



**Joni Jacobs  
for mayor  
in  
San Francisco  
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Vol. 9, No. 10 OCTOBER 1991 50 CENTS

## Mass response needed to defend women's rights

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

The need for an independent militant women's rights movement was never more clear.

Many events point to this conclusion: The right to abortion, while still the law of the land, is in danger of being overturned. It continues to be chipped away piece by piece. Abortion is no longer a right for those who cannot afford to pay. It is no longer a right for young women in many states. In almost all states, the right to abortion is restricted.

All the attacks on the living standards of the working class hit women harder. Last hired, first fired. Lower wages, regressive taxes, childcare costs—all these hit women with a vengeance.

The need for a well-organized defense of rights and living standards is well-established. But, the unions are not mounting such a defense. And there is no working-class political party fighting for the interests of working people in the political arena.

The absence of these needed components of a serious fightback (militant unions and a workers' political party) creates a special responsibility for the women's rights movement to mobilize the most effective response possible to the attacks on women.

The components of such a response are the *independence* of the women's movement from political institutions run by the rich (chiefly the Democratic and Republican Parties) and a perspective of

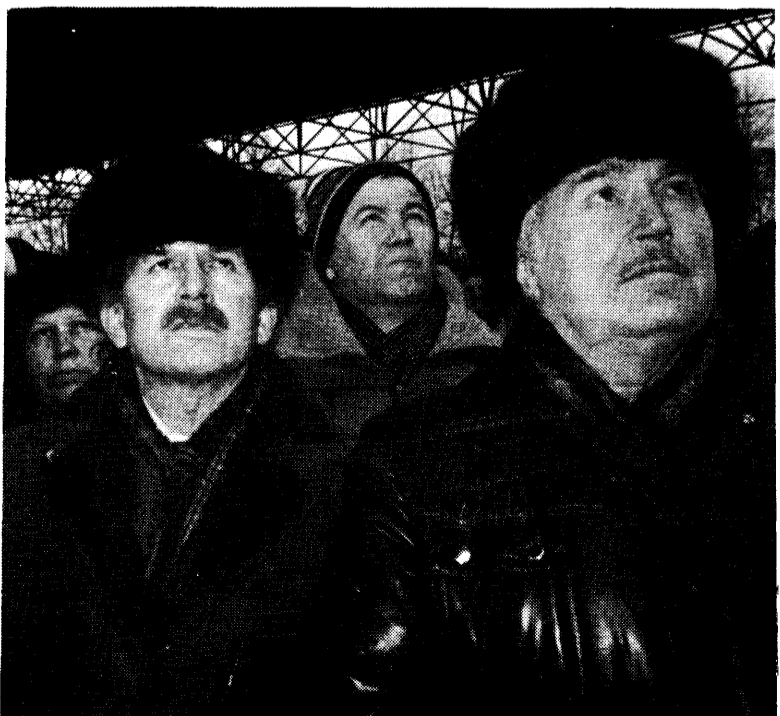


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Pro-choice supporters demonstrate against Operation Rescue in Wichita, Kan.

Tina Beacock/Socialist Action

## What has happened in the Soviet Union?



Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

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# "Support Our Unborn Troops?"



## Fightback

By  
Sylvia Weinstein

"Support Our Unborn Troops!" This slogan was prominent at an Operation Rescue rally on Aug. 25 featuring the Rev. Pat Robertson. The rally was held in Wichita, Kan., where Operation Rescue thugs had tried to stop women from exercising their lawful right to have an abortion.

No, I didn't make this up. One of Operation Rescue's deep thinkers must have thought that since the slogan "Support Our Troops!" seemed to work so well for the American assault in the Middle East, it would also lead to victory for them.

But the slogan might have been more appropriate if it read, "Support Our Unborn Storm Troopers!" That, in any case, is closer to what they really mean.

The Right Rev. Pat Robertson exhorted his thugs with statements such as, "We will not rest until every baby in the United States is safe in its mother's womb," and "We will not rest until this land we love so much is once again truly one nation under God." These ravings brought the crowd to its feet.

What is this movement all about? It certainly is not about

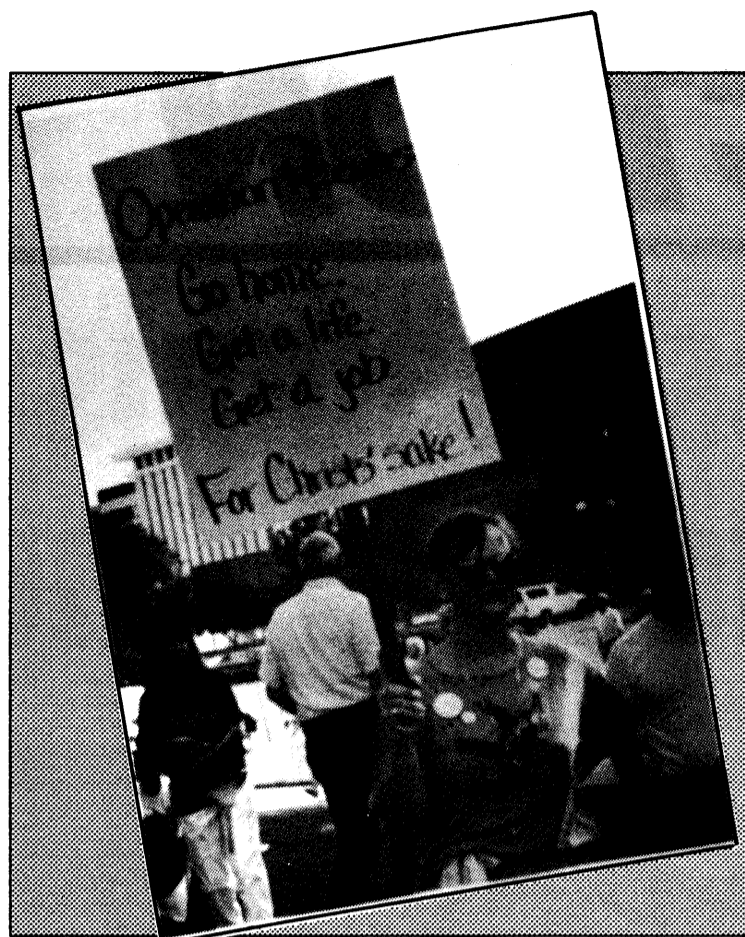
saving children in or outside of women's wombs. We know that young children and their mothers are the number-one victims of poverty.

Last year, in this country that Pat Robertson "loves so much," 3.4 million preschoolers could not be immunized against measles because they were too poor. This year, it is expected that 10,000 children will die because this rich country cannot afford to pay \$15.33 per child for their immunization. And every night in this country 100,000 children will sleep in the streets because they and their parents are homeless.

Of course, these are "born" children, which the fascist-like leaders of Operation Rescue couldn't care less about.

### Future storm troopers

The rantings and thuggery of Operation Rescue serve a larger purpose than what appears on the surface. Besides serving as a battering ram in the combined attack by the courts and state and federal governments to knock down the hard-won right of women to choose, they are experimenting with tactics that future storm troopers will seek



Tina Beacco/Socialist Action

to use against the coming rise in working-class militancy.

The American ruling class knows that the economic crisis building up will soon break out of control. Increased unemployment and inflation will force working people to fight to defend their living standards. When workers in this country take the road of class struggle, the forces of "law and order" will not be enough to beat us down.

That's why the ruling classes of Italy, Germany and Spain financed fascism in these countries during the crises which erupted after World War I. They were not able to put down

workers' uprisings without the help of extra-legal shock troops.

The fascists in Europe also hid behind so-called "moral" issues to whip-up their followers against the victims of capitalism. The German fascists did not start out by saying they were going to murder six million Jews, uncounted numbers of gypsies and other "inferior races," trade unionists, gays, communists, and socialists. No, they claimed to have "noble" aims: To bring class peace and a New Order to Germany and the world.

Today the American ruling class needs the option of turn-

ing the "Right to Life" gangs into "Right to Work" goons. In coming days, I can see the same types breaking through union picket lines saying the strikers are denying God-fearing citizens their right to work.

That's why the wealthy of this country are financing the Pat Robertsons and other demagogues, whose real program is the right to luxury for the rich and the right to starve for the poor and oppressed.

### "Civil rights" tactics?

The so-called "Right to Lifers" claim they are using the tactics of the civil rights movement, which resorted to civil disobedience to defeat inequality and racial injustice. But the Operation Rescue bums are using civil disobedience to deny liberty and equality to millions of women.

I watched the hearings on the nomination of Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court. Thomas is the hope of the "Right to Lifers." But what will really happen in this country if *Roe v. Wade* is overthrown is that millions of women and men who support liberty, equality, and justice will take to the streets.

I do not care who is on the Supreme Court. The courts, in the last analysis, do what's best for capitalism. Whether it is to extend or to take away rights depends on how well organized are those fighting for the rights of the real majority, the exploited and oppressed.

Women will defend their rights against church and state and maintain their right to choose if they organize together with their natural allies. ■

By GERRY FIORI

NEW YORK—On Sept. 18, as the United Nations General Assembly ended the second day of its 46th session, a crowd of 500 gathered at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza to express its solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. The event was called by the New York Hands Off Cuba Committee.

The demonstrators held a spirited picket around the plaza, with chants focusing on the demand that the United States lift its 30-year economic blockade of Cuba. Slogans included: "USA, End the Blockade!"

## NYC rally demands UN condemn U.S. trade embargo against Cuba

"Self-determination for the Cuban Nation!" "Cuba Si! Bloqueo No!" and "Hey, Hey! Ho, Ho! The Trade Embargo's Got to Go!"

A group of about a dozen counter-demonstrators down the street, representing the anti-revolutionary element of the Cuban community, shouted and jeered at the demonstration. But they were drowned out by the

chanting of the marchers, who largely ignored them.

After the picket, the crowd was addressed by a number of speakers, including Panamanian activist Esmeralda Brown, Marciel Garcia of Hospital Workers Local 1199, Deborah Jackson of the Association of Cuban Journalists, Phil Oak of the Christian Peace Conference, and Elombe Brath of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition. Several messages of solidarity were also read.

The speakers' talks centered around support for sovereignty and self-determination for Cuba—including its right to decide what form of economic system to have—and on opposing the political and economic aggression of U.S. imperialism against Cuba.

They also stressed that, despite adverse conditions, the Cuban people were determined to defend the gains of their revolution—including advances in healthcare, education, literacy, and the elimination of poverty and homelessness.

Much of the focus of the remarks from the platform was on demands made to the UN to act in the interests of the peoples of the world rather than those of imperialism.

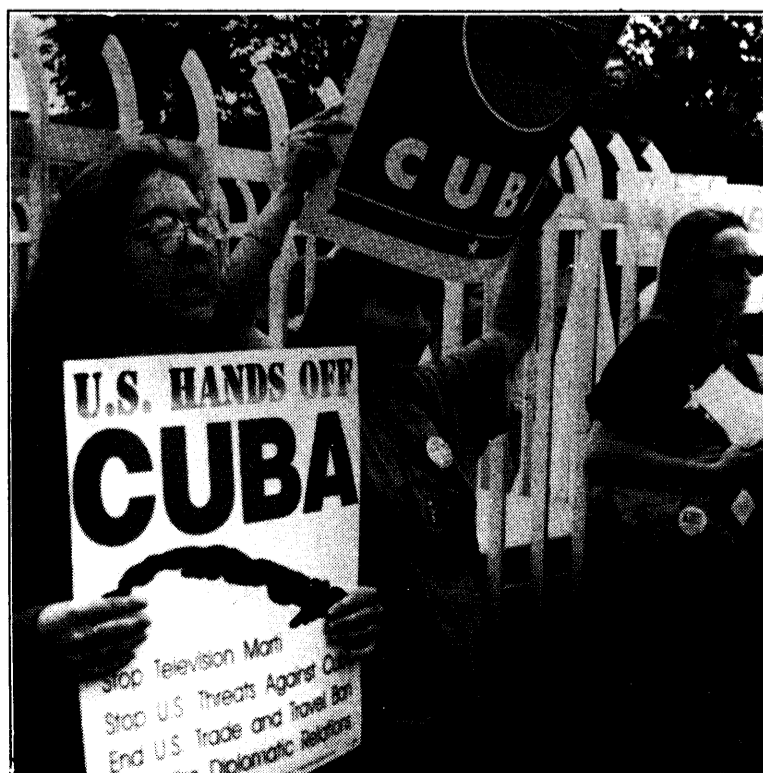
Esmeralda Brown, for instance, condemned the "double standard" of the UN. The United Nations, she pointed out, had been complicit with Washington's invasions of Grenada and Panama and given quick support for the Gulf War while refusing for three decades to take up the issue of the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

The announcement made at the rally that the UN Presidium had acceded to the request of the Cuban representative that the

question of the blockade be discussed by the General Assembly brought cheers from the crowd and chants of "Viva Cuba Socialista!"

At the end of the rally, participants were encouraged to step up their involvement in activities defending the Cuban Revolution.

In the current context, with Cuba under a greater threat than ever before, actions of this kind need to be organized on an increasingly broader scale in order to build the largest and most powerful solidarity movement possible in this country, a movement that will make Washington's cost of aggression against the Cuban Revolution too high to bear. ■



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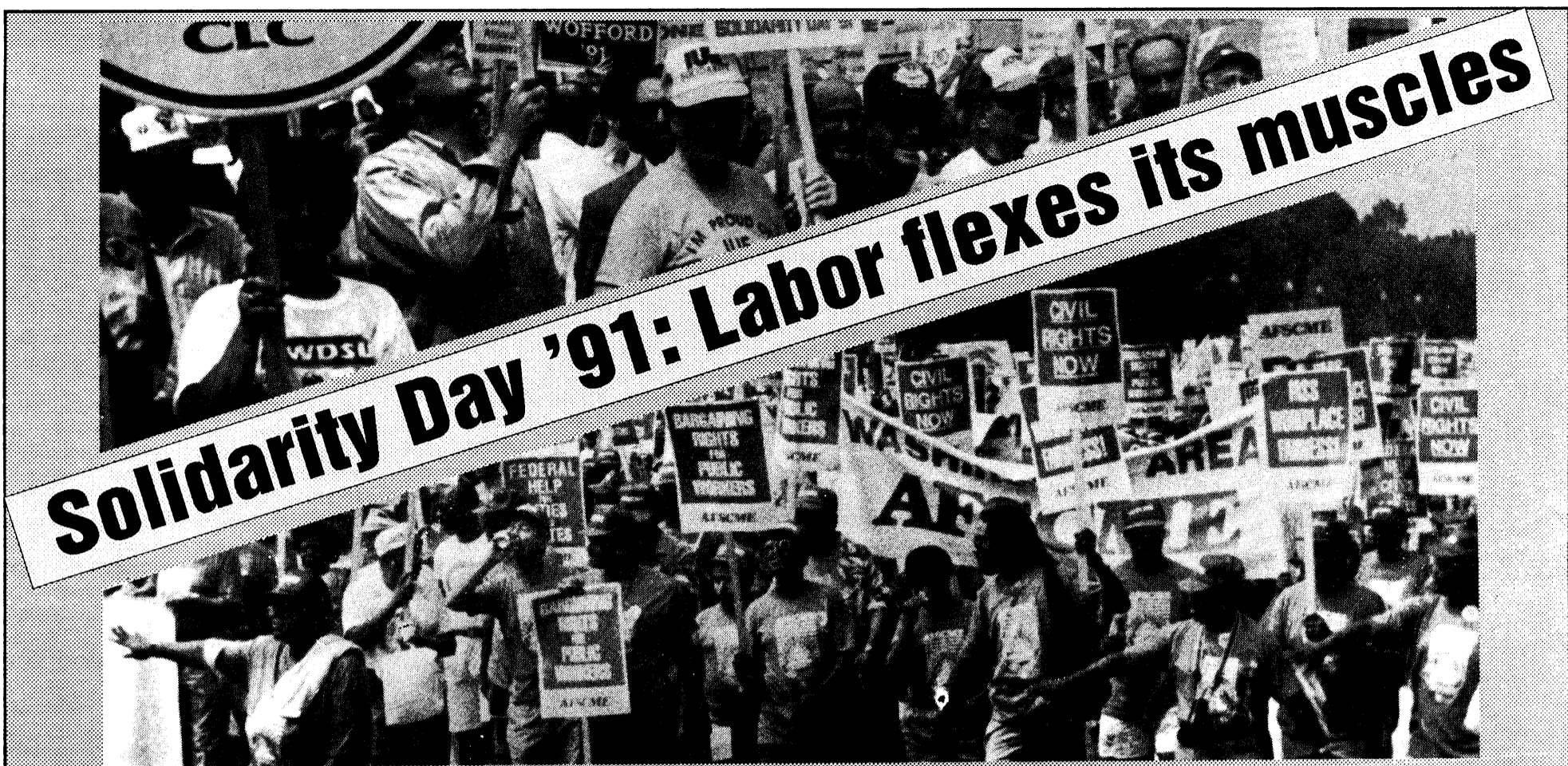
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By CARL FINAMORE

Hundreds of thousands of trade unionists—most of them wearing colorful identifying hats and T-shirts—marched in Washington, D.C., on Aug. 31 to protest the government's anti-union policies.

Billed as Solidarity Day '91, demonstration organizers estimated that over 325,000 unionists marched down Constitution Ave. to the Capitol.

The objectives of the Labor Day protest were to support legislation calling for a national healthcare plan, banning the replacement of strikers with scabs, and eliminating discriminatory laws that deny collective bargaining rights to over 5 million public service workers.

One of the most eye-catching contingents were the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) members, who wore army camouflage fatigues used during their bitter strike against Pittston Coal Co. in 1989-90.

Each section of the march took up the same chants and carried the same placards: "Unions Yes, Scabs No;" "Civil Rights Now;" "Health Care Now;" "Right to Strike, Scabs Out;" "Bargaining Rights for Public Employees;" "Invest in our Future, Invest in Education;" and "Federal Help for Our Cities and States."

The largest contingent came from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which draws a big portion of its membership from public service workers in various government social agencies, education, and healthcare. The United Auto Workers of America (UAW) had the second largest participation, followed by the Machinists, Teamsters, Clothing Workers, Teachers, and Garment Workers unions.

In fact, virtually every union in the United States was present, with most of the major labor groups represented by marchers numbering in the thousands. Together, both the AFSCME and UAW delegations totaled around 50,000, with Black unionists comprising the largest proportion.

Overall, about 30 percent of the marchers were Black. There was also a large percentage of women.

AFSCME Local 457 from Detroit carried a banner which read, "Jobs and Public Services not War." Railworkers held signs saying "Railroaded by Congress," blasting Congress for forcing them back to work in April after less than a 24-hour strike.

Some UAW locals took up a chant of "Be American, Buy Ameri-

can," but I observed that it did not pick up the momentum of the other slogans and was often replaced by the popular slogan of "Civil Rights Now."

While smaller than the 1981 Solidarity Day (which attracted 500,000 participants), this year's demonstration was nonetheless quite impressive. Although it was endorsed by over 180 national civil rights, political, and peace organizations, the march and rally was attended almost exclusively by trade unionists.

In fact, few people outside of the trade-union movement ever heard about the plans for the demonstration. Even within the unions, the event was mostly publicized through normal union leadership channels, which unfortunately often don't reach and seldom inspire the membership.

Also, unlike the 1981 demonstration—which brought together thousands of unionists outraged by the government's firing of 12,000 air traffic controllers—the 1991 focus on legislation failed to tap the dissatisfaction, the desire for action, growing in the ranks of labor.

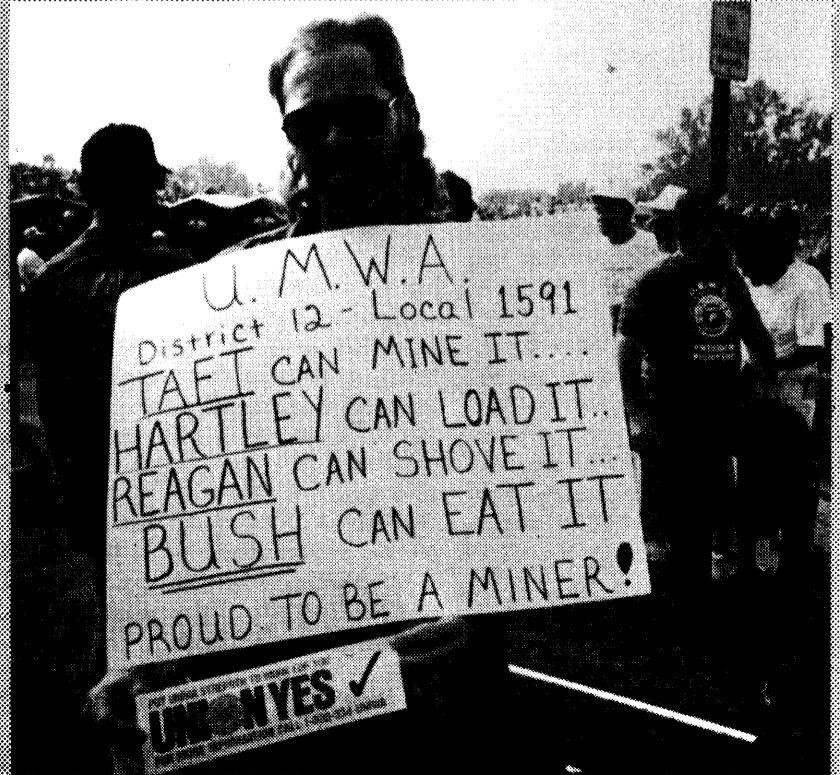
The AFL-CIO's own figures reveal the extent to which an even more massive march could have been scheduled had organizers offered genuine solutions to the current problems facing the working class.

Since 1979, for example, the real earnings of the average worker have declined 12.1 percent; over 37 million Americans have no health insurance; nearly 20 percent of all children in America are living in poverty. Behind these brutal statistics is the reality of a steadily deteriorating standard of living and quality of life for workers.

Yet, labor officials at the rally limited themselves to meaningless threats to throw out of office those Democratic or Republican politicians who don't vote for union-sponsored legislation. Not one speaker mentioned the alternative of using the power represented by the march and rally to generate a political movement led and organized by the unions.

Fortunately, such an idea is being raised today by Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) leader Tony Mazzocchi, as he campaigns for the idea of forming a labor party based on the unions.

This project was ignored by the top union officials who controlled the podium at Solidarity Day '91 and who dominate today's labor scene. Nevertheless, the idea of a labor party will undoubtedly pick up steam as the prevalent mood of frustration edges workers closer and closer to the stage where they will begin to speak for themselves and select genuine leaders who will voice their real needs. ■



Photos by Carl Finamore/Socialist Action

The following is a speech given by Joni Jacobs, Socialist Action candidate for mayor of San Francisco, to the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO) during its candidates night Sept. 4, 1991.

# S.F. Labor Council hears socialist mayoral candidate

My name is Joni Jacobs. I'll be listed on the November 5 ballot as a Socialist Action pro-choice activist. I recognize many faces from the various picket lines I've walked on over the past few years, including ones for Local 1100 (Retail Clerks), Arveys, the auto mechanics, Local 2 Hotel and Restaurant Workers, and the Eastern Airlines machinists.

My organizing skills and leadership abilities have been developed in the women's movement. I've been a central figure in San Francisco for the past three years defending our family planning clinics against Operation Rescue.

We've been tremendously successful in beating back these anti-choice terrorists in our city. And I'm proud to say the reason why is because we've incorporated the tactics of the labor movement, that is, physical defense of the right to choose. In San Francisco, we don't rely on the courts or the police; we rely on ourselves. We put our bodies on the line to stop the anti-choice scabs from closing the clinics. And it works.

Both the women's movement and the labor movement are under severe attack. In Wichita, President Bush has given Operation Rescue the green light to bust women's right to choose, just like President Reagan gave the green light to union busting in the 1981 PATCO strike.

A recent example of the continuing

anti-labor agenda of the government is the recent railroad strike. Within 24 hours of the strike, Congress voted to impose an unfair contract on the rail workers. In the Senate, they did it by unanimous acclamation. In the House, only five voted against it; one of them was a "socialist." This was an historic, bipartisan attack on the working class. A Democratic Party-controlled Congress denied workers the right to strike, or negotiate, or even vote for a contract.

Working people, whether they're union members or not, look to unions and the Labor Council for leadership.

Real leadership won't try to decide which of these big-money, pro-business candidates somehow represents our agenda. Real leadership will challenge working people to stop playing the bosses' game, to stop voting for their candidates, and to stand up for our own interests with our own candidates.

I wish all of you could have been here last month when Brother Tony Mazzocchi of OCAW [Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union] talked about Labor Party Advocates [LPA] and the need for working people to have their own party. Joining LPA is a more

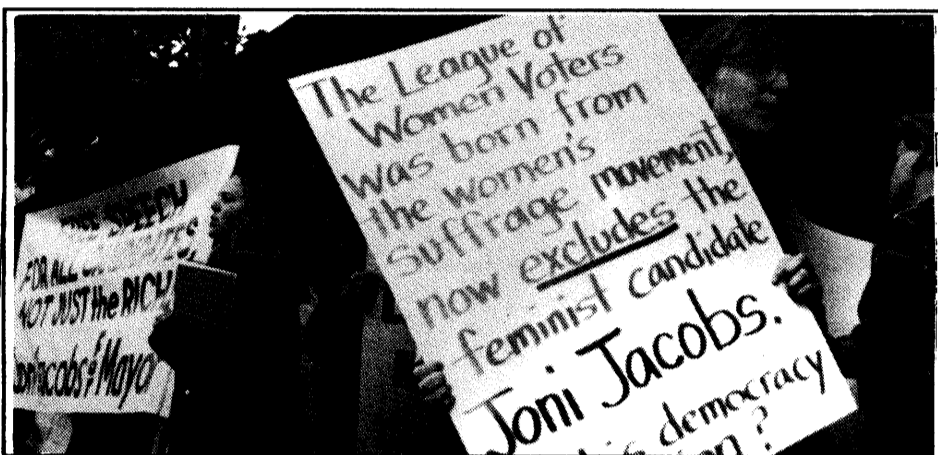
important political expression of labor's power than backing one of these bosses' candidates.

But since that's what we're here for tonight, let me say that I believe, in all modesty, that I am labor's best candidate. I stand on a platform which expresses our interests—housing, jobs, healthcare, democracy. I believe we have the resources to fund a more humane city if we make the political commitment to put human needs before profits. I understand the power of working people mobilized to fight for their interests. I've seen that power work in the women's movement and on union picket lines.

But if the Labor Council is too constricted by a sense of misguided pragmatism to endorse me, then the best message to send the city's working people is to not endorse any of these candidates, and to join Labor Party Advocates.

More and more, young, poor and working people don't vote because they won't be fooled. You can't pick apples from orange trees, and working people can't get justice at the bosses' City Hall.

