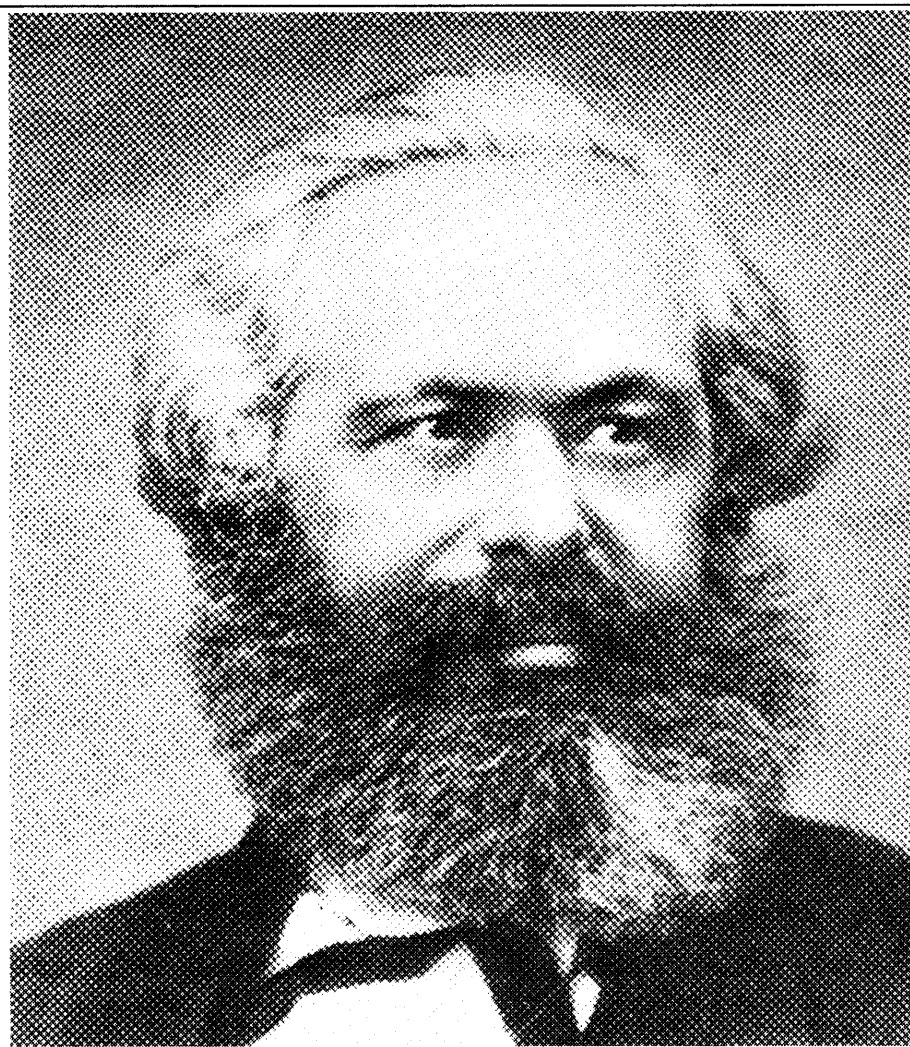
Louis Philippe immediately displayed a partiality toward the great magnates of finance capital. Although he appeared to be their royal patron, the opposite was the case, of course; it was they who had put him on the throne.

(To get a feel for the spirit of the times, look at Daumier's prints and read Balzac's novels. Marx said that one can learn more about bourgeois society from Balzac's novels than from any non-fictional source. Balzac's "Pere Goriot," for example, illustrates that during the Bourbon restoration the trappings of aristocracy were highly prestigious, but money still made the world go 'round.)

The essential achievements of the French Revolution proved to be irreversible. By establishing capitalist social relations on the continent of Europe, the door was opened to the greatest advance in the material basis of human existence that the world had ever seen.

Today, approaching the final decade of the 20th century, we confront a capitalism that has long passed its progressive era and now spawns only war, racism, poverty, oppression, and destruction of the environment. Nevertheless, it would be ahistorical to deny the role of capitalism in creating the modern world.

That is why revolutionary socialists revere the memory of the great bourgeois revolution that began to unfold exactly 200 years ago in France.



***"Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon—these were the heroes...who, with Roman trappings and phrases, accomplished the mission of their epoch: they unleashed and established modern bourgeois society. The first four of these smashed feudalism....The fifth, Napoleon, created inside France the conditions that made it possible for free competition to develop, for the redistributed land to be exploited, and for the newly liberated productive energy of the nation to be put to use; beyond the borders of France, he swept away feudal institutions....Once the new form of society had been established those giants disappeared from the face of the earth, and with them vanished the resurrected Romanism...and Caesar himself."***

**—Karl Marx**

***The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte***

By RALPH SCHOENMAN

*Socialist Action sent a team of reporters to China following the crackdown there. In our July issue, Ralph Schoenman wrote about his conversations with student activists in Shanghai. In this issue, Schoenman continues the story, writing about his experiences in Beijing.*

Our arrival in Beijing brought us face to face with the realities of martial law. We were the only Americans in our hotel, the Jing-lun or Beijing-Toronto, on Chang An Avenue leading to Tiananmen Square.

The hotel manager, Ma Si, received us and advised us to carry our passports, never photograph soldiers, know that it is forbidden to walk in Tiananmen Square, and be careful—particularly at night when shooting could be widely heard and check-points were common.

We knew we would have a harder time contacting people in Beijing—without jeopardizing them—than we had faced in Shanghai.

The wide avenues of central Beijing were bracketed by high-rise luxury hotels, office buildings of glass, and sites cleared of workers' housing. Soldiers with automatic rifles were at every major intersection and stood back to back with weapons poised. Their faces were stony, expressionless.

Unlike in Shanghai, on the main streets passersby rarely smiled and averted their eyes. There was fear and tension in the air.

We set out quickly for the universities. They were under armed guard, with soldiers surrounding them and security police at the entrance gates.

#### At Beijing University

Beijing University is near the Summer Palace of the Empress Cu Xi, an exquisite series of temples, arcades, and monuments along a lake and endless hills and walkways. We had lived there in 1985, and we knew the area well.

The soldiers at the entrance to Beijing University were determined not to let us in. By a combined strategy of emphasizing our tourist status and pretending not to understand, we persuaded the young soldier in charge to let us "walk across the bridge."

We kept going. We saw quickly that students were fearful to speak, even when we nodded or greeted them in Chinese. Finally, one student responded, and I began discussing the status of things. "Don't be misled by the tranquility inside the university ground," he cautioned me.

"It is very dangerous. People are picked up. We are surrounded by army units. Each entrance and exit is checked. All identity cards are checked. Many are in hiding. Mainly graduate students are here or those needing to take exams in order to get degrees."

"Most students are 'away' in the countryside," he added. "I don't know how many will return."

We explained that people were supporting them outside China and mentioned the international appeal we were circulating that demands an end to the repression. [For more about the appeal, see page 11.] He smiled and said that it was welcome. It is a very difficult time, he told us. No one knows what may happen here next.

We quickly shook hands and, wishing him luck, moved on. He flashed a "V" sign as we left.

Walking on throughout the park-like campus, we observed the care with which people averted their gaze, some offering furtive smiles before doing so. Soon we noticed a car approaching. It was the taxi which had brought us to the campus, and we were surprised. The driver indicated that the soldiers had sent him to find us. We thanked him and sent him away.

After five minutes, the soldier appeared. We smiled broadly at him as we continued the charade of not comprehending what he said. When he asked us where we were staying, we asked him his age. His English was limited. We managed to walk out undetained.

#### A middle-school student

In the working-class neighborhoods near the Summer Palace, people were friendly but wary. Walking along a polluted river in which people were swimming, we met a young swimmer who asked us from which country we had come.

His eyes darted around him alertly as we spoke. He was a middle-school student about 16 years old who had been in Tiananmen

# Fear and loathing pervade Beijing under martial law



*'Soldiers with automatic rifles were at every major intersection and stood back to back with weapons poised. Their faces were stony, expressionless.'*

Square just before the massacre.

There are many soldiers in the center, we said. "In the center?" he replied. "Look 50 feet to your left. They are all over our neighborhood." There, under a group of trees, were six soldiers staring hard. We took pictures of the river and took out our map, pointing to it as we spoke to the student.

It is dangerous for you, I told him. If they ask what we were talking about, tell them we were asking you how to find the entrance to the Summer Palace because we were lost.

He smiled, appreciatively. We told him that the world knew what happened, that we were here to support the students. We felt we could risk such words as it was clear to us that this 15 or 16-year-old boy was ready to risk communicating his words to us.

#### At Beijing Normal University

We left and made our way to Beijing Normal University, one of the most militant. This is the teachers' college. Many of the principal student organizers, such as Wu'er Cai-Xi, were from Beijing Normal.

The gates were patrolled by army units and were shut. We were determined to find a way in. After reconnoitering, we found an entrance some two streets further which had only campus security personnel guarding it. We walked through unimpeded, only later to realize that we had stumbled on the road

leading to the Foreign Students' Dormitory.

We soon made contact with a student from Mali. I had been in Bamako, its capital, and it developed that we knew people in common.

Epsi, as we shall call him, told us that the situation was very precarious for the students at Beijing Normal. The soldiers would periodically seal the campus and stage raids, checking I.D. cards and arresting students at random. People were fearful. Chinese students had been warned not to speak to the foreign students—even those with whom they shared classes.

Epsi was a physicist. He and his fellow West African students were told to avoid talking politics by university administrators.

"Here is what we should do," he began, after we had established rapport. His French was elegant and he had a soft-spoken charm. "I'll walk through the campus with you. Get the lay of the land. Then come back at 9 p.m., when it gets dark. It will be easier for students to talk to you at night."

We walked through the campus, and Epsi showed us the sites where students had mobilized to get to Tiananmen, where the strikes and strategy were prepared.

#### Students in the underground

We returned at night and spent three hours talking to Epsi, a West African friend making the introductions, and other students. Many

were underground; many carried leaflets, photos, and appeals into the countryside.

All those on campus were now being forced to attend special classes where the writings of Deng Xiaoping were read aloud by a party official. Students were made to repeat passages and voice approval. They were actually tested on the Deng decrees, and doing well was a condition for graduation.

"We must regurgitate Deng's garbage," one student told us. "He is our leader!" said another with contempt. Here were the militants of the student democracy movement forced to listen to Deng's denunciations of their movement, to learn the words, and to praise them.

