

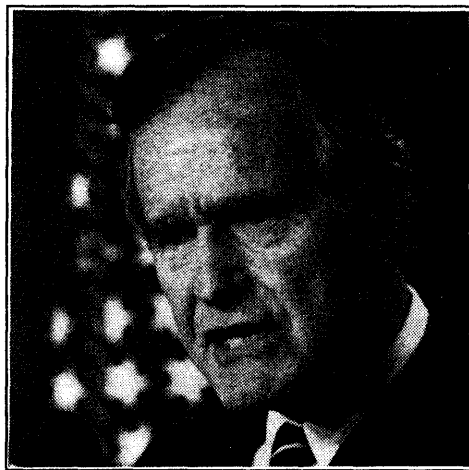
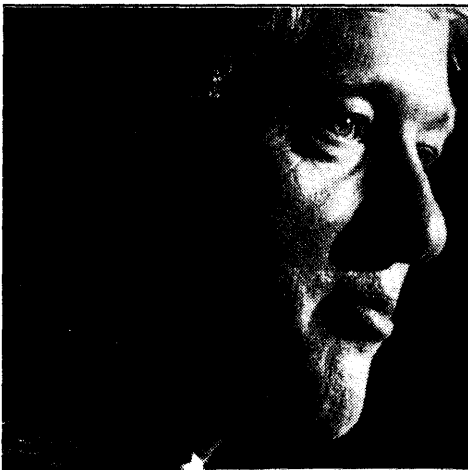
A Socialist ACTION



CHOICE
referendum
in Maryland
See page 3.

Vol. 10, No. 9 SEPTEMBER 1992 50 CENTS

What's behind U.S. war moves against Iraq?



By NAT WEINSTEIN

On Aug. 26, President George Bush sent U.S., British, and French warplanes, loaded with the world's most advanced weaponry, blazing through the skies of southern Iraq. In the first 24 hours, 200 sorties were flown to enforce an order to Iraq to ground its aircraft south of the 32nd parallel.

Gov. Bill Clinton, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, having previously given Bush's preparations for aggression against Iraq his unqualified seal of approval, then reinforced his support by faulting Bush for not demonstrating sufficient resolve "to defy and defeat those who threaten us."

Bush and Clinton are competing with each other over who is the toughest enforcer of America's "New World Order."

Democratic Party spokespersons, reflecting the spirit of Clinton's criticism, lost no time before blaming Bush for "not having finished Saddam Hussein off when we had the chance."

The motive for this latest act of war is alleged to be the establishment of a "security zone" to shield the Shiites of southern Iraq from air attacks.

But hardly anyone takes Bush's "humanitarian" aims seriously.

The Aug. 28 *New York Times*, reflecting the views of a major section of the U.S. ruling class, editorializes that Bush's "purpose is unclear, probably unwise, and maybe even illegal." But it then goes on to say: "Americans do not shrink from using force against the Iraqi dictator..."