When we pull together as unionists, working people, women, and people of color to put forward our agenda, to fight for our needs, we will win. But we will win only when we mobilize ourselves in the streets, and get organized in a politically independent movement. We can take a first step down the road of political independence by endorsing a truly working class candidate for mayor of our city. Thank you brothers and sisters for your attention.



Supporters of Joni Jacobs picket League of Women Voters candidates night, Sept. 26, to protest exclusion of socialist candidate from the televised debate.

Kathy M. Booker

## ... Women's rights

(continued from page 1)

mass action to mobilize the supporters of women's rights.

### Independent politics

The need for independence from the ruling rich is meeting with a contradictory response from the organized women's rights movement.

On the one hand, most of the women's rights activists in the National Organization for Women, for example, are thoroughly disgusted with the betrayals the two big political parties have dealt to women. On the other hand, the main leaders of NOW continue to support Democrats and attempt to channel the work of the organization into electoral work for the Democrats.

The defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment by the Democrats and Republicans (in the state legislatures) set the stage for the whittling away of women's reproductive rights. The setbacks in employment, pay equity, and affirmative action can also be laid at the door of these capitalist political parties.

Many years of NOW support for Democratic Party "liberal" candidates have produced no gains for women. In fact, women's rights have been set back during the years of increased dependence on the strategy of electing Democrats (and a few Republicans).

Now, the Commission on Responsive Democracy, set up by NOW two years ago to hold hearings on the issue of setting up a new pro-feminist political party, has reached the conclusion that such a new party is needed and should be established.

But the very idea of independent politics stirs up the political waters, and the pro-capitalist media has responded with an outcry. The media is working overtime to convince those who work to defend and expand human rights that they must work only through those "legitimate" channels established by the rulers themselves.

### A local example

The San Francisco chapter of NOW provides an example, in the negative, of the problem. A broad coalition of organizations (ranging from the League of

Women Voters and the S.F. Labor Council to Socialist Action) has been assembled under the aegis of the S.F. Area Pro-Choice Coalition to support the Oct. 5 pro-choice demonstration. But the S.F. NOW leadership waited until one week before the action to grant its endorsement.

Meanwhile S.F. NOW's two main leaders have been working to elect Angela Alioto, a Democrat, as mayor of San Francisco.

This policy harms the women's movement at a time when broad unity in action (like the Oct. 5 demonstration) is desperately needed. By denying their support until it was too late for the chapter to help build the action, the NOW leaders have prevented the mobilization of the full number possible. (See the article on the Chicago pro-choice demonstration for another example of this problem.)

### Mass action strategy

There are reasons for optimism however. Pro-choice opinion is at an all-time high. Young people are unwilling to give up the right to abortion, which has been legal for their entire lives. Activists note a tremendous response on college campuses to the call for pro-choice action.

This means that there is great potential for mass mobilizations for women's rights. Such mobilizations are the only means available at this time to defend *Roe v. Wade*. Without them, women will continue to lose ground.

The lack of nationally-coordinated pro-choice actions this fall, when women's reproductive rights are under such an escalated attack on all fronts (Congress, the courts, and the Administration) including the extra-legal attacks by Operation Rescue on women and abortion clinics in Wichita, hurts the fight to save *Roe v. Wade*.

National NOW's call for one million people to demonstrate in Washington, D.C., on April 5, 1992, will be a real test of strength of the women's rights movement. Activities should be launched in every city and town across the country to begin building support for this demonstration.

The Young Feminist Conferences

## PERSPECTIVES ON INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p><b>TONY MAZZOCCHI</b></p>  <p>Tony Mazzocchi, Secretary-Treasurer, Oil, Chemical &amp; Atomic Workers Union (OCAW); Initiator of Labor Party Advocates (LPA), national organization advocating the formation of a Labor Party based on the unions.</p> | <p><b>SARAH NELSON</b></p>  <p>Sarah Nelson, Co-convenor, Citizens for a New Party; Member, National Organization for Women (NOW) Commission on Responsive Democracy; National Director, Christic Institute.</p> | <p><b>JONI JACOBS</b></p>  <p>Joni Jacobs, Socialist Action candidate for mayor of San Francisco; Former chair, Reproductive Rights Task Force, San Francisco chapter, National Organization for Women (NOW).</p> |
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**Friday, Oct. 11 at 8:00 pm**  
**ILWU Local 34, 4 Berry St., S.F. 821-0511**

organized nationally and statewide by NOW will, most likely, help spur the organizing for mass mobilizations. Last year's Young Feminist Conference held in Akron, Ohio, adopted a more militant approach in calling for a series of mass actions in defense of women's rights.

California NOW is sponsoring a

Young Feminist Conference in San Jose on Nov. 15-17. This conference should get the ball rolling in California for actions to build April 5. It can also continue the important discussion needed in the women's movement on the need for breaking definitively with the Democratic and Republican parties.

## Abortion foes out-mobilized in NYC

**NEW YORK**—Right-wing anti-abortion groups had promised to form a four-mile-long "human cross" on the streets of midtown Manhattan on Sept. 29.

But their publicity stunt was overshadowed by an outpouring of over 6000 women's rights supporters—who out-mobilized the anti-choice people by more than five to one.

"New York is pro-choice!" the abortion rights demonstrators roared as they marched down Fifth Avenue from a rally at Columbus Circle. As they passed St. Patrick's Cathedral, a symbol for the anti-abortion fanatics, the

marchers chanted, "Shame! Shame!" Meanwhile, the anti-choice "cross" turned out to be a straggling line of people, half-hidden behind police barricades, sometimes with gaps of entire blocks between them.

The size of the pro-choice counter-mobilization was especially significant in that it was organized on just two-weeks' notice.

The counter-mobilization was sponsored by a broad coalition of groups, including the Women's Health Coalition, the Reproductive Rights Coalition, and the National Organization for Women.



Clinic defenders in Wichita, Kan. Similarly, women in Illinois face escalating attacks on their health clinics.

# Anti-abortion fanatics vandalize doctor's office

By TINA BEACOCK

AURORA, Ill.—The local clinic of Dr. Alexander Jacobowski was vandalized on Saturday, Sept. 14, by anti-abortion fanatics, leaving damage estimated at \$175,000.

The vandals broke all the windows, smashed up medical equipment (including an ultra-sound machine), slashed up furniture and the doctor's diploma, and took a sledge hammer to the toilet and tank, causing extensive water damage. The vandals left no doubt about their motive, scrawling "the Devil's workshop" and "baby-killer" inside and outside, and splattering red paint over the walls.

The damage was discovered Saturday morning by pro-choice volunteers when they arrived to escort patients past the lines of anti-abortion zealots who usually show up on that day.

Jacobowski opened the office after his lease at a local clinic owned by Copley Memorial Hospital was not renewed after

months of harassment. (Copley does not allow elective abortions.) He has been targeted because he performs abortions, including second-trimester procedures, although they comprise only 10 percent of his practice. His office is one of two places a woman can get an abortion within a 20-mile area surrounding this town of 100,000.

The vandalism is clearly part of a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation by anti-abortion fanatics. One anti-abortion picketer outside the office on the morning of the trashing exclaimed, "Look at God's handiwork!"

Local anti-abortion demagogue Joseph Scheidler, while careful to disavow any knowledge of the vandalism, complained that anti-abortion zealots were too "caught up in apologizing for vandalism against property." He carefully listed every other attack on the doctor and the clinic, and attributed the destruction to possibly "a genuine pro-life radical for whom non-violent protest takes too long."

Scheidler allowed that perhaps vandalism "may discourage other medics from getting involved in the dirty business of abortion."

Dr. Jacobowski and his clinic had been targeted before. In April, Jacobowski was accosted in a rest-stop parking lot by people who chained themselves to his car. When his office in Aurora opened in June, the telephone lines were cut, and 16 people were arrested after chaining themselves to the porch of the office.

On the Wednesday following the vandalism, when Jacobowski stopped at a restaurant, someone spilled acid and paint on his car. His house has also been picketed, and his family harassed.

Such tactics are encouraged by the climate of official hostility to women's right to abortion, nationally as well as locally. The support the Bush administration gave to Operation Rescue in Wichita, Kan., was a clear example.

The local mayor, rather than squarely condemning the criminal attack, said that Jacobowski's office brought trouble with

it. "We don't need vandalism in this town along with any other crime, and we probably don't need what he does here either," Mayor Pierce stated. He compared an abortion clinic to "a toxic waste dump or a nuclear power plant."

But many of the doctor's neighbors have opposed the vandalism. Phyllis Doyens, his next-door neighbor, told the *Beacon News*, "our neighborhood has been ruined, not by Dr. Jacobowski, but by these people who call themselves Christians."

Local people have poured out to support the doctor and the clinic. Two local NOW chapters helped train between 80 and 100 people to do clinic escort when the harassment first started. The volunteers met in area churches and received support from the local chapters of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and the League for Women Voters, among others.

A support demonstration of over 100 people held at the doctor's office on Sept. 21 showed the breadth of support for access to abortion. Many local people came to the rally because they had read about the attack.

Several women high school students explained that they were for keeping abortion safe and legal because "people will have abortions no matter what. There will be those teenagers, too afraid to tell their parents, who will just go somewhere else ... No one should have a baby as a teenager. It's not worth ruining two lives."

Heather Sewell, a resident of Aurora, continued, "The people making these decisions [about abortion and law] are ruling other people's lives, making their decisions for them. It should be a woman's choice."

Local organizers are planning another rally at the end of October. For information, call Kane County NOW at (708) 584-0004.

Chicago pro-choice activists scored an important victory against Operation Rescue on Saturday, Sept. 28, when they out-mobilized the OR blockaders four to one at the American Women's Medical Center.

The pro-choice clinic defenders were organized by the Emergency Defense Coalition. Thirty-two of the 50 blockaders (from two Chicago-area churches) were arrested by police and removed from the clinic. By 8:30 a.m., the clinic was once again accessible to patients.

Although led by a national leader of Operation Rescue, the blockaders were ineffective against 200 activists determined to uphold women's legal access to abortion services.—T. B.

CHICAGO—Several groups in this area are planning a large, peaceful protest this fall to answer the attacks on the right to abortion.

An initial call cites the government's Gag Rule against women's health clinics, Operation Rescue's attacks in Wichita and Iowa, and the Aurora clinic vandalism as examples. It states, "There is an urgent need for all those organizations and individuals which have supported women's rights ... to come together to respond, to mobilize the vast majority of women and their supporters who defend the right to safe, legal, and accessible abortion."

The call is signed by Sharon Powell, Chicago Women's Health Center and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights-Bridge Women of Color Partnership Program; Terry Schleder-Scott, Du Page NOW; Norine Gutekanst, Emergency Clinic Defense Coalition; Ellen Mason, Health Worker's Pledge; and Sarah Rivkin, Northwestern University Women's Coalition.

The initial planning meeting will be held Saturday, Oct. 5, at 2 p.m., at the Chicago Circle Center, 750 S. Halsted St. (For more information, call (312) 845-6838.)

Originally, virtually every significant organization in Chicago supporting abortion rights had planned a rally for Oct. 12. But this rally was called off when one organization, Planned Parent-

## Actions underway to protect choice

hood, withdrew, fearing that an action at the same time that pending legislation on the Gag Rule was being considered in the Senate would jeopardize the legislation.

There is currently a rider to an appropriations bill in the Senate which temporarily prevents implementation of the Gag Rule, while it calls for parental consent for teenagers getting abortions. (Parental notification, where it is in effect, has already resulted in the deaths of teenage women, like Becky Bell of Indiana.)

Other organizations, like Chicago NOW, said they were concerned that a rally would be seen as support for such legislation, and did not want to send the wrong message to legislators. They talked instead of an activity in February, perhaps tied to the primary elections.

Others, however—like the Health Workers Pledge, Terry Schleder Scott, and other signers of the letter—agree that the only way to send a clear message to legislators, courts, and the Bush administration is to mobilize the largest possible forces in a public action.

The strategy of relying on the kindness of legislators has been tried for years. As a result, we are in the current situation in which women's rights (and

other rights) are under constant attack. Women—and men too—must mobilize to preserve and extend the right to abortion. If we don't, we risk losing even more of our rights.—Tina Beacock

SAN FRANCISCO—Pro-choice supporters in the Bay Area are marching on Oct. 5 to defend "safe, legal, and accessible abortion." This action is one of the few regional mobilizations being built this fall in response to the stepped-up campaign of government and right-wing attacks on reproductive freedom.

During the last weeks of organizing, many important organizations have endorsed the event. These include the San Francisco Labor Council and several unions, including ILWU Local 6 and Local 34, Sign Display and Allied Crafts Local 510, California Federation of Teachers, the Executive Board of the California Teachers Association, United Public Employees SEIU local 790, and two chapters of the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

Also endorsing the action are organizations of Asians and Pacifics, Black women, Latinas, Filipinos, eight specifically pro-choice organizations, four NOW chapters, three area Pro-

Choice Coalitions (representing many organizations), the League of Women Voters, student organizations, several socialist organizations (including Socialist Action), several lesbian and gay organizations, the ACLU, and many others.

Many of these groups have done more than lend their name to the event. Thousands of letters with calendar announcements have gone out, several campuses and concerts have been leafleted and posted, train and bus stops have been leafleted, and an advertisement has been placed in the *Oakland Tribune*.

The main difficulty that arose in building this impressive action was the failure of several of the main pro-choice organizations to honor their own vote for the action. The vote had been taken during a meeting of the S.F. Area Pro-Choice Coalition back in August.

Planned Parenthood, for example, voted for the action at the August meeting but later declined to endorse it. S.F. NOW and the California Abortion Rights Action League (the NARAL affiliate) refused to endorse the action until one week prior to Oct. 5.

The response of these three well-funded groups has hurt efforts to unite Bay Area pro-choice forces. Despite these unfortunate obstacles, the march is expected to be a success.

—Carole Seligman

# Pressure to compromise derails Black candidate's mayoralty bid in Boston



The Rev. Graylan Ellis Hagler

David Schervish

By JIM HENLE

BOSTON—When the Rev. Graylan Ellis-Hagler, of the Church of the United Community, declared his candidacy for mayor this spring, there was an immediate reaction throughout the city.

Because of his clear stands for Black community action and his articulate and far-reaching criticism of injustice, Ellis-Hagler awakened the hope that a Black candidate had emerged who would take on the Democratic Party machine and mobilize the community.

In a statement for his first public meeting, Ellis-Hagler wrote, "It is time for a strong Black voice to challenge a system that only represents whites."

The reaction from the ruling-class politicians was also strong. One witness reported that when a reporter asked Democratic incumbent Mayor Raymond Flynn for a response, "he went nuts." Flynn's campaign team was reportedly meeting every day to discuss their strategy to foil Ellis-Hagler's challenge. It looked as though crisis-ridden Massachusetts had finally found a way past politics as usual.

Five months later, however, the Rev. Ellis-Hagler's campaign has failed to live up to its initial promise. He has failed to launch an independent political challenge to the Democratic Party or to directly base his campaign on the struggles of the Black community.

Instead, he has followed down the well-worn path of Rainbow Democrats, such as former mayoral candidate Mel King, a path that provides no answers for the hard-pressed Boston Black community.

The Rev. Ellis-Hagler is well known in Boston as a fiery orator and an uncompromising spokesman of the Black community.

In 1983, he played a major role as inspirer and organizer of mass picketing for striking Greyhound workers. He has taken a strong stand against apartheid and U.S. intervention in Central America. He was outspoken against the Gulf War, and has fought against the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

He is best known in Boston, however, for his courageous stand against the stop-and-frisk policies of the Flynn administration. Last year, when Carol Stuart's husband murdered her and tried to pin it on an unidentified Black man, the Flynn administration helped whip up

**'... the Rev. Ellis-Hagler's campaign has failed to live up to its initial promise. He has failed to launch an independent political challenge to the Democratic Party or to directly base his campaign on the struggles of the Black community.'**

a racist hysteria. Young Black men were routinely forced to submit to strip searches on the streets of Boston.

As the national media played up the Black-male-murders-a-white-middle-class-woman sensation, Ellis-Hagler was virtually alone among political leaders in standing up to the police and defending the rights of the Black community.

#### Flynn's Democratic machine

Ellis-Hagler's history of independent action and support for community struggles gave hope that his campaign might be a break from Democratic Party politics. The Democratic Party in Boston is the political organizer for big business interests. As in Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago, it is the only viable party in the city.

Incumbent Mayor Flynn pretends to be the "neighborhood" mayor who knits together the varied neighborhoods in Boston into a coherent community. In reality, he presides over an entrenched system of corruption and white job-trusting.

From the ruling-class point of view, Flynn has "excellent credentials" for this post. He rose to prominence as a racist anti-busing advocate as State Representative from South Boston. He was a voting city councillor from South Boston, for example, at a Boston city council meeting in 1979 that voted funds for para-military training for vigilantes of the racist South Boston Marshalls.

While a liberal on some social issues, he also is a vocal opponent of women's right to abortion. John O'Bryant, Black President of the Boston School Committee, recently compared Flynn to George Wallace, the staunch racist who later wore a "new South" mask.

#### Depression and repression

Massachusetts has crash-landed into the recession. The high-tech boom has gone bust, and unemployment is chronically

high. Construction unemployment is at 40 percent. It is the worst recession for any state in 30 years.

For Boston's Black communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, there is a depression. Over 30 percent of Roxbury's population is below the poverty line. The average Black family spends 50 percent of its income on rent; only 20 percent own their own homes.

Investigators, including a task force associated with Local 26 of the Hotel Workers' Union (HERE), have uncovered a huge banking scam that robs mainly minority families of their homes by means of exorbitant second mortgages. Major Boston banks have made this standard practice.

The high-school dropout rate is now 40 percent for Black students. Homelessness is on the rise. Gang activity and drugs have become endemic. The largely minority and working class city of Chelsea, just north of Boston, showed the future for minority communities when it became the first city in the country since the 1930s to declare bankruptcy.

To keep a lid on the resistance of the Black community, the police are a constant presence. Over the summer, police outrages were a common occurrence. On June 5, Nathaniel Lackland was shot in the back of the head by a police officer. Witnesses disputed the police claim that it was a "justifiable homicide" and that the victim was brandishing a knife. On July 12, 16-year-old Christopher Rogers was shot down by a police officer, who claimed his gun discharged "accidentally." The officer has a record of involvement in incidents of police violence.

Both killings were given short shrift by the police department and its commissioner, Francis Roache, a Flynn crony. On top of these killings, a review of police handling of the Stuart murder

case revealed that police had threatened and physically abused witnesses in order to frame a Black suspect. Yet no criminal charges will be filed against the police, who are supposed to review their own misconduct.

The Black community has mobilized to call for Commissioner Roach's resignation. Prominent leaders called for a civilian review board of the police, viewing this as a step toward community control. In truth, however, civilian review boards have historically been used to whitewash police misconduct. In addition, they have had no decisive control and are not based on the Black community.

This call for a civilian review board was part of Ellis-Hagler's initial platform. However, until it became a proposal that was taken up by other Black leaders, he downplayed this demand in favor of the even more moderate proposal of sensitivity training for Police Academy cadets. He proposed assigning the cadets "to schools, youth centers, and as street workers on a full-time basis for 18 months to develop relationships with the community and its youth."

The deteriorating conditions of Boston's Black communities call for a determined political response. As the economic pie shrinks, Blacks and other minorities are the first to have their seat at the table taken away. Repression is intensifying to enforce this exclusion. Even to defend the existing living conditions of the Black community, it will be necessary to mobilize the community and to use the organized power of all working people.

#### Surrounded by Rainbow

Meanwhile, there is an explosive mood in the Black community. This is reflected in the attention given to Malcolm X and his message of "no sellout." Political leadership in the Black community that was willing to tap this sentiment and launch a movement based on community struggles, beholden to no one else, could have a tremendous impact.

The Rev. Ellis-Hagler's campaign for mayor had the potential to galvanize this discontent. Hopes were raised when the candidate brought into his campaign important community workers like Shakur Ali and Chuck Turner. While fighting for jobs for Black youth, they had never hesitated to defy the authorities, the police, the mayor, or court injunctions.

But now, Ellis-Hagler has sought the advice of Rainbow Democrats to manage his campaign. Prominent Black Democrats, such as Mel King and Juanita Wade, were brought in to play key advisory or technical roles. Veterans of Mel King's 1983 mayoral campaign have consciously molded Ellis-Hagler's campaign on King's. The 1983 King campaign, which had caught fire on the grass-roots level, was turned into an effort to expand the Democratic Party beyond the old white patronage system.

Rainbow Democrats moved toward the Rev. Ellis-Hagler when their other possible candidate, Diana Lam, had her campaign explode on the launching pad. Within two days of announcing her candidacy, Lam was exposed as a landlord who had engaged in dubious practices.

Under the influence of "progressive" Rainbow campaign organizers, Ellis-Hagler shifted. His campaign was consciously molded into a non-confrontational bid for "unity," rather than a campaign to expose Flynn and other political forces as enemies of the Black community and of working people.

Therefore, Black community struggles necessarily have taken a back seat in the campaign. There have been no large rallies to draw people into the campaign and no focus on the ongoing struggles of the community.

#### The fight for affirmative action

To advance, struggles in the Black community must mobilize against the institutions of capitalist power, includ-

(continued on next page)

# Appointment of Thomas no gain for Black rights

By MALIK MIAH

Clarence Thomas will be the second Black to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet he will not serve the interests of the great majority of Blacks or other working people. He will be another cog in the wheel of injustice.

His performance before the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings in September made this clear. Thomas will sit on the highest court because he represents the rightist views of the Bush government and the anti-Black, anti-worker policies of the employers.

It is Thomas' views on affirmative action, abortion rights, "states" rights, and the prerogatives of the employing class versus those of the working class that explains why conservatives and reactionaries—including a few outright racists—support Thomas. Consider Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, who had nothing but praise for Thomas before and during the hearings!

Opponents of Thomas' confirmation included all major liberal and civil-liberties organizations—including the NAACP and the National Organization for Women—as well as the AFL-CIO.

## Anti-worker bias

What are some of Thomas' views? Although he tried to retreat on some of his more right-wing positions during the hearings, Thomas reaffirmed his opposition to affirmative action—even though he personally benefitted from such a program at Yale University.

Thomas, while head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) during the Reagan presidency, actively opposed class-action suits to fight discrimination. The EEOC under his command prioritized cases of individual discrimination. The onus was on the Black or woman to prove discrimination, not the employer.

Thomas made clear his class bias too. He told the senators the story of his poor upbringing in rural Georgia to "prove" he understands discrimination, and would show empathy for the poor.

Thomas, however, reaffirmed his view that the poor stay poor because of lack of effort.

Although his sister was present, Thomas did not retract a story he told a conference of Black conservatives about his sister, who once was on welfare. "She gets mad when the mailman is late with the welfare check," Thomas told that group. "That's how dependent she is."

Thomas, like many working-class and poor Blacks who "make it" out of poverty and into the middle class, forgets his roots. Thomas and his fellow-travelers now identify more with the oppressor, not their former class. The system that put them in poverty is let off the hook.

## Natural law and abortion

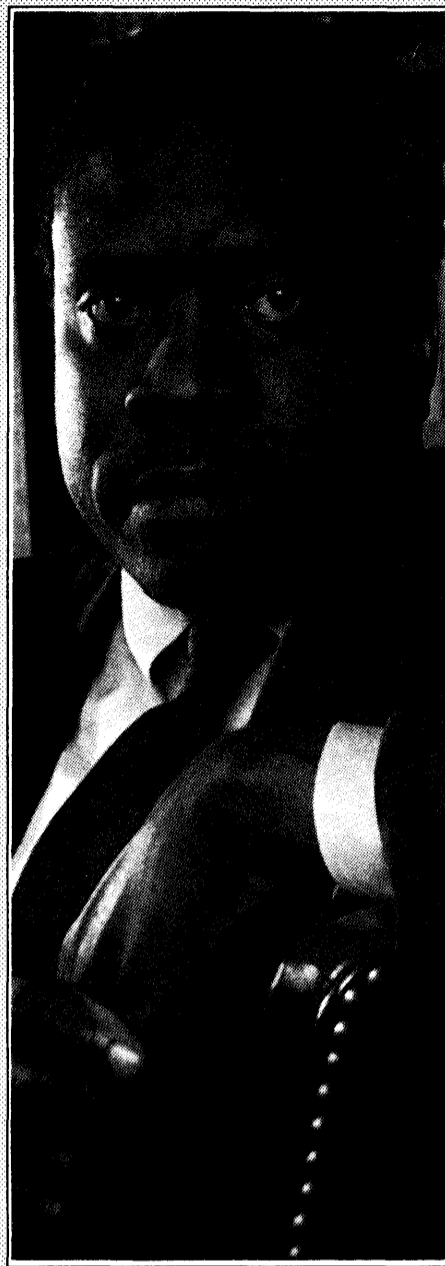
While claiming support for the right of privacy, Thomas said he had no opinion if that right should apply to a woman's right to an abortion. He said he had no position on the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case granting woman that right.

Yet Thomas stressed his view that "natural law" was key to interpreting the Constitution. By natural law, he and other conservatives mean a "higher" law than the written Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. Thomas had praised an article claiming that the right to abortion was a violation of natural law.

Natural law is usually used by right-wing forces to defend the status quo—be it slavery in the 1800s (the Dred Scott case), Jim Crow in the 1900s, or sex discrimination today. That's why the Constitution has been amended under social pressure to explicitly include such basic rights as freedom of speech, formal equality for Blacks, and the right of women to vote.

## Divided loyalties among Blacks

Because Thomas is Black, the Black community became divided over whether to back his confirmation. A majority disagreed with Thomas' views



Clarence Thomas Martin H. Simon

but favored his appointment to the court. The argument was simple: since Bush will pick a conservative, at least he (no Black woman was on the list) should be Black.

This divided loyalty of the Black community reflects a deeper political issue. Thomas is not an aberration (or simply an opportunist being used by

Bush) in the Black community. There is a social basis for his rise.

Since the victory of the civil rights movement in the 1960s that overturned legal segregation, a sizable and influential Black middle class has emerged. This layer has more in common with the white middle class socially and politically than with the average Black working person. Thomas genuinely believes what he says, and many other Blacks of the professions agree with him, whether they call themselves Republicans or Democrats.

Yet his appointment is no gain for the Black community. It is not an advance toward Black equality, not even a blow against institutional racism. It is not "better" to have a Black reactionary instead of a white reactionary on the Supreme Court. It serves no one's interests but the racist state to have more Black professionals integrated into the highest governmental, military, and corporate bodies.

## Black workers

The condition of life for most Blacks is not that of Clarence Thomas. The average Black is more like his sister—trying to survive in a society where institutional racism is used to keep Blacks as second-class citizens and to deepen divisions among Black and white workers fighting for a better life.

A few statistics prove this point. A new federal study based on the U.S. Census Bureau shows that the Black middle class grew significantly since the 1960s. The number of Black families with annual earnings over \$50,000 has more than doubled since 1970. About 14 percent of Black families make that kind of money today, compared with just 6 percent in 1970.