What was clear was the futility of trying to impose authority by such crass totalitarian methods. This was an awakened generation, and the old tools of coercion were now used as weapons by the rebellious young—who cited them by way of negative example. "We tell them anything they want to hear and then go to our rooms to plot against them."

We would spend three nights there, meeting students, discussing cautiously. One student obtained a copy of the tape of an underground song performed by Cui Jian, the most popular Chinese rock singer and a voice of his generation. It is called "I have nothing" and is sung widely by students.

The song describes unrequited love,

yearning, aspiration, each stanza ending in the bitter refrain "You laugh at me; I have nothing."

One student leader had just returned from going underground, since the authorities appeared unaware of his role.

He described to us his odyssey. After the massacre, as troops entered the campus, he fled. He walked for hours and then took buses to an area of the empress' tomb and gardens—where he slept several days. He slept in train stations too, making his way to Hunan province and to an industrial city where he stayed.

He was back now. We spoke on and realized that time had sped by. It was midnight, long past curfew. Epsi got us to a telephone and we called the hotel. After much arguing, we arranged for a taxi to come to a specific location.

Returning, we encountered four army barricades. We were stopped each of the four times but waved on after our passports were examined. At checkpoint three, a young Chinese was being slapped around by a soldier.

#### At Ching Hua University

Ching Hua University had been among the militant centers of the student movement. Now it was also under guard by security police. We found an entrance where we were let through because we said we were looking for the foreign students' dormitory.

We met a graduate student who gave us an hour-long account of the struggle at Ching Hua—the M.I.T. of China. Students were still under attack by the army. Three of his friends had been killed and 22 arrested. The army was omnipresent.

The readings of Deng's speeches and four principles as well as his analyses of the "counterrevolutionary rebellion" were instructive. One passage from Deng's account contained a revealing observation: "If the party had hesitated or retreated at this point, all would have been lost and the party would have been overthrown. It was a critical juncture."

Clearly, students by themselves could not do this and, although the passage is part of a self-serving rationale for the repression, it offers an important insight into the minds of the leading bureaucrats.

If concessions had been made, or if the Communist Party had vacillated about massive repression, the rebellion would have led to working-class actions at the point of production, with subsequent fracturing of the army, notably among conscript soldiers. How



*'The students care about political reforms, the workers about economic reforms and material improvement. But the workers clearly feel the economic reforms are wrong.'*

much weaker would the party bureaucrats be in the next round?

#### Construction workers

We walked into many neighborhoods. In the shadow of the China Trade Center, under construction, we began to talk to people in the working-class housing—small, one-room brick hovels crammed together.

These people were astonishing. As Mya [one of the *Socialist Action* reporters] took Polaroids, they crowded around our group of six. They were construction and factory workers. Their meager homes were scheduled for demolition. They had no prospect of replacement housing and they were furious. They held back nothing from us.

"All the party [CCP] officials are rotten bastards. These miserable sons-of-bitches don't give a damn about whether we live or die," said one. "In order to do anything you need 50 stamps on up the line—and you have to bribe these swine each step of the way," said another. "This bureaucracy is hopeless. Nothing ever gets done—that is, for us—they look after themselves."

There was no caution here. They let it all hang out in loud, fearless voices. "Look, why don't you Americans buy this land. It's valuable. Buy it before these bastard officials destroy our houses. Then you can build us some housing."

"See all these office blocks? All it does is destroy our homes, poor as they are. Who knows where we'll end up? So buy this land, why don't you? These bureaucrats won't do anything for us. Anything that goes through

them will be bad. "And they will force us to leave our homes on valuable land in order to build a highrise. We never get replacement housing. If they need to build 10 houses, they provide two! We can't afford to bribe them like others do. So if they build 10 houses, they'll keep eight. New housing is not given to families. We will have to scramble and fight each other over it. We hate them."

#### "No reporting!"

Suddenly six soldiers marched over to interrupt our animated discussion. They warned us: "No photos. No reporting." They checked each of our passports. Then they interrogated the workers, who were unimpressed. "Look, these are foreign businessmen, and we are telling them to invest in China. What's wrong with that?"

The soldiers and officer were unsure how to respond. They hemmed and hawed, finally leaving. The workers continued, "We'd rather put ourselves under foreigners than under these party bureaucrats."

We noticed a series of pool tables that the construction workers were using. Nat and Rod [Nat Weinstein and Rod Holt were members of the *Socialist Action* team] played a couple of games as workers crowded around. We learned that they had come in from the farms, often from great distances to take part-time work or whatever they could get.

Some were brought in by bus. They told us that they are paid two yuan a day by the joint-venture owned by the Chinese government and a Japanese investment corporation. They

work but two weeks a month, earning about 30 yuan, or about eight dollars. "How can you survive on that?" we asked.

"By stretching our stomachs," we were told. One of the workers looked no more than 14. I asked his age. He smiled and said "18"—the minimum legal age. It was obvious he was underage. Local workers get full-time work at this pay. The temporary workers were living outside Beijing in the countryside.

#### A factory militant

We walked on a considerable distance and entered an alleyway. As we were passing small brick huts with garbage strewn nearby, we stopped to speak to workers. One of them, a man of 38, spoke to us in impeccable English that, we would learn, was self-taught. "We live in slums," he said.

He was a worker militant and quickly invited us into his home. He was home from work this day to build a small window in the back of the one-room house for cross-ventilation. There was just enough room for a bed and a few small chairs.

He had organized the workers at his plant to strike and to go to Tiananmen Square with their own banner. "All the workers want independent trade unions—all of them. But we lacked time. We just got started."

"My mates have warned me," he went on. "I am marked as an organizer. It is clear that it is necessary to overthrow this system, and we workers are the ones to do it."

He estimated the number of workers who had been shot in greater Beijing to be over 800. Ten thousand are under arrest. They direct their repression to the workers primarily. "We're the ones they really fear," he said.

"Price increases and inflation are swamping our salaries. Workers are very angry about corruption. Everything is based on whom you know. These bureaucrats look out for themselves only."

He told us that his wife is also a factory worker. We met her. She was friendly but nervous; she kept popping out to see if we were being observed.

The worker militant explained that the generation gap affects him and his wife. His father works and his mother is a farmer. They are both Communist Party members who criticize the party but believe it can be reformed. That is an illusion, a sad fairy tale, we were advised.

"This apparatus is vast and oppressive. The bureaucrats are too entrenched. There is no mechanism for change or for freedom. The system has to be revamped and all these corrupt, privileged officials removed."

"All the workers feel that there is no point whatsoever to work hard for these bastards. So we workers slow down everything. This has been going on for years. We sabotage

(continued on page 10)

## 十月评论

October Review

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**SPECIAL ISSUE:**  
*Documents of the struggle*

The June/July issue of *October Review* is a 100-page special issue (12 pages in color) devoted to reprinting the main documents of the Chinese Democracy Movement. It is published entirely in Chinese. Included are 30 pages of documents from the autonomous workers' movement.

Copies of this special issue can be ordered from *Socialist Action*, 3435 Army St., Room 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. Send \$5.00. (Contributions are welcome.) Proceeds will go to *October Review*.



# ...Martial law in Beijing

(continued from page 9)

machinery, too. Whatever causes them grief and screws up their quotas."

We had a long discussion about capitalism and socialism, about the structure of power in the United States and the capitalist world. They invest here, we stated, because workers work for slave wages. If workers were paid properly, these investors would go elsewhere.

The subject turned to organizing. We discussed for nearly three hours and agreed to meet the next day, when Nat could come and join in. But the next evening, when we arrived as scheduled, his door was locked. A neighbor brought out a brief letter which read as follows:

"Mr. Ralph and Mya,

I'm very sorry that I can't keep my word to meet you tonight for I'm told that somebody may be watching me. I feel very glad to get to know both of you. I hope we could be friends.

With best regards,  
Faithfully yours"

We were terribly disappointed, for this was a bright, militant workers' leader. We had looked forward eagerly to our evening with him and his wife. But we also knew they made the right decision.

## A migrant farmer

We learned that some distance away farmer migrants were living in the open under a make-shift canopy. We walked to the site and introduced ourselves to a young man. He was from Kiangsu Province.

The government had provided a little land for his family but it was not enough for him to feed himself. There was no extra money. All he could afford was rice. He had to leave school when in the fifth grade. His family couldn't afford to let him continue in school. They needed his help.

But he had to leave Kiangsu to survive. He came to Beijing to earn money. A friend, whom he met in Beijing, had come 2000 miles and brought a special tool all that way with which to shred cotton. His friend found some temporary work in another part of Beijing and so left the tool with him. It was a huge gesture.

His name is "Lo-ming". He is 18. People encouraged him to come to Beijing to try to earn money. He met many farmers in Beijing from distant provinces—Kiangsu, Anwei, Hubei, Szechuan, Sikiang. They were idle, could find no work. Entire families had left the countryside.

"If there is someone helping you," he explained, "helping you to get a job, then it is possible to stay. Otherwise, you must know someone with a good connection.

"You can't find work in Szechuan or Kiangsu or Sikiang," Lo-ming pointed out. "Sometimes people take advantage and get you to work and never pay you."

He hadn't brought any money to Beijing. He had to borrow a little from other farmers in Beijing. "We have to depend on ourselves," he said.

During the first two days, a friend gave him food. A brother-in-law's brother in Beijing helped him for the first two days. Lo-ming bought his own rice. Sometimes he eats only rice. Occasionally, he buys vegetables and a little meat.

Most farmers work as part-time construction workers. Sometimes Lo-ming goes two to three days without work. He has no idea of his future. Maybe he'll go back to farming; maybe, continue what he is doing. He shreds cotton for stuffing material and quilts. Then he sells it.

His father died, his mother still farms. One older brother and sister are farming, but he thinks he can make more doing this than farming. When it gets dark, he sleeps. "When you have work, you work." When he doesn't, he walks around. In the winter, he'll go further south to warmer provinces—when he feels like it.

## A temporary worker

Now a second man came. He is 60, from Hupeh. A farmer, he left the land because he needed more money.

His name is "Li." He arrived a month before. He has two children. They are back home. He earns 118 yuan a month, same as when he farmed. He is getting old and can't see well. Land is limited. Only one acre. He can't make it on that.

He is a temporary worker, a night watchman. He sleeps in the open. His two children farm, so "if you have an extra person, you

have one more mouth to feed."

I asked Lo-ming about the demonstrations. He replied that he was told not to go out because it was dangerous. He didn't think about the demonstrations because he didn't understand them. No sense caring about something if you don't know what it is about.