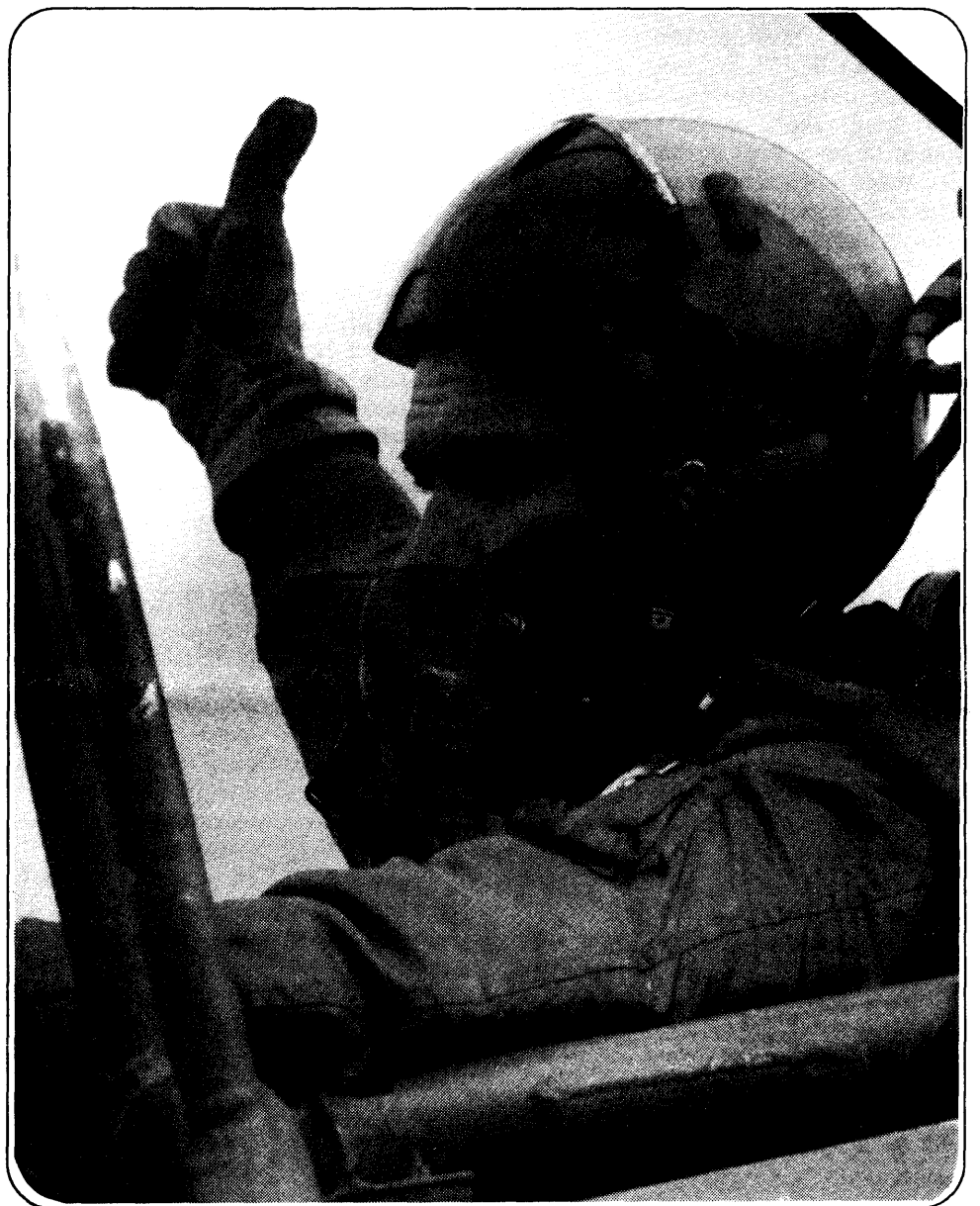
To underscore their unqualified support, the editors write: "America's undisputed interest is to enforce the UN cease-fire terms so Baghdad does not again threaten neighbors or regional peace."

They play a cagey role—backing Bush's aggression to the hilt, they also take their distance wondering out loud what the purpose of it might be.

The Times editors pointedly ask: "Why stop at planes? Checked in the air, Mr. Hussein might come after the Shiites on the ground. Do the allies also claim authority to rain missiles on Iraqi tanks? Otherwise, aren't the Shiites being set up for further slaughter?"

Neither side in this dispute within the U.S. ruling class cares anything about the rights of the Shiites.

Their only concern is to maintain the "right" of American imperialism to impose



its "order" on everyone else in the world.

Moral statements to the contrary, the dispute within the ruling class is not over what they believe is right or wrong but only over what will work. Most important, it reveals the increasingly hard choices available to the imperialists for stemming the accelerating breakdown of world capitalist order.

They face this dilemma: On the one hand, they fear the spread of rebellion in the region by the oppressed nationalities and other peoples suffering from religious and/or cultural oppression. This includes the Kurds and the Shiites of Iraq, who each have populations in other Middle Eastern states. To meet such threats of revolt, imperialism needs ruthless governments like Iraq's.

On the other hand, they fear the Saddam Husseins of the world when they show a capacity to mobilize the region to pressure imperialism for a larger share of the wealth it has been looting for more than a century from the colonized Gulf region.

Eighteen months ago, Saddam Hussein's Iraq constituted such a threat and was crushed. Ten years ago, it was the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran that challenged imperialism and was bled to exhaustion by Saddam Hussein's Iraq—armed to the teeth and backed up by U.S. imperialism. Later,

Iran gave its silent acquiescence to the American assault on Iraq.

Now, as the economic crisis of world capitalism aggravates the misery suffered by the people of the Middle East, imperialism must take care to not inadvertently provoke a generalized uprising by its victims.

The reluctance of Arab regimes—who had previously joined in America's Operation "Desert Storm"—to give political cover to President Bush's latest initiative reflects the volatility of the masses in the Middle East.

Moreover, this concern is not limited to the Gulf region. The collapse and capitulation of the Stalinist camp is turning out to be much more of a problem than the imperialists bargained for. The powder keg that today is Yugoslavia could just as soon be the ex-Soviet Union tomorrow.