Yet 31 percent of all Blacks were at the poverty level in 1989, about the same as in 1979 and 1969. The gap between the better-off and the poor in the Black nationality therefore is widening. And the wage gap among Blacks and whites in all categories (for men, women, college educated, etc) also remains significant.

The fact that so many Blacks finally rejected Thomas in spite of the color of his skin shows the growing political sophistication in the Black community. It indicates that the nationalism of Black working people is much stronger than the bourgeois nationalism of the Black middle class. The future lies in their hands, not in those of the Clarence Thomases. ■

## ... Boston campaign

(continued from preceding page)

ing the Democratic Party. This is incompatible with the Rainbow strategy of trying to broaden the base of the Democrats.

The Democrats are locked in at the top to the banks and businesses. The Vault, the key business leaders' group, screen politicians for acceptability. Significantly, Mel King met privately with them when he ran for mayor in 1983. The Vault makes sure that power is in their hands and serves the interests of profit. But instead of organizing against the Vault, the Rev. Ellis-Hagler speaks of "enticing" it to help the Black community.

It is not enough to talk about a patronage system. There must be a crusade for affirmative action. Initially, Ellis-Hagler projected a slogan of "Boston jobs for Boston people" as a community-control issue of jobs in the Black community. This was linked to the Greater Roxbury Workers' Association drive for affirmative action in construction.

But now the Ellis-Hagler has backtracked to the point where he is voicing support for "community jobs" for South Boston, a key white patronage area. In effect, he is echoing Mayor Flynn's "neighborhood mayor" rhetoric. He no longer is campaigning for the Black

community and against the special oppression of Blacks.

In fact, Ellis-Hagler has now stated that he agrees with Boston Teachers Union President Ed Doherty, also a candidate for mayor, that busing for integrated schools has not been productive. Ellis-Hagler noted that many potential gains of busing had been sabotaged. Yet he did not point a finger at people like Ray Flynn, who goaded the racist mobs and promoted white flight from Boston public schools.

Busing has been a key Black community issue for almost two decades. Giving credence to Ed Doherty on this is backing down on a fundamental question. Ellis-Hagler also stated that he would "consider" cutting the fire department budget. This means laying off firefighters, with the likely result that the Black community would suffer the major loss of firefighting services.

To take another example, Mayor Flynn has won widespread labor support. But unionists will think twice about voting for him when they are reminded that he spent \$600,000 of taxpayers' money on police duty to herd scabs for Greyhound last year.

Unfortunately, Ellis-Hagler rejected such hard-hitting pro labor exposés to run his "unity" campaign. Supporters who were attracted to his campaign because of his record as a fighter have been disappointed by his vague talk of change and his reluctance to challenge

powerful interests.

The overall response to the Rev. Ellis-Hagler's campaign has been low-key. Part of this is due to the attack from the Flynn forces.

For example, Flynn was able to enlist prominent Black leaders, such as Minister Don Muhammed of the Nation of Islam, into backing his cancellation of the elected school board and have it appointed by himself.

When Ellis-Hagler stood up for the large majority of the Black community that supported the elected school board, he was almost alone among the city's Black leadership.

Close supporters of Ellis-Hagler risk losing their jobs or funding if they openly back his campaign. "There are lots of people who say they'd work for me if they could," Ellis-Hagler says, "but the most they can do is stuff behind the scenes." Furthermore, Mayor Flynn hasn't made it any easier for Roxbury residents to register to vote.

But it is also true that the campaign has not taken off. What was needed was to support community fights against the Democratic Party power structure, against a strategy of cooperation with the bank and business politicians who are destroying the Black community, and to work for the needs of the

Black community and working people. This would necessarily involve breaking with the Democratic Party and its "progressive" hangers-on.

It is the building of real struggles and the involvement of people in these struggles that will make a difference, not another "progressive" candidacy. But instead of taking his campaign on a new political road, Ellis-Hagler has provided a pale copy of Mel King's "Rainbow" campaign in 1983.

The fact that a fighter for the Black community like the Rev. Ellis-Hagler would backtrack this way testifies to the tremendous pressure of and by the Democratic Party and its tentacles in the Black community. A break toward independent still needs to be made. ■

## Ellis-Hagler loses primary

The Rev. Graylan Ellis-Hagler placed third in the Sept. 24, 1991, "non-partisan" primary election for mayor of Boston.

Only candidates with the top two highest number of votes will be on the ballot for the Nov. 5, 1991, city-wide election for mayor of Boston. Therefore, the Rev. Ellis-Hagler will not be on the ballot in November. The vote totals were as follows:

Ray Flynn—47,000  
Ed Doherty—12,000  
Rev. Graylan Ellis-Hagler—5,000

# Crisis in Crown Heights: How oppressed people are turned against each other

By CHRIS BIELER

NEW YORK—Last summer, the rage and despair of Black youth in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn boiled over. Thousands of young people rose up against the cops, city officials, and the privileges of the Hasidic Jews who live there.

No doubt, a mayoral blue-ribbon panel will be appointed to investigate the causes of the street rebellion—New York City's largest in 20 years.

But the underlying causes should be clear enough. Unemployment for Blacks is high, especially among youth. Police brutality is rampant. Federal, state, and city cutbacks have devastated schools, healthcare, and other social services—particularly in minority neighborhoods.

On Aug. 9, seven-year-old Gavin Cato was killed by an out-of-control car that had run a red light and landed on the sidewalk where Gavin and his cousin were playing. Both were pinned under the tire.

When neighborhood residents crowded around the car to help, they were roughed up and pushed away by the police. Gavin's father was among those beaten by the cops when he tried to save his son.

The driver of the car was 22-year-old Yosef Lifish, a Hasidic Jew. Lifish was bringing up the rear of a police-escorted three-car motorcade carrying Menachem Schneerson, the Grand Rebbe of the Lubavitcher sect, home from his weekly visit to his wife's grave. When an ambulance arrived at the scene, it took the white driver and passengers—who had only minor injuries—from the car and left the critically injured Black children pinned under the weight of the automobile.

As word spread that the Jews had received treatment before the children and

that the cops had once again brutalized Black residents, youth took to the streets in protest. Fights broke out between Blacks and Jews. Yankel Rosenbaum, an Hasidic scholar visiting from Australia, was stabbed to death later that evening as he was walking home.

## Protests spread

For over a week, 2500 police were dispatched to occupy Crown Heights. Torrents of youths hurled rocks and bottles at the police, shouting, "Whose streets? Our streets!" Another slogan expressed the struggle against the privileges of the Hasidic Jews living in the area: "This isn't Palestine!"

In a demonstration at the 71st police precinct, Black leader Sonny Carson outlined the demands of the rebellion. These included the jailing of Lifish on charges of murder and the suspension of those police who had beaten the victim's family at the scene. "This isn't against Jews, it's against the police," one Black youth told a *New York Times* reporter. (Aug. 25, 1991.)

The street rebellion was a special embarrassment to Mayor Dinkins, who became New York City's first Black mayor in 1989 based on his supposed ability to engender racial harmony in just such strife-torn areas as Crown Heights.

In sharp contrast to his appearance at rallies around the lynching of Yusuf Hawkins in Bensonhurst in 1989, Dinkins was booed when he visited Crown Heights, and bottles were thrown at him.

In the meantime, the Black youth who allegedly killed Rosenbaum is in jail facing felony charges. In September, a grand jury refused to indict Lifish on any charges whatsoever, and he has since left the country for Israel.

It is impossible to understand the outrage of Caribbean and African American

youth engendered by this incident without knowing more about Crown Heights. Out of the 300,000 residents of the district, 80 percent are Black (many of Caribbean origin), about 10 percent are white, 9 percent are Latin and 1 percent are Asian.

## The Lubavitcher sect

The Lubavitchers are a large worldwide sect of Hasidic Jews. As many as 20,000 members are clustered in Crown Heights—which is the world headquarters of the sect.

The Lubavitchers are not without powerful connections. Spiritual leader Schneerson's power in Washington, D.C., was reflected in the fact that 90 senators and congresspeople attended his birthday last year. In New York, the Hasidics' links with the Democratic Party and the police enable them to obtain disproportionate amounts of funding for housing and other services.

Black residents have complained about acts of arson and other forms of harassment by Hasidic landlords who are trying to preserve their enclave. For years, Blacks have been terrorized by special vigilante "watch patrols" that Hasidics have organized to "fight crime."

Several major organizations which claim to speak in the interests of Jewish people have issued high-sounding condemnations of "anti-Semitism" in Crown Heights. They point to anti-Jewish graffiti and chants of "Heil Hitler!" heard at some rallies.

Nevertheless, how many of those pointing accusing fingers at Black people are willing to devote the same energy to examining and changing the distribution of power in Crown Heights? How many of those preaching brotherhood are willing to expose a system of "justice" (read "just us!") that refuses to punish cops who act as if Black people have no

rights they are bound to respect?

The revolt in Crown Heights has also led to discussion in the big-business media about the "death" of a progressive Jewish-Black alliance, best exemplified during the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

But as Clinton Cox persuasively argued in a recent *City Sun* article (Sept. 11-17, 1991), this alliance was driven largely by the perceived self-interests of two outcast groups in American society, both seeking a way out of their pariah status. As more and more Jews have gained a stronger foothold in this country, they have come to share less and less common ground with Black people.

Nevertheless, the history of the Black liberation struggle in the 1970s and 1980s reveals that Black people continue to welcome concrete acts of solidarity by anti-racist whites, provided that the whites do not try to dictate the course of the struggle.

Nevertheless, Black leaders missed an important opportunity to initiate an anti-racist coalition of a new kind in Crown Heights. These leaders, such as the Rev. Al Sharpton, failed to speak out against the anti-Semitic slogans that had found an echo among some confused youth.

Also, while defending the right of Black youth to self-defense, they failed to distinguish between acts of self-defense and indiscriminate retaliation on innocent Jews like Rosenbaum.

Anti-Semitism, like racism, is an ideology the ruling class has used historically to prevent the united fight-back of the working class in times of economic crisis. The anti-racist movement should have nothing to do with such poison.

The root causes of Black oppression lie not in the synagogues on Eastern Parkway but in the boardrooms of Wall Street and Washington. As the capitalist crisis deepens, more and more workers will come to see they have no material interest in the divide-and-conquer ideology of the ruling class. ■

*Dawn Reel assisted in the research on this article.*



Erik Larsen Photos by Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

By JEFF MACKLER

The nation's most prominent and most persecuted antiwar Marine Corp reservist and conscientious objector, Erik Larsen, won another important legal victory on Sept. 18.

A Marine Corps judge, Col. Richard Oullette, at Camp LeJeune, N.C., ruled that Larsen had been denied legal counsel when a preliminary hearing, required under Article 32 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, was held without his civilian or military-assigned attorneys present. Oullette ordered the previous Article 32 hearing to be "redone."

This victory marked the second time Larsen's defense team, headed by Attorney Robert Rivkin, has turned back Marine Corps efforts to deny Larsen due process rights under the U.S. Constitution. The first victory was won in April 1991 when a federal district court judge in San Francisco ordered a hearing on Larsen's application for conscientious objector status.

Larsen is one of several Marines facing court martial for refusing activation to the Persian Gulf, where the U.S.-led slaughter of the Iraqi people reached

## New legal victory for G.I. resister Erik Larsen



Erik Larsen's parents—Johanna and Harold—demand release of their son.

genocidal proportions. Larsen's antiwar activities led him to participate in over 100 rallies in 20 states and in antiwar protests in Germany, Britain, and Italy.

Like his Hayward, Calif., Marine Corps reservist friend, Tahan Jones, Larsen was originally charged with "desertion in time of war." Following an outpouring of national and international support for these courageous youth, this death penalty-associated charge was replaced with "desertion to avoid hazardous duty and/or shirk important service."

Larsen and Jones now face maximum prison sentences of seven years. Jones's court martial begins on Sept. 30, and Larsen's in October.

Dramatic testimony in Larsen's pre-trial hearing last month revealed that the Marines deliberately moved to deny Larsen his right to legal representation. Larsen's originally assigned military attorney, Capt. Wendall Arsi, testifying

under oath, described a May 13 conversation with Capt. Eric Pfisterer, the former prosecutor in the case.

Arsi asked Pfisterer, "Why are we going on with the Article 32? I have no authority to act; civilian counsel [Robert Rivkin] is out of the country." Pfisterer responded, according to Arsi's notes made at the time, "Civilian counsel is a prick and has to be taught a lesson now or later."

Pfisterer, who had never spoken to Rivkin but who was present in San Francisco last April to observe Rivkin's successful defense of Larsen's due process rights during his conscientious objector hearing review, admitted that, "a lack of success on Larsen's conscientious objector case would have mooted our [court martial] proceedings at Camp LeJeune."

"This is the first direct evidence," according to Rivkin, that the government intentionally steamrolled Erik at

the Article 32 hearing in retaliation for Larsen's federal court victory."

The "steamrolling," in fact, consisted of the Marines proceeding with the Article 32 hearing without Larsen's attorneys present and after denying Rivkin 38 of the 39 witnesses he had requested.

With "Catch 22" logic, however, Judge Oullette absolved the Marine Corp Hearing Officer of any wrongdoing. Instead, he ruled that Rivkin himself was responsible for his client's lack of legal representation because of Rivkin's alleged "refusal to participate" in the Article 32 hearing.

The Larsen/Jones Defense Committee has responded to each new attack on these young antiwar fighters with renewed efforts to win the broadest possible public support for the immediate release and for a general amnesty for all Gulf War resisters.

A San Francisco demonstration last month mobilized some 200 protesters at the Federal Building. Similar protests, according to the Larsen/Jones Committee, are in the planning stages for cities across the country.

Antiwar activists and supporters of democratic rights interested in the defense of Larsen and Jones should contact: The Larsen/Jones Defense Committee, Box 225, 1678 Shattuck Avenue., Berkeley, CA 94709. Telephone (415) 655-2101. ■

**Boston Meeting in Defense of Erik Larsen & Tahan Jones**  
**Sat., Oct. 19, 7:30 pm**  
**African-American Institute**  
**Northeast University,**  
**Boston, Mass.**  
**Speakers:**  
**Erik Larsen & others**



# Why Americans don't vote? They're tired of 'lesser evils'

As life in America becomes ever more difficult, sentiment for a labor party is growing. The United States is almost the only major country where workers do not have their own party. Many workers point to the betrayals of the Democrats, who claim to represent "all the people."

Two social historians, Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, present another compelling argument for forming an American labor party. In a recently published book, "Why Americans Don't Vote," they probe the low turnout of Americans in presidential elections and come to some surprising conclusions.

If voting in elections is the hallmark of democracy, Piven and Cloward tell us, the United States is not the most democratic nation. In other nations, far more citizens take part in the democratic process of electing governments.

In 1983, in Belgium, 95 percent of the voters cast ballots in a national election. In France, 86 percent voted; in Portugal, 84 percent. The United States was next to the bottom of the list, with only 53 percent of the electorate voting for a president.

Piven and Cloward reveal where the other 47 percent of American voters have gone, who they are, and why and how they have been disenfranchised.

Early in the 19th century, they tell us, white workers in America were going to the polls when only men of property could vote in Europe. This was the so-called "Golden Era" of American democracy. It must be noted, of course, that during this "Golden Era" women and Blacks were excluded from voting.

It was a time, the authors point out, when "the marching bands, the rallies, the hoarsely shouted slogans and excitement" marked the extraordinary popular enthusiasm generated by election campaigns—and 90 percent or more of the voters turned out.

Behind this intensity of feeling were the issues that affected many people personally—ethnicity, religion, and sectionalism. Irish-Catholics competed with native Protestants. New England manufacturers collided with southern plantation owners. Workers found a place in the Republican and Democratic parties so long as issues were not posed in working-class terms.

## Politics based on deceit

Later, as waves of immigrants settled in the big cities, machine bosses would sometimes present a Democratic election campaign as "one of capital against labor, of money against popular rights, and of political power against the struggling interests of the masses."

The city bosses were not serious, of course. It was only bait to sign up class-conscious workers to vote for the bosses's candidates. These "machine" politicians built their political power on the more solid foundation of patronage and graft.

This system worked so long as the small farmer and the worker did not press the Republicans and Democrats too hard. Then economic progress produced a steel industry and a railroad network. This, in turn, created a classic proletariat.

By the 1870s class warfare was raging, with no quarter given by the industrial predators. Great strikes in 1871, 1886, and 1894 were among the bloodiest and costliest the nation had seen. The embattled workers now found the Democrats and Republicans united as one against them.

Meanwhile, back on the farm in the West and the South, farmers found that the Republicans and Democrats were controlled by the railroad barons and the bankers, who raised freight rates and interest rates.

Both the workers and farmers began forming their own political parties. Massachusetts shoemakers formed an independent party in 1869. A number of trade-union assemblies united in the National Labor Union in 1872. Labor joined with farmers in the Greenback-Labor party in 1876.



The Greenbacks captured 14 Congressional seats in 1878. Other challenges to the two major parties followed. The United Labor Party almost elected Henry George, the single-tax-advocate mayor of New York in 1886.

## Farmers and workers unite

The next big push for independent political action came when the Farmers Alliance in the 1890s embarked on an electoral crusade against "centralized capital, allied to irresponsible corporate power." The Knights of Labor joined the farmers in campaigning for "government ownership of transportation and communication, equitable taxation, and abolition of monopolies."

The high point of this crusade was reached when the poor white and Black farmers in the South joined labor and the western farmers to form the Peoples Party in 1894. This Populist movement, based more on farmers than on industrial workers, was the first major challenge to the rule of capital.

Unfortunately, this promising movement was co-opted by the Democratic Party in 1896. The Populists threw their support to William Jennings Bryan, the presidential candidate who called for backing the currency with silver as well as gold. Bryan's stirring oratory about "mankind crucified on a cross of gold," stirred the Populists and scared the ruling class.

But the threat was more illusion than real. The Democratic Party watered down or ignored much of the Populist program. The alliance between southern farmers and northern factory workers was tenuous at best.

But there was enough anger and unrest in the country to alarm men of property. Republicans and conservative Democrats raised millions to wage the first mass media electoral assault on the American people. They destroyed the Populist movement.

Conservatives in both parties won, but they had felt the hot breath of rebellion. The infection, they decided, lay in the urban masses. The historian Francis Parkman spoke of "the diseases of the body politic" in the cities.

"Here the dangerous classes," Parkman said, "are most numerous and strong, and the effects of flinging the suffrage to the mob are most disastrous." It was necessary to bar their access to the ballot box. Southern plantation owners echoed

that sentiment and proceeded to purge both Blacks and poor whites from the voters' rolls. Literacy tests and poll taxes cut participation in Southern elections from 57 percent in 1896 to 19 percent in 1924.

In the North, less-obvious ploys to disenfranchise workers had to be used. It was made harder to register. Election offices were seldom open. Documents had to be notarized. Voters had to register again for each election. Not every state set up such roadblocks to the poor, but enough did to cut Northern participation in elections from 86 percent in 1896 to 57 percent in 1924.

## Sentiment for third parties

This meant unchallenged political domination by big business and big agriculture. They could safely ignore labor, sharecroppers, and other distressed Americans. The poor, in turn, looked to third parties and mass movements of protest when life became unbearable.

In 1912 and 1920, the Socialist Party and its presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, won six percent of the vote. Later, Middle Western farmers formed the Farmer-Labor Party and elected two senators, two congressmen, and a governor in Minnesota.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, Roosevelt's "New Deal" attracted many new voters. But much of this was a "lesser evil" vote.

In New York, for example, the sentiment for independent political action was so strong the unions were compelled to form the American Labor Party there to steer class-conscious votes to Roosevelt.

The Communist and Socialist parties, in an historical betrayal of the American working class, also urged workers to vote for the Democrats.

Workers exerted more influence through the mass movements that developed in the streets and factories outside the Democratic party. The unemployed movement demanded relief and welfare while occupying legislative halls.

On mass picket lines and factory sit-ins, workers turned the heat on Roosevelt to pass the Wagner Act to sanction unions.

Then Roosevelt co-opted the new labor leaders into the Democratic Party machine to tame and use them. Roosevelt made no effort to enfranchise the millions of potential Black voters in the South. He preferred to maintain good

relations with the Southern Dixiecrats.

Class-conscious voters have never been welcome in the Democratic Party. When anti-Vietnam War demonstrators in Chicago were being hammered by police in 1968 because they wanted to influence the Democratic Party convention, they were not invited to present their views on the convention floor. These were not the comfortable middle-class voters the party was looking for.

Incumbent congressional representatives do not welcome hordes of new voters in their districts either. If the new voters are poor they are likely to raise issues that make the politician very uncomfortable. The occasional calls for bigger turnouts on election day are not directed to the dispossessed.

## Vote with their feet

Meanwhile, the dispossessed see no point in voting for politicians who offer them nothing. Current mud-slinging election campaigns make both parties look repulsive. "There is no one here to vote for," say more and more workers, who stay home in droves.

They are sitting at home in frustration as the crisis of capitalism bears down on them ever more heavily. But they will not sit there long. As in the 1930s, they will express their grievances through mass movements that will fill the streets.

Now the time has come for the workers' own party—a labor party. This is not a project for the distant future. It is a realistic goal already being projected in union circles.

Tony Mazzocchi, secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW) has formed "Labor Party Advocates" to begin down the path toward forming a labor party based on the unions.

Union leaders, who have gained absolutely nothing from Washington for years, can no longer deliver their members' vote for the Democrats. Many will be looking for a way out of their dilemma.

The biggest obstacle on the road to a labor party will be the tired argument: "A labor party is fine for the future, but this year we have to defeat the worse evil in the Republican Party."

But millions of non-voters in America have already decided that lesser-evil politics is an endless cycle leading nowhere. They are ready to take another road. ■

# The material basis for the ascent of idealism in the ancient world

By CLIFF CONNERS

Following is the second of a series of articles on the philosophical foundations of Marxism. The articles are based on classes given by Cliff Conners at a Socialist Action national educational conference in August 1989.

Last month's article discussed the development of philosophy among the Ionian Greeks. The first Ionian philosophers were materialists; they sought the causes of things in nature itself.

In the 4th century B.C., materialism faded and idealism—spearheaded by Socrates—became the predominant philosophical tendency in ancient Greece and Rome. Why was the Socratic revolution so successful?

From a purely ideological point of view, we could say that the early materialists simply could not answer all of the questions they set out to answer. There were too many things about the real world that they just could not explain.

One obvious problem is the difference between a living body and a dead body. There is no apparent material difference, and yet there is certainly an important distinction to be made between a live human being and a corpse. How can the difference be explained other than by the presence or absence of some immaterial "life spirit" or "soul?"

The idealists also pointed out, in answer to the atomists (one of the materialist schools among the Ionian Greeks), that to describe the real world it isn't enough to account for the mere presence of a heap of atoms. You also have to account for how the atoms are organized, and how they got that way. A human body isn't just a random collection of matter; it is matter arranged in a particular form, and the form is just as important as the matter itself.

The development of a chick embryo from a mass of undifferentiated material into an intricately formed living organism seemed beyond explanation. The materialists suggested some answers, including organic evolution, but these were conjectures without evidence, and they weren't very convincing at the time.

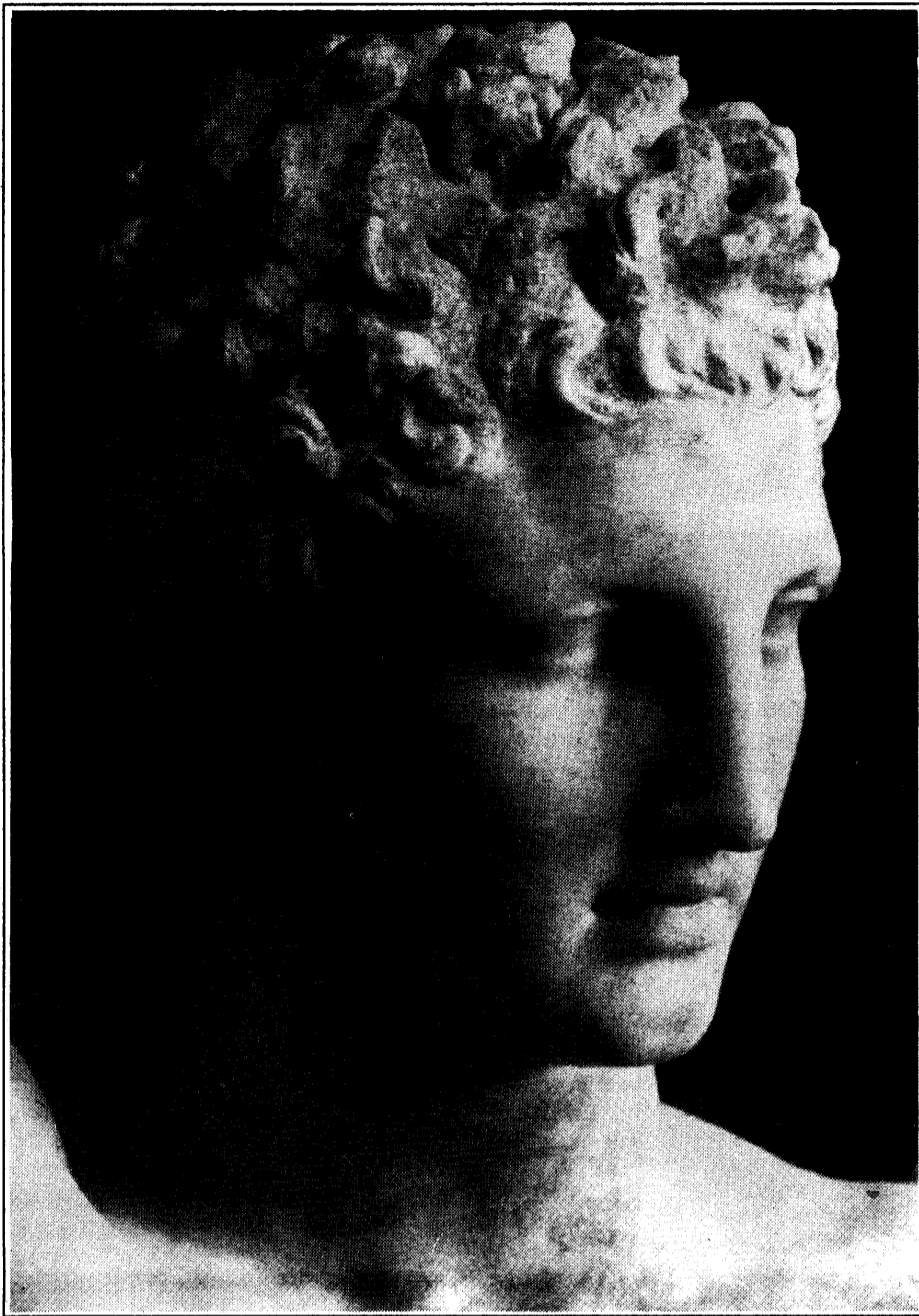
The idealists considered the development of an egg into a chick or an acorn into an oak tree to be evidence of a cosmic plan governed by a universal intelligence. This was where the "argument from design" came from: Complex living organisms appear to have been designed—therefore there must have been a designer.