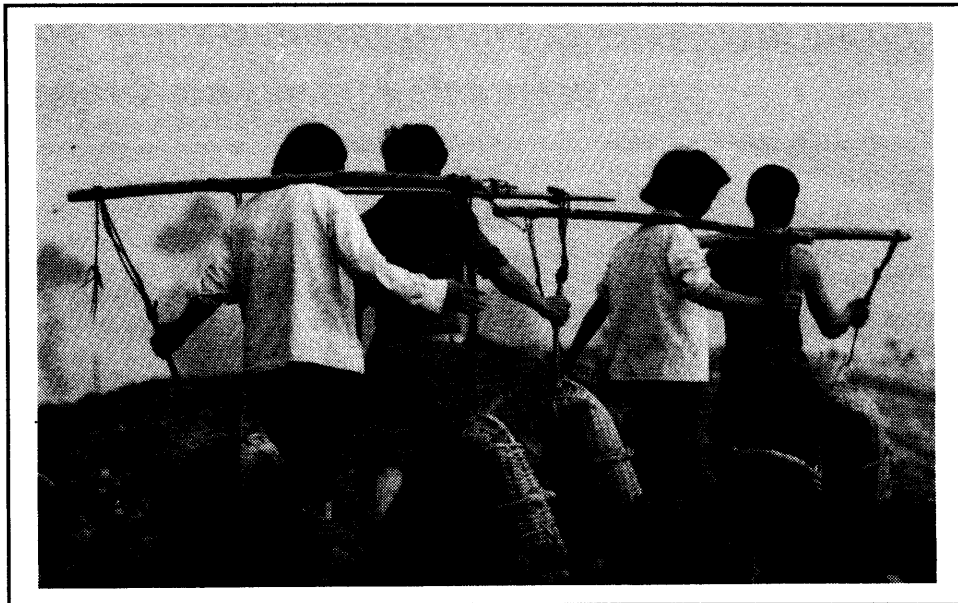
I asked Lo-ming, "Do you think the government can do something to give you a better life?"

"It's better now than before," he said. "It doesn't matter what you do; if you don't have education or more knowledge it is impossible to get a better job or to improve your life.

"In the countryside it really doesn't matter whether you have education or not," he told us. "I would like to, but that is far beyond my hopes. I don't even think about it."

He lives by himself. Another family moved away. Now he is lonely. He walks around the neighborhood to try to feel better. Right now the most difficult problem is that he has no water. He uses a towel and wets it. Sometimes Lo-ming exchanges cotton for water.

He goes to a community bathroom but he can look all day to find a bathroom. Sometimes he has to go far to find one. He



has one shirt and one pair of trousers. Clothing, he says, is not important.

When we tried to give him some money after thanking him for helping us by telling his story, Lo-ming became upset. He refused three times.

Our translator explained that he is our friend and friends want to help each other—just as he helped us by taking all this time to talk to us. Finally, he accepted. He was shy. He was grateful for an expression of actual interest in his life. His eyes were glowing as we embraced him and said goodbye.

## In Tiananmen Square

As we walked down Chang An Avenue, we read the banners in red with white letters that the Communist Party has stretched across luxury hotels and skyscraper joint-ventures.

The banners hung over groups of soldiers standing like statues with automatic weapons at the ready. They read as follows:

- 1) Insist on full support for the leadership of the CCP.
- 2) We demand full support for socialism.
- 3) Emphasize the civilized spirit which the Party has established.
- 4) Create orderly transportation and discipline in Beijing, the capital.
- 5) Full support to Jiang Xiamin to be our Communist Party General Secretary.
- 6) Support all decisions of the Party Plenum.
- 7) Salute the People's Liberation Army.

As we approached Tiananmen Square, we entered the Beijing Hotel—which was empty. In a large dark dining room, we came upon a group of 25 workers seated in front of a party official who was reading from the writings of Deng Xiaoping. He stopped to fire a question. The workers glared sullenly or looked at the ground.

We had to take pedicabs through Tiananmen since no pedestrian traffic was permitted. Tank tracks were still visible, as were the remnants of slogans on the pavement. Stony faced soldiers stared. Crowds of bicyclists came alongside us as they made their way across the huge area, first in front of Mao's portrait before the Forbidden City, then past the Hall of the People and the Monument to Revolutionary Martyrs.

As people bicycled by, we caught their eye. Several winked. A few flashed us the "V"

sign, lifting two fingers off the handle bars. We responded. We saw the simmering rage of the people of Beijing visible in the eyes of a population sullen but in no way subdued.

## A party official

Nor are young officials or Communist Party cadre immune. We were told that many loathe the leadership, identify with the population—and look for ways to show it.

Many of the party cadre enjoy relative advantages and might be expected to identify with the bureaucracy. It is a measure of the isolation of the party and its hierarchy that the spirit of revolt has entered its ranks.

We met one such official, "John," who sought us out. His views, he told us, were shared by many of his friends and colleagues: "The sons of officials have the privileges of their fathers conferred upon them. Fathers and sons are brazen and have no shame. They wine and dine everywhere in special restaurants, hold countless banquets. They consume in this way 48 billion yuan, far more than is spent on housing or education."

"Party officials buy things cheap," he said, "and sell them on the black market for big profits. They can buy television sets for \$1000 and sell them for \$6000. It's commonplace and it goes down the line for luxury goods or where there are shortages. The slogan 'Enrich yourselves' may have been

conditions. So they really support the students. They were young and self-sacrificial. The gesture of the hunger strike really moved the people. And the corruption and illegal buying and selling which the students exposed—the workers strongly supported this feeling.

"If you want to get married and you need a TV, you can find the ads but there are no TVs in the market! People are fed up."

"The movement, of course, is just beginning and has weaknesses. Students lack experience and many, especially older people, retain a feudal consciousness. Students don't have social experience, while the old bureaucrats run things.

"When they die, things should shake up. Most of these leaders went through the Long March. When they speak, they think it's law. They impose dictates. Everyone has to say 'yes,' including other officials.

"We have these endless, boring statements of Deng read to us. We have to repeat his words and nod our heads approvingly. We went through all this for 10 years during the Cultural Revolution when Chairman Mao's thoughts were sacrosanct. The god's words were beyond criticism. Then all this was denounced, including the idea that the Emperor's words are holy.

"They had to do it then to prevent revolt, debunking all that slavish worship of the Emperor-god-ruler. Now we are going back to the same thing at a time when people no longer can tolerate it. So what can they expect but a bigger explosion?"

"If we didn't pretend to listen, there would be no promotion. So we go through the motions. Frankly, none of us pays attention to them now. Everyone is bored. We talk about it among ourselves and say what rubbish it is.

"So you see what the students ask for is reasonable—an end to corruption and more democracy, no more special privileges (like buying cheap and then selling subsidized purchases on the free market.)

"All those party officials could have spoken to the students but they couldn't face them because they are feudal lords. They won't even consider that what everyone feels are reasonable demands."

## "People want real socialism"

We asked John if young officials won't do the same as older ones. "Perhaps," he replied, "but they lack the same authority. The old former revolutionaries who were in the Long March carry some weight—in the army, with functionaries. They had some respect. It will be far easier to challenge the next generation of officials.

"We should keep in mind that the revolution has been good for people. Capitalism will not be better for China.

"Remember also that no one called for capitalist restoration. The students and workers sang the Internationale. They want political change. Most people in China care for socialism but want it better. They want real, democratic socialism—not feudalism dressed up as socialism.

"Beijing is not Lhasa. It is foolish to impose martial law on the capital, on Beijing. Many citizens tried to explain this to the soldiers. It is reasonable.

"Now one reason martial law was maintained is that 400 automatic weapons were taken by workers.

"The wages of construction workers are so low. Regular workers only earn two yuan a day. Income distribution is so unfair. My father has been a teacher for 24 years. In one year as an official I make five times what he makes. Who can accept this?"

"Yet no one in the party can change this. Their privileges are too great. The Peoples' Congress is a rubber stamp. Even they just nod their heads. So they're all afraid to speak out so they won't be displaced. All this must go. The change will have to come from without, from the people."

We expressed surprise that a young official with much to gain from his position should feel this way and speak so boldly. "It is natural," said John. "We are not empty, like the old officials. We are not beasts." ■

## FUND APPEAL

Help us finance the expenses (over \$6000) of sending our six-member reporting team to China. Your donation will help *Socialist Action* continue to give the viewpoint of Chinese workers and students in their struggle for socialist democracy. Send your check to:

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# ... Soviet Miners

(continued from page 1)

which has the largest deposits of coal.

Miners in other parts of the country began to join in. By the last week in July, coalfields thousands of miles apart—from the Don River region, to central Asia, to the far north—were virtually closed down. Railroad workers had been asked to strike on Aug. 1.

## Challenge to Gorbachev's reforms

In all parts of the country, strikers raised demands similar to those of the Siberian miners—including demands for more political autonomy.

In an open letter to the Soviet government, the Siberian miners had demanded "that the population in Siberia and the Far East be supplied with food in accordance with dietitian's norms, that privileges to officials be abolished, and that a new national constitution be published for discussion immediately and adopted not later than Nov. 7, 1990," the anniversary of the Russian revolution.

Workers were pictured in the press carrying banners reading "All Power to the Peoples' Soviets." The entrenched, normally slow-moving bureaucracy was desperately concerned that the independent strike committees would develop an even broader political alternative to the government. For that reason, rapid steps were taken to settle

The great lessons of this unprecedented struggle have certainly not gone unnoticed. "We've shown a strike is the only way to get what you want," said one Siberian miner. The mere thought probably keeps Gorbachev awake at night.

Gorbachev's biggest nightmare is yet to come. Even as the Siberian strikers returned to work with a bushful of concessions in their pockets, they made clear that "they weren't going to buy us off with a bit of sausage." They gave a deadline of Aug. 1 for the government to fulfill its agreement.

Strike leaders also indicated that they would not disband the strike committees. Another strike leader in the Ukraine called for "an immediate national congress of coal workers, with senior industrial managers to be excluded." (*The New York Times*, July 21, 1989) This could lay the basis for the formation of an independent national trade union.

The government had its predictable explanation for the strike, blaming the "inertia of local authorities." Officials were treading very carefully, in order to avoid provoking the miners.

For example, *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, reported that "it is a pity that objectively [the strike] gives a negative result for the economy. But can the workers be blamed for that? People who ignored these workers demands...these people are guilty."

Actually, of course, the finger should be pointed at the government itself. Most of all, *perestroika's* failed promises.

## "People were at my throat"

Siberia and the Soviet Far East produce two-thirds of the oil and gas, 40 percent of the coal, 20 percent of the electric power, and 37 percent of the industrial timber exports.