In July, the Pentagon threatened to unleash "days and weeks" of bombing raids on Iraq's road and electric grid system. According to one White House official, Bush stated that hostilities with Iraq "could explode at any moment."

Working people and students in this country should put both the Democrats and the Republicans on notice that we demand: "U.S. Hands Off Iraq!" ■

**Interviews with
South African trade unionists**
See pages 14 - 17.



You've got to be taught to hate



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

What is amazing is that some mental health workers haven't yet strapped a straight-jacket around the Rev. Robertson and put him away. But remember, he is a major spokesman for the Bush election campaign. He also gets heavy support from the capitalist class. Why? Because he and the rest of his sewer-mouthed evangelist ilk are needed by the ruling class to protect their right to exploit and oppress the overwhelming majority of the people.

The ruling-rich are a small minority in this country. They are, of course, protected by the two political parties—Democrats and Republicans—by the armed forces, the police, and all other institutions of state power. But they are still a tiny minority compared to the millions of working people. So capitalism needs this incipient-fascist bunch to help divide the majority. That is the only way they can maintain their power.

Women want equal pay for work of comparable value. They want affirmative action to guarantee them equal access to better paying jobs and they want child care for their children when they are forced to work to support their family. Women support an Equal Rights Amendment because they have never had equal rights and do not have them now. Do these demands threaten America? No, sir. Do they threaten capitalist

profits? Yes indeed!

The labor power of women has been used as a great resource for superprofits. Women and Blacks in this country have always been put back, condemned to be part of the "reserve army of unemployed" that is used to keep wages down as low as possible for all workers—male, female, Black, and white.

Women's labor has historically been undervalued and underpaid. For poor working-class women working conditions and wage differences are even worse today. Two out of three poor adults are women and one out of five children is poor. Women head half of all poor families, and over half the children in female-headed families are poor—as are 50 percent of white children and 68 percent of Black and Latin children.

A woman over 60 years of age is almost twice as likely as her male counterpart to be impoverished. One-fifth of all elderly women are poor. Among Black women over 65 and living alone, the poverty rate was 82 percent in 1982. Fifty percent of women with children over age six are working outside of their homes. Most must work to help feed, cloth and house their families.

More women are working outside their homes because working-class families have taken a beating economically. In 1991, the number of jobless persons in

the United States was 16 million—a jobless rate of 13 percent. The government's "official" unemployment rate (which is a joke) is 6.7 percent.

Even more important, by the beginning of 1992, average weekly wages for production workers in U.S. industry, adjusted for inflation, had fallen to 79.7 percent of their level in 1973. At the same time, there was a sharp increase in inequality of income distribution in the United States. The position of the bottom 20 percent was worse than it was in 1947.

By far the greatest loss of jobs, 2.2 million from 1979 to 1991, has occurred in the highest paying manufacturing jobs. By contrast, the service producing sector of the economy has generated 21.8 million jobs during the same years. However, 73.5 percent of these jobs are in the two lowest paying categories of the service sector, namely, retail trade and health and business service. The majority of workers in this sector are women.

These are the reasons that more women are demanding not only control over their own reproductive rights but full equality on the job and equal access to better paying jobs. This is bad news for capitalists, and is the reason the most holy Rev. Pat Robertson is working so hard to teach people to hate. And especially to hate women. ■

The Rev. Pat Robertson is doing his best to live up to the song from South Pacific that explains how it is necessary to begin teaching hate at an early age.

Robertson wrote a letter to Iowa voters in opposition to a state Equal Rights Amendment, which will be voted on Nov 3. In it, he stated that the proposal is not about equal rights for women but part of a "feminist agenda."

He raved on, "It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." Believe it or not, this is what he wrote!

In his letter, which was mailed to thousands of voters, the old Bible-thumper did not mention in which order these activities were to be carried out. Should women kill their children before leaving

their husbands, or should these socialist feminists simply destroy capitalism first and then carry on with this very demanding agenda? Should all of this be done on their lunch break or after the women come home from work and have prepared supper? Or should they just send out for pizza and then commence these mammoth chores?

Rev. Pat simply doesn't supply enough details. But he is certainly willing to peddle this garbage to millions of voters in Iowa.

Three hundred years ago, in Salem, Mass., little children would fall down and writhe in pain at the sight of a woman who was thought to be a witch. Can you visualize what the children of Iowa will do when they are told that not only does their mommy want to kill daddy but them also? How many will fight going to sleep at night fearing at what moment mother will strike?

Become one of our 500 new subscribers!