The inadequacy of the early materialists' ideas helps to explain their eclipse, but it is not the primary factor. Again, it's necessary to turn to the social context. The Socratic revolution was brought to its culmination not by Socrates, but by his pupil, Plato.

## Plato's political philosophy

I think the eminent historian of science George Sarton put it best when he described Plato's "Republic" as "the work of a disgruntled fanatic." Plato, he said, was "a disgruntled old man, full of political rancor, fearing and hating the crowd ... his prejudices had crystallized and he had become an old doctrinaire. ... Plato was witnessing a social revolution, and he could not bear it at all. His main concern was—how could one stop it?"

That, I think, is the key to understanding Plato. All of his philosophy was devoted to defending the interests of the ruling elite of a "slave-owning, class-divided, chauvinistic city-state which was already an anachronism." He despised Athenian democracy and praised the repressive dictatorial regime in Sparta. Because of this, Sarton compared Plato to Americans during World War II who admired fascists and the Nazis.



Olympian god Hermes: Plato promoted religion to deceive "ignorant" masses.

It is necessary to stress the link between Plato's idealism and his politics. As classical scholar Benjamin Farrington puts it: "The whole philosophy of Plato is a political philosophy, and the controlling purpose of his whole life ... was the construction of a system of belief and a system of education which, being imposed by the governing authority, would guarantee the well-being of the State."

## Plato upholds the "noble lie"

Plato is sometimes thought of as a philosopher who personified the ideals of truth and truthfulness as the highest virtues. This is extremely ironic, because Plato, in fact, believed that government was only possible on the basis of a lie. According to Farrington, he "devoted his life to the elaboration" of that lie.

To uphold that lie, Plato urged that the books of the materialist philosophers, the Ionians, be destroyed, and "that his own fraudulent book [the 'Laws'] should be imposed by the State as the one and only obligatory source of doctrine." For dissenters who objected to his plans, he advocated the death penalty. This is Plato's idea of a political utopia, as he spells it out in "The Republic."

What was the famous "noble lie" that Plato wanted to impose as the official doctrine of the State? Here is how he describes it in "The Republic." He wrote in dialogue form, of course, and he has one of his interlocutors ask him: "How then may we devise one of those needful falsehoods of which we lately spoke—just one royal lie?"

Then he answers: "I propose to communicate [the audacious fiction] gradually, first to the rulers, then to the soldiers, and lastly to the people. Citizens, we shall say to them ... you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of you have the power of

command, and in the composition of these he has mingled gold, wherefore also they have the greatest honor; others he has made of silver, to be auxiliaries; others again who are to be husbandmen and craftsmen [farmers and workers] he has composed of brass and iron; and the species will generally be preserved in the children..."

This, then, was Plato's "noble lie"—that social distinctions were created by God and that the ruling class is the ruling class because God made its members out of better material. The rulers, the aristocrats, are the Golden Men, while the ordinary people are made of brass and iron.

As part of this effort, Plato promoted two separate religions—a sophisticated, abstract one for the intelligentsia, and a cruder one, with the old Olympian-type gods and goddesses, for the ignorant masses.

As part of his program, Plato explicitly counterposed his idealism to the materialism of the Ionians, who either did not believe in the gods at all, or believed that if there are gods, they take no interest in human affairs.

## Three anti-elitist schools

Aristotle didn't agree with Plato on everything, but he did support the idea that untrue religions were a political necessity; he called them "myths that have been introduced to persuade the multitude, and on account of their utility in regard of social custom and the public good." Also, while Aristotle's philosophy was quite different from Plato's, it was still fundamentally a variety of idealism.

Aristotle founded his Lyceum as a rival school to Plato's Academy, but it, too, was an elitist institution, only open to upper-class youth. In opposition to both of them, three anti-elitist schools arose in Athens, and these sought sup-

port among the common people. They were the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Cynics.

The Cynics in particular "appealed to those who felt themselves simple and oppressed;" their doctrine has been called "the philosophy of the proletariat of the Greek world." [Farrington.]

It's necessary to remember, though, that the proletariat of the ancient world was not the same as the modern proletariat—it was not a class of wage-workers.

The Cynics might best be compared to the hippies of the 1960s. Their social protest took the form of ostentatious renunciation of prevailing cultural norms. Like the hippies, they wore outrageous clothes and adopted provocatively anti-establishment lifestyles as a means of shocking the solid citizens. The Cynics, then, represented for the most part a negative reaction to the oppressive social system. Like the hippies, they attracted a lot of attention, but were just a passing phenomenon.

The Stoics were a more serious tendency. Most of the Stoic teachers were Asians—non-Greeks who naturally were repelled by the chauvinism of Plato's and Aristotle's schools. To Plato, Asians were barbarians, and all barbarians were enemies by nature; to Aristotle, Asians were slaves by nature. The Stoics' answer was to stress the essential similarity of all human beings—that all men are brothers—in support of the ideal of the solidarity of the human race.

But alas, the Stoics eventually sold out. Their political trajectory was very similar to that of the Christians, who came later. They started out as militant opponents of the status quo, but as they grew and became established they began to seek respectability, and to seek accommodation with the ruling powers, and finally they wound up supporting the society they had previously challenged.

## Epicureans defend materialism

The third tendency, the Epicureans, started out very much like the Stoics. In fact, at first they were often confused with each other; many outsiders had a hard time telling them apart. But there were two big differences. First, the Stoics were idealists and the Epicureans were materialists. And second, the Epicureans never sold out; the consistency of their doctrine over seven centuries is remarkable.

The Epicureans are of particular interest to us because they were the primary defenders of materialism in the ancient world. Epicurus did not like Plato at all, and derisively called him the "Golden Man." He hated Plato's "noble lie" and his use of religious superstition as a political tool. Farrington praised Epicurus as "the first man known to history to have organized a movement for the liberation of mankind from superstition."

Something of the social character of the Epicurean school can be seen in the fact that it was the only school that admitted women and slaves to membership.

The Epicurean school was not a revolutionary political party. Epicurus's battle was ideological, not political—in fact, he urged his followers to avoid politics. Some Marxist philosophers, including George Novack, have criticized Epicurus for this, but I'm inclined to be more indulgent. In Greek and Roman society, the material basis was lacking on which to create a more advanced social structure, so revolutionary politics would have been an exercise in futility.

What I've been trying to illustrate is that the ideological struggle between materialism and idealism had a social basis. Idealism did not come out on top because Plato was smarter than Epicurus or because his ideas were superior in any objective sense. Idealism triumphed because it served as ideological support for the rule of a small privileged elite. In the "Communist Manifesto," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels observed: "The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." ■

(To be continued)

# Trotsky's prognosis for Soviet Union confirmed

By MALIK MIAH

"The Soviet Union emerged from the October Revolution as a workers' state. State ownership of the means of production, a necessary prerequisite to socialist development, opened up the possibility of rapid growth of the productive forces. But the apparatus of the workers' state underwent a complete degeneration at the same time: it was transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy.

"The bureaucratization of a backward and isolated workers' state and the transformation of the bureaucracy into an all-powerful privileged caste constitute the most convincing refutation—not only theoretically but this time practically—of the theory of socialism in one country.

"The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a degenerated workers' state. Such is the social diagnosis. The political prognosis has an alternative character: either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."—Opening paragraphs of the section, "The USSR and Problems of the Transitional Epoch," in the founding programmatic document, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International."

The above words were written by Leon Trotsky in 1938. Trotsky was a central leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution and founder of the Fourth International. He was exiled in the late 1920s and later assassinated by an agent of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in 1940.

The historic events currently transforming the Soviet Union are a confirmation of Trotsky's analysis. The disintegration of the Stalinist bureaucracies first in Eastern Europe, beginning in 1989, and today in the Soviet Union was predicted by Trotsky. This was not because Trotsky made a subjective guess but because of his use of the scientific method of Marxism. He based his analysis on the facts and the line of march of history.

The issue today is whether the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy will be able to overthrow the workers' state—the state property, planned economy, and monopoly of foreign trade and other historic conquests of October 1917—or whether the working class will first rise up and reestablish its political rule over the Soviet Union.

The roots of the economic catastrophe and political crisis in the Soviet Union were evident decades ago. The capitalist restorationist tendencies of the ruling bureaucratic caste (openly pushed by all wings of the bureaucracy today, including the Stalinists-turned-nationalists in many of the republics) was also clear 60 years ago.

Trotsky discussed these and other questions concerning the degeneration of the first workers' state in several works, the most important being "The Revolution Betrayed," written in 1936. What follows here is a brief review of that book.

## The October Revolution

Trotsky begins his critical analysis by explaining why the Russian workers and peasants took the road of the proletarian revolution even though Tsarist Russia was the weakest link in the world capitalist chain.

"Russia took the road of proletarian revolution, not because her economy was the first to become ripe for a socialist change," Trotsky wrote (page 5), "but because she could not develop further on a capitalist basis. Socialization of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism. That is the law of combined

development for backward countries."

The Russian Revolution, led by the Bolshevik (Communist) Party under V.I. Lenin, was very deep-going. The old ruling class was crushed, its army destroyed, and workers' ("soviet") democracy established in which the majority now ran society. The 1917 revolution opened up the epoch of the worldwide struggle of the working class and its allies for socialism. It inspired millions.

Tsarist Russia, Trotsky explained, was a backward capi-

political power was in their hands, the toiling masses did not stop with ousting the Tsar. They went beyond making a democratic revolution to making a socialist revolution.

The "expropriation of the expropriators"—as Marx called it—by the toiling masses did not vault revolutionary Russia beyond its economic backwardness. It opened the door for

Russia to catch up with the most advanced capitalist countries to "solve those problems of technique and productivity which were long ago solved by capitalism in the advanced countries." (Page 6.)

The Bolsheviks understood that socialism could not be built on an economic foundation of scarcity. Lenin called the task one of "catching up with and outstripping" Europe and America. Thus the Bolsheviks looked to the extension of the world revolution as key for its survival. Aid from a successful socialist revolution in Germany was hoped for to keep the revolution alive. Otherwise, the 1917 revolution would

be another experiment for the world's toilers; as the Paris Commune had been in the 19th century.

Not surprisingly, the Bolshevik leadership did everything in its power to extend the world revolution. The Bolsheviks were instrumental in the formation and leadership of the Communist International in 1919.

## Counterrevolution

But the extension of the world revolution was delayed, with defeats in Europe and Asia.

The isolation of the Russian revolution and its inherited backwardness, was also made worse by the civil war and imperialist intervention from 1918-21, which led to the deaths of many of the top cadres of the Bolshevik Party and the most conscious layers of the working class.

The destruction caused by the civil war increased poverty even further.

The scarcity of goods and the setbacks in the world revolution formed the material basis for the rise of a bureaucracy. This bureaucratic layer (social "caste") eventually usurped political power from the working class through force and violence.

This counterrevolution reversed many of the social gains of the revolution, while leaving intact the nationalized property relations.

The political counterrevolution, headed by Joseph Stalin, was sweeping. It included suppressing the rights of oppressed nations, relegating women to second-class status, and gutting the soviets—which were the democratic instruments used by the working class to take power.

Stalin also broke the worker and peasant alliance that had been crucial for the victory of the October revolution. He devastated Soviet agriculture through his forced collectivization of the peasantry. Soviet farming still has not recovered from that adventurous policy.

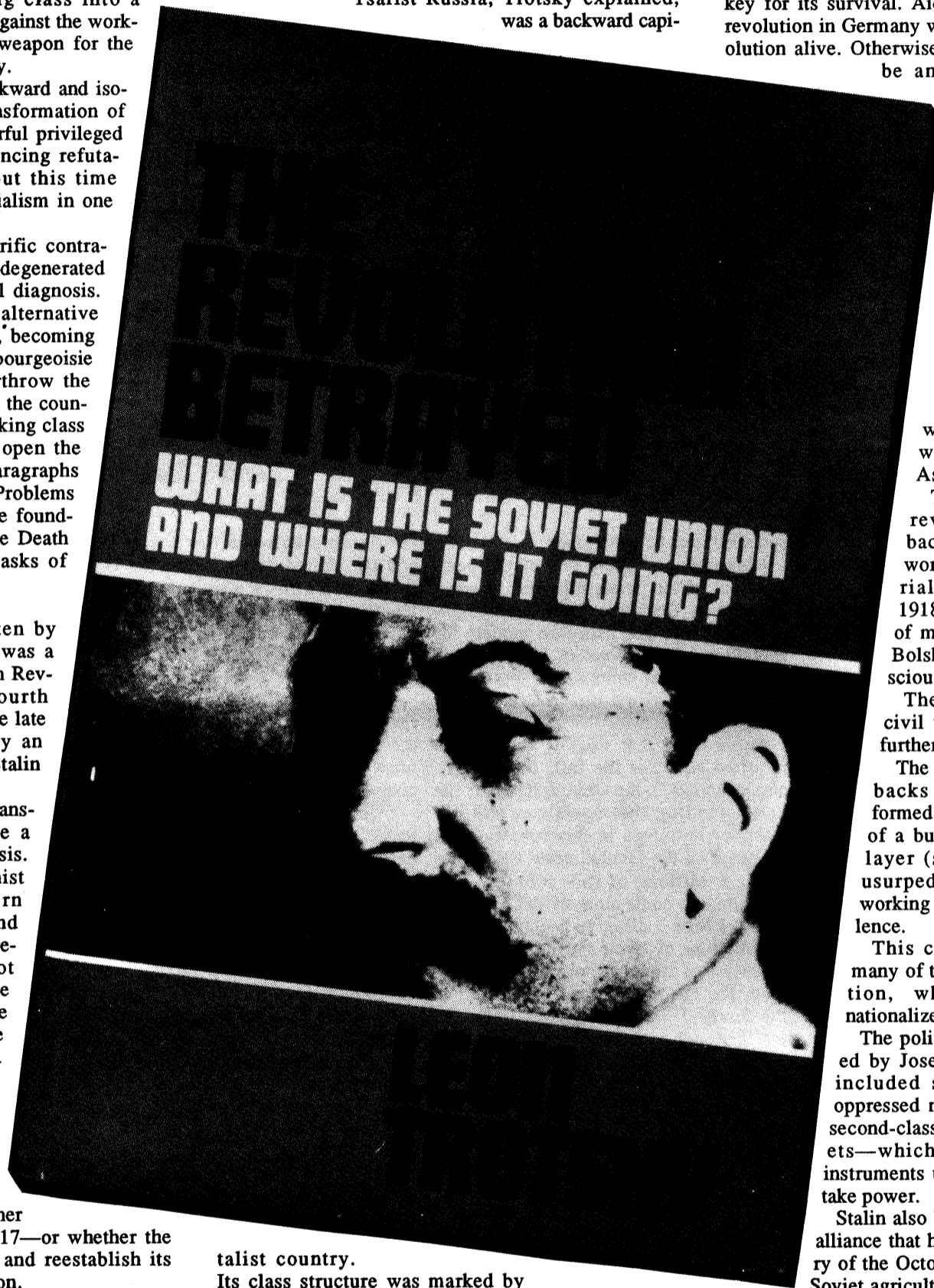
Most significantly, by World War II, the ruling caste—through terror, murder, and concentration camps—had driven the workers and peasants from political life. The Communist Party was transformed from a revolutionary party into an apparatus of the privileged caste to rule over the working people in their name.

## Socialism in one country?

After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin, speaking for the caste, tried to justify the political counterrevolution with a new "theory" called building "socialism in one country." The idea was that the Soviet Union could build socialism without the rest of the world making a socialist revolution. The political content of this utopian notion was a policy of collaboration with imperialism at the expense of workers and peasants of the world.

Yet the Soviet Union was never socialist except in its perspective when led by the Bolsheviks under Lenin. What Trotsky said in 1936 remains true today: "Russia was not the strongest, but the weakest link

(continued on page on page 21)



talist country.

Its class structure was marked by semifeudal relations. More than 80 percent of the country's population was engaged in agriculture.

The Russian Empire was also a "prison house of nations." Only 43 percent of the population were Russians. The other 57 percent consisted of oppressed peoples—Ukrainians, Poles, Tatars, Turks, and many more. These oppressed peoples were forcibly incorporated into the empire and subjected to economic, social, and cultural discrimination. Anti-Semitism was also rampant. The policy of the old rulers was divide and rule.

The Russian liberal capitalists, whose economic interests were fettered by the monarchy, refused to overthrow the feudal relations on the land question by implementing agrarian reform. This was because landlords and capitalists in many cases had merged. Landlords became capitalists and capitalists became landlords.

Therefore it fell to the workers and peasants led by the Bolshevik Party to organize a popular uprising against the Tsar. The masses were mobilized to carry out a democratic revolution, that is, the overthrow of the monarchy and the feudal landlord aristocracy.

But as Trotsky and Lenin explained, the bourgeois-democratic revolution could only be led by the working class in an alliance with the peasants. Once

The following debate was broadcast on KQED, a public radio station in San Francisco, on Aug. 28, 1991. It has been slightly edited for space and clarity.

**Kevin Pursglove** [moderator]: The leaders of the major democratic nations of the world are offering support and praise for the Soviet people and their leaders in the aftermath of the failed plot to overthrow Mikhail Gorbachev. In fact, foreign support for the economic and political changes espoused by President Gorbachev has never been stronger.

The major reason for this backing is the belief on the part of many of these democratic leaders that the events of last week have brought an end to the largest symbol of communism and socialism in the world.

Joining me in the KQED radio studios this morning are three people long active in socialist and communist political activities in the Bay Area and the country. They're here to offer their observations on the impact of the Soviet events on socialist and communist parties in the United States. My guests are Kendra Alexander, Chairperson of the Communist Party of California; Irwin Silber, journalist and author and former Executive Editor of *The Guardian* newspaper. He is now the editor of *Crossroads Magazine*, a monthly publication of political analysis.

Jeff Mackler is the National Secretary of Socialist Action. He's long been active in the Bay Area's leftist movement. He's organized local protests against the Persian Gulf War and directed the Committee Against a Vietnam War in the Middle East. Good morning to all three of you. Thank you for being here on the program.

Let me begin with you, Jeff Mackler. Do the events in the Soviet Union over the past seven to 10 days have an impact on the idea that a socialist or communist party can survive in the Bay Area?

**Jeff Mackler:** The events are testimony to the fact that the working people of the Soviet Union are beginning the process of taking their destiny into their own hands. Of course, this is a fundamental aspect of socialist politics, the rule of the people themselves.

**Pursglove:** Even if they tend to be moving in what we would describe in this country as a more democratic form of government, you still think that there is hope there for socialism?

**Mackler:** Neither Gorbachev, Yeltsin, or the coup-makers have anything in common with socialism. They have all publicly stated their continuing support for the market economy, for capitalism.

The difference between the coup-makers and Gorbachev is that the coup-makers believe that you can impose capitalism at the point of a bayonet—perestroika with a bayonet, so to speak. They thought they had a good chance to succeed because Gorbachev's attempt to impose capitalism had led to a sharp decline in popularity. The polls indicate that less than seven percent supported his policies.

**Pursglove:** Irwin Silber, do you think there's going to be an overall impact on the ability of communist or socialist parties to organize followers, workers, and members of the party?

**Irwin Silber:** Clearly that has to be the case. The international communist movement is dead. I think that for all practical purposes, it was dead before the coup and its rebuff.

The crisis that's overtaken the Soviet Union and all of the countries where socialism presumably actually existed, has undermined the ideological foundations of an international communist movement. So if we just want to look specifically at the Communist Party framework, which after all is the most influential section of the socialist movement on a world-scale, I think it is in very big trouble.

**Kendra Alexander:** The events in the Soviet Union, the coup and now the aftermath, are a terrible tragedy for the

world. I think that it shifts the world balance of forces. There is no counter-weight now to U.S. imperialism. I'm very saddened by the demise of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, closing down of newspapers.

I opposed the coup, because you can't go back. What socialists, communists have to do is look for another way to bring equity and equality to the people's of the world. I still believe in socialism. I believe it's the only answer to the problems in our country. I'm very saddened that this kind of method was used in the Soviet Union and that it now precipitated a course of action that is basically going to be to the detriment of the Soviet people.

**Pursglove:** Now, I understand that there is always a debate among various members of the socialist or communist elements in the Bay Area that what we saw in the Soviet Union was never true communism or true socialism. But like it or not, that's what most people use as a definition. So, if the Soviet Union is continuing to change, what models are there for people in the Bay Area to point to as examples of a communist or

**"The events in the Soviet Union, the coup and now the aftermath, are a terrible tragedy for the world. I think that it shifts the world balance of forces. There is no counter-weight now to U.S. imperialism."**

**—Kendra Alexander**

socialist form of government?

**Alexander:** I think one of the positives out of the perestroika and glasnost initiated by Gorbachev was the recognition that there are really no models for socialism and that one of the problems of the left and of communists was seeing that there was just one model or one form.

And I think that what is going to be required now for the left, communist, and socialists in the United States, is the understanding that socialism and our fight for socialism in this country must be based on the revolutionary and democratic traditions of this country. You can't impose some other model here.

**Mackler:** I disagree with the major assumptions of Irwin and Kendra on the question of international communism. With the coming to power of Stalin in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s, the international communist movement was destroyed. The leadership of the revolution, which gave the largest country in the world to the people in the form of a massive land reform and worker's soviets, was destroyed by Stalin.

Few people know what soviets are these days. The original soviets [the Russian word for councils] were democratic, controlled and organized by the working class and their allies and designed to run society.

The so-called international communist movement has been, in reality, a world Stalinist movement. It has been a conservative and reactionary movement that has been opposed to the ideas of socialism. The essence of socialist politics is democracy.

In San Francisco, Socialist Action is running Joni Jacobs for mayor. She explains to the voters of San Francisco what the view that we in the [real] international communist movement uphold. Jacobs says that socialism means working-class rule. It means that society should not be run in the interests of a tiny, privileged, wealthy capitalist elite, but in the interests of working people.

The new international movement formed to challenge Stalin's current is called the Fourth International.

**Pursglove:** But to some degree, you would agree with Kendra Alexander that if you're going to implement the philosophical purity of the socialist or

# What went wrong in

## The chairperson of the Calif. CP, a former ec

### the Nat'l Secretary of Socialist Action debat

communist movement in this country, you've got to do it through the current political mechanisms. Is that correct?

**Mackler:** Not at all. We utilize the elections, as Joni has in her campaign for mayor, to educate about socialism. But the power of the socialist movement is generated from working people in action.

That's what you saw in the Soviet Union. The coup-makers were smashed, not by a Yeltsin, but by a massive mobilization of the Soviet people to defend their own interests against not only the Communist Party, but against those who would, American-style, lower their standard of living to allow capital to enter the country at a greater profit.

The most interesting thing about the

relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States is that the United States won't invest a dime in the Soviet Union, not to mention in it's own economy. The only condition [under which] it will invest in the USSR, is the smashing of the working class.

That's why President Bush said that for now, the U.S. was not supporting the coup. But the United States government was totally prepared to support the coup-makers if they were successful.

**Silber:** This discussion sort of puts in the front of my head what I think has been, and continues to be, unfortunately, one of the major problems of the left in the United States, particularly that left oriented towards socialism or communism. And that is, we have lived in a fantasy world.

I think part of it is due to the fact that the left has been so marginal to politics in the United States that we can indulge ourselves in any kind of utopian scheme. We can think that politics means what we believe rather than what we are capable of doing or what the real possibilities are.

And so we cling to fantasies. Some of which are historical fantasies. Well, if only Stalin hadn't done this or if Trotsky had won out, then the world would be entirely different. Well, how can you argue with those kinds of statements? There's no way to prove them or disprove them.

I think part of why Gorbachev won the respect of many people on the left, myself included, was that almost for the first time since the time of the revolution in the Soviet Union, somebody in leadership was talking in realistic terms, was acknowledging, not just the shortcomings and the problems, but beginning to deal with historical reality in a way that you say, "Yeah of course that's true."

A lot of this talk about, "Well, so and so is going to lead the Soviet Union back to capitalism," and so on, is actually irrelevant. The crisis in the Soviet Union began long before Gorbachev came power. I don't care who comes to power in the Soviet Union. They will have to deal with that crisis. And that crisis stemmed fundamentally from the fact that the economic system, the administrative-command economy that



**"The coup-makers were smashed but by a massive mobilization of the Soviet people to defend their own interests against not only the Communist Party, but against those who would, American-style, lower their standard of living to allow capital to enter the country at a greater profit."**

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**Alexander:** Well, I find this a difficult discussion, frankly. My personal opinion is that the Soviet Union, the people of the Soviet Union, are in serious, serious trouble. The economy is in serious trouble, their political forms are in serious trouble.

I do not believe that Yeltsin offers a way out, or a solution. I think that he is expressing a very disturbing Great Russian chauvinism towards the other peoples of the Soviet Union, that the Soviet Union is headed for a real deep problem.

I don't want to debate. What's the point of debating Trotsky, Mao, those questions, now? In my opinion, that's what's irrelevant. What's relevant is how to make the left in this country more relevant to the concerns and the needs of people in this country. And that's what we should concentrate our attention and thinking on.

**Pursglove:** Then would you agree with Mr. Silber that the left is some-

# What went wrong in the Soviet Union?

The chairperson of the Calif. CP, a former editor of *The Guardian* newspaper, and the Nat'l Secretary of Socialist Action debate the meaning of the fall of Stalinism

communist movement in this country, you've got to do it through the current political mechanisms. Is that correct?

**Mackler:** Not at all. We utilize the elections, as Joni has in her campaign for mayor, to educate about socialism. But the power of the socialist movement is generated from working people in action.

That's what you saw in the Soviet Union. The coup-makers were smashed, not by a Yeltsin, but by a massive mobilization of the Soviet people to defend their own interests against not only the Communist Party, but against those who would, American-style, lower their standard of living to allow capital to enter the country at a greater profit.

The most interesting thing about the

Soviet Union, the coup and are a terrible tragedy for the shifts the world balance of counter-weight now to U.S. erialism."

-Kendra Alexander

relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States is that the United States won't invest a dime in the Soviet Union, not to mention in it's own economy. The only condition [under which] it will invest in the USSR, is the smashing of the working class.

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**Pursglove:** Then would you agree with Mr. Silber that the left is some-

what irrelevant in terms of American politics?

**Alexander:** Oh, no. I don't think it is irrelevant at all. I think there's a deep sentiment for the need for some basic change in this country ... homelessness, hunger, all of these questions of such magnitude.

Look at what's happening in Brooklyn. Our people are turning on each other in this country. It's not just happening over there in Yugoslavia. African-Americans and Jewish people are fighting each other because conditions have gotten to such a point of rage and disruption.

These are the questions that the left must concentrate its attention on. I don't want to debate these other questions. I don't really think they are relevant. But the question of what happens to our people here and how we can help to mobilize people for change in the United States is relevant.