Gorbachev last visited there in 1988 and also got an extremely cool response. His reform policies were challenged across the board. People there were "at my throat," he said on Soviet television.

He had to recognize that the "shortage of many light industry goods, and even durables, is still considerable and acute. And I felt this during these days, talking to the residents of cities, villages and workers' settlements." (*Moscow News Supplement*, No. 39, 1988.)

The cold shoulder Gorbachev got during his 1988 visit shook him up so much that it was considered the main factor convincing him to turn up the heat on his reforms. He made some rapid-fire political moves aimed at removing his "hard-line" opponents in the bureaucracy.

Last fall, Gorbachev called an emergency meeting of the Supreme Soviet, got himself unanimously elected president, and dumped around 33 percent of left-over central committee members from the Brezhnev period.

## The costs of bureaucratic rule

Even before the miners' strike in July, there were reports of a dozen wildcat strikes by miners, bus drivers, librarians and other workers protesting "pay cuts resulting from new laws that require factories to be more cost-conscious and peg workers' pay to their output." (*The New York Times*, July 14, 1989.)

Factory managers began laying off and cutting pay but did not permit workers' participation in solving the problems of mismanagement. Workers know they are being asked to pay the costs of bureaucratic rule and they are finding the price too high.

Gorbachev realizes that his pet project of market reforms has antagonized large sections of the population. He is mindful of public resentment against entrepreneurs who have become rich in private business.

The private cooperatives now charge about three times as much as state enterprises for their products and about five times as much for services, according to a recent study by Moscow's Institute of Sociology. Two-thirds of the Muscovites queried in the study also said they cannot afford cooperative prices. (*Business Week*, Jan. 30, 1989.)

The government is quite alarmed. "Society will be destabilized" if the economy does not improve within the next two years, said Leonid Abalkin, Deputy Prime Minister. Other warnings are even more dire. Peoples' Congress deputy and economist Vladimir Tikhonov predicted "famine in the very near future" unless radical changes are made. (*The New York Times*, June 18, 1989)

Under these circumstances, the miners'



Socialist Action reporters talk to workers in Shanghai. Left (partly hidden) is Jim Henle. Center is Nat Weinstein.

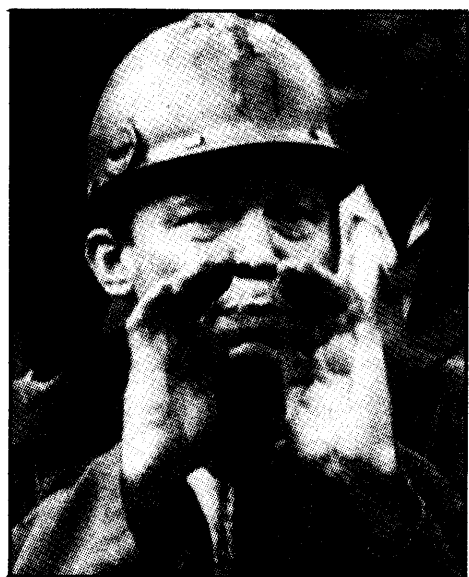
## Revolution in China: 'The first barrage'

LOS ANGELES—On July 7, about 100 people attended a Socialist Action forum here about the uprising in China. Ralph Schoenman, Mya Shone, and Nat Weinstein spoke about their recent visit to China to assess the exact nature of the uprising. The speakers described the deteriorating conditions—unemployment, inflation, and homelessness—brought about by over a decade of economic reform.

Weinstein, co-national secretary of Socialist Action, noted that they went to China having heard reports in the U.S. press that there were general strikes in Shanghai and Beijing. In discussions with workers and students in China, the character of these strikes became clearer.

"We were told," Weinstein said, "that the workers organized chaotically—not through any unions, organized strike committees, or factory meetings. They organized in support of the students rather than around their own independent demands. On the other hand, the students advanced economic demands to attract the workers to support their movement.

"But independent trade unions were beginning to be organized. Our Hong Kong co-thinkers concluded that these events constituted "the first barrage" of the coming political revolution—which will see the self-mobilization of the Chinese workers reach an even higher level on the basis of their own demands."—M.D.



Message to Gorbachev

the strike in the Siberian coalfields with an infusion of money.

Coal Industry Minister, Mikhail I. Shchadov, rushed into Mezhdurechensk carrying a pledge of \$80 million in pay hikes and the promise of more local control over the mines. Other concessions included increasing the area's regular food supplies by 20 to 30 percent and more shipments of soap and washing powder.

"It looks like within these two days more attention was paid to Mezhdurechensk's problems than within the last two decades," acknowledged *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the Communist Party (CPSU) Russian Federation newspaper.

Yet, despite the concessions, workers initially rejected even the pleas of strike leaders to return to work. They insisted that Gorbachev personally explain the settlement offer. Instead, he sent a personal appeal on behalf of the Supreme Soviet to end the strike.

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strike was no fluke.

The Soviet working class took its first giant step during the miners' strike in reclaiming its past role as political leadership for the nation.

It represented the biggest challenge to Gorbachev's economic policies so far and also showed that the workers were not yet willing to cede all their power to the revamped Congress of Soviets, where the CPSU still maintains majority control.

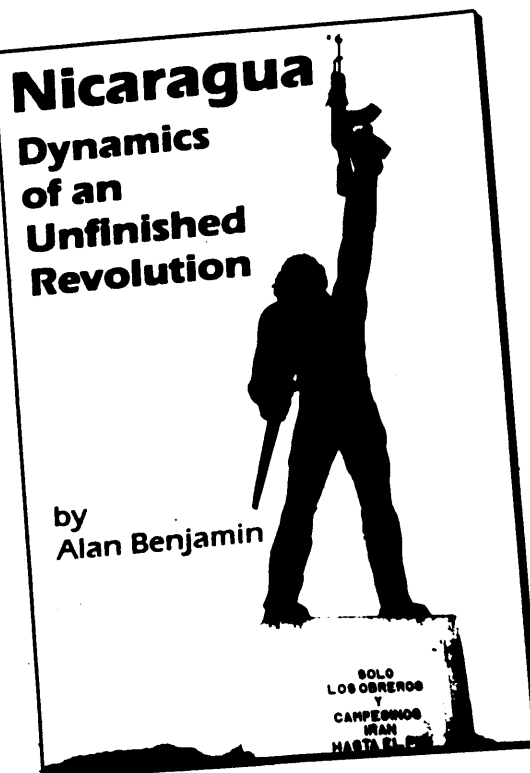
The most successful and powerful strike in modern Soviet history has laid the basis for a national independent union which can fight

to implement the self-management perspective of the miners.

Throughout the struggle, workers' growing confidence in their own power contrasted sharply with their widening mistrust of the government. The formation of independent strike committees—one step on the road toward independent trade unions—is also only a few steps away from organizing working-class opposition parties.

Ultimately, the working class will once again create genuinely democratic worker's councils—or "soviets."

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# Germany 1919: workers and soldiers reached for power

By ADAM WOOD

Seventy years ago, the workers and soldiers of Germany held the course of the history of the 20th century in their hands. In 1919, workers' and soldiers' councils contested for state power against the German capitalists and landowners.

Victory for the workers could have led to the extension of the socialist revolution, launched in Russia in October 1917, throughout all of Europe.

But ultimately, it was the German capitalists who enjoyed the fruits of victory—a victory that would have been impossible were it not for the betrayals of the leadership of the world's most powerful working-class party, the German Social-Democratic Party.

Like the Russian Revolution, the German Revolution had its roots in the devastation caused by World War I. Launched in 1914, the First World War threw the working people of Germany and all of Europe into the bloodiest conflict the world had seen at that time. Over 10 million died in a war started by competing capitalists and bankers that was fought purely for a redivision of the world's economic markets.

In 1914, Germany had the largest socialist party in the world, with traditions that reached back directly to Engels and Marx. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) had over 1 million members and many affiliated trade unions. This party was in a position to expose World War I as an imperialist bloodbath and channel opposition to the war into a struggle against the government of Kaiser Wilhelm.

Tragically, decades of prosperity and steady growth for the party had led to the entrenchment of a bureaucratic leadership receiving privileges from German capitalism. These leaders—Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann, and others—believed that advances could be made through gradual reforms and parliamentary activity. They shunned any activities that would make the party seem "irresponsible" to liberal German capitalists.

When Germany entered the war, the SPD's parliamentary fraction voted on Aug. 4, 1914, to approve war credits. The party told the millions of workers under its influence to kill workers of other countries in the interest of "democracy and socialism." Ironically, the war that signaled capitalism's death agony



January 1919: Workers and soldiers patrol the streets of Berlin after rebuffing army coup attempt.

also ended the SPD's potential to lead a fight against capitalism.

## Opposition in the SPD

For three years, the SPD maintained its monopoly over the leadership of the German workers' movement and continued to support the war. However, the war was having an effect on the workers. Opposition to the Kaiser and the war were growing inside and outside the SPD. In 1917, the SPD expelled thousands of its members for opposition to the war.

About 120,000 of these expelled members

met in April 1917, and launched the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). The USPD was a *centrist* party; that is, it vacillated between *revolutionary* and *reformist* positions. This party included a pacifist current—led by Karl Kautsky and Hugo Hasse—as well as the revolutionary Spartacus Group—led by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and others.

The Spartacus Group had formed within the SPD in December 1914, after Karl Liebknecht, a leader of the left wing and a member of the party's parliamentary fraction, voted against war credits.

They published leaflets and newsletters opposing the leadership's support for the war and called for a workers' revolution as the only way to resolve the problems of capitalism. Both Liebknecht and Luxemburg were imprisoned by the German government for their antiwar activities.

The year 1917 also saw the victory of a socialist revolution in Russia. The Bolshevik Party, led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, came to power on a program of bread, peace, land, and workers' power. The Russian Revolution also created a new kind of state—one based on workers' councils, or "soviets." The victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia made the prospect of workers' revolution much more realistic for many German workers.

## Workers take to the streets

The year 1918 was marked by growing workers' unrest and military defeats for the German army. Strikes shook Germany and Eastern Europe throughout the year. From Jan. 28 to Feb. 4, political strikes involving over 1 million people took place in 50 German cities. A new strike wave took effect in June of that year.

On Aug. 14, 1918, the German army high command reported that the war could not be won. The German government was losing all credibility in the eyes of the German people.

Demonstrations against the government and mutinies in the armed forces took place in October. Germany was entering a pre-revolutionary period. Karl Liebknecht was released from prison that month and was welcomed by 20,000 workers upon his return to Berlin.