Join us in our campaign to sign-up 500 new subscribers to Socialist Action newspaper by Dec. 31, 1992. If you like our newspaper, help us get the socialist message out to others. Order a bundle of Socialist Action for sale in your area. Ask your friends to subscribe—they'll get a point of view in our newspaper they won't find anywhere else.

Help us pay for on-the-spot coverage in the ex-Soviet Union.

Socialist Action correspondent Gerry Foley has just embarked on a six-week fact-finding trip to the ex-Soviet Union. While there, Foley will interview trade union, student, and political activists about the impact of the "market reforms," and the movements of resistance.

Help us defray the expenses of this important coverage by making a contribution today.

I would like to contribute \$500 \$250 \$100 \$75 \$50
 \$25 \$10 other _____

Subscribe to Socialist Action today!

Introductory offer:

- \$3 for 6 months
 \$8 for one year

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____ Org./Union _____

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action, 3425 Army St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Socialist ACTION

Closing date:
August 31, 1992

Editors: MICHAEL SCHREIBER, JOSEPH RYAN

Staff: Paul Colvin, Gerry Foley, Joni Jacobs, Hayden Perry, Barbara Putnam, Carole Seligman, Kwame M.A. Somburu, Sylvia Weinstein.

Business Manager: JOSEPH RYAN

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly for \$8 per year by Socialist Action Publishing Association, 3425 Army St., San Francisco, CA 94110. Second-class postage is paid at San Francisco, Calif.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Socialist Action, 3425 Army St., San Francisco, CA 94110.

RATES: For one year (12 issues)—U.S. 2nd Class: \$8, 1st Class: \$18; Canada and Mexico 2nd Class: \$12, 1st Class: \$18; All other countries 2nd Class: \$15, 1st Class: \$30. (Money orders, checks should be in U.S. dollars.) Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials.

By JULIA STEINBERG
and RICHARD HILL

BALTIMORE—Pro-choice activists here are actively working to pass a referendum to guarantee abortion rights in Maryland. The law, which will be voted on in November, would replace old laws that prohibit abortion in all but a handful of circumstances.

Under the old law (which has not been enforced since 1973 due to the Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision) all abortions must be certified by a hospital review board, and are only permitted if the mother's life or health is in grave danger, if the pregnancy is the result of a reported rape, or if there is severe and permanent danger to the fetus.

The Supreme Court's *Webster* decision in 1989 opened the door for states to pass laws chipping away at reproductive rights. This decision, posing the threat that *Roe v. Wade* would be overturned in the near future, caused pro-choice groups to mount a campaign to have a law passed that would maintain the right to choose in Maryland.

Molly Yard, then national president of the national Organization for Women (NOW), spoke at a rally of over 1000 people in Annapolis, Maryland's state capital. She called for passage of a clean bill with no restrictions on any woman's right to abortion. Yard was joined by a high school woman representing Maryland Students for Choice and by other speakers.

Two bills circulated in the Maryland state senate last year. One bill, sb. 145, reflecting the sentiments of pro-choice activists, would have codified *Roe v. Wade* in Maryland with no additional restrictions. The other, sb. 162, while maintaining the right to choose, included a clause requiring the physician to notify the parent of a teenage woman under 18 prior to her abortion, with some exceptions.

Behind the scenes, sponsors of the clean bill quietly dropped this bill and formed a "pro-choice coalition" with the legislators who favored restrictions. These legislators then put pressure on pro-choice organizations to support their restrictive bill.

The previous year, an abortion rights bill had been filibustered and defeated by right-wing senators. Now "pro-choice" politicians confronted the movement with an ultimatum: Support this compromise or there will be no bill.

Many activists felt frustrated with the restrictions being imposed, but saw no choice other than to support the one bill remaining (sb. 162). Passage of this bill was seen as a victory, albeit limited, for the pro-choice movement.

As soon as the bill passed, anti-abortion forces successfully collected enough signatures to take it to referendum. This prevented the law from going into effect.

Pro-choice groups have come together in the Maryland for Choice coalition to ensure passage of the referendum—Question 6.

Among the member groups are the ACLU, NARAL, Planned Parenthoods of Maryland and Metropolitan Washington, the Maryland State Teachers Association, Baltimore NOW, Maryland Students for Choice, and the Washington Area Clinic

Maryland pro-choice activists campaign for referendum



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

"Supporters of women's rights must explain that while passage of this referendum would clearly reflect the pro-choice views of the majority, it must be immediately followed by a campaign to reverse this restriction on young women."

Defense Task Force.