**Silber:** Kendra, I agree with you that the problems in the United States are very real. Nobody wants to glorify the

conditions of people in the United States. One could spend most of this program detailing what they are, and I think most of our listeners will know what they are. But the existence of those problems does not automatically make the left relevant or significant in U.S. politics. That's our problem.

We do not play any significant role in whatever movements are now developing, let alone have the capacity to effect national politics. I wish we did, because the problems are very real. And we cannot continue to cite the shortcomings of capitalism. That creates the space within which the left can operate. But, unfortu-

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nately, we haven't been very good at it.

**Pursglove:** Irwin Silber, why does the American population as a whole, at least the voting public, not buy into or support some of the leftist philosophies and policies that you've long worked at and written about and supported?

**Silber:** It does respond to it. But not in the form that has been put forward traditionally by parties of the left. Look at the kind of response that Jesse Jackson got. A lot of the issues that Jesse Jackson spoke to, that he represents, are certainly at the left end of the political spectrum in the United States and there's clearly a mass social base for that kind of expression. That's only one example.

So to the extent to which the left can find a way to focus on the real problems of injustice, of inequality, exploitation in the United States, we certainly have an opportunity to be relevant. But we do not have in the United States a set of conditions which makes our talk of socialism, of revolutionary transformation and so on, relevant to anybody.

To the extent that we are associated with that, especially in the last few years given the problems in the socialist countries of the world, I don't think we're going to get over at all.

**Mackler:** I'm not surprised that your other guests, Kendra and Irwin, now believe that the debate over the historical questions in the Soviet Union is irrelevant. I wish I could just pass it by, but frankly, I've spent 30 years of my life as a participant in this debate, and the simple question I've had to debate was whether or not the Stalinist, repressive, murdering, totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union was socialist.

Because of that regime in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the name of socialism has been smeared in front of the working class of the world. Socialism became associated with the Stalinist oppression of national minorities. That's why they're seceding from the USSR today. Only the Trotskyist movement, parties like Socialist Action, supported the rights of the oppressed nationalities.

Democracy in the Soviet Union was smashed by Stalin. And the previous speakers said nothing about it for most, if not their entire, adult lives in politics. There was no democracy in the USSR. That was not socialism.

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As far as the United States is concerned, Jesse Jackson is a leading representative of a capitalist party, the Democratic Party. When the United States, the Democrats and Republicans, joined to murder 250,000 Iraqis in a brutal, genocidal, Hiroshima-type war, neither Jackson nor any other representative of the Democratic or Republican parties said anything. Whereas, my party—a socialist party and Joni Jacobs, our candidate—campaigns to "Bring our Troops Home Now."

That in my opinion, is what a real socialist movement is about—democratic, anti-capitalist, non-sexist, anti-racist, and supporting the struggles of the people of every nation when they rise against oppression, Stalinist and capitalist alike.

**Alexander:** It seems that Jeff is unhappy with everybody. That's O.K. The reality of the situation is that we need to think through a lot more about the relationship of the left to democracy.

I've spoken many times about coming to the conclusion about what Stalinism did to communist parties. I think it had a disastrous effect on ... lies, my party included.

I think now is the time to turn our attention to how to more effectively democratize our political organizations and to more effectively fight for the democratic participation of people to solve their problems. I believe that.

So, Jeff is critical of everything. Delums spoke very forcefully against the Gulf War. He's a member of the Democratic Party.

**Mackler:** He never demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

**Alexander:** Excuse me, I was speaking. If you want to take the whole time, you can do that. I think that there are many political forces out there, in the Democratic Party, in other socialist parties, in many different formations, that are trying to solve the problems of this country.

What we need to do is get over the sectarian ideas that keep us apart, and rather join together on those things that we agree can be done to try and solve the problems here.

**Pursglove:** Jeff, do you believe that the perception that the Soviet Union has operated under a "socialist" form of government or a communist state is incorrect and that this is an important issue for people to understand—what a true socialism would be about?

**Mackler:** Absolutely. The true face of socialism is seen when hundreds of thousands of people fraternize with Soviet troops and say, "You're on our side against the Stalinist bureaucracy," when coal miners strike, when the oppressed nationalities move ... wherever people mobilize to defend their own class interests.

That's what the face of socialism is like. And that, in my opinion, is the only future for the Soviet Union. A return to capitalism would mean, a return to the Third World variety, the capitalism of poverty.

**Silber:** I'm sort of envious of Jeff and his position because it makes life simple, it makes discussion easy, and it doesn't require too much thought. It requires simply going back to philosophies and theories which have very little

new to them and which have never been verified in life.

I'm envious because it's thoroughly utopian. Anybody can paint the picture that this is what socialism is or would be if I had my way. We can always find fault with what existed.

I certainly have my criticisms of what existed, but unless we begin to come to terms with the way history has actually unfolded and stop engaging in the fantasy that if only it had happened this way then all of our problems would be solved, we're not going to work our way out of the bind that we're presently in.

**Pursglove:** If an individual is a committed socialist or a committed communist, if they would like to see governments handled in either of those manners, isn't it helpful to try to understand what's happened in the Soviet Union during this century?

And if you think that is not pure socialism, to try to learn from that mistake so you can apply it to some other situation if it ever presents itself—so you don't go back and make the same sorts of mistakes if you think that socialism was never handled properly in the Soviet Union?

**Silber:** Absolutely. But what I reject is this notion of pure socialism. This is a platonic concept, as though socialism exists somewhere in some formula and only remains for us to discover it. Socialism, if and when it comes, and I think sooner or later it will, will have to be invented. There is no existing formula that tells us what it was.

The one huge experiment which started in the Soviet Union, that was believed to be socialist, turned out to fail. Not simply because it wasn't democratic and so on, all those things are true. The point is it didn't work. It never proved itself superior to capitalism. And that failed.

The mistake in my opinion, if you don't mind my putting it this way, was not so much in the model or in the failure to find pure socialism, but in the historical abruptness of the project. What was wrong with Stalin's conception was the idea of a historical rupture in which for the first time in history one social system would be supplanted by another in the course of 15 years. Impossible.

This was a totally voluntarist, utopian notion, which had to be backed up by tyranny and terror because it couldn't work in real life. And that notion of the historical rupture in which one day a country or a people are living under capitalism and next day under socialism, that was the fundamental error, in my opinion, that took place in the Soviet Union.

Lenin himself began to get a glimpse of the problem in his last years, which is why he initiated what became known as the New Economic Policy—which was basically a mixed economy as a form of transition from capitalism to socialism.

**Pursglove:** Is the definition that you have of an active Communist Party in this country compatible with capitalism?

**Alexander:** I don't know what you mean by compatible. We are for changing the capitalist system into socialism... [TAPE CHANGE]

There is an anti-communist development in the Soviet Union now—the closing down of newspapers, the closing down of [Communist Party] offices. You can't have a pluralistic society that does not democratically allow for many voices.

In the United States, our party has gone through the experience of McCarthyism, where Communists were hounded out of their jobs. But then it reached beyond Communists. Anyone who espoused social change became suspect.

And that process is happening now in the Soviet Union. So you have to be consistent on democracy. That's been one of our weaknesses. I don't think we were consistent on democracy. You have to oppose the coup as an undemocratic action, but you also have to oppose the excesses of hounding Communists, going after Communists in the Soviet Union.

(continued on next page)

# ... Soviet debate

(continued from previous page)

It's not democracy.

**Mackler:** I agree with bans on the Communist Party...

**Alexander:** I'm sure you do, Jeff.

**Mackler:** The reason I generally do so is that in the Soviet Union there has been no real government since Stalin. Instead there has been the rule of a single party. I agree with the decrees that have taken the property that the Communist Party bureaucrats stole from the people and returned it. The police agencies were not the agencies of the people but of a repressive party apparatus.

I agree that the KGB should be banned. I agree that every Communist Party law restricting the rights of the people should be smashed. And when the Communist Party orders a military coup against the Soviet people, I don't put that in the category of one of their democratic rights.

I've spent a lifetime fighting for democratic rights in the United States, but socialism has nothing in common with one-party rule. It has to do with rule of the people through their own institutions.

**Pursglove:** Is it now necessary to engage in a re-evaluation of Marx's writings and the current status of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union in order to have a healthy Communist Party in this country?

**Alexander:** Absolutely. ... We have to look at all of the experiences of socialism. I don't want to sound as if I don't think that is a necessary process. Our party has certainly engaged in taking a long, hard look at what this all represents and what immediate impact it will have on our own policy....

**Silber:** I think one of the singular accomplishments, if I can use that word, of this period is the fact that Marxism, and its 20th-century version which is called Marxism-Leninism, is being demystified. I think one of the problems we've had in the realm of theory has been the deification and reification of Marxism.

There is a lot in what Marx wrote, Engels, Lenin, and other Marxist thinkers, that remains eminently useful. But so long as we go on putting it in the framework of doctrine, of a sort of complete philosophy that has an answer ready in print more or less for every question that faces us, we remain in serious trouble.

Marxism-Leninism, which was hailed and looked at as Marxism in the 20th century, is dead. Its fundamental assumptions have been wiped out in the course of the last 10 years. And anybody who tries to cling to those fundamental assumptions is bound to come up with a set of politics that is going to be at odds with the real world.

We have to go back and examine what it was that Lenin said that was topical to his time and what he said that might be of some use to us today. But the more important thing is to rid ourselves of the absolutist notion that a reference to Marx, Engels, Lenin, or the isms attached to their names is going to find our guiding philosophy.

**Mackler:** Essentially, what Irwin is saying is that Marxism-Leninism is irrelevant as anyone has ever interpreted it, and that he has a new interpretation we have to discuss.

That brings us back to the same question we've been debating for the past hour. The essence of Marxism, the essence of socialism and communism, is rule by the majority of the people. For the first time in the planet's history the mass of people through their own institutions will rule democratically in their own class interests.

Socialism represents a historic rupture with the notion that a tiny, elite capitalist group should rule. That's the vision of Marxism, of socialism. The agency for socialist change is the majority of the people.

When Irwin says that Stalinism, which he considers the same as social-

ism, is a mistake and he doesn't want to talk about past ideology ... that the mistake in the USSR was to go from a backward capitalist country to socialism, he is mistaken.

Stalin's "mistake" was that he tried to limit the struggle for socialism to one country. His doctrine was in fact known as "socialism in one country," which essentially meant no socialism anywhere in the world. Stalinism meant an alliance with world capitalism in return for capitalist support to the Stalinist bureaucracy. That's the essence of it.

If you have one iota of a thought in

ment are supporting Yeltsin and Gorbachev, for political reasons, for capitalist purposes, and not militarily.

The U.S. opposes the mobilization of the Soviet people. The Bush administration has not supported the right of independence and self-determination of the Baltic nations. They prefer the formula of the bureaucracy, which is pro-capitalist. They are opposed to the formula of the people, which is separation and independence.

As far as the nationalist question is concerned, this struggle has been going on since time immemorial. And today

**"I think one of the problems we've had in the realm of theory has been the deification and reification of Marxism."—Silber**

**"I'm saddened by the recent developments. I'm determined to figure out a better way for us in this country."—Alexander**

**"Essentially, I believe that socialism is not only viable, but necessary for the United States."—Mackler**

your mind that anything about Stalinism, or the Soviet Union under Stalin was progressive, other than the remaining gains of the October Revolution—the abolition of private property, which the workers will still defend—you can't understand what's happening today and you're going to be demoralized, as I think our previous speakers are.

If you understand socialism as the rule of the people, then the events in Eastern Europe, the Berlin Wall, and in the Soviet Union are events to rejoice in.

[At this point, a caller asks about whether the recent events in the USSR were orchestrated by the CIA.]

**Alexander:** The world balance of forces has shifted. There is no counterweight to U.S. imperialism. I believe that. I think Yeltsin is a disaster for the Soviet Union. I think it is going to move back to capitalism if the USSR stays together at all. So I think that the role of U.S. imperialism is clear and it represents a big danger to the world.

I'm very worried about what's going to happen to Cuba. I'm worried about what will happen to the liberation movements that are struggling to democratize their countries. So I think we're in for a tough period. I'm not depressed. I'm saddened by the recent developments. I'm determined to figure out a better way for us in this country.

**Silber:** It's probably comforting to view every event in the world as somehow reflecting the long arm of the CIA or the Pentagon or some combination thereof. I think this view attributes more intelligence to those agencies of the United States than is warranted. They don't have that good a track record. And it lets the rest of us off the hook...

I don't subscribe to Kendra's view about Yeltsin and the events in the Soviet Union. I think Yeltsin is a big question mark, frankly. But history chooses strange characters sometimes to work its will. That may sound kind of mystical but I think it's been proven. And the fact of the matter is that at the particular moment, this guy came to the forefront in the right place and at the right time doing the right thing. More so than anybody else.

**Pursglove:** Do you believe that the republics are being led down the "primrose path" by American imperialism?

**Mackler:** In the mind of the Stalinists, anytime the people mobilize against the Communist Party, it is a CIA-inspired coup—as in Hungary, and in Czechoslovakia, and in every single uprising of the Eastern European people.

But today the CIA is not alleged by anyone to be involved. In fact, to the contrary, the CIA and the U.S. govern-

ment are supporting Yeltsin and Gorbachev, for political reasons, for capitalist purposes, and not militarily. I support these movements for self-determination just like I support the right of Black people to determine their future and any oppressed nationality to determine their future free from the oppressor nation.

**Alexander:** I want to thank Jeff for recognizing the right of Black people to self-determination. I think it is complicated. I think both things are operating.

I think there is a genuine desire on the part of the Soviet people to change the way things have been. They're in serious economic trouble. There's no question about that. And I think that the move for independence has some legitimacy.

I think the big failure was this notion that the national question had been solved in the Soviet Union. Clearly, it had not been solved. When you think something is solved, you don't deal with it any more. I think it's frankly going to be a disaster for the Soviet Union to break up into small republics. How are they going to be able to exist?

And a lot of these movements in the republics are very reactionary and in opposition to other peoples that live in those republics. How can you support this chauvinist line with the "great people." That's the problem that Black people have been fighting in this country. The question of racism and discrimination and isolation from the whole of society. I can't support that.

So I think that we have to draw on our experiences to take a look at what now are going to be the problems they are facing in the Soviet Union. Just to say, "Hip, hip hooray." Great! The people are exercising their rights, and to not recognize the impingement on other people's rights, I think for Marxists is inexcusable.

**Silber:** I don't think it's a sinister [CIA] plot either. I think ... the Bush administration has not quite figured out how to handle this because in terms of their conception of national interest, it could go either way. I think they are scrambling. To attribute to them some omniscience that knows exactly what will happen if we push this button or that, I think doesn't make any sense...

I agree very strongly with Kendra's point about being wary of every movement that proclaims itself for independence. The mayor of Leningrad made a very interesting point in the Soviet Parliament the other day. He

noted that in a number of republics the movement for independence is being led by people in the old Communist Party structure. Because they feel they have local control and that's their way of maintaining control.

I suspect, for instance, that this is the case in Byelorussia, where the old Communist Party apparatus is still very strong. One cannot simply take an across-the-board, uncritical look at every move for independence and applaud it and say, "Oh yeah, this is the expression of democracy."

[A caller asks about whether socialists favor "violent revolution."]

**Mackler:** The main perpetrator of violence on this planet today is U.S. imperialism. They are the ones that organized the contras against the Nicaraguans. They are the ones that support the dictatorship in El Salvador. They are the ones that are seeking to deny women their right to abortion, to control their own bodies. They are the ones who killed a quarter of a million people in a month or less in Iraq.

Revolution and violence are part of an [historic] process. I support, for example, the right of the people to rule and to organize to achieve this end.

This includes the American Revolution in 1776, the American Civil War, the Russian Revolution, the French Revolution, and every other revolution where the efforts of the majority to rule were thwarted by a tiny minority which employed the state's repressive apparatus on their side. Socialism is majority rule, not minority violence.

Essentially, I believe that socialism is not only viable, but necessary for the United States. It will come when the majority of people, organized in their own parties and their own institutions, want it. If it is opposed by an isolated capitalist minority, which I expect it will be, I support the right of the people to defend themselves against the same imperialists who kill to preserve their rule in the rest of the world, and who, I expect, will try to do the same in this country.

**Silber:** I don't think that violent revolution is a cardinal principle of Marxism, whatever cardinal principles mean. I think it was an observation by Marx in the context of his time, that he couldn't imagine, and Lenin even more so, how social change could take place otherwise. But it was more like an observation of the facts on the ground as they were. I think we have to rethink this view that violence in the course of making revolution is inevitable....

Mass actions in the streets by masses of people have effected incredible changes with a minimum of violence. That's a new feature in the world. So I think we have to rethink that question.

**Alexander:** I tend to agree with Irwin on that. I think in this country that socialism will have to come because people want it. Therefore, it will be done probably through the structures of this country, in voting and mobilizing mass action and so forth. All of those things will be combined to the point where people see the need for an actual change. These are questions that we do have to rethink. ■

## Why the Soviet People Defeated the Attempted Coup

Hear  
**Gerry Foley**  
**Friday, Oct. 11**  
**at 7:30 p.m.**  
**PATRIOTIC HALL**  
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# What the banning of the Soviet CP does and does not mean

By NAT WEINSTEIN

In the immediate aftermath of the attempted coup d'état, wide-ranging measures serving to ban the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) have been taken by various governmental agencies in the USSR. Russian President Boris Yeltsin took the first and most aggressive actions against the CPSU and was soon followed by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and many others. (Yeltsin had begun to ban CPSU activity in the workplaces well before the coup.)

Along with the CPSU's "dissolution," decreed by its General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, Yeltsin decreed the wholesale nationalization in Russia of the CPSU's vast holdings of real estate, printing plants, newspapers, and other property. Similar actions have been taken in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Kazakhstan and other Soviet Republics.

At the same time, Yeltsin banned the party's publications, including mass-circulation dailies like *Pravda* and *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. Most of the banned publications, however, were reborn days later with essentially the same Stalinist staffs—but now with an anti-Communist Party editorial policy.

Virtually all reports indicate that the destruction of the CPSU has been welcomed by the masses of workers and farmers who see it as a major blow to their bureaucratic oppressors. There have been no reports of protest demonstrations, nor any other evidence of anyone coming to the defense of the party of Stalin—even supporters of the coup have remained virtually silent.

Even so, the workers' movement needs to have a clear position on this question since it vitally affects the future of workers' democracy and its main enemy inside the Soviet Union, the bureaucratic dictatorship.

## What was Communist Party?

The idea of outlawing a "Communist" party—Stalinist or not—evokes a justifiable apprehension in most progressive-minded people. But the CPSU was not just a political party, it was also the main political agency of repressive rule. It exercised exclusive control over every sector of the state; the government, the army, the police, the workplaces, the farms—everywhere. This massive apparatus still had 15 million members just before the coup—down from close to 25 million when it was at its height toward the end of the 1980s.

It played this role ever since this party was gradually transformed into its opposite by Joseph Stalin beginning in 1923. The coup de grace was delivered by the mass purge trials of 1936 and 1938. These staged, frameup trials "liquidated"—often by a bullet in the head—what was left of real communists inside the CPSU. From then on, membership in this blood-stained shell of the party of Lenin and Trotsky was largely restricted to bureaucrats, aspiring bureaucrats, secret police, and a smattering of broken ex-communists. It was a membership card into a life of privilege.

Complicating the matter further is the fact that it is the bureaucracy itself which has banned the CPSU. Virtually all apparatchniks who have recently transformed themselves into outspoken anti-Communists, had throughout their careers been leading members of the CPSU. They helped implement or at least acquiesced in every Stalinist atrocity—including those committed under Gorbachev's reign.

Now, the heroes of Stalinism are quitting their party as fast as they can and have become born-again "democrats" and champions of privatization. In one sense, it is no change at all. They seek



**"It is entirely in the interests of Soviet workers and farmers that the CPSU be stripped of the billions in property they systematically stole from the wealth created by workers and farmers..."**

only to maintain their privileges on the basis of property rights.

It is entirely in the interests of Soviet workers and farmers that the CPSU be stripped of the billions in property they systematically stole from the wealth created by workers and farmers over a more than 60-year period. It is also in the interests of Soviet workers that the CPSU, as a governmental and state institution of the bureaucratic dictatorship, be dismantled, and removed from all positions of power.

But working people should not give an iota of confidence to those carrying out these acts. The ex-Communist wing of the privileged elite cannot be entrusted with this task. They have a vested interest in destroying the CPSU for two reasons, neither of which has anything to do with why the masses hate it: first, because it has become an albatross around the bureaucracy's collective necks and, second, because it has become an instrument of a rival faction in the competition to grab the biggest shares in a Soviet economy based on capitalism.

## Workers and farmers should rule

Is there a danger that outlawing a political party—in this case, the CPSU—could be turned against the workers? Of course. And we can be sure that when the presently small anti-Stalinist, anti-bureaucratic, anti-capitalist,

pro-socialist, workers' movement begins to grow under the impact of the attacks on their remaining social and economic conquests, there will be attempts by the legions of unreconstructed Stalinists to slander and smash it as a "rebirth of Stalinism"(!).

For this reason, revolutionary socialist workers and farmers must insist that only the class institutions of the workers—their strike committees, unions, and eventually the reconstitution of workers' councils (soviets)—should freely and democratically decide which parties to recognize as legal parties. 1

Gorbachev speaks for the whole of the grasping, self-serving anti-communist caste when he hypocritically declares his opposition to any "witchhunt." He had only just ceased being head of the party which had for over 60 years rooted out, imprisoned, and murdered genuine communists and other opponents of the totalitarian system he defended throughout his adult life.

Bureaucrats need not fear a "witchhunt" so long as the Gorbachevs and Yeltsins are in command! The real purpose, however, of Gorbachev's plaintive plea is to block the attack on the CPSU from becoming an attack on the bureaucracy as such. We can be certain, too, that his fear of a mass movement developing which will come to sweep the

bureaucracy out of all positions of control, is real. But in that case it would not be a witchhunt at all, it would be an organic and indispensable component of the democratization of Soviet society.

Perceptive bourgeois Soviet "experts" approaching it from their pro-capitalist viewpoint have noted, with great trepidation the likelihood of a pro-socialist, anti-bureaucratic upsurge ahead. Stephen F. Cohen, for instance, comments in the Sept. 4 *New York Times*:

"...[F]or most Soviet citizens, Communism really meant a cradle-to-grave welfare state. Opinion polls tell us that popular demands for those social guarantees remain widespread. Some effective movement, probably dominated by Communist fundamentalists, will emerge in response to them."

## After the defeat of the plotters

But born-again "democrats" like Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the rest are fated to revert to their old ways. No sooner did the "democratic" bureaucrats defeat the coup plotters than did they initiate their own version of extra-legal government. For the moment it takes the form of a Yeltsin/Gorbachev-led bloc which has instituted the State Council, a transitional central government that includes leaders of ten republics. This is a rump body which for the moment supersedes the Supreme Soviet, the elected parliament of the USSR.

The State Council was sanctioned, after the fact, by the Supreme Soviet on a motion by Mikhail Gorbachev. But even such unconstitutional hat-tipping to legal procedures will soon be bypassed by whichever Bonapartist "man on a white horse" emerges from the dogfight among opposing cliques and factions.

Starting this winter, the class struggle will be heated to high temperatures by the measures necessary for restoring capitalist market conditions. Ultimately, if not this winter, workers will have no choice but to find their way to effective forms of organization of their struggle.

Despite superficial appearances of widespread rejection of socialism, the masses sense that it was bureaucratic dictatorship that failed, not socialism. They will also come to understand that socialism is not an impossible utopia, but that it is the absurdity of "socialism in one country"—and a backward country to boot—which is the pipe-dream.

Moreover, the appreciation of the authentic world-historic October Revolution, especially its example and lessons for today, have not been expunged from the collective memory of Soviet workers and farmers. It has temporarily been overshadowed by the crimes of Stalinism which falsely marched under the banner of socialism for over 60 years. This is evidenced by mass worker resistance to efforts to take away the remaining conquests of the October Revolution.

Under the impact of the sharpening class struggle, they will do what workers everywhere do; they will seek to learn from history, especially their own history. Furthermore, when the Soviet workers enter the political arena in their own name and for their own class interests, they will inevitably make their impact on the best of Soviet intellectuals. And the latter, inspired by the resumed march toward world socialism, will identify with the working class and help them separate historical fact from fiction.

The collapse of the CPSU, along with the developing crisis of world capitalism, means that the objective basis for the renewed forward march toward socialism by the Soviet and world working class is firmer now than ever before. ■

1. Leon Trotsky, the co-leader with V.I. Lenin of the workers' revolution of October 1917, and the single most uncompromising opponent of the Stalinist bureaucracy, explained the fundamental guiding principle for understanding this problem of workers' democracy. He wrote in the Transitional Program: "Democratization of the soviets is impossible without legalization of soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties."



# How the American 'Left' analyzed attempted coup in Soviet Union

By BARRY SHEPPARD

*The attempted military-KGB coup in the Soviet Union and its aftermath have shaken left-wing parties and tendencies in the United States and worldwide.*

*Below, we critically review the positions of tendencies on the American left who claim the heritage of the Russian Revolution. All have been put to a key test by these events.*

*Once again, all the issues raised by the development of Stalinism and the Trotskyist opposition to it have come to the fore.*

*We begin with the position of the Workers World Party not because it is the most important formation but because of all the groups supporting the coup, their position is the slickest.*

rialist pundits were preparing public opinion for this course if it would be necessary—a point developed by Henry Kissinger on CNN, for example.

Marcy's criticism of the coup leaders was that they were inept and indecisive, and did not appeal to the masses.

Why didn't they appeal to the masses? According to Marcy, it was because they suffered from the same incorrect view as the great French revolutionary Auguste Blanqui: "Blanqui relied upon the conspiracy of a small group against the reactionary ruling class, thinking that if they succeeded in carrying out a blow against the state, the masses would follow."

First of all, it is a monstrous slander of Blanqui to equate him with the leaders of the coup. Blanqui was not a Marxist,

The rule of the bureaucracy has already led to the stagnation and decline of the planned economy since the 1970s. Bureaucratic rule has not only disrupted, disorganized and sabotaged the planned economy established by the great socialist revolution, as it did from 1923 on, it has become an *absolute* brake upon the planned economy.

This is the underlying cause of the current crisis. To protect its privileged position, the bureaucracy in the main and as a whole can see no way out except capitalist restoration in cooperation with imperialism.

So even if the coup plotters were Stalinists who wanted to rule in the old way, they would have immediately faced the exact same crisis and be compelled to take the same course towards capitalist restoration that the Gorbachevites have done.

This was not their orientation, however. The plotters meant what they said about continuing on Gorbachev's economic road.

But they were addressing a real problem that Yeltsin, Gorbachev and whoever else is in office for the bureaucracy must grapple with. And this is the fact that capitalism cannot be restored in the USSR, or in Eastern Europe for that matter, without crushing the working class resistance to the prerequisites for capitalism: The creation of an unemployed sector of the working class, the closing down of "inefficient" plants, cre-

But the Marcyites don't look in the direction of the workers and their fight against the bureaucracy. In every major conflict between the masses and the bureaucracy since 1956, the followers of "Chairman Marcy" have sided with the bureaucracy, in the name of "defending socialism."