Liebknecht called for an end to the war and for a workers' government. Upon hearing of

Liebknecht's release, Karl Radek, a leader of the Bolshevik Party, reported, "We felt that the German Revolution had a leader."

Revolutionary upsurges took place at the end of October throughout the Austro-Hungarian empire. On Nov. 4, a workers' and soldiers' council took over the city of Kiel in Germany. Within the next six days, similar councils were formed spontaneously in 95 cities.

These councils were inspired by the soviet model in Russia, and were representative of all the working people and soldiers in a given area. Delegates were elected from each workplace and armed detachment. The councils were formed in order to organize the struggle against the government and to administer the needs of the workers upon taking power.

## "Maintain law and order!"

On Nov. 9, the revolution reached Berlin, and the Kaiser was forced to step down. Prince Max von Baden, chancellor of Germany, resigned and appointed SPD leader Friedrich Ebert as his replacement.

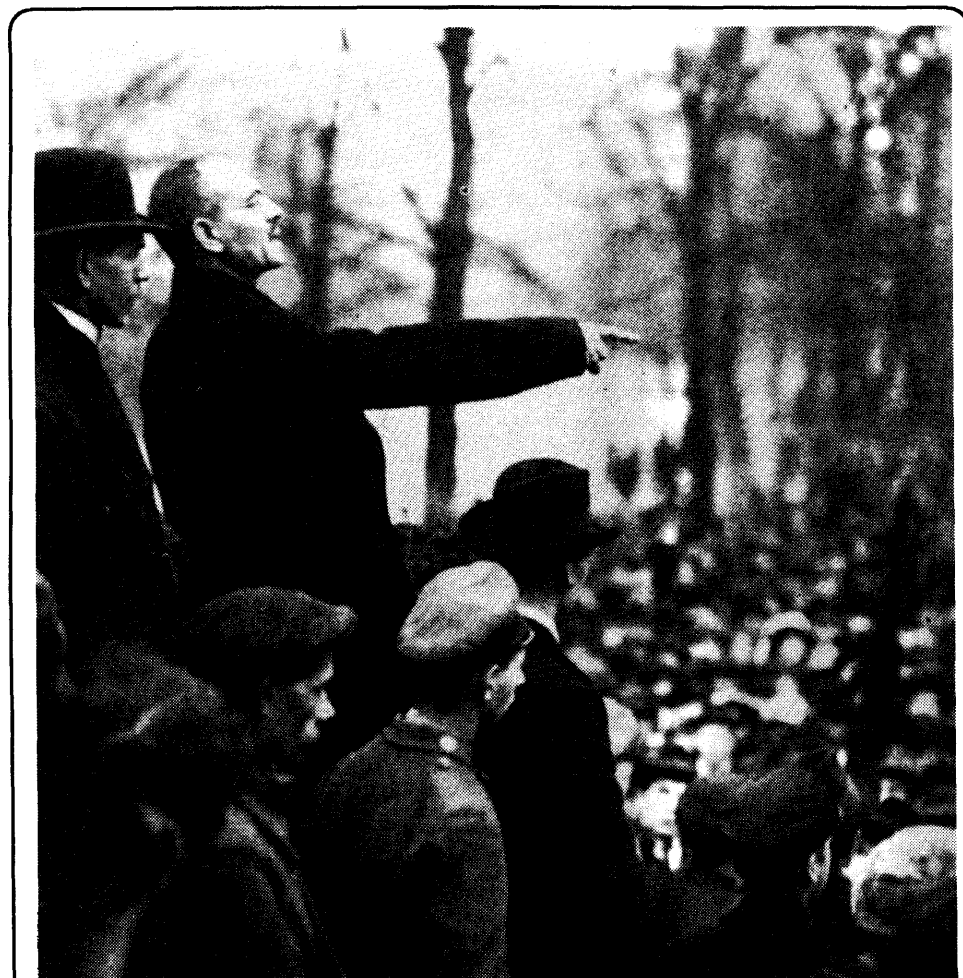
Ebert's first public act as chancellor was to issue a proclamation of a "people's government" that ended with these words of advice to the "people": "Fellow citizens! I urgently appeal to you: Leave the streets! Maintain law and order!" These lines would be repeated many times in the following months.

In the full swing of a revolutionary upsurge, however, it would take more than a proclamation to pull the workers out of the streets. Max von Baden and the German capitalists realized that workers' power had become a reality, and that armed force would have been ineffective against the organized workers and soldiers. They needed to slow down and reverse the radicalization, and this is where Ebert and the SPD came in.

The SPD had served the capitalists well throughout the war as their representatives in the workers' movement. Max von Baden was gambling that the SPD in power would satisfy the workers' movement and that their bureaucratic leadership would prevent any encroachments on private property. The SPD leadership was fully prepared to play this role.

The SPD also had to acknowledge the new power of the workers. The Executive Com-

(continued on next page)



Karl Liebknecht speaking against Ebert-Scheidemann government during Dec. 16, 1918, demonstration of 250,000 in Berlin.

# Germany

(continued from preceding page)

mittee of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils claimed full power across the country, and the USPD had gained a large influence over the radicalized workers and soldiers.

The SPD proposed that the Executive Committee support a "Council of People's Commissars" with representatives from the SPD and USPD. This council would administer the government until a national assembly could be elected.

The USPD leadership accepted this proposal, and on Nov. 10, 1918, the Executive Committee voted to support the new government. But there was not unanimous support for this proposal. The Spartacus Group in the USPD argued that the workers' and soldiers' councils should use the power which they held in their hands to take state power—not transfer it back to the capitalists.

However, representatives of the capitalists remained in control of all the government's ministries. The SPD had no intention of dismantling the capitalist state apparatus and would only use the power granted by the workers' councils to hold back the revolution.

## Spartacus League formed

On Nov. 11, the Spartacus Group broke with the USPD leadership because of its participation in the capitalist government and formed an independent organization, the Spartacus League (SL). The SL challenged the SPD-USPD government for the next two months over the question of the national assembly.

The SPD, which sought to cloak the government in a "socialist" disguise, began every article and leaflet with the assertion that the capitalist government had fallen and that the task was to construct a democratic assembly in which all "citizens" could send representatives.

The SL pointed out that the capitalists maintained all of their economic power and that the coercive institutions of the capitalist state—the army, the police, etc.—had not been touched. They urged the workers' and soldiers' councils to dismantle the old institutions and establish themselves as the institutions of the new workers' state. This would be more representative of the working class and the forces which had carried out the revolution than a national assembly.

The SPD argued that socialists were for "democracy" and that a national assembly was the only way to give the "whole people" the chance to participate in the government. What they concealed with their abstract arguments was their determination to maintain the political power of the capitalist class. A government of workers' and soldiers' councils would leave no room for capitalists to influence the state.

The SL's call for a workers' government had an appeal for radical workers, but they were fighting an unequal battle with the SPD-

USPD government. The SPD and the USPD had massive organizations with links in all of the workers' organizations. They also held the reins of government.

The SL was still a relatively small organization trying to get a hearing. In December 1918, the SL fused with other radical workers' organizations into the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), but their forces remained limited.

## A flawed approach

Unfortunately, the SL was also hampered by an incorrect analysis of the relationship between the workers as a class and their revolutionary leadership. They tended to downplay the role of an organized revolutionary party which would lead the workers to power. Instead, they expected the class as a whole to come to revolutionary positions and act independently of any party.

Flowing from this position was a flawed approach to the mass organizations of the working class. Since they viewed the workers' councils as the leadership independent of any party, they related to the councils in some ways as a political tendency rather than as mass organizations.

Liebkecht, for example, declined nomination to the Executive Committee of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Berlin on the basis that this committee had given support to the SPD-USPD government.

However, the councils were not a political party based on a program, but mass organizations uniting all of the workers in Berlin that were temporarily dominated by reformist political parties (the SPD and USPD). A counterrevolutionary political position, foisted on these councils by its reformist leadership, did not change their character, and Liebkecht could have used his position on the Executive Committee to reach out to the millions of workers under its influence.

The Spartacus League did participate in many of the councils, however, and many of their positions were in a process of development during this revolutionary period.

## Attack by the counterrevolution

December 1918 saw a further polarization of forces in Germany. On Dec. 6, the High Command of the armed forces attempted to put down the revolution by moving troops into Berlin and occupying the public buildings. It was later revealed in a 1925 court testimony that Ebert of the SPD was fully informed of this plan and supported it.

The entire Executive Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils was arrested, but the workers and soldiers of Berlin responded quickly and repulsed the attack, freeing the prisoners.

The SPD put up no resistance to the coup, and after the reactionary generals had been defeated they placed most of the blame for the incident on Spartacus League "provocations." The workers were outraged by the counter-revolutionary attack. A Dec. 8 demonstration organized by the SL calling for a workers' government attracted 150,000 armed workers



Rosa Luxemburg—Her murder was a great loss for the world labor movement.

and soldiers.

From Dec. 16-21, the first General Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils of Germany met in Berlin. But the Congress voted to delegate all government responsibilities to a future national assembly and leave power in the hands of Ebert for now.

On Dec. 24, the government launched another attack on the workers. Government troops attacked the People's Naval Division in Berlin. The government scored some victories in these battles, but the end result was a further radicalization of the Berlin armed forces.

## Workers fill the streets

In late December, the government began moving a new armed division, the Freikorps, around Berlin. The Freikorps was a volunteer force recruited by right-wing officers. Many of its cadre would later rally around Hitler's fascist movement, but for now they served the "socialist" Ebert government against the working class.

The government launched a further provocation on Jan. 4, 1919, when it fired Emil Eichhorn, a popular police chief in Berlin. Eichhorn refused to step down, and the government moved in with force.

This was the last straw for the Berlin workers and soldiers. Beginning on Jan. 5, hundreds of thousands of workers filled the streets in opposition to the government. The revolutionaries, however, were caught off guard by the tremendous display of workers' power. The leaders of the new KPD debated what to do with these demonstrations while the workers impatiently waited in the streets for some direction.

Some revolutionaries argued that Berlin was still isolated from the rest of the German workers. They believed it would be better to give these demonstrations the character of a mass protest rather than an insurrection, and then use the momentum established to win further support for a workers' government throughout the councils and press for a struggle for power in the future.

A premature struggle for power, they said, would give the SPD the opportunity to isolate Berlin from the rest of the country and crush the workers' movement. Liebkecht and others, however, were not willing to let this opportunity slip by. It seemed to them that governmental power was in their reach if only they would move forward and take it.

The indecision of the leadership created a restlessness among the workers in the street. They spontaneously took over the newspapers and government buildings. Thousands of workers rushed to the newspaper district and set up barricades. The government sent in troops, and the new revolution had begun.