The wording of the ballot referendum states that the new law "prohibits state interference with [a] woman's abortion decision before [the] fetus is viable." Under this law, however, the right to choose without government interference is denied for young woman. This is a step backward. *Roe v. Wade* contains no such restriction.

Politicians claim that such laws promote family communication. But parental notification and consent laws not only do not improve parent-child communication, they actually endanger the lives and health of teenage women by forcing them to seek

"back alley" abortion providers.

Supporters of women's rights must explain that while passage of this referendum would clearly reflect the pro-choice views of the majority, it must be immediately followed by a campaign to reverse this restriction on young women.

Unfortunately, this is not the perspective of the leadership of the Maryland for Choice campaign.

While the main piece of campaign literature does not include either support or opposition to this provision, the massive phonebanking effort now under way across the state includes the parental notification

clause as a *reason* to vote for the referendum.

This agreement to restrict women's rights is a direct result of depending on Democratic Party politicians rather than mobilizing to fight for the rights of all women.

If the anti-abortion right-wing legislators had introduced a bill limiting the right to choose, all pro-choice forces would have come together to oppose it. Why must we do less when "pro-choice" legislators advocate the same restrictions?

The right to choose will never be safe as long as supporters of reproductive freedom continue to vote for Democratic and Republican candidates.

We must build a pro-choice movement that is completely independent of these two big business parties. Although many Democrats (and some Republicans) claim to support a woman's right to choose, both parties have written off young women, poor women, and women of color.

The pro-choice movement must work for *all* women's rights and should adopt the saying of the labor movement: "An injury to one, is an injury to all."

Despite its serious limitations, a vote for Question 6 should be supported in November. Passage of this referendum in Maryland will strengthen the women's movement. Pro-choice forces will be in a stronger position to defeat future attacks on the right to choose and to extend this right to young women. ■

SOCIALIST ACTION FORUM

"Message to the Grassroots"

Hear acclaimed actor Michael Lange recreate the famous speech by Malcolm X

Friday, Sept. 25, 8:00 PM
3425 Army St.,
San Francisco
Call (415) 821-0458

Michael Lange is a teacher of acting and production theory at Merritt College in Oakland, Calif. His recreation of Malcolm X's speeches have been critically acclaimed throughout the Bay Area

\$5 donation requested



EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

A Socialist Perspective for Changing the World

Saturday, Sept. 26, 10:00 AM — 5:00 PM
3425 Army St., San Francisco

Attend an all-day conference to hear presentations and join in discussions about the vital issues facing working people today.

- Destruction of Education — Who Benefits?
- Capitalism Fouls Things Up! Solving the Environmental Crisis
- Feminism and Socialism
- The Case for a Socialist America

\$3 donation requested. Lunch will be provided for \$2.50

S.F. painters demonstrate fighting capacity

By ROLAND SHEPPARD

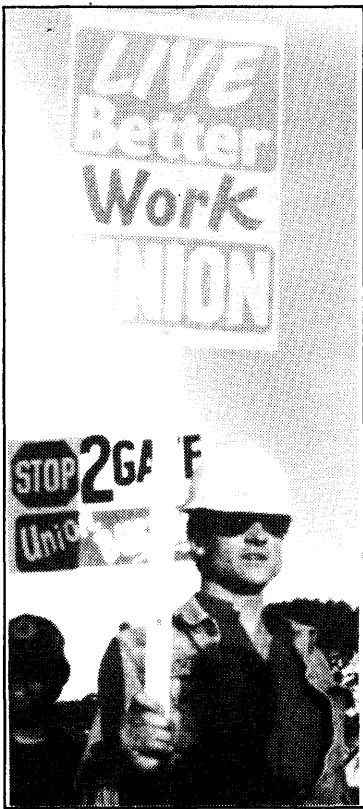
In the beginning of July, my union, Painters Local Union #4-District Council #8 in San Francisco, was on strike for 12 days.

The strike was precipitated by a concessions-laden agreement between the employers and the union officials that included giving up time and a half for night work and every other Friday off, in return for a \$1.90 wage package over three years.

On June 30 (the expiration date of the contract), the membership voted the contract proposal down by a 5-1 margin. This was the first time in the history of the union that a contract recommended by the union officials was voted down.

Prior to the strike, the local union and district officials were involved in an internal fight for control of the local due to a rapid decline in membership and a subsequent decline in revenue from dues.

Roland Sheppard is an elected delegate from Painters Local #4 to the San Francisco Labor Council and an elected delegate to Painters District Council #8.