They supported the crushing of the Hungarian workers by Soviet tanks in 1956, of the Czechoslovakian masses and the "Prague Spring" in 1968, of the Polish working class by the military coup in 1981, of the Chinese students in Peking and the workers in Shanghai in 1989. Is it any wonder they supported the attempt to establish a military dictatorship by a sector of the Soviet bureaucracy in 1991?

The leaders of the Workers World Party present themselves as critics of the bureaucracy, even quoting Trotsky in private. But their support of the bureaucracy, or sections of it, and Stalinist methods against the workers to "save" the workers state, inevitably leads them to prettify bureaucratic rule.

For example, they lament the present struggles of the oppressed nationalities in the USSR, on the grounds that national oppression and great Russian chauvinism were eliminated by the revolution. John Catalinotto, writing in the Sept. 5 issue of *WW*, blames the current upsurge in the oppressed nationalities solely on Gorbachev and Yeltsin, saying nothing about the period from the death of Lenin up to the 1980s.

The impression given is that the whole period of Stalinism up to then was a continuation of Lenin's policies on the national question. But the opposite is true.

While the Bolsheviks championed the oppressed nationalities of the former Tsarist empire, and stood for their right of self-determination including the right to leave the USSR, the bureaucracy under Stalin reversed this course, once again relying on great Russian domination as a prop to its rule (see article by Gerry Foley, p. 20).

The upsurge of the oppressed nationalities is a justified rebellion against the "prison house of nations" that Stalin and his heirs reimposed on the USSR. Lenin's program supporting self-determination for the oppressed nations and nationalities is as applicable today as it was in the revolution against Tsarism because the bureaucracy adopted a policy parallel to Tsarism's.

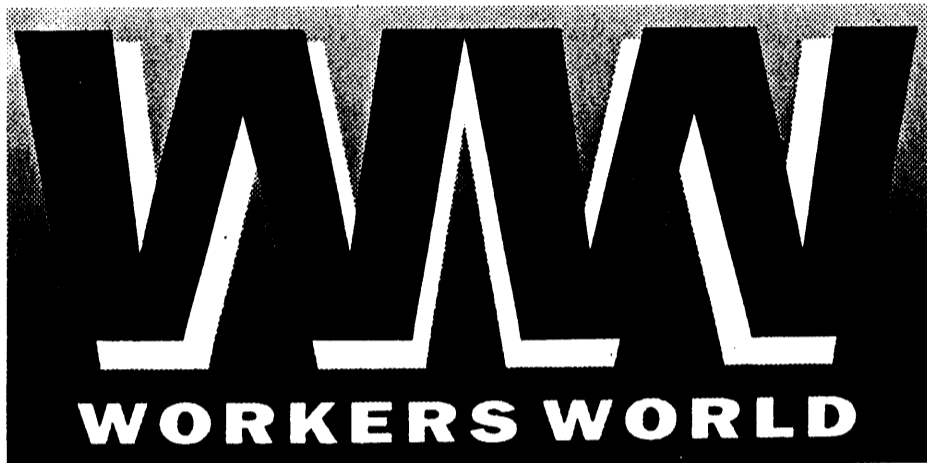
Many people are socialists and communists in the sense they believe in the ultimate establishment of a classless society. But Marxism is a specific current within socialism that holds that the historic agent for carrying through the socialist transformation is the working class created by capitalism.

Marcy, in contrast, looks to a sector of the petty bourgeois bureaucracy to save the day, even *against* the working class. But a workers state cannot be defended against the working class. Workers World ends up providing a left cover for the preservation of Stalinism.

Marxists, on the other hand, take their stand with the masses in their battle against the bureaucratic caste, in spite of whatever illusions the masses have in capitalism as a result of decades of bureaucratic misrule.

The Soviet masses have begun their fight under the slogans of democracy and against the privileges of the bureaucracy. The more democratic rights the workers win, the more they will fight for their class interests. This will bring them into conflict with whomever in the bureaucracy seeks to restore capitalism. It is through this fight that the masses will

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*Reflects the views of the Workers World Party (WWP).*

Workers World (*WW*) supported the August coup as an "ill-fated attempt to halt the process of capitalist restoration in the USSR," in the words of WWP Chairman Sam Marcy. (*Workers World*, special issue dated Aug. 25, 1991)

However, in the Sept. 8 issue of *WW*, Marcy sharply criticizes the coup leaders. He says that they "issued an utterly inept and scandalously vague statement calculated to assure the imperialist bourgeoisie that foreign policy toward the imperialists would remain the same and the reforms at home would continue.

Not even the word socialism was mentioned in the manifesto, which promised that private property and the market economy would continue."

But the coup leaders hid their real aims, he asserts, to *fool* the imperialists, because they were afraid of foreign intervention. They didn't really mean their own statements, according to Marcy: "Even though they had gone very far with the Gorbachev reforms, they were regarded as opposed to the restoration of capitalism."

So "regarded" by whom, other than Sam Marcy? The only "proof" offered for Marcy's assertion is that Bush and other imperialist leaders denounced the coup and backed Yeltsin.

However, while Bush and others did back Yeltsin in this split within the ruling bureaucracy, intervention was never a realistic or desired option on the part of the imperialists.

They simply preferred stability in the Soviet bureaucracy, correctly fearing that the attempt to reimpose an outright military dictatorship at this time would lead to a social explosion by the masses. This could result in the working people and oppressed nationalities putting their stamp upon the course of events. To the extent that has happened, Washington and the other imperialist centers express deep concern.

Moreover, the imperialists were ready to deal with the coup leaders if they were successful, while making propaganda points in favor of "democracy." During the three days of the coup attempt, impe-

**"The leaders of the Workers World Party present themselves as critics of the bureaucracy, even quoting Trotsky in private. But their support of the bureaucracy, or sections of it, and Stalinist methods against the workers to "save" the workers state, inevitably leads them to prettify bureaucratic rule."**

but he was a revolutionary and fought for the working people. He spent most of his adult life in French prisons for his revolutionary activity and was absolutely selfless in his devotion to the cause of the downtrodden.

The coup leaders, by contrast, never worked a day in their lives for their fat privileges—for their limousines, dachas, special restaurants, big salaries, lucrative kickbacks and bribes, special vacation spas, access to Western goods in special stores, and all the other goodies that come with being at the top of the Soviet bureaucracy. They never spent time in jail for resistance to injustice and privilege—they *put* people in jail for doing that.

They didn't appeal to the masses because they rightfully have a deadly fear and hatred of them, because their material interests are directly opposed to the great mass of workers and peasants. They view working people as objects to be contained and suppressed—they have the same basic mentality as Gorbachev and the rest of the bureaucrats.

For the sake of argument, let's grant "Chairman Marcy" (as his followers call him) his strongest argument for a moment. That is, let's assume for a moment that their goal was to maintain the nationalized and planned economy, but with the domination of a privileged bureaucratic caste over the working people. Even if that were the case, it would be no solution whatever in defense of the social foundations of the workers state.

ation of a true market system and higher prices for basic necessities, massive privatization, cutbacks in social services, acceptance of the domination of foreign imperialist capital, etc.—all of which means a reduced standard of living and a bleak future for the workers and peasants.

In order to do this a *strong state* of some type will have to be established that can crush the workers. The coup plotters tried to do this through a military dictatorship that proved impossible to establish right now because the masses resist going back to the Stalinist past. Furthermore, the rest of the bureaucracy didn't think they could get away with it without provoking a social explosion.

So for the present, the bureaucracy is going along with the "democratic" fig leaf of Yeltsin and Gorbachev, although with emergency measures and rule by decree.

The only way forward for working people is to sweep away the *whole* bureaucracy, reestablish workers democracy in the government and in the factories, and thereby put the planned economy on a rational and democratic basis, thereby releasing the pent-up creativity of the working class.

This would go hand in hand with internationalist solidarity with the struggles of workers and peasants the world over, and reversing the Stalinist policy of subordinating the interests of the working people to deals with imperialism.

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learn in practice what capitalist restoration means, will rebuild a new Leninist leadership to overthrow the bureaucracy *in toto*, and once again will move towards socialism. ■

are, for the most part, technocrats.

"There is no reason to believe the group which took over briefly last week would have put the brakes on radical economic reform. If anything they might have speeded up the process....

"Some members of the coup group

issue, as does a fear of the class battles looming in the USSR and at home. A petty bourgeois despair concerning the Soviet masses is the undertone.

*Guardian* writer Michio Kaku captures this mood best: "I have mixed feelings witnessing one of the most important events in my lifetime, the collapse of the Soviet Union. On one hand, I applaud the courageous democratic forces that have taken to the streets. People should be free to decide their own fate. It is thrilling to see people take the first steps toward democracy.

"However, I also have a queasy feeling about this. It's like giving oxygen to a sick patient. The shock may kill the patient."

Later in his article, Kaku develops this contempt for the masses: "Ideologically, however, Gorbachev unwittingly created a vast vacuum. People, especially poor ones, desperately need things to believe

lizing for democracy; the rapid dismantling of the tyranny of the KGB and the Communist party bureaucracy; the fulfillment of the Baltic peoples' legitimate and democratic desire for national independence."

Concerning Yeltsin, *Solidarity* says he is a "former Communist Party boss who left the party to embrace 'radical market reform.' ... Yeltsin deserves credit for resisting the coup, certainly—and the hundreds of thousands who responded to his appeal for resistance were correct to do so, whether or not they were supporters of Yeltsin himself. But is Yeltsin the 'democratic' leader our media advertised as the coup collapsed? Yeltsin began issuing orders, for example, banning the Communist party 'in the territory of the Russian republic' and numerous newspapers.

"Such decrees are highly dangerous—not because the CP's politics should be defended, but because it appears that Yeltsin is the kind of leader who likes to run things without any parties or opposition organizations at all."

*Solidarity* sees "not one, but two processes underway in the USSR, both dramatically accelerated by the attempted Stalinist coup and its failure.

One is the process of democracy, initiated 'from above' by Gorbachev and now open to the masses to expand from below.

The other is the attempt to 'marketize' the economy from above and from outside. This would inevitably create a capitalism with enormous inequities, prosperity alongside incredible misery and huge indebtedness to western banks. In other words, it would be the kind of capitalism that exists in Brazil, not western Europe.

"We see these two processes as being on a collision course—not immediately, but perhaps in the not too distant future..."

"What lies ahead are years of complex struggles. As socialists our loyalties are clear: with the people and the democratic movement in the streets against the bureaucracy, and also with the workers as they begin to organize their defense against the costs that a new capitalist order will impose [emphasis in original]..."

We can agree with this stand, in the abstract. But there are some serious weaknesses in *Solidarity's* position.

One concerns the role of Gorbachev and the sector of the bureaucracy he represents. It should not be forgotten that the bureaucracy as a whole placed him at the apex of its apparatus in 1985. And following the failed coup, he still plays a central role along with Yeltsin, and, increasingly, with Nazarbayev, president of Kazakhstan and an advocate of the "market economy," who cautions against too much democracy in the new government seeking to re-consolidate the rule of the bureaucracy.

The *Solidarity* statement mentions Gorbachev only once, giving him credit for initiating the "process of democracy," even if from above. The statement mentions only Yeltsin's penchant for rule by decree, but the same thing is true of the whole new government, including Gorbachev.

It also doesn't refer to Gorbachev's

## PEOPLE'S WEEKLY

# World

Reflects the views of the Communist Party, United States of America (CPUSA).

Ever since its subordination to Stalinism in the late 1920s, the CPUSA has been a faithful apologist for the twists and turns of the Soviet bureaucracy in the USSR and internationally.

We don't have space to list all the crimes against socialism and the working people committed by the Soviet Stalinists right up to the present, every one of which was defended by the CPUSA.

Concerning the attempted coup, the CP doesn't know whether to shift or go blind, or which faction in the Soviet bureaucracy to back. Officially, in the Aug. 31 issue of the *People's Weekly World*, they distance themselves from the coup, claiming it was "unconstitutional." But in an editorial, they blast Gorbachev and his "pro-capitalist policies."

It is reported by Ann Wagoner in *The Guardian* of Sept. 11 that CPUSA chair Gus Hall sent a cassette tape to party clubs during the coup attempt. The tape said, "We should not join in the bring-back Gorbachev campaign ... I'm not for any kind of condemnation [of the coup]." He added that a speech made by Gorbachev just before the coup was "a basis for removing a leader of the party, because it's basically an anti-party position." After the coup failed, however, he modified this in a statement to the *New York Daily News*, saying that he agreed "with the intent but not the method of the coup."

Political differences within the CPUSA are rampant. For some time, it has been clear that West Coast CP leader Carl Bloice supported Gorbachev, while Hall looked to the past. In the Aug. 31 issue, Hall clearly opposes the present government of the USSR, while Bloice has some hope.

The official statement of the party says: "While many questions are not yet answered about the unconstitutional attempted takeover, one thing is abundantly clear: reactionary pro-capitalist forces in the Soviet Union, with the backing of the transnational corporations, are exploiting the situation.

"Developments have quickly moved to a new stage. Processes are now in motion that inflame anti-Semitism and nationalism, seriously threaten the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of socialism, and push the country in the direction of capitalism and the wholesale plunder of the USSR."

In the same issue of the paper, however, a long article by Carl Bloice written from Moscow attacks the coup plotters and defends the Soviet CP: "While there was active collaboration [with the coup] at the top, the party as a whole did not support the attempted usurpation of power."

Bloice has some interesting things to say about the coup plotters: "For the most part ... these men could not be accurately called 'party hardliners.'..."

"If anything marks the tenor of the conspirators it is a heavy bent on ideological and economic pragmatism. They

## "Concerning the attempted coup, the CP doesn't know whether to shift or go blind, or which faction in the Soviet bureaucracy to back."

have publicly expressed their attraction to the 'Pinochet model' (referring to the harsh economic restructuring carried out by coup-installed dictator General Augusto Pinochet in Chile) and the 'South Korean miracle.' (There are many on the other side of the Moscow barricade that hold such views as well.) Ownership is not a hangup with them...."

Bloice ends up hoping that a new party that Gorbachev has called for will save the day, a "party of left-wing forces built on the platform of freedom and democracy" as the "outgoing" Central Committee defined it before it dissolved.

The discreditment and disintegration of Stalinism in the USSR sounds the death knell for the CPUSA. Trained for decades in class collaborationism and toadyism to Moscow, most of its members are rapidly moving even further to the right. Perhaps a remnant of befuddled fools like Gus Hall will remain, gently rocking on their porches and nostalgically recalling the good old days of Stalin and Beria. Good riddance. ■

in... I believe that most peasants and farmers in the Soviet Union believed in their system and made heroic sacrifices because they believed that it was right to help humanity and defend their country....

"But then Gorbachev, in effect, said it was all a waste, that they were all dupes, that Communism was a fraud, that they sacrificed for nothing. How would you feel if you had willingly suffered for 50 years because of a cause, only to be told it was all a bad joke, a complete fraud? That your brothers and sisters and parents died for nothing? You would go berserk, of course. And this is what is happening all over the Soviet Union...."

One can only conclude that it is Mr. Kaku who is going berserk, having just woken up to the crimes of Stalinism. If only Gorbachev, he says, had not told the "poor people" that everything was not hunky-dory, everything would be OK. Then the "reforms that should have taken place 25 years ago" maybe could have been implemented from the top, by people who you can bet are not "poor"

# The Guardian

This newspaper defines itself as an independent radical weekly.

*The Guardian* did not comment on the attempted coup until its Sept. 11 issue, and even then did not present an editorial position. Instead, it printed a number of commentaries from various people on the left.

Nevertheless, an overall impression of the events is conveyed, capsulized by the title of the major piece by Fred Weir, a special to *The Guardian* from Moscow: "Goons of August" finished off Soviet socialism:"

"Fool or not, he [coup plotter Yanayev] and his accomplices set off an explosion that ruptured the chances for an evolutionary solution," writes Weir. "Their actions will condition the future in a myriad of ways—not all of them happy.

"In seeking to save the union through conspiracy and coercion, they may have destroyed it. By slathering the banner of socialism onto a tank turret one final, pathetic time, they discredited it forever in this country [the USSR]."

Most of *The Guardian* writers favor Gorbachev and had illusions that he was trying to democratize the Soviet Union but preserve its "socialist" character. But now the attempted coup has dashed those hopes.

This pessimism runs throughout the

and thus don't have to "believe things" in order not to "go berserk."

Note Mr. Kaku's timing? Reforms should have been made 25 years ago, that is, in 1966. The whole Stalin period is glossed over.

In the main, *The Guardian* reflects the views of people trained in the Stalinist school, including the Maoist variety, and as such haven't a clue as to what's happening in the USSR or China for that matter. For them, everything boils down to good or bad policies by the leaders. ■

# AGAINST THE CURRENT

Reflects the views of members of the organization called *Solidarity*.

A statement by *Solidarity* to be printed in the October issue of *Against the Current* was furnished to *Socialist Action*.

"Everyone, it seems, is celebrating the August events in the Soviet Union," the statement begins. And there's plenty to celebrate: the collapse of the coup; the people of Moscow and Leningrad mobi-

role in driving towards capitalist restoration, a curious omission given his well-known positions. It could seem from the *Solidarity* statement that Gorbachev is part of the "democratic movement" which will come into conflict with the drive toward capitalist restoration.

The crisis of bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy forced the

(continued on next page)

## Romanian miners illustrate a point

Fierce resistance by striking Romanian coal miners to "market reforms" illustrates the difficulties facing the bureaucratic caste all over Eastern Europe and the USSR in restoring capitalism.

On Sept. 26, thousands of miners from the Jiu Valley arrived in trains they had commandeered to join 4000 compatriots in Bucharest who had stormed government buildings the day before. Battles with government forces lasted three days, as the miners were joined by Bucharest residents in protesting the regime's economic policies.

The miners in Bucharest were demanding higher pay, lower prices, and the resignation of the government.

The protests forced Prime Minister Petre Roman to resign. After President Ion Iliescu promised to form a commission to study the miner's grievances, the miners went home. But the state radio reported that a general strike continued by the Mining Trade Union Confederation, which does not represent the Jiu Valley miners, demanding government subsidies and a halt to the closure of so-called unprofitable mines.

Prime Minister Roman's "market reform" policies not only include shutting down mines and throwing miners out of work, but have "sliced standards of living, widened the gap between rich and poor and sent inflation soaring to 170 percent," according to the Associated Press.

Roman, himself a former member of the Stalinist Communist Party,

attacked the miners' action as a "Communist coup." He charged the miners with seeking "the dissolution of all the democratic institutions in this country," in an interview on French TV. "Romania has broken with Communism for too short a time for the old structures and mentalities to be able to disappear," he said.

Roman thus tried to smear the miners as supporters of the hated Stalinist dictator Ceaucescu, who was overthrown in an armed insurrection in 1989. But these miners were in the forefront of the 1989 insurrection.

What Roman really fears and hates, are the "mentalities" of the workers who resist moves towards capitalist restoration. It is through their own struggles that the workers will come to understand the difference between Stalinism and real communism, which, after all, is just the generalization of the movement of the working class towards its emancipation. Roman, by calling them communists, will help their education.

After Ceaucescu was overthrown and executed, the bureaucratic caste reorganized as the National Salvation Front and established a new government. Like the other regimes in Eastern Europe and the USSR, it seeks a way out of the crisis it faces through the restoration of capitalism.

But the miners have shown that won't be so easy, especially in Romania, where the workers overthrew one regime arms in hand, and have given notice they can do so again.—B.S.

in the USSR should be defended against imperialist attack in the second world war in spite of its bureaucratic deformations. Politically, they were bending to imperialist pressure, as was seen also in their refusal to defend colonial China against imperialist Japan during the war.

This anti-Marxist theory has been definitively refuted by the recent events in the USSR. It is now clear that the bureaucratic caste does not represent a new historical system unforeseen by Marxism, but a temporary excrescence on the workers state—a parasite, not a new organism.

The bureaucratic caste itself has come to realize that the only hope for its members as a privileged minority lies not in the continuation of its old methods of enrichment through sucking the blood of the nationalized economy, but in a restoration of capitalism. There is no "third way"—either forward toward socialism on the basis of workers' power or back to capitalism.

We note that Solidarity is opposed to a return to capitalism and recognizes this would mean great hardship for the Soviet workers and peasants. This position contradicts the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism," but it is always better to be right than consistent. ■

towards the restoration of capitalism without similar measures.

"Contrary to what is implied by the Western bourgeois media, neither 'democracy' nor the partisans of a 'free market economy' have consolidated their hold on a post-coup USSR. The situation in the Soviet Union is extremely fluid. Powerful elements will attempt to plunder state property, unleash foreign investment, slash social benefits, and provide a bourgeois legitimization of already-existing economic inequalities within Soviet society. Already competing nationalisms, some assuming extremely reactionary manifestations, have begun to make significant headway among different sectors of the peoples of the USSR.

"There is a potential for immense class struggles waged by the Soviet working people, in some cases coexisting or combined with national liberation struggles. There is also potential for destructive inter-ethnic conflicts and the emergence of right-wing, fascist-like movements. In more ways than one, there is the possibility of civil war.

"The outcome of this struggle is yet to be determined. While the fighting capacity of the Soviet masses cannot be doubted, they so far lack mass organiza-

# Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

Reflects the views of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT).

A statement by the FIT leadership scheduled for the October issue was furnished to *Socialist Action*.

"The defeat of the coup was a genuine victory for the Soviet peoples," the statement says. "The active intervention of the masses in this situation creates important opportunities for the forces of democracy and socialism.

"At the same time, the mainstream of the top bureaucratic leadership will attempt to utilize the shock-value of the coup to justify far-reaching measures they have been unable to implement in the past. The self-discrediting of a major sector of the more conservative wing of the bureaucracy, combined with the partial collapse/partial repression of the Communist Party, creates a new balance among the contending elements within the bureaucracy.

"Those who favor an all-out restoration of capitalism will obviously be strengthened and emboldened. To the extent that 'economic reforms' are advanced at the expense of the masses, however, elements among the working class can be expected to utilize any and

tions, such as socialist workers' parties and effective unions, needed to organize successful defense against the counter-revolution.

"Glasnost has created important incipient groupings — socialist vanguard formations, attempts at organizing independent unions, nationalist, women's and environmental movements. These vanguard formations are now challenged to quickly find a way to win genuine mass influence."

The FIT statement is lengthy, with the whole first part reviewing the history of the USSR from a generally Trotskyist (Marxist) viewpoint, and we can agree with its general orientation towards a political revolution by the working people, and of course its opposition to the attempted coup.

But concerning key problems of what to do now, the FIT statement has serious weaknesses and confusion.

Some of these it shares with Solidarity. It is ambiguous on Gorbachev, hailing his policy of "glasnost" without differentiating between his anti-working class proposals for "glasnost" and the openings Gorbachev was forced to concede to the masses in their fight for workers democracy. "Glasnost" did not

**"Glasnost" did not create the independent groups and movements the FIT statement refers to. The people did this, utilizing the greater political freedom wrested from the bureaucracy."**

all democratic freedoms to struggle for defense of their economic interests and the rights won in 1917.

"Mass action against the anti-democratic coup may pave the way for mass actions in the direction of genuine socialism. Such a collision between glasnost and perestroika may well cause some of yesterday's partisans of 'democracy' to once again take up the banner of authoritarian 'law and order.'

"In many 'newly industrializing countries,' the cause of 'capitalist 'modernization' is advanced by dictatorships intolerant of trade unions, opposition parties, and free speech. It is hard to see how the ex-USSR could move decisively

"create" the independent groups and movements the FIT statement refers to. The people did this, utilizing the greater political freedom wrested from the bureaucracy.

The fundamental contradiction is not between "glasnost" and "perestroika," two completely interconnected sides of the same policy of capitalist restoration. The coming battles will be between the bureaucracy as a whole, and the working masses and the oppressed nationalities. Fuzzy thinking on this question can lead to illusions in the Gorbachevites. The task of the working people is the over-

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## ... Soviet coup and U.S. left

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bureaucracy under Gorbachev to allow more "glasnost" or openness as the ruling caste tried to chart a course that would keep their privileges intact. This opening has been increasingly seized by the masses to further their interests, but we shouldn't be giving praise to Gorbachev for this any more than we should give praise to the U.S. Congress for "granting" Blacks the right to vote in the 1960s or to the Supreme Court for "granting" women the right to choose in 1973.

At best, Gorbachev's "democracy" is parliamentary democracy a la the capitalist West, and is counterposed to the regeneration of workers democracy through democratic soviets, trade unions and factory committees.

The reality is that the bureaucracy, under whatever "democratic" fig leaf, has to move towards a "strong state" in order to defeat the workers' resistance to the restoration of capitalism. Gorbachev's proven willingness to seek emergency powers is more important than his lip-service to democracy.

Any softness towards any wing of the bureaucracy in this situation will lead to disorientation. We must oppose not only the coup plotters, but also vigorously oppose the new government.

The choice looming before the working people of the USSR and Eastern Europe is stark. Either the bureaucracy will overthrow the still-existing working-class property forms and reintroduce capitalism or the workers will overthrow the bureaucracy and reestablish workers democracy. There will be no halfway houses.

Keeping this in mind, we now turn to the way forward offered by Solidarity. Their statement says: "The logic of such movements [trade unions, social movements, and political parties], particularly in the working class, would not point to creating capitalism.

"Working people, instead of turning the factories that they built over to foreign investors or bureaucrats-turned-owners, will want to 'own' and control their workplaces themselves and

to negotiate contracts with other enterprises. This would be a first step toward workers' self-management, which can only succeed if worker-controlled democratic planning replaces the old bureaucratic 'command' system."

The idea of the workers owning and controlling their own factories and negotiating contracts with other enterprises is not a step toward workers' self-management. That would be a step away from state property and the goal of socialized property. It would amount to the factories becoming cooperatives, a form of private property.

The only way each factory would be able to "negotiate" with the others would be on the basis of the market and competition.

There could be no overall planning. The blind forces of the market would begin to dominate economic decisions, even if they were made democratically by the workers in each enterprise. This would lead to growing inequality and the reemergence of exploitation of the poorer enterprises by the wealthier enterprises, and be a stepping stone back towards capitalism.

In fact, this very idea is being floated in Eastern Europe today as a way to fool the workers into accepting private ownership of the means of production.

Real workers self-management can only rest on nationalized property, with an overall economic plan decided democratically by the working class collectively. This is the only way the workers can exert real power over the economy. On this basis workers self-management in each individual enterprise can develop as part of that plan.

Solidarity resulted from a fusion of different groups. One of these held that the Marxist analysis of the USSR developed by Trotsky was wrong. They held that the bureaucracy was really a new ruling class based on nationalized property. They called their theory "bureaucratic collectivism."