Liebkecht and his supporters took the leadership of this spontaneous movement and called for an insurrection against the Ebert government.

For days, the Berlin workers battled heroically against the forces of the Freikorps and other government troops. But the fight was really over before it started. Armed confrontations sprang up throughout the

country over the next two months, but in the end the "socialist" government succeeded in putting down the workers and preserving capitalism.

## Murder of Luxemburg and Liebkecht

On Jan. 15 the government arrested Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebkecht. While in custody, they were both murdered by the Freikorps. This was a tremendous loss for the world's labor movement.

Despite mistakes made by these revolutionaries and their co-thinkers, the blame for the loss of the German Revolution belongs to the leaders of the SPD and the USPD. Using the name of socialism to camouflage their preservation of capitalism, these parties betrayed the interests of the German working class and set the stage for the ultimate triumph of fascism.

It's true that the revolutionaries struck prematurely in January, but the only reason the political conditions were not ripe was that the SPD and USPD had been miseducating the working class for months. Their damage had to be undone before the workers could finally strike together against capitalism.

Eugen Ernst, the SPD member who replaced Eichhorn as chief of police in Berlin, explained his party's provocation to a reporter on Jan. 16, 1919: "The Spartacus people could not succeed because through our preparations we compelled them to strike prematurely. They had to make their move before they wanted to, and we were therefore in a position to counter them."

The KPD made a tactical mistake by striking in January before the working class and peasantry outside of Berlin were ready for an insurrection. But the KPD leaders were absolutely correct in their analysis that the workers' and soldiers' councils needed to take state power from the capitalists.

These institutions were the early forms of a new workers' state, and their very creation posed the question of power for the working class. The capitalists could not peacefully exist alongside these institutions which challenged their rule. Ultimately, the capitalists would move to crush the councils and "put the workers in their place." This is what happened in January 1919.

The frustrating fact is that the councils were handed power by the workers, and then the councils handed it over to the bourgeoisie. The councils delegated authority time and time again to the Council of People's Commissars and later to the national assembly—the class institutions of the capitalists and landowners.

The German Revolution of 1919 is not just a subject for history students. The tug of war that developed in Germany between reactionary parties and governmental institutions and the embryonic institutions of a new society has been repeated in every 20th-century workers' revolution. The participants in these and future struggles need to understand what happened in Germany and what went so horribly wrong. ■

## Mexico hunger strikers win victory

A victory for human rights has been won in Mexico. After a month-long hunger strike by leaders and supporters of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International), the government agreed to release political prisoners not covered under an earlier amnesty.

Two of the prisoners who have been released are Eladio Torres Flores and Amanda Arciniega Cano, who had been sentenced to serve 32 years and 38 years respectively on charges of membership in a guerrilla group, the Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre. Torres, imprisoned since April 1980, had been tortured in prison.

The government also acceded to the demand that they set up a commission to investigate the disappearance of Jose Ramon Garcia Gomez, a PRT member who was ab-

ducted by government agents last December. The commission will include representatives from the PRT.

The hunger strike was begun on May 10 in front of the National Cathedral (near the seat of government in Mexico City). The participants included two men and two women who are members of the central leadership of the PRT. They are Edgar Sanchez, Manuel Aguilar Mora, Leslie Serna, and Simon Castillejos.

Also taking part was Carlos Piedra, a member of the Eureka Committee for Human Rights and son of former PRT presidential candidate Rosario Ibarra de Piedra.

The hunger strike gained wide publicity and support. Thousands of people visited the strikers—including former presidential candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and other politicians, artists, and religious leaders. Millions of pesos were collected for the defense fund.

Solidarity actions at Mexican embassies and consulates were held in several cities, including New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit—as well as Paris (France) and Sao Paulo (Brazil).

The PRT continues to urge that messages be sent to the Mexican government demanding the release of Ramon Garcia Gomez. Send letters to Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Presidente Constitucional—Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Palacio Nacional, Mexico D.F., Mexico.—the editors

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Alexandra, a poor Black township in South Africa, will be "transformed," the apartheid government boasts to the world. But, says community leader Moses Mayekiso, planned new housing will sell at prices far beyond the reach of most residents. They'll have to move out to rural camps.

"Drug traffickers beware!" warns President Bush. In the meantime, Oliver North and other former high-ranking U.S. officials have been charged with smuggling drugs to raise money for the contras. The charges were made last month by a parliamentary commission in Costa Rica.

The average family in the United States is \$11,500 in debt, reports economist Barry Bluestone.

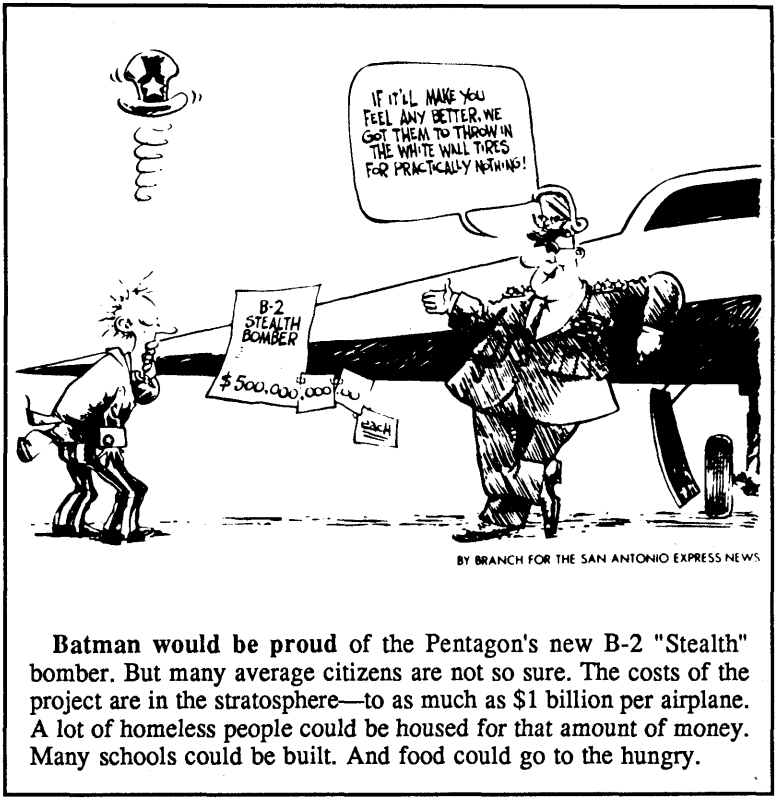
A Summer of Discontent is heating up in Britain. A strike by rail workers has closed lines for one day a week. And dockworkers have placed 30 ports at a standstill. Polls suggest that a majority of the population blames the government for the situation rather than the strikers. Inflation in Britain is over 8 percent a year.

"Brother Czech, don't poison Lech!" says the growing grass-roots environmental movement in Poland. Protests have been organized against Czechoslovakia's plans for a power plant on the Polish border. Poland is already one of the most polluted industrial countries in the world. As much as 10 percent of Poland is an environmental disaster area and should be evacuated, some scientists believe.

Which U.S. industry pays the most in honorariums to members of Congress? The tobacco corporations, natch. They shelled out \$123,400 last year to lawmakers who presumably are "friendly" to so-called smokers' rights.

The cancer-stick producers are facing big trouble with calls for curbs on smoking in public places. A just-published government study estimates that tobacco smoke in the home and workplace kills some 46,000 non-smokers a year in the United States.

Need a direct line to Heaven? There's now a toll-free number you can call to place a message in Jerusalem's Wailing Wall. The service is provided by an enterprising Hassidic group in Brooklyn.



Batman would be proud of the Pentagon's new B-2 "Stealth" bomber. But many average citizens are not so sure. The costs of the project are in the stratosphere—to as much as \$1 billion per airplane. A lot of homeless people could be housed for that amount of money. Many schools could be built. And food could go to the hungry.

# C.L.R. James: A socialist scholar, writer, and orator

By KWAME M.A. SOMBURU

The world revolutionary movement has rarely been fortunate enough to have among its ranks members with over 50 years of service to the cause. And rarer still among the 50-year veterans are those of African ancestry.

C.L.R. James, who died in England at the age of 88 on May 31, was one of the most significant people among this group. James was born Jan. 4, 1901, in the colony of Trinidad at the height of the power of the British Empire. The almost nine decades of his life witnessed the closing stages of that empire as well as the reassertion of neo-colonial domination by a few countries.

As a child, James was more fortunate than the overwhelming majority of his colonized contemporaries. C.L.R., notes *The New York Times*, "had a school-teacher father and a mother whose zest for reading was contagious." His parents had the financial means to provide him with a comfortable home, social, and academic environment.

Early on, James developed a deep love for the English sport of cricket, classical literature (particularly Shakespeare), and music (particularly Beethoven). At the age of nine, he was the youngest winner of a national educational competition. Nine years later, he had become a certified teacher.

The poverty and racial and social oppression that was pervasive in Trinidad nurtured values that motivated his life's activities. James took part in the intense political debate following the First World War that led to criticisms of the colonial system.

James became a supporter of the popular



C.L.R. James

movement of Andre Cipriani, the mayor of Port of Spain, Trinidad. That led to his biography of Cipriani, which was later revised and republished as "The Case for West Indian Self-Government."

### Educated in the class struggle

In 1932, he arrived in England and settled in the Lancashire town of Nelson. It was an area with a history of radicalism and industrial disputes. James later credited the Lancashire workers with educating him in the class struggle. It was there that he read Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution" and was stimulated to study the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

In 1934, James joined the Independent Labor Party and became a socialist re-

volutionary and an active member of the Trotskyist Marxist Group. He rapidly acquired a reputation for being an outstanding orator, debater, and writer.

In 1936, his book "World Revolution 1917-34" was published. It was a study of the rise of the Communist (Third) International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky and its decline under Stalin.

Trotsky commented that it was a good book, but that James did not understand the dialectical method. This irked James and was the beginning of his differences with Trotsky that led to a break with some major tenets of Marxism.

James gave intense study to Hegelian methodology. In his "Notes on Dialectics," James argued that it was Trotsky who misunderstood the dialectic, and that Trotsky's interpretation of history was flawed.

However, James defended Trotsky against Stalin's slanders during the Moscow Trials. He was a prominent member of the Trotsky Defence Committee in England.

In 1938, James was a delegate to the founding conference of the Fourth International—the organization of the world Trotskyist movement. He was elected to the International Executive Committee.

The same year, his most famous book, "The Black Jacobins," was published. In this classic study, James utilized the science of Marxism to analyze the Haitian revolution at the turn of the 18th century against the French colonizers.