The fight basically centered around which official was going to be laid off. That was and still is the number-one priority of the officials, and there was no preparation for negotiations.

After the vote, the officials had to quickly make picket signs, and

on the first day of the strike the union was completely disorganized. Fortunately, the contractors were also disorganized and not prepared in the event that the contract would be voted down.

By the second day of the strike, the membership took over the running of the strike and spontaneously set up flying squads of pickets to shut down both union and non-union jobs in the city. An effective strike had been established.

On the third day of the strike, the contractors reopened negotiations, and the officials agreed to a contract worse than the one that had been voted down! They then worked with the contractors to win a "yes" vote at a meeting scheduled for July 7.

At the July 7 meeting, the argument was presented that the contractors would bring in replacement workers and that the new proposal was the best that the union could get.

In actuality, the membership had demonstrated its capacity and strength on the picket line while the leadership had demonstrated its weakness and its collaboration with the employers at the bargaining table.

At this meeting, two of the

Which side are you on?

seven union negotiators—in response to the membership—opposed the contract. The effectiveness of the picket lines gave the membership confidence that they could prevent the contractors from using replacement workers.

The contract proposal was again voted down, this time by a 3-1 margin.

The next day, the contractors called to reopen negotiations. They withdrew night work from the table after chastizing the officials for not "selling the contract." A new agreement was reached, with only eight Fridays off a year and a \$1.70 wage package over three years.

In the context of being in a battle with both the employers and their union officials, the membership voted in favor of the new

agreement by a 3-1 margin at a Sunday, July 12, meeting. They returned to work on July 13.

The effect of the contract will mean more money for fewer members. The positive side is that the membership got a glimpse of its strength and the potential of the union.

The response of the officials has been to continue their fighting. They are organizing to obtain automatic dues increases rather than addressing the issues and problems facing the membership.

It remains to be seen if any of the officials will chart a new course for the union in the interest of the membership or if openings will be created whereby the membership can exert its will to make the union a fighting instrument in its interests. ■

Very little progress made at People's Progressive Convention

By MARIE WEIGAND

On Aug. 21-23, 352 people from 31 states met in Ypsilanti, Mich. The call for this gathering, billed as the People's Progressive Convention, had promised: "We will take steps to unify into an ongoing, independent, permanent, grassroots movement. We will show the country and the world that in this election year, 1992, we are not only disgusted and angry at the corruption, hypocrisy, oppression, and injustice coming out of Washington, D.C., state and local governments, and the transnational corporate establishment. We will take concrete steps to do something at this national gathering."

The conference voted to form the People's Progressive Network (PPN). Some saw this as a new organization; others as a communications network to better facilitate information sharing and cooperation among existing groups. These contradictory conceptions of what was being established colored the debates.

Those who viewed the PPN as a new organization bringing together socialists, environmentalists, feminists, people of color, and gay and lesbian activists, proposed that it initiate various actions. Others argued that this was not its role, that it should simply publicize actions that other groups called.

In his Saturday morning convention address, conference initiator and presidential candidate Ron Daniels proposed a series of actions next spring designed to shut down the country. He compared this to the recent South African general strike. He added that if it is not possible to shut down the country, activists should set their sights as high as possible—shutting down a state, city, or workplace.

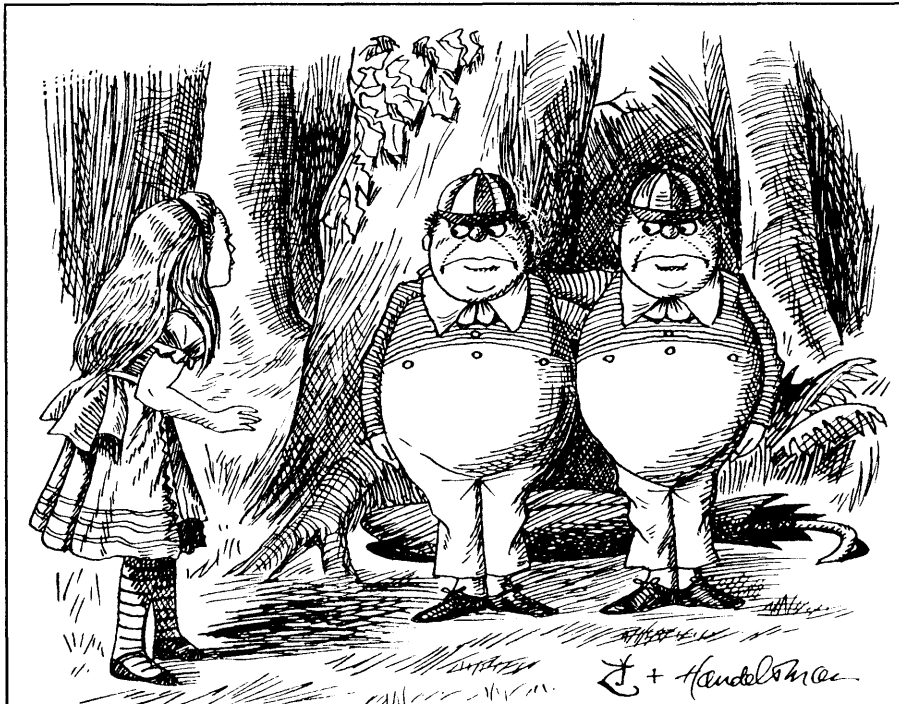
While conference participants made frequent favorable references to Daniels' proposal, they clearly recognized it as unrealistic, since no one proposed any steps for implementing such a campaign. One participant in the Great Lakes regional caucus meeting pointed out that Daniels had not listed any demands for this action.