The originators of this theory split from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1940 because they could not accept the SWP position that the workers state

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throw of the new post-coup government, including Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

A major difficulty with the FIT position is its refusal to see that the bureaucracy as a caste has opted for capitalist restoration.

While acknowledging that restorationist policies have been "strengthened and emboldened," the statement says that "the partisans of a 'free market economy'" have not "consolidated their hold in the post-coup USSR." But they had already "consolidated their hold" on the pre-coup USSR, and now in the post-coup period are loudly proclaiming their intentions from the rooftops.

This view is backed up by theoretical assertions in the statement: "Sections of the top echelons of the bureaucracy could undoubtedly enrich themselves by becoming native agents for the penetration of foreign capital [under capitalist restoration], but much of the bureaucracy—which numbers in the millions—will lose their privileges and be driven back into the working class."

And, "if capitalism is restored it is guaranteed that the bureaucracy as a whole will not be able to establish itself as a new capitalist class."

The implication is that the bureaucracy in its great bulk, at least those not in the "top echelons," are opposed to restoration as against their own interests.

It is true that if capitalism is restored, not all or even a large majority of the many-millioned bureaucracy will become capitalists. But this doesn't mean they will "lose their privileges and be driven back into the working class." Undoubtedly, some will. But the great bulk will continue to do what they are doing now, except they will be doing it for the new capitalist masters.

Trotsky pointed out in "The Revolution Betrayed" that in the event of a capitalist restoration, the bulk of the functionaries in the state apparatus are perfectly suited by their mentality and habits to operate the capitalist state and would be retained. A workers' political revolution, on the other hand, would require the sweeping out of the bureaucratic crud on a massive scale.

Present factory and farm managers and technocrats won't lose their positions in the main under a capitalist restoration. They envy their counterparts in the West, and fervently hope they can become just like them, without the constraints of the planned economy. If the FIT doesn't believe this, take a look at what has happened with these layers in the former East Germany, where even the bulk of the secret police has been retained.

and China were "state capitalist" as against Trotsky's analysis.

This view led them to be neutral during the Korean war (1950-53), which was a bloody conflict between U.S. imperialism and the North Korean and Chinese workers' states.

The ISO proudly states, "The founding slogan of the International Socialist Organization and our sister organizations internationally was: Workers Power East and West—Neither Moscow nor Washington, But International Socialism."

This sounds very revolutionary, but it led in practice to a helpless neutrality when faced with imperialism's attempts to crush the bureaucratically deformed workers' states.

Not only was this current neutral during the Korean war—under the false notion that the workers had nothing to defend in the nationalized and planned economies of North Korea and China—they were neutral throughout the "Cold War," placing equal blame on both the imperialist countries and the workers' states for the threat of a nuclear war.

In the United States, this meant fighting against those who wanted to concentrate their fire on Washington's war mongering and nuclear weapons buildup. Their "equal blame" line conveniently allowed them to duck the ruling class's anti-communist campaign.

Politically, they were in the same boat as those who held the "bureaucratic col-

Indeed, what is the fuss all about? Nothing much new is happening. On these grounds they fail to join the issues of the real class struggle unfolding in the USSR, around which a new revolutionary socialist party will be built.

inspire fighters everywhere to link up with their brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union in a common struggle against oppression and exploitation."

Longer articles develop and expand this line.

# THE MILITANT

Reflects the views of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Front-page headlines in the Sept. 6, 13 and 20 issues give a flavor of the SWP's position: "Soviet workers win giant victory by defeating coup"; "Gorbachev, Yeltsin drive to stem Soviet disintegration—Seek to defend ruling stratum, take aim at workers' rights"; "New federation in USSR keeps bureaucratic rule."

An editorial in the Sept. 6 issue says: "Working people and fighters for democratic rights should have no hesitation in identifying with the battle waged by hundreds of thousands of people against the coup in the Soviet Union. Through their actions on the barricades and in the

A difference may exist with *Socialist Action*. We think the bureaucracy intends not only to seek accommodation with imperialism, but to drive toward the restoration of capitalism, as it sees no other road out of the crisis that would preserve its privileges.

This is not clearly spelled out in *The Militant*, although the political line on what to do against any moves by the bureaucracy in this direction is similar to that of *Socialist Action*.

An SWP resolution adopted before the coup attempt but reprinted in the Sept. 6 issue and clearly meant to apply to the USSR today as well as Eastern Europe, states:

"The brutally repressive regimes [in Eastern Europe] that had blocked the workers and farmers of these countries from entering politics and acting in their own class interests are crumbling. The regimes that have replaced them are in irresolvable crisis. And the imperialists have no prospect of restoring a stable capitalism, or even reasonable social equilibrium, without a fight against the toilers—a fight whose consequences they cannot foresee. [We would only add that this fight is inevitable—B.S.]

"The crisis will deepen in all these countries. It will get worse. The assaults on living standards, on what workers and farmers in these countries have come to recognize as social rights, will intensify.

"But working people will resist these attacks...."

The political line of *The Militant* concerning the coup is closest to that of *Socialist Action*. This is because both organizations base their analysis of these events on Trotsky's class explanation of the bureaucratic counterrevolution and the road forward for the Soviet working people.

This is true even if the SWP leaders have not quite fully absorbed that Trotsky's political prognosis for the USSR—either a political revolution by the workers or an overturn of the property relations by the bureaucracy—is not a far-off alternative, but has become the stark choice facing Soviet working people.

This convergence may seem surprising, given that the SWP leadership rejected its former Trotskyist program in 1981, and soon expelled those who later founded *Socialist Action* for defending that program. In 1990, the SWP officially stated it was not Trotskyist, and it left the Fourth International, the world party founded by Leon Trotsky with considerable help from the "old" SWP in 1938.

The explanation lies in the fact that in place of its historic program, the current SWP leadership has substituted an eclectic melange, borrowing here from Trotskyism, there from ideas of Stalinist origin—although it does not recognize the fact.

Luckily, this time it went back to its Trotskyist past. *The Militant* is even advertising basic works by Trotsky on Stalinism, such as "The Revolution Betrayed," "The Third International After Lenin," and "In Defense of Marxism."

It is to be hoped that the SWP membership will read or reread these works. Perhaps that will inspire them to do the same with Trotsky's other writings, which just might convince them that Trotsky was more correct and a better Marxist than some of their leaders who saw fit to "correct" and "demote" the great Bolshevik.

**"The political line of *The Militant* concerning the coup is closest to that of *Socialist Action*. This is because both organizations base their analysis of these events on Trotsky's class explanation of the bureaucratic counterrevolution and the road forward for the Soviet working people."**

lectivist" theory. Both currents failed to defend the Cuban revolution, and both initially were neutral in the Vietnam war, opposing the slogan of immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops as being too unilateral. Not until the antiwar movement burgeoned did they jump on the bandwagon.

In *Socialist Worker*, they come out for workers' revolution and workers democracy in the USSR, but one searches the issue in vain to find any concrete program for the Soviet toilers to advance

streets working people have widened the space open to them and gained greater confidence for the struggles to come.

"Opposing the coup and identifying with those in the streets in no way means extending one iota of political support to Boris Yeltsin, or Mikhail Gorbachev who simply represent various wings of the bureaucracy.

"Yeltsin plans to drive ahead with market-oriented reforms which will further deepen the economic crisis suffered by workers and farmers; he seeks the same sacrifices and 'labor discipline' that the coup leaders wished to impose by force; and his regime is set to impose new forms of Great Russian domination on the multitude of oppressed nationalities in the Soviet Union.

"The crumbling of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) following the coup's defeat is also an event worth celebrating. Since the counterrevolution led by Joseph Stalin in the 1920s the CPSU has been an integral part of the bureaucratic machinery designed to guarantee the perks and privileges of the parasitic ruling caste. As such the CP was a tool of anti-working-class terror—at home and abroad. It has misled millions of revolutionary-minded workers around the world.

"The murder machine of Stalin and his successors drove workers out of politics for more than six decades. By repulsing this coup, working people in the Soviet Union have taken a giant step toward once again finding their way, through struggle, to their own organizations and revolutionary leadership.

"In the course of the fights to come they will debate ideas, link up with fellow fighters around the world, and absorb the revolutionary experiences of the world working-class movement. They need to deepen their struggle and reconquer political power.

"The sight of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people routing this coup will

today. But this is not really surprising, since they reject the concrete struggles of the Soviet masses as illusory. For example, the opposition to the privatization of the means of production—which is deep in the Soviet working class—is dismissed as meaningless since capitalism already exists. At a recent forum in San Francisco an ISO spokesperson stated this position.

They refuse to recognize and defend the remaining conquests of the 1917 revolution—that is, the planned economy, nationalized property, and the monopoly of foreign trade—which the bureaucracy and world imperialism have not yet succeeded in overthrowing on the grounds that these conquests simply don't exist!

How can there be capitalist restoration if capitalism has already been restored?

# Socialist Worker

Newspaper of the International Socialist Organization (ISO)

The September issue hails the defeat of the coup attempt, and in a front page headline says that the "regime's fall opens up new period of struggle."

"What we are seeing," the lead article states, "is the final failure of *Stalinism*—the repressive bureaucratically controlled, capitalist system that rose on the ruins of a workers' revolution."

The ISO thinks that the system in the USSR is and has been capitalist, what they call "state capitalist."

This current looks to the Socialist Workers Party in Britain for guidance. The British SWP is led by Tony Cliff, who developed the view at the end of the 1940s that the USSR, Eastern Europe,

By GERRY FOLEY

No one should have been surprised that the Stalinist regime in the USSR shattered on the reefs of the national question. Despite a rollback of the rights of the nations and nationalities under Stalin and the reimposition of national oppression, the bloody dictator and his heirs were unable to totally liquidate the heritage of revolutionary years with respect to national rights.

In 1978, when the Stalinist rulers tried to push through new constitutional provisions reducing the status of the languages of the non-Russian republics, they faced mass demonstrations in the Georgian and Armenian capitols, and were forced to back off. Before the present breakdown of bureaucratic control, however, it would be hard to find another example of the mass mobilizations dealing a direct defeat to the totalitarian state machine.

The very existence of the republics with their formal right to sovereignty (and even to secede from the USSR) represented a historic defeat for Stalin. At the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1922, he tried to have all the republics reduced to the status of the autonomous units of the Russian federation. A dying Lenin's last efforts defeated this project.

In fact, Lenin's last letters attacking

Nationalities or "Autonomization," in December 1922, Lenin opposed Stalin's rationalization for his policies:

"In my writings on the national question I have already said that an abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all. A distinction must necessarily be made between the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation, the nationalism of a big nation and that of a small nation.

"In respect of the second kind of nationalism, we—nationals of a big nation—have nearly always been guilty in historic practice of an infinite number of cases of violence; furthermore, we commit violence and insult an infinite number of times without noticing it.

"That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or 'great' nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies) must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice.

"Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question; he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view."

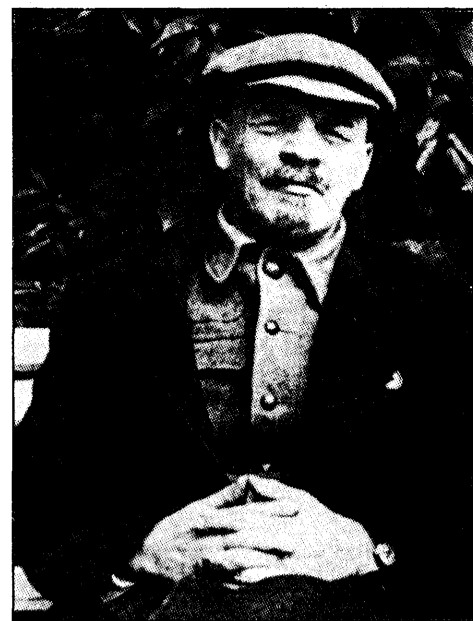
lowing terms:

"The colonization of the borderlands is not simply the work of a few months, but of whole decades. For whole decades, Russian imperialism colonized these borderlands. If we admit that economic development is reflected and manifested in various spheres of social and economic life, we must admit that the colonization of the borderlands by Russian imperialism created a colonialist ideology and a definite colonialist attitude of mind among Russian elements living in these borderlands. ... And until we rid ourselves of this ideology ... we will not achieve anything. We must launch a struggle against colonialism as such." (Quoted in "Internationalism or Russification," p. 62.)

Spousing the cause of the oppressed nationalities in Central Asia won over to the Bolsheviks the most radical fighters for national liberation—such as Sultan Galiev, who rebelled later against the revival of Great Russian chauvinism under Stalin.

**Bolsheviks' policy gained allies**

Objective pro-bourgeois nationalists, such as the Tatar Tamurbek Davletshin, admit that once the Bolsheviks won the confidence of the oppressed peoples with their recognition of their national rights, the latter followed them on social ques-



V.I. Lenin in 1921

The Ukrainian nationalists, for example, called only for autonomy and adopted a program of independence only when the Provisional Government in St. Petersburg, headed by Alexander Kerensky, refused to give it to them.

**Lenin on the Ukraine**

Despite the spiteful language he employs about the Bolsheviks in his classical nationalist history of Ukraine, Mikhailo Hrushevsky, a member of the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist government ousted by the Bolsheviks, reveals that "Bolshevik agitation" had largely "demoralized" the Ukrainian nationalist forces. ("Istoriia Ukraini z Dodatkom Novoho Periodu Istoriï Ukrainy za roky vid 1914 do 1919", Shkol'na Rada, New York, undated.)

The Bolsheviks came not only to defend Ukrainian sovereignty as a principle. They undertook a program of imposing Ukrainian as the language of culture and public life in the republic, which lasted from 1925 to 1932. For the first and last time, the Ukrainian language was raised from its minority, marginal position on its own territory. The reversal of this policy by Stalin in the early 1930s was marked by the suicides of the Ukrainian Communist Party leader Mikola Skrypnyk and the leading Ukrainian Communist intellectual, the writer Mikola Khvylovy.

Stalin developed such hatred for the Ukrainians that Khrushchev was led to say in his "secret speech" of 1956 that Stalin would have liquidated the Ukrainians entirely if there had not been so many.

The Bolshevik nationalities policy was to a large extent hardened up and consolidated by the experience of the civil war in the Ukraine. At the time of the November revolution, the major front between the German and Austrian armies and those of the Russian empire ran through the Ukraine. This area included major industrial regions and sources of food and raw materials. In the course of the civil war, control of the Ukraine changed hands eight times.

The Bolshevik forces were mainly centered in the Russian-speaking proletariat, who had little sympathy with Ukrainian national feeling. Moreover, the Bolshevik political and military commanders were led by the pressures of the civil war, in which the Germans intervened, to disregard Ukrainian national aspirations and feelings. These tendencies threatened to lead to the defeat of the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine. The central leadership had to intervene directly to force their local followers to change their approach.

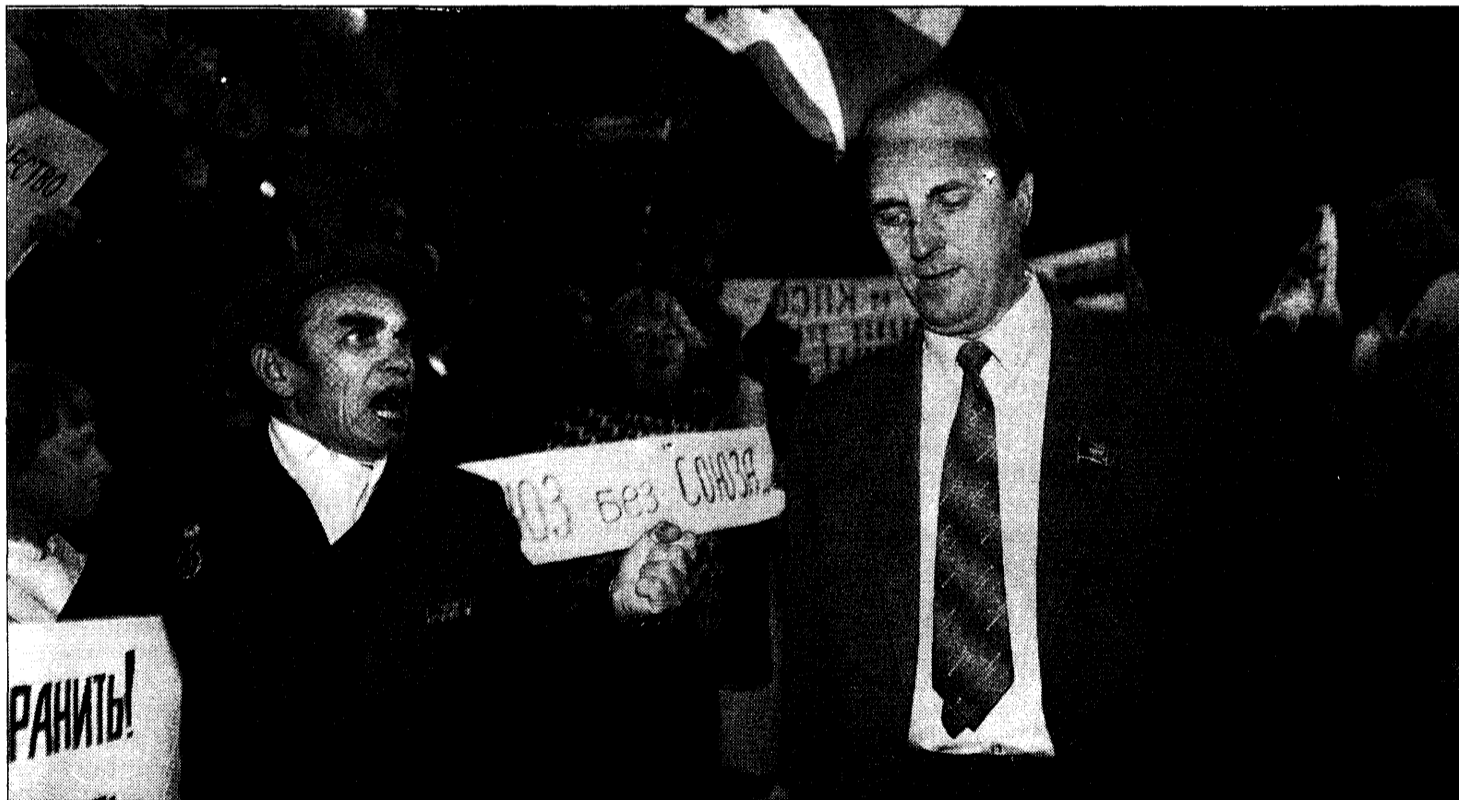
In late 1919, following the Red Army victory over the White general Denikin, Lenin wrote in an open letter to the Ukrainian workers and peasants:

"We Russian Communists must repress with extreme rigor the least manifestation of Russian nationalism that arises among us, because such manifestations are a betrayal of communism. They do us enormous harm, separating us from our Ukrainian comrades, and this plays into the hands

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## Lenin's policy vs. Stalin's:

# How the Bolsheviks defended rights of national minorities



Russian deputy is confronted by demand for more freedom for national republics.

Peter Turnley for Newsweek

Stalin's "autonomization" proposal and other violations of national rights—such as the breaking of the Georgian Communist Party—were not published in the Soviet Union until after Stalin's death.

Stalin had used the argument that the Communist Party needed to combat all forms of "nationalism" equally—the national feeling of small nations as well as the large. He adopted this stance particularly in attacking communists among the oppressed nationalities who defended the national rights of their peoples against the growing Great Russian chauvinism of the increasingly bureaucratized Soviet Communist Party.

**Stalin's repression in Georgia**

The case of Georgia was symptomatic. After the occupation of Georgia by the Red Army in 1922, Stalin proceeded to crush the Georgian Communist Party under the guise of suppressing what he called "bourgeois nationalism."

In his article "The Question of

(Quoted in "Internationalism or Russification," by Ivan Dzyuba. English translation from Ukrainian original, published by Monad Press, New York, 1968, p. 60.)

Stalin's repression in Georgia led Lenin to break with him and propose an alliance with Trotsky.

**Self-determination in the East**

Two national questions were posed with particular acuteness during the period of the civil war (1918-1922)—that of the Ukraine and that of the peoples of Muslim tradition, then mainly grouped in the province of Turkestan.

The base of the Soviet government in Turkestan was mainly among the Russian-speaking population of the cities, in particular in Tashkent. The danger arose that the Russians would attempt to maintain colonial domination in the name of the revolution.

This threat was denounced in the Bolshevik congresses. At the Tenth Congress, a delegate spoke in the fol-

lowing terms: "Sovetskii Tatarstan, Teoriya i Praktika Leninskoi Natsionalnoi Politiki," Our Word, London, 1974.)

Davletshin also points out that the Bolshevik decision to grant full rights of self-determination, up to and including secession, to the nationalities—while the Provisional Government headed by Alexander Kerensky refused to do this—was decisive turning the struggle in favor of the Bolsheviks.

This was also a crucial factor in the civil war, in which the Whites alienated the non-Russian peoples with their project of restoring the unity of the Russian empire.

Furthermore, the bourgeois and pro-bourgeois nationalists tended not to be very nationalistic. The Bolsheviks actually went beyond the nationalists with their support for the right of the oppressed peoples to the fulfillment of their national aspirations and their right to adhere or not to the Soviet Union.

## ... Nationalities

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of Denikin and his policy." (Retranslated from the Spanish; quoted in "Lenin y las naciones," Javier Villanueva, Editorial Revolución, Madrid, 1987, p. 384.)

The Ukraine also became the principal victim of the Stalinist bureaucracy's regression on the national question. This led Trotsky in 1939 to write that it was necessary, most fundamentally, for the republic to recover real independence in order for the Ukrainian people to be able to reassert their right to self-determination and a national future. (See in particular, "Ukrainian Independence and Sectarian Muddleheads," "Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40," New York, Pathfinder, 1973).

### Ukrainians' fight bureaucracy

Armed struggle for Ukrainian independence spread eastward in the Ukraine after the post-World War II annexation of the western part of the country, which had been under Polish rule and where the nationalist movement had not been so effectively suppressed. These fighters were led to make a distinction between the Stalinist bureaucracy and nationalized ownership and to adopt the goal of building a classless society.

The largest single category of political prisoners in Stalin's gulag were Ukrainian fighters for national rights. They were a major force in the concentration camp revolts that followed Stalin's death, and were later able to

pass on their traditions to the leaders of the Ukrainian literary renaissance of the 1960s, who were jailed in the 1970s. Some of the latter have now re-emerged as leaders of the Ukrainian national democratic movement, called Rukh. Thus, among Ukrainians the tradition of

ship, when the party top echelon and its Siamese twin—organized crime—wants to convert it into their own private property. The real facts and the laws that the party, Komsomol, and economic magnates adopt in the Supreme Soviets in Moscow and Kiev confirm that this

***"They will find, as their grandparents and parents did, that revolutionary working-class movements are the only reliable allies of movements for national freedom".***

radical opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy remains unbroken.

This tradition may have helped shape the radically antibureaucratic formulations in the speech of Ivan Drach, the chair of Rukh, to the organization's second congress in November 1990.

"In the so-called 'regulated socialist market' programs," Drach said, "the government has camouflaged a still crueler exploitation of the working people. There is only one innovation. Today everyone is going to be forced by 'economic conditions' to grab their miserable ration away from their neighbors."

Drach described exactly the beauties of capitalism for the bureaucracy. He went on to say, "We are making every effort to prevent the reform of national owner-

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Russia in the revolutionary period showed more understanding and offered greater perspectives for achieving the aspirations of oppressed peoples than any other major force in history.

The collapse of Stalinism has opened the way for the oppressed peoples of the Soviet Union to resume their advance toward achieving their aspirations. They will find, as their grandparents and parents did, that revolutionary working-class movements are the only reliable allies of movements for national freedom.

Already the rise of the mass national movements in the Soviet Union has put the question of ending national oppression and achieving democratic collaboration of nations to the fore again, as it was in the period of the Russian Revolution and the wave of revolutions that followed it.

This is hardly something that the capitalist rulers wanted. They have too many problems of their own with oppressed nationalities in their own countries or under their domination elsewhere.

For example, Bush had no hesitation, during his visit to the Soviet Union last summer in fundamentally adopting Gorbachev's line against the national movements—forcing Drach to denounce him.

It is a safe bet that the Soviet peoples' pursuit of their national aspirations will cause more and more problems for Washington's dreamed of "new order," as well as for Stalin's heirs.

## ... Trotsky

(continued from page 11)

in the chain of capitalism. The present Soviet Union does not stand above the world level of economy, but is only trying to catch up to the capitalist countries. If Marx called that society which was to be formed upon the basis of a socialization of the productive forces of the most advanced capitalism of its epoch the lowest stage of communism, then this designation obviously does not apply to the Soviet Union, which is still today considerably poorer in technique, culture and the good things of life than the capitalist countries. It would be truer, therefore, to name the present Soviet regime in all its contradictoriness, not a socialist regime, but a preparatory regime transitional from capitalism to socialism. ... The strength and stability of regimes are determined in the long run by the relative productivity of their labor." (Page 47.)

What a strong indictment of the Soviet system today! Soviet goods are inferior to those made in the capitalist countries. Few "good things in life" exist for the Soviet working people, who wait in long lines for bread and live in one-room apartments. No wonder most Soviet working people reject the "socialism" of Stalin and have illusions in the capitalist West.

"Socialism," Trotsky explained (page 61), "is a structure of planned production to the end of the best satisfaction of human needs; otherwise it does not deserve the name of socialism."

### Political revolution and soviet democracy

The bureaucracy, Trotsky explained, has no independent program or perspective. It is a petty-bourgeois layer that sits atop the toiling masses who made the October Revolution. It is a transmission belt for the bourgeois ideology inside the workers state. It defends itself by force and violence; it fears the working class. It is like the trade-union officialdom in the capitalist countries that fears the rank and file more than the boss, but derives its privileges because of the dues paid by the workers.

Because this caste derives its privileges from its control of the state property, monopoly of foreign trade, and control of all distribution, the counterrevolution until the recent period was limited to the political field.

The active promotion of capitalist restoration is a direct result of the bureaucratic caste's failure to reverse a longterm decline of the economy. The ruling elite sees its privileges threatened by economic stagnation. Life is getting worse for the average working person. To get workers to work harder (that is, to raise labor productivity) the workers must see improvement in their lives. Terror alone can not work anymore.



Trotsky

Thus, for those material reasons, Gorbachev and the other bureaucrats have turned to the "market economy."

Change is a life-or-death question. The question is: what type of change? Capitalism or socialism? For the privileged caste, the answer is simple: institute a market economy in which they become the new owners, managers or functionaries of what was formerly state property. But that would be a social, economic, and political disaster for the working class. The alternative perspective for the toiling masses is building genuine socialism.

"It is not a question of substituting one ruling clique for another," wrote Trotsky (pages 289-90), "but of changing the very methods of administering the economy and guiding the culture of the country. Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy. A restoration of the right of criticism, and a genuine freedom of elections, are necessary conditions for the further development of the country."