### Work in the United States

At the end of 1938, James moved to the United States for 15 years of speaking, organizing, and writing—until he was expelled

as an "undesirable alien" during the anti-communist frenzy of the Sen. Joe McCarthy era.

In 1939, James and other members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) traveled to Mexico to speak with Trotsky, who was in exile in that country. Those discussions helped the SWP develop an understanding of the racial situation in the United States and how the support that Marxists give to the right of self-determination can apply to the struggle of African-Americans.

The obituary writer for *The New York Times*, C. Gerald Fraser, asserts that James went to Mexico to tell Trotsky that "Black people had to have their own organization—not one ruled by the left." But that gross slander is not evident in transcripts of the discussions or in any subsequent statements by James.

In reality, James proposed that SWP members participate in helping to set up a nationwide mass organization that would fight against all forms of oppression and discrimination that Blacks suffer in this country. The general lines of this proposal were accepted by Trotsky.

The text of these discussions (which was never disputed by James) is in "Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination," published by Pathfinder Press.

After the Stalin-Hitler Pact of 1939, James concluded that the Soviet Union was no longer a workers state that had to be defended. He denied Trotsky's view that a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy now ruled the Soviet Union, arguing instead that the country was "state capitalist."

James left the Socialist Workers Party in 1940. With others who left the SWP, James helped to found the Workers Party. In 1947, he rejoined the SWP, but left again in 1951.

James spent most of his remaining years in England. But he visited Africa and Trinidad. His interest and involvement in Pan-African affairs, which began in the 1930s, continued until his death.

He exerted varying degrees of influence on political leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Eric Williams (Trinidad), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Michael Manley (Jamaica), Forbes Burnham and Walter Rodney (Guyana), and Maurice Bishop (Grenada).

To the end of his life, James remained committed to the liberation of all victims of class, racial, and sexual oppression. He was for a socialist world. Many revolutionaries, including this writer, differed with James over strategy, tactics and analysis—but not over our general goals.

Memorial meetings were attended by thousands in New York, London, and Trinidad. The capitalist government of Trinidad wanted to have a state funeral for him, but his legal will stated that the "Oilfield Workers Trade Union be solely responsible for making all the arrangements."

## Charlie Cornell

In our last issue, we printed in our "Readers Speak Out" column a tribute to Charlie Cornell, who died on Jan. 1, 1989. We should have published this obituary sent by a reader as a separate article to underline our respect for Cornell. He made a special contribution to our movement by serving as one of Leon Trotsky's guards in Mexico in 1939-1940.—the editors

**Socialist ACTION**

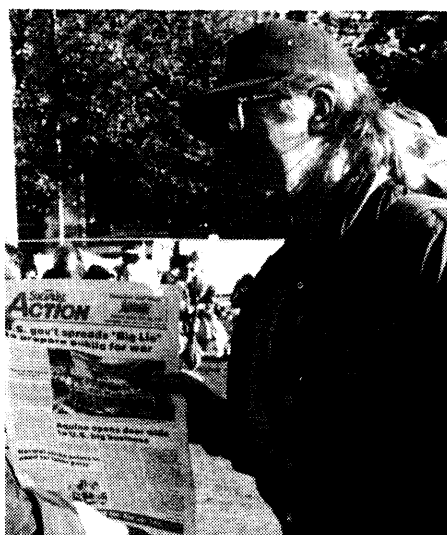
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# Spike Lee does 'The Right Thing'—He tells the truth

By MARK SCHNEIDER

*Do the Right Thing*, a film by Spike Lee.

Defending his film on ABC's "Nightline," Spike Lee, looking exasperated and weary, exploded like a character in his own movie overburdened by the heat. "This is not a film about good guys and bad guys," he said. "It doesn't end with Mookie and Sal hugging each other and singing 'We Are the World.'"

Lee was responding to Jose Williams, a thoughtful civil rights proponent who helped create "Eyes on the Prize," a documentary of the civil rights movement. Williams, speaking with an element of truth, objected that the film lacks a "positive vision."

Other African-American critics, like Stanley Crouch, have attacked the film harshly as the tawdry fascination of a middle-class Black, Lee, with the "underclass."

In truth, there is no crusading Black minister fighting the forces of racism in this film. Nor is there a courageous young woman trying to hold a family together, nor a young man with a chemistry set or a saxophone and a dream. In fact, there are no clichés at all. Spike Lee loves his community, and in this film he has dared to challenge conventional images. Only someone who loves you will tell you the truth—and the truth can hurt.

If this film has an affinity with anything, it is Greek tragedy, with smaller-sized heroes confronted by unseen forces. The unities of time and place are strictly observed; on this one boiling block in Bedford-Stuyvesant is a social microcosm of America's racial attitudes.

"Do the Right thing" feels like a classic almost from the beginning. This film will last. It may be the best American film about race relations ever.

## The life of a community

Mookie, the pizza delivery man played by Spike Lee, is not the first character we meet. The film is really about the life of a community, and Lee presents three oracular figures, one at a time, who represent three different sides of the community's life.

The stage is set by Mr. Senor Love Daddy, the rhymin' and jivin' D.J. who is the musical soul of the block. Next, there is Smiley, a handicapped stutterer, as dysfunctional verbally as the D.J. is facile. Smiley sells pictures of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King—and is ignored by everyone. With this image, Lee seems to be commenting on the fate of these leaders in the community today.

Then there is the self-appointed "Mayor," rendered wonderfully by Ossie Davis, an elderly drunk who tries to hold together the community—and his own dignity—in the face of youthful taunters.

When we first see Mookie, he is counting money. He talks about money a lot. Mookie has no dreams. He lives in a world too unsentimental for that. Like all the characters in the film, with the exception of Sal, the business of his life is survival.

Yet Mookie knows how people work, and he understands the racism that pervades his world, even if he can't change it. He even

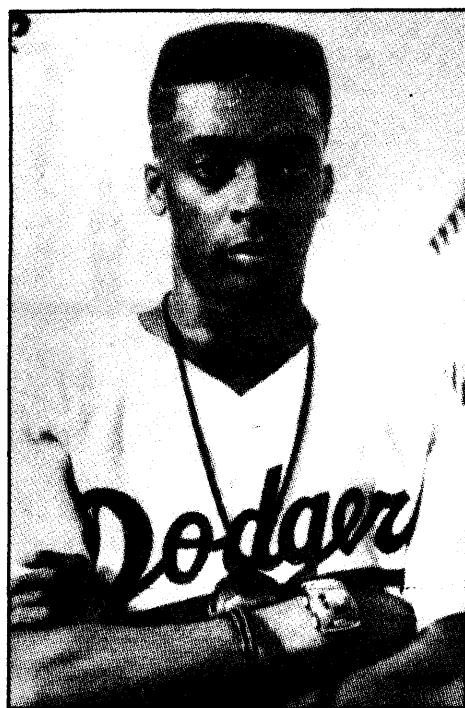
works on Pino—Sal's elder, racist son, who "hates fuckin' niggers." Mookie hilariously tries to make him see the irrationality of his views.

## "You do what you gotta"

The plot turns on the action of Buggin Out and Radio Raheem. Buggin Out protests that there are only Italians on the "wall of fame" in the pizzeria, but "no brothers."

"It's a free country," Sal replies. "You want brothers, get your own pizzeria, and you can put anybody you want on the wall." In a nutshell, we have the conflict between property rights and the rights of free speech placed before us. Buggin Out then decides to organize a boycott of Sal's pizzeria—which is completely unsuccessful. People like Sal.

The philosophical content is stated by the Mayor and Sal. It is the Mayor who tells Mookie, "Always do the right thing," and



Spike Lee

Sal, defending himself before the community, who grimly states, "You do what you gotta." It is Mookie's tragedy that he is caught in the grip of these imperatives.

If there is a weakness in the film, it is that the female characters are largely confined to the background. Mother Sister (Ruby Dee) watches over the block too, almost like a religious symbol. She "sees all," like the eyes on the billboard in "The Great Gatsby."

Tina screams at Mookie, justifiably, for paying her scant attention and being a poor father to their son. Jade, Mookie's sister and roommate, demands that Mookie get a "real job," move out, and take care of what should be his family. The complaints of the women are real, but all they have to offer are complaints.

In *Bed-Stuy*, everyone is vulnerable, and everyone has a legitimate gripe against everyone else. Some gripes are not legitimate, however, and those are everyone's racial attitude. The racism of the whites is familiar and expected. But Spike Lee is not afraid to look at the attitudes of the Blacks.

## "On no postage stamp"

Radio Raheem is full of Black pride. He wears an Africa pendant and a "Bed-Stuy" T-shirt. His enormous boom box blasts "the only song I like," "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy. "My heroes ain't on no postage stamp," they rap—and ultimately, it is this dilemma that lies at the movie's core.

But Radio Raheem has no place for anyone else's heroes. His radio overblasts the Puerto Ricans' salsa music. And he roundly abuses the Koreans, demanding that they speak "mo' fuckin' English." When he walks into Sal's pizzeria the second time with "Fight the Power" blaring, he unwittingly provokes the fatal confrontation toward which the movie has been building.

When Sal destroys Radio's cultural symbol (the radio), Radio locks him in a grasp that seems sure to strangle him. The cops arrive and mete out to Radio the death he sought to impose on Sal.

Radio and Sal are twin characters—likeable,

human, tragically flawed by their intolerance of the other's cultural symbols. But the power is on Sal's side. Sal's tragedy is that racism, his fatal flaw, has blinded him so that he cannot see Radio Raheem's tragedy. He sees only his own loss.

## Two leaders laughing together

Unlike the African-American critics of the film, some white critics have attacked the film for the violent aftermath to Radio's death and Mookie's role in it. I heard this in the hostile tone with which a national Public Radio interviewer questioned Spike Lee.

"You conclude the movie with two quotes," she pressed, "one by Martin Luther King and one by Malcolm X. One opposed violence, the other justified it. Which one do you want us to accept?"

You could hear the tone of exasperation in the filmmaker's voice: "It's not an either/or thing." In fact, the lasting image of the film is the picture showing the two leaders laughing together—which is also the "positive image" Spike Lee leaves us with.

But the interviewer was still dissatisfied: Surely, Spike Lee didn't want us to take Malcolm X's words as being equal to King's! I suppose for this reason the film will be denied the Academy Award it richly deserves.

## An auditory "vision"

You have to listen to this movie as much as watch it. Listen to more than the dialogue. Spike Lee is the most musically aware filmmaker working today; he even wrote some of the score himself.