No break from Democrats

These promised militant street actions—which will either never occur or be small and limited to radicals—serve as a left cover for the actual failure to break from the Democratic and Republican parties.

The convention call said: "Every four years, the Demo-

cratic and Republican parties tell us that by electing one of their presidential candidates we will making a real choice. Every four years, we are bombarded by media campaigns that only the rich can afford. And every four years, we hear the same promises and platitudes which seem to evaporate right after election day."



"I beg your pardon," said Alice, "but which of you is the Democrat?"

But despite this, many conference participants did not recognize the futility of working for candidates of these big business parties. Buttons for the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate from Illinois, Carol Moseley Braun, dotted the audience. "Explaining Inside/Outside and National/Local Electoral Strategies" was one of the six conference working groups.

Daniels is past executive director of the National Rainbow Coalition and served as deputy director for Jesse Jackson's 1988 Democratic Party presidential campaign. The convention call includes favorable references to the Rainbow Coalition. Throughout his campaign, Daniels has advocated pressing the Democratic Party to enact reforms.

A simple proposal that the PPN not endorse the Democratic or Republican parties or their candidates stirred

controversy in both the labor caucus and the plenary session. Some argued that this would reduce the attractiveness of the PPN for the many people who support "progressive" Democrats.

A woman from Columbus bragged that in her area they had just elected a "socialist" to the school board—as a Democrat. It was finally agreed to include this proposal in the points of unity, while adding an additional qualifying sentence explaining that this would not prevent affiliated organizations or individuals from supporting any candidate.

Although conference planners had proposed setting aside seats on the Continuations Committee for the Twenty-First Century Party and Labor Party Advocates (LPA), neither group endorsed or officially participated in the conference. There was no sign of the Twenty-First Century Party. Detroit LPA members staffed a literature table and a number of conference participants identified themselves as LPA members.

The PPN Continuations Committee includes representatives from the convention's regional caucuses, and from the people-of-color, women's, youth, gay and lesbian, and labor caucuses, as well as from groups that endorsed the convention. State and regional conferences are projected before the next national convention.

For a third party?

Some hoped that this convention would lay the groundwork for a third party. Although the convention call stated that this gathering could not form such a party, it promised, "We can begin to build a movement from the bottom up so that by 1996 we are in a position to seriously contend for power."

However, the third party they have in mind is not a labor party based on the trade unions. The original convention agenda did not include provisions for a labor caucus or for worker participation on the Continuations Committee.

Some view this "third party" as a pressure group designed to influence the Democratic Party. For others, it is an "independent" party that, while independent of the Democratic and Republican parties, is not independent of capitalist politics.

Most do not envision the PPN forming a party. Those who see it as an organization view it as a regroupment vehicle for "progressives," "democratic socialists," greens, and counter-culturalists.

As in the recent national conference of the Committees of Correspondence, a profound pessimism motivated participants in the PPN. Failing to recognize the importance of the working class and feeling that the forces of reaction are on the rise, they look to the formation of a loose association of "progressives" with minimum programmatic agreement. Such an attempt to resurrect the New Left of the 1960s is doomed to failure. ■

Northwest Airlines bailed-out on the backs of working people

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

MINNEAPOLIS—Northwest Airlines sustained massive profit losses when it was forced into a summer air-fare war with its competitors.

After the war's conclusion, Northwest CEOs had to come clean with the working people of Minnesota and admit that Northwest was in deep financial trouble.