This assumes a revival of freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of Bolsheviks, and a resurrection of the trade unions.

"The bringing of democracy into industry means a radical revision of plans in the interests of the toilers. Free discussion of economic problems will decrease the overhead expense of bureaucratic mistakes and zigzags. Expensive playthings—palaces of the Soviets, new theaters, show-off subways—will be crowded out in favor of workers' dwellings. 'Bourgeois norms of distribution' will be confined within the limits of strict necessity, and, in step with the growth of social wealth, will give way to socialist equality.

"Ranks [in the army] will be immediately abolished. The tinsel of decorations will go into the melting pot. The youth will receive the opportunity to breathe freely, criticize, make mistakes, and grow up. Science and art will be freed of their chains. And, finally, foreign policy will return to the traditions of revolutionary internationalism."

What worker in the Soviet Union would not hail such a program? The antibureaucratic democratic revolution unfolding in the Soviet Union today opens the door to working people engaging in real politics for the first time in decades. It's a crucial necessity for the Soviet working people to destroy the caste and successfully complete a political revolution where state property is defended and the new regime joins the battle for world socialism.

The workers of the Soviet Union don't yet have their new Bolshevik Party. They will create it as they fight back against attempts to rollback their social gains and restore capitalism.

Trotsky's book, "The Revolution Betrayed," and his other works are invaluable tools for Marxists today.



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# TAXES! ANOTHER WAY TO RIP US OFF

In our capitalist society, virtually all goods are produced for exchange in the market and not for immediate use by the producer. In fact, most goods are produced by workers working together co-operatively in enterprises owned by capitalists. The percentage of goods produced by independent producers, like artisans and working farmers, is small compared to those produced capitalistically.

In last month's issue, we discussed how the value of goods produced for the market, called exchange value, is equal to the average amount of human labor time spent in their production. The exchange value of goods produced capitalistically, therefore, is created by the workers. Since taxes, whether actually paid for by the workers or the capitalists, come out of this pool of value created by the workers, the workers really "pay" all the taxes.

How do the capitalists get their hands on the lion's share of the value the workers produce?

First, we should note that the workers—either individually or collectively—never sell to the capitalist owners of industry the products of their labor. If they did, the workers would get back in money the full value of what they produced, and the capitalists would get nothing. The workers do not sell the products they make because they never own them—they never are theirs' to sell. The capitalists own those products.

So it is the capitalists who sell the products "their" workers have made, and who therefore pocket the full value of those products even though the workers have created all of that value.

But the workers do sell the

capitalists *something*, in exchange for which the capitalists pay the workers' wages. This "something" the workers sell to the capitalists is their *ability to work*. The value of this "ability to work" is the value of all the commodities necessary to keep this ability intact and reproduce itself—the food, shelter, clothing, etc. necessary for maintaining the average worker and her or his family. This "ability to work" is called "labor power."

In other words, the capitalist class doesn't pay you for the work you do—if they did they would have to pay you for the full value of the products you made. *They pay for you yourself.*

The capitalist class doesn't buy *all* of you—if they did, you would be a slave. But they do buy your labor power for a definite time, say eight hours a day, and during that time your ability to work is *theirs* because they paid for it. They put you to work to create products which are also theirs, and which they sell to realize the full value of what you have produced. You are not a slave, but a *wage slave*.

So two different exchanges in the market are involved. In one, the capitalist buys your ability to work, or labor power. In the second, the capitalist sells the product of your work—equal in value to the labor you put into it.

The difference between the value of the product of your work, which the capitalist gets, and the value of your ability to work, which you get, is the "surplus value" the capitalist gets to keep. In terms of money, surplus value is called profit.

Now back to taxes. Taxes are

monies collected to run the government. By government, we mean more than a particular regime, but the whole apparatus of the army, police, judicial system, prisons, bureaucracy, etc., which we call the state. At bottom, the state is a system of organized force and violence.

## Funds for the state

Under capitalism, the state is a capitalist state, organized to preserve the capitalist system under the laws designed to do that. It is controlled by the capitalists through their political parties—like the Democrats and Republicans—in capitalist democracies, or in other ways, such as military dictatorships or fascism.

The capitalist state also defends the interests of the capitalists in each capitalist country against the capitalists of other countries and against colonial and socialist revolutions. This is the source of modern war.

Running the capitalist state is a necessity for the capitalists. Therefore taxes are a necessary expense for the capitalists as a class, and are paid from their mass of surplus value.

So now we see that the capitalists pay all the taxes out of the surplus value they pocket! But didn't we first conclude that the workers really pay all the taxes? The conundrum is answered when we recall that surplus value was created by the workers. The capitalists pay the taxes to run their government out of the pool of surplus value they own, which is part of the total exchange value the workers created.

But what about the taxes we workers pay out of our own pockets?

The situation was clearer 50 years or so ago, when workers

## Learning About Marxism

By Barry Sheppard



in fact paid little or no tax.

Today we are forced to pay taxes. But these taxes are part of the total tax that goes to running the capitalist state. So even the taxes that come out of our own pockets are part of the capitalist class's expenses for running *their* state, and as such are part of surplus value and are not part of our real wages.

Most workers instinctively know this. When we get our paychecks, we don't look first at what is called our "gross" wage over there on the pay stub side you can't cash, but at our "take-home" wage with the taxes deducted on the business side of the check.

Taxes that we pay later, like sales and property taxes, should also be deducted to arrive at our "real" wages, but their form makes it harder for us to see that.

## Who pays the taxes?

The reason the capitalists "pay" us a little more and then turn around to have us pay taxes, instead of directly paying these taxes themselves, is *political*. It is designed to make us identify with their state and to feel we are co-responsible for maintaining it.

If they can convince us, for example, that "we" need to spend billions on arms, we workers might agree to what amounts to a pay cut and a lower standard of living through

increased taxes.

What about monies spent by governments on needed social services like education, fire-fighting, social security, unemployment payments, etc.? These things are "ours" (some go to the capitalists, too, of course) and are part of the "social wage" paid to us by the capitalist class as a whole out of surplus value.

Let's take the example of social security taxes. When they are deducted from your paycheck, that is a lowering of your wage. When you retire and receive your social security check, that is part of the social wage paid out to the workers as a whole. But the amount taken out of your paychecks for a lifetime may very well not be the amount you get back, especially when inflation is taken into account.

You can't count what is called the "social security" tax as yours because it isn't—it's theirs. Count as yours only the checks you receive.

Readers who wish to go more deeply into the process of capitalist exploitation and the creation of surplus value can refer to the pamphlets "Wage Labor and Capital" and "Value, Price and Profit" by Karl Marx, as well as the first chapters of Marx's "Capital." ■

(To be continued)

## How you can help get our newspaper to new readers

By BARRY SHEPPARD

Our campaign for 650 new and renewal subscriptions has gotten off to an uneven start, as the scoreboard shows. Supporters in Baltimore have taken the lead in getting a good head start on making their goal.

San Francisco sub sellers are just on time, and have concentrated on new subs. This should now be complimented by more sustained work on renewals.

Renewals help us build up our base of long-term subscriptions of people who read the paper over time and become closer to the politics we stand

for. New York supporters have done the reverse, doing well on renewals but with more work needed on reaching new readers.

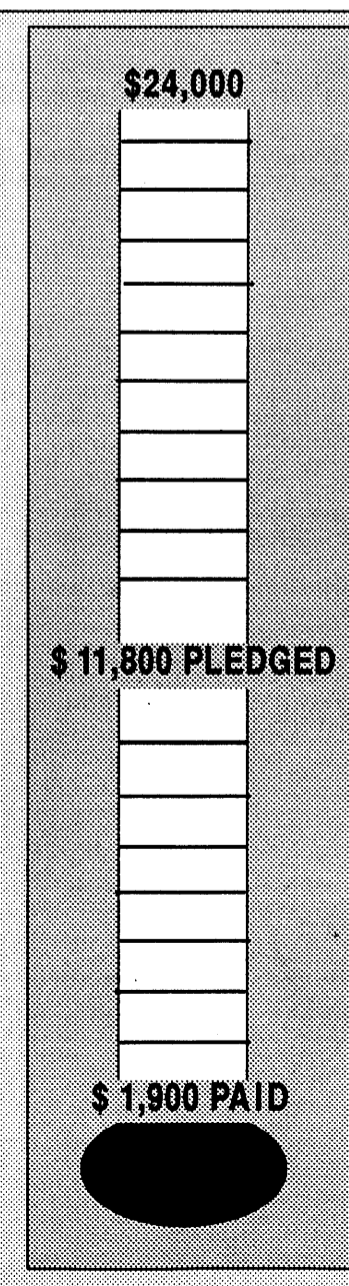
Other areas have not yet really begun the drive. While we have until Dec. 15, time's a-wastin' and all should begin now planning how to reach our goal by then.

All our readers are encouraged to participate in the subscription campaign.

Let us know if you'd like your area to be listed on the scoreboard.

The current scoreboard registers the subs we received in the Business Office as of Sept. 29.

| City          | Goal       | New       | Renew.    | Total      | Pct.       |
|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Baltimore     | 35         | 15        | 1         | 16         | 46%        |
| Bath, Me.     | 5          | 0         | 0         | 0          | 0%         |
| Boston        | 75         | 5         | 2         | 7          | 9%         |
| Chicago       | 50         | 3         | 0         | 3          | 6%         |
| Cincinnati    | 5          | 0         | 0         | 0          | 0%         |
| Cleveland     | 15         | 0         | 0         | 0          | 0%         |
| Detroit       | 10         | 2         | 0         | 2          | 20%        |
| Los Angeles   | 25         | 3         | 1         | 4          | 16%        |
| New Haven     | 5          | 0         | 1         | 1          | 20%        |
| New York      | 55         | 3         | 8         | 11         | 20%        |
| Philadelphia  | 20         | 0         | 0         | 0          | 0%         |
| Portland, Or. | 15         | 2         | 0         | 2          | 13%        |
| San Francisco | 250        | 54        | 9         | 63         | 25%        |
| Twin Cities   | 25         | 1         | 3         | 4          | 16%        |
| Others        | 60         | 4         | 7         | 11         | 18%        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>650</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>32</b> | <b>124</b> | <b>19%</b> |
| Should be     |            |           |           | 163        | 25%        |



## Successful \$24,000 fund drive key to Socialist Action's expansion

By SHANNON SHEPPARD

Socialist Action's fund drive has gotten off to a good start with our readers since it was announced in last month's issue. Contributions have come from as far away as Alaska, and have ranged from \$5 to \$50. One reader in Iowa City, Iowa, has pledged to contribute \$20 per month to the drive.

Many contributions are accompanied by notes, such as this one from a reader in Wisconsin:

"We have enclosed a check of \$25 as a contribution to help increase the frequency of publication of *Socialist Action*. Your news-

paper is very informative, and we thank you for it."

We thank our readers who have already made contributions and urge others to do so. Our goal is \$24,000.

To date, we have received pledges and contributions totaling \$11,800. As you can see, we have quite a way to go!

We need your support to reach our goal by the Dec. 15, 1991, deadline.

Help *Socialist Action* move to a larger readership, a larger office space, and increase our newspaper's frequency of publication.

Send your check to: Socialist Action, 3435 Army St., Rm. 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. ■

# Capitalist greed kills 25 workers in N. Carolina

What's the life of a poultry worker worth? Less than a fried chicken nugget, according to the owners of the Imperial Food Products company in Hamlet, N.C.

Some 200 workers were inside Imperial on Sept. 3 when a fire started at the 26-foot-long deep-fat fryer located in the center of the plant. Twenty-five workers died of smoke inhalation and 49 others were hospitalized.

The chicken plant had no sprinkler or fire-alarm system. The company had never been written up for safety violations in the 11 years the plant had been in operation. Fire drills? Not in anyone's memory. Safety exits?

"The doors were padlocked," Aquanetta Fairley told Robert Dees of *The Militant*, "The company claimed people were stealing boxes of chicken. If you had to take a bag of trash out, you had to get a supervisor with a key to open the door. Sometimes when I went up there, every door except the main door was locked, and sometimes it was too."

"The supervisors would be across the street," Fairley said, "which is where they were that morning." Fairley's fiancé was one of those who died in the fire.

So, what do these "highly-paid" mostly Black women workers earn? Starting pay is \$4.85 an hour. Top pay is \$5.50 after about one year. "They used to pay our insurance until last January," one worker said. "Then we had to pay our own. They took \$12.45 out of my check every week. Just for me! To cover my son would have cost \$58 a week."

The Imperial plant is non-union. The workers are dependent on the city, state, and

federal health and safety inspectors for protection. Yet all three government agencies deny responsibility for their failure to inspect Imperial. Each blames the other for lack of financial resources or enough inspectors.

North Carolina has 12 to 16 safety inspectors and only six health inspectors. Federal guide-

lines would normally require that the state have a minimum of 64 safety inspectors and 50 health inspectors. There are 180,000 workplaces in North Carolina. Federal minimum standards call for state inspectors to randomly check 2 percent of workplaces. Less than 1 percent of North Carolina factories were inspected in 1990. The state legislature has cut the safety budget by 40 percent in the past decade.



Government food inspectors who check Imperial daily also did not report any safety violations.

North Carolina is one of 23 states that operate their own federally approved programs for workplace safety and health inspection under an option

to keep the feds out." Fines of companies for safety violations by the state are significantly less than by OSHA. North Carolina fined Perdue Farms \$39,000 for exposing workers to repetitive-motion injuries in two plants in 1989. OSHA fined Cargill \$1 million for similar violations.

The AFL-CIO is demanding that OSHA take-back responsibility for enforcing occupational safety laws in North Carolina. But OSHA is understaffed as well. In 1980, OSHA had 1380 inspectors; today it has 1200.

What explains this deadly situation? Capitalist greed. Hamlet, N.C., is not atypical. It is a working-class town of 6100. People work at the poul-

## Which side Are You On?

By Malik Miah



try plant out of necessity, not choice. It is low-paying, but sometimes the only job available. Single mothers (18 of the 25 killed) in many cases have no choice but to work there.

Poultry is now the biggest farm enterprise in North Carolina. Some 24,000 workers are employed in the industry from growing, slaughtering, and processing chickens. The market value for the bosses is \$1.5 billion per year.

Not surprisingly, nothing is being done against Imperial and other big food processors as they put the lives of their workers at risk. They run the state. Criminal charges? It wasn't

their "fault!"

Workers are expendable. So 25 died. There are others without jobs to replace them. That's the cynical and true views of capitalists toward all workers. We are wage-slaves. We are animals. Chickens to be processed and used by the employers as we create society's wealth.

The bosses don't give a damn about our lives. Working people must organize and fight back. Unions. Safety inspection. Shutdown all factories that are unsafe. That's the program the AFL-CIO should take to workers in Hamlet and nationwide. ■

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By SAMIA A. HALABY

This is a response to the Opinion article by Franklin Balch titled "Do the visual arts have a future?" (August 1991 *Socialist Action*). Yes, they do if the working class does. The real visual arts are in no more or less trouble than communist leadership.

Interest in the visual arts is subject to class analysis. Bourgeois interest in the arts palled because of their own increasing fears and worsening economy. Working-class interest in art, like most working-class creative activity, is impris-

## OPINION

oned by bourgeois power. Ever since Impressionism, they have grown ever more skillful at stealing what is properly to the credit of the working class.

Mondrian and Brancusi were not the pioneers of abstraction. They were only tame echoes of the great leap to abstraction created by the Soviet constructivists and suprematists. These were intellectuals moved by the great revolution. Let's not deny our own and believe bourgeois propaganda.

Abstraction is not bourgeois decadence. Abstraction is illusionistic of reality. The ability to describe the general motion of bodies rather than particular views of particular objects is valuable. Abstraction is ours. Let's not so hastily disclaim it.

The writer of the article in question wonders whether much of what is called "art" today is even art at all. First, ask who does the calling. Just because there is a bourgeois art market with magazines and a gallery scene does not mean that what they show us is in fact valuable. Dealers are

## Abstract art is our heritage; let's not hastily disclaim it

small business people who are blind to art, due to their economic interests. We cannot leave what is properly a social decision to them.

Who might show us what is at present happening in the visual arts worldwide? To my knowledge, Cuba does the best job. The curatorial staff responsible for organizing the Havana Biennial has done the best job of putting together encyclopedic exhibitions of contemporary art, much of which is art of social conscience.

Art does not have the potential to create revolutionary change. This is the biggest

mistake of Balch's article. In our time, only the working class has the potential to cause revolutionary change.

Furthermore, artists do not scare the bourgeoisie; at most they can be a bit embarrassing. Artists cannot unionize. They do not sell their labor by the hour nor work in factories arranged for productivity by division of labor. Artists cannot interfere with production.

The present malaise in what is claimed to be the art world will last as long as the bourgeoisie does. Contrary to what is hoped for in the article, American art has

no future because nationalism has no future. What is called American art only existed as a regionalist variation on capitalist art. Real American art is the art of the Indians in all the Americas.

Capitalist art was born with capitalism in Italy—the Renaissance. It had a national flavor because then capitalism was national. Now capitalism is well into imperialism; that is, it is ripe past rotten. Now its art is as international as imperialism and just as exploitative.

In agreement with the article, let all those of conscience look deep into the plight of the homeless, the unemployed, the underpaid and underemployed, the hungry, and the bombed-out victims of capitalist greed. But instead of making art, let them prepare the best leadership parties for the working class. ■



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# U.S. 'New World Order' means changes in relationship with Israel

By NAT WEINSTEIN

American imperialism's vital interests in the Middle East spurred President Bush to put the screws on the Israeli Zionist regime. He demanded Congress postpone any action for 120 days on a \$10 billion loan guarantee requested from the United States by its Israeli client state.

Bush knows that the \$10 billion will be used to expand Jewish settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights to house the bulk of the million new Soviet immigrants in addition to the 300,000 already arrived during the last few years.

The underlying conflict is deep. Although of recent origin, it is implicit in the relationship between imperialist master and subordinate junior partner. The conflict has recently emerged because of the inability of the United States to maintain its domination over the Middle East without reducing Israel's role as its main strategic instrument for control in the region.

When Secretary of State James A. Baker III was sent to line up the world for its war on Iraq's Saddam Hussein—whose actions it correctly judged to be a distorted expression of the Arab revolution—the Bush administration knew that it could no longer maintain imperialist domination there on the old basis. It was necessary to guarantee to the Arab states a bigger role at the expense of the Israeli settler state's expansionist dreams of a "Greater Israel."

Most important, this option was now possible given the decisive capitulation of the Soviet bureaucracy. The United States no longer needs a strong Israeli ally against Arab states that were backed up by Soviet Stalinism.

Bush knows that the Middle East "peace" talks planned for this month have no possibility for success unless Israel is forced to retreat from its intransigent insistence on holding on to all territories stolen from the Palestinian and other Arab peoples.

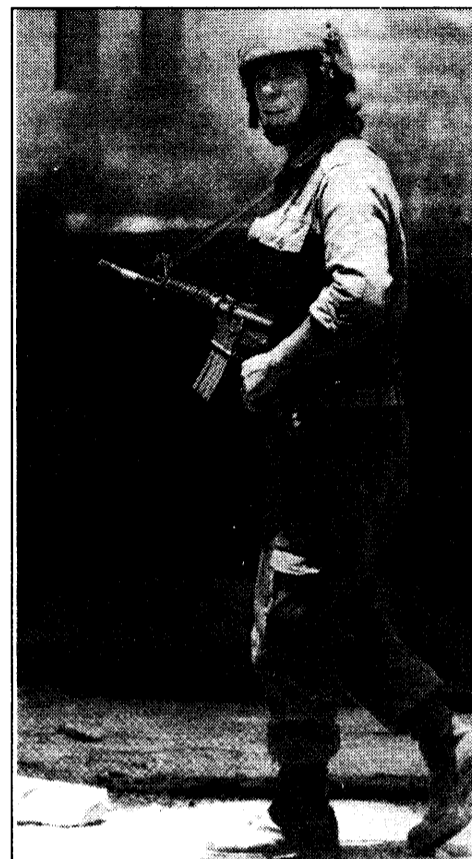
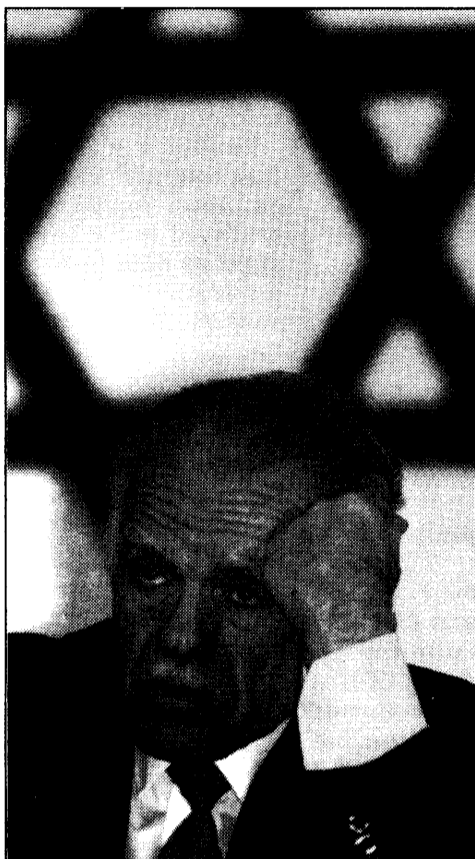
Although Bush doesn't care a whit about the plight of Zionism's victims, he knows that the Arab rulers will not be able to help establish his "New Order" in the region if Israel remains hardnosed and uncompromising. The Arab rulers must have something to show their peoples to justify their past treason and gain a measure of acceptance for the hateful neo-colonial status quo.

But neither is Bush prepared to close any doors on the Israeli puppet. His recent demand, made at that the United Nations withdraw its previously adopted position that Zionism is racism is primarily intended to allow the Israelis to acquiesce to his demands gracefully. It is also intended to reassure Zionists in this country of imperialism's continued commitment to the Israeli settler state.

## Response by Israel's rulers

On his part, Yitzhak Shamir fears that even a token Israeli retreat will encourage Palestinians to press for full redemption of their national rights. He further fears that the United States will, under this pressure, drift inexorably toward ever-greater reliance on its Arab allies. Consequently, the current frantic campaign to root settlers in the occupied territories is designed to strengthen Israel's bargaining position against this dynamic.

The withholding of the loan guarantee is intended to convince Shamir that he must give back some of his territorial loot and retreat from attempts to dictate



**"The conflict has recently emerged because of the inability of the United States to maintain its domination over the Middle East without reducing Israel's role as its main strategic instrument for control in the region."**

who shall represent Palestinians in the talks designed to work out a more stable relationship of forces in the region for American imperialism.

Baker's message provoked a sharp outcry from the Israeli ruling class. Israeli capitalists know that they will be compelled, in the end, to subordinate their interests to those of their paymaster, who subsidizes Israel to the tune of \$3 billion a year—not to mention supplying them with the latest in military equipment.

They fear, most of all, that when the Arab revolution resumes its forward march, imperialism will have no qualms about sacrificing Israel when it deems that to be necessary for the preservation of imperialism's own interests.

Nevertheless, no ruling class gives up without a fight, and Shamir's game is to strengthen the Zionist hand by calling on American Jews to intercede on behalf of the "Jewish homeland." Zionist desperation was highlighted when one of Shamir's cabinet ministers foolishly called President Bush an anti-Semite and a liar.

Shamir also revealed panic when he slandered American Jews, many of whom were embarrassed by Zionist demands that they vigorously support the massive construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Besides, American capitalists who are Jewish still have a basic loyalty to American capitalism and its vital interests.

## A distortion of history

Shamir's aim, in any case, was to prod all U.S. Jews to raise a clamor in support of his policy by shaming them with the false charge of having done "nothing" to save European Jews from mass murder during World War II!

This canard is an outrageous distortion of history. It was not the millions of American Jews who refused to help save

Europe's Jews. It was Zionist misleaders—and the "democratic" imperialists—who blocked Jews and others who sought to help Hitler's victims. It was such people as Rabbi Stephen Wise, the principal American Zionist representative, who in 1938 opposed any change in U.S. immigration laws which would have allowed more Jewish victims of Nazi terror to find refuge in this country.

Nor was this some bizarre quirk of American Zionism. It was a Zionist policy applied everywhere. Chaim Weizmann, for instance, who later became the first president of Israel, opposed changes in immigration laws in Great Britain and other potential havens. These laws, while far from a solution, would have opened the door for many more Jews to escape the Nazi holocaust.

Zionist policy was to block such changes because the immigration of Jews to Europe and America did not serve their goal of colonization of Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

Anything short of this, they falsely reasoned, prolonged the agony of the Jewish people.

Yitzhak Shamir's call to American Jews to mobilize in support of Israeli policy will surely contribute to the absurdity dear to the hearts of all anti-Semites, fascists, and incipient fascists—that "a conspiracy of rich and powerful Jews dominates the world." This is just the other side of the Zionist counter-myth that all gentiles, in their heart of hearts, are anti-Semites.

Even Israeli Zionist "leftists" are concerned at Shamir's recklessness. The Sept. 16 *New York Times*, for example, reported that Yossi Sarid, a member of the Israeli parliament, characterized Shamir's action as a "vulgar mistake" that could increase anti-Israel and anti-Jewish feelings in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

And that's exactly why the news medi-

harp on the myth of "the formidable Israeli lobby"—as if American imperialism's role in the Middle East was dictated by anyone other than the American capitalist class, which is non-Jewish in its great majority.

It is a mistake, too, to call Bush an anti-Semite—even though he, along with the great bulk of ruling capitalists in America, is certainly capable of embracing this reactionary ideology when it serves their class interests.

This was the case in Nazi Germany, whose capitalists were no more anti-Semitic than other ruling classes. Nevertheless, when they needed fascism to save German capitalism from a workers' revolution, the great majority of German capitalists embraced Hitler.

## Zionism's shameful record

From the beginning, before there was a Zionist settler state ruling over the land of the Palestinians and before its indigenous people were made foreigners without rights in the land of their ancestors, Zionism allied itself with the enemies of the Jewish people. On June 21, 1933, for example, the Zionist Federation of Germany sent a memorandum of support to the Nazi Party which read in part:

"...a rebirth of national life such as is occurring in German life ... must also take place in the Jewish national group.

"On the foundation of the new [Nazi] state which has established the principle of race, we wish so to fit our community into the total structure so that for us, too, in the sphere assigned to us, fruitful activity for the Fatherland is possible."<sup>2</sup> Again, this is not a quirk of German Zionists, it is inherent in the reactionary philosophy of Zionism!

American imperialism still supports Zionism. But tomorrow, when imperialism has no further use for it, it will drop any pretense at being "friends" of anyone or anything Jewish.

The working class and socialist revolution remain the only solution to the abomination of anti-Semitism and all other expressions of capitalist racial, sexual, and religious prejudice and social injustice. ■

<sup>1</sup> See "Zionism in the Age of the Dictators," by Lenni Brenner, Lawrence Hill, Westport, Conn.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.