In the background are not only the sounds of jazz, pop, soul, and rap, but orchestral vignettes that sound like an odd blend of Aaron Copeland and McCoy Tyner, profoundly "American-sounding" in the chord construction and yet dissonant.

The music is an auditory "vision" of Spike Lee's America. The cinematography and staging works much like the music. Lee uses lots of oblique angle shots to dramatize, perhaps, the way we see each other. He also has the characters speak head-on into the camera in one sequence, hilariously venting their pent-up racial animosities in up-tempo, full-throttle release.

There are certain ideologues who go to the movies hoping to see their preconceived notions reinforced so they can walk out saying, "Yes, life is just like I say it is." You won't get this for your six dollars from Spike Lee. What you will get is something far richer—a tragedy in the Aristotelian sense that will move you to genuine pity and terror.

## Characters in Lee's film fight to preserve dignity

By MILLIE GONZALEZ

Spike Lee's "Do the Right Thing," is an unblinkingly fresh approach to the contradictions in race relations. If you are looking for a documentary on the plight of minorities in urban America, you'll be disappointed. This film, however, is good drama—and good drama has roots in reality.

The film takes place on one street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, N.Y. The setting, the color, and the dialogue are all somewhat stylized. Buildings are painted in bright yellows and reds—giving emphasis to

the heated situation.

The characters in the film likewise serve as a vehicle to depict anger and bigotry in a creative yet realistic manner. Lee shows how each ethnic group faults another for its problems. The camera flashes from one person to another as denunciations are made of one group after another.

Spike's character, Mookie, vents his anger against Italians. A Korean spouts ugly verbiage against Jews. A white cop ridicules Puerto Ricans. And an Italian puts down Blacks.

To further drive home the point, Lee uses three men from the neighborhood to serve as a running commentary on what they see is wrong with the world.

In one scene, one of the men complains about how fast the Koreans have risen in the neighborhood and suggests a boycott of their vegetable shop. A second character says, "We should start our own business and keep our money" in the community. Finally, Sweet Dick Willy says, "Where are you going to get the money?" As he walks off, he adds, "I have nothing against them [the Koreans]."

The film does not provide ready answers to the problem of racism. It does, however, give us a real understanding of the rage and frustrations of these people due to their everyday realities. As bad as the economic conditions are—everyone in the film struggles to preserve their dignity, self-respect, and respect from others.

The ugly ending should come as no surprise. A confrontation occurs between Radio Raheem (a Black youth) and Sal (a pizzeria

owner) that is symbolic of the violence between minority groups. Instead of venting their rage against the capitalist system (the source of their depressed and degrading living conditions), they come to blows against each other.

The cops are called in to restrain Sal and Radio Raheem. A riot ensues after one of the white cops engages Raheem in a fatal choke hold. The neighborhood destroys Sal's pizzeria. (But the Korean's shop is spared after he protests, "I'm one of you.")

Some critics contend that this movie does nothing to improve race relations. They charge that it might incite violence. Twenty-five years ago, when I was a child living in "Bed-Stuy," our community was just as depressed and divided. Although some themes of the film are enigmatic, one theme that comes through is that our social system encourages this anger and violence.

Divided as a people, nothing can improve. We leave the theater disturbed by the injustices done to everyone.

## Malcolm X

Some movie critics have stated that "Do the Right Thing" advocates violence. They point to the fact that the film ends with a quote from Malcolm X.

Director Spike Lee responds: "That was supposed to be disturbing. Malcolm X isn't advocating violence, but self-defense. There's a difference."

Lee says he was inspired to make the film by the Dec. 20, 1986, Howard Beach incident. In that event, a young Black man, Michael Griffiths, was killed after he was chased by a lynch mob into the path of a car.

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# Operation Rescue: What it is and how to fight it



Brenda Bishop/Socialist Action

'Operation Rescue' fanatics taunt from the sidelines at the 600,000-strong pro-choice demonstration in Washington, D.C. on April 9.

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

The following is a selection from the pamphlet, "The War Against Abortion Rights: How to fight 'Operation Rescue' and the 'Right to Life' movement," available from Walnut Publishing Co., \$1.00.

The U.S. government, acting through all its branches, has become the main danger to women's right to choose. As we shall see below, a variety of institutions at the federal and state level have already been used to severely undermine the right to abortion. The Supreme Court's *Webster* decision was the most serious attack.

The rightist component of the anti-abortion movement has the ultimate aim of outlawing all abortion by passing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which confers upon the fertilized egg the "right to life," thereby equating abortion with murder. The more sophisticated forces behind the anti-abortion movement prefer to steadily and constantly erode abortion rights—leaving open the question of how fast they can go. This, they figure, can be determined by the resistance they encounter.

The anti-abortion movement as a whole has run into many difficulties because, since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, an ever-increasing majority of the American people support the right to legal abortion. It is universally recognized that legalized abortion has lowered the maternal death rate.

In 1965 the number of women who died from complications due to illegal abortions comprised 20% of all deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth that year. [*Oakland Tribune* editorial Jan. 25, 1989.] While seeking to ultimately ban all abortions, the anti-abortion zealots have operated on many other fronts within the framework of "legal" challenges to abortion rights. Their biggest victory was the July 3 Supreme Court decision.

It is in this area in particular that they have received considerable governmental support. By a series of acts of the President, Congress, and various state legislatures, nearly all federal funding for abortion under entitlement programs such as Medicaid has been banned.

Regulations have also been passed against

birth control clinics providing abortion information. State funding for abortion for poor women has been banned in all but eight states. Compliant legislators have passed restrictions on abortion in all states, including laws requiring teens to get parental consent. This, in effect, denies many teens (who account for one-third of all abortions) the right to abortion and to privacy.

The anti-abortionists have introduced thousands of pieces of anti-abortion legislation in state legislatures and nearly 500 such bills in the Congress.

Their most damaging victory until the Supreme Court *Webster* decision was their success in cutting off federal funds for abortion, through the Hyde Amendment in 1977. This automatically made the procedure inaccessi-

ble to those women who could not afford the price.

able to those women who could not afford the price.

Rosie Jimenez, a young mother and student, was the first documented case of a woman who died (since *Roe v. Wade*) because she was unable to afford a safe abortion. She went to a "back-alley" illegal operator in McClellan, Texas, who botched the procedure so badly that Rosie died from septic infection.

How many other women without financial resources have met Rosie's fate or will in the future unless federal funding for abortion is restored and restrictions—like the *Webster* decision—are removed?

#### Rightist Terrorism

The effect of the attacks on abortion rights coming from the major centers of governmental power has been to embolden the rightwing's extra-legal tactics. The anti-abortion zealots are frustrated by the growing public support for women's right to choose

abortion. However, they are encouraged by the continued anti-abortion actions of the government. These have led them to open a new front in their campaign.

Previously, the extra-legal campaign against abortion consisted of a wave of terrorist attacks carried out by small numbers of individuals. Since 1977 the National Abortion Federation has kept track of these terrorist acts. Between 1977 and 1987 they report 70 arsons and bombings, 213 bomb threats, 216 clinic invasions, 41 assaults and batteries, 2 kidnappings, 191 instances of vandalism, and 61 death threats. There have also been 624 pickets and blockades aimed at preventing or discouraging women from exercising their legal rights. These acts failed to win any significant support from the pop-

ulation and undermined the argument of the anti-abortion movement that they were interested in "saving lives."

Operation Rescue (O.R.) is the right-wing's latest illegal operation against women. It is the brainchild of evangelical fundamentalist Randall Terry, who, since the *Webster* decision, has become the main media spokesman for the anti-choice position.

O.R. aims to stop abortions by blocking the doors to abortion clinics. Staged by the pastors and congregations of fundamentalist sects and by some Catholic parishioners, these zealots pray and sing and, by their numbers, block the entrance to the clinics. This is blatantly illegal—to physically bar women from carrying out their constitutional rights—as illegal as it is to bar people from going into a voting booth to exercise their right to vote. The police have often been very slow to respond and have even cooperated demonstratively with the taunting zealots. Treating them with kid gloves, they

have moved to arrest them so painfully slowly that after posting bail the blockaders have been able to return to join the illegal action again while it is still in progress.

#### Storm troopers for the right-wing

Though O.R. has not been able to close more than one clinic at a time due to its small forces, it has succeeded in garnering a lot of publicity. This is obviously one of its main goals. But the harassment and threat to clinic users is significant. Their plan is to intimidate women seeking abortions and to intimidate the women's movement in general. In this way they hope to speed up the process of getting abortion outlawed through legal means. They have already scored significant results.

It is important to note the similarities of the anti-abortion movement with previous extreme right-wing and fascist groups. Though they demagogically try to compare themselves with the civil rights movement, (because of their use of the tactic of civil disobedience), they have *nothing* in common with this movement, whose goal is to *secure* rights for Blacks and not deny rights to anyone. O.R. is led by white men whose religious beliefs hold men to be superior to women. Misogyny fuels their movement.

Their use of intimidation tactics against individuals (women going to a clinic for an abortion) smacks of fanatic intolerance. And despite their claims to employ only passive, non-violent tactics, they have used strong-arm methods to push their way to clinic doors, attempting to physically remove clinic defenders.

If the Ku Klux Klan decided on election day to surround a polling place in a Black community and prevent Blacks from going in to exercise their right to vote, no one would question the right of the community and all supporters of democratic rights to remove the Klansmen. Operation Rescue must also be removed. Their tactic of intimidation must be answered in the only way that has proven effective so far—we must outmobilize them.

#### Door to conservative politics

Extreme right-wingers have a special interest in anti-abortion activists. Here is what Richard Viguerie, right-wing fundraiser and publisher of the *Conservative Digest* says: "The abortion issue is the door through which many people come into conservative politics, but they don't stop there. Their convictions against abortion are like the first in a series of dominoes. Then we lead them to concern about sexual ethics and standards among young people. This leads to opposition to secular humanism. Then...we point out that secular humanism is identified as both the godfather and the royal road to socialism and communism which points the way to commitments to minimally regulated free enterprise at home and to aggressive foreign and military policies to counter the communist threat from Russia and its many surrogates." From anti-abortion protest to pro-war activism!

One danger inherent in O.R. is that it is already pre-organized through the specific fundamentalist church organizations that are its backbone. These religious fanatics consider the "rescue" of the fetus (not, we note, helping *living* children) to be a holy crusade. In their own words, if abortion isn't criminalized, "we will all share in God's punishment upon America, whether it be drought, war, AIDS, financial collapse, or some other calamity."

#### Religious fanatics

The Binghamton, N.Y., Operation Rescue brochure which issued this warning states

(continued on page 4)