Northwest's disclosure of its massive debt and profit losses was by no means a startling revelation. It was common knowledge in U.S. financial circles that Northwest was virtually insolvent and in danger of going bankrupt. There wasn't a creditor in the country willing to lend the company a flat dime for its continued survival. But Northwest found a willing lender—the state of Minnesota.

Minnesota lawmakers—Democrats and Republicans—lent Northwest \$759 million. In return, the company promised to build two Airbus maintenance bases up in the Iron Range, in northern Minnesota, creating 3000 jobs for this depressed area. But Northwest has placed these maintenance bases on the back burner. And so far, Minnesota's lawmakers have declared no intentions to recover the money.

Adding insult to injury, Northwest CEOs, Al Checchi and John Dasburg, are demanding concessions from Northwest workers. This is a last ditch effort to finance the nearly bankrupt airline before the courts step in and confiscates its assets.

But Northwest employees are hesitant

about giving concessions to Checchi and Dasburg.

This is especially true after seeing their fellow workers at Western Airlines and Republic Airlines lose their jobs after accepting concession contracts. Many former Republic Airline workers are employed at Northwest today.

A "partnership" with the bosses?

Unfortunately, the trade-union leaders representing Northwest workers aren't as wise as their members. The union "tops" remain committed to the strangling concept of a "partnership" between labor and big business.

The heads of the Teamsters (IBT), International Association of Machinists (IAM), and Airline Pilots Association (ALPA), have promised John Dasburg to review his concession proposals. These officials have already allowed Northwest to lay off 810 pilots, mechanics, and salespeople without a bleat of protest.

Minnesota lawmakers and Northwest Airlines have waged a sophisticated propaganda campaign to inveigle taxpayers and Northwest employees into shouldering the huge costs needed to bail out the carrier. They claim that if Northwest goes out of business, then Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport could lose its valuable position as an airline hub—and 30,000 families could lose all or part of their incomes.

These conjectures could come true if Northwest were allowed to collapse with-

out intervention by the trade unions.

By rights, Northwest should not receive one red cent of tax money from the state. The \$759 million already "loaned" should be returned to the social programs it was looted from.

Not too long ago, the St. Paul, Minn., *Pioneer Press* admitted that Northwest Airlines has "\$759 million dollars of our money that could be better spent on child immunization programs in the schools."

Open the books!

Northwest Airlines should be forced to open its account ledger so its employees and the public can see where all the money we've given them has gone. Ultimately, if the current owners can't meet the corporation's debts, it should be nationalized and placed under the control of the workers.

In the meantime, the trade unions have an obligation to fight against the layoffs and wage a fight against the concessions currently being imposed on their members.

The scandalous Northwest loan is not an isolated incident involving bungling politicians and crooked business leaders. It is part and parcel of a long-term program to use the taxing powers of the federal and state governments to bail out corporations and banks that would otherwise collapse from normal competition and irresponsible speculation.

The memory of the CIO industrial organizing of the 1930s is still fresh in the minds of U.S. capitalists. They can't allow corporations to shut down and throw mil-

lions of Americans out of work. When American workers are hungry and desperate, they are capable of fighting with a vengeance for a big hunk of the capitalists' profits.

Wall Street has an instinctive fear that the American working class might cast off the parasitic CEO's and bankers and expropriate the industries and banks and operate them by themselves. This is a real danger if another Depression sets in.

This is why the Democratic and Republican party politicians are absolutely committed to bailing out U.S. capital at the expense of the working class.

The Democrats generally control the city and state governments nationwide. It has been the Democrats, at least as much as the Republicans, who have looted social programs and schools. This money has been turned over to the federal government to dispense with it as they will. After a brief time lag, this stolen money is placed back into the hands of corporations and banks. This whole process is done under the guise of cutbacks and budget shortages.

To further mask this thievery from the public, the Democrats condemn the Republicans for cutting spending on social programs.

But these rhetorical attacks are usually hurled during election campaigns. Once in office, the Democrats have the leaders of trade unions and people's organizations securely tucked away in their pockets. Then, they proceed once again to initiate police attacks on striking workers, take away civil rights and gut social programs.

The utter collapse of Minnesota's social programs, and the specter of 30,000 Northwest employees out of work and hungry, might trigger a revolt against the Northwest bailout.

The day is coming soon when Minnesota's working people, supported by the organized labor movement, will intervene in their own name and stop this insane program of "welfare" for the rich. ■

By DOUG MANN

MINNEAPOLIS—The school board here faces the prospect of a legal challenge to its policy of denying equal access to public schools for homeless children, who should be attending school in grades one through six.

People Serving People (PSP), a grassroots organization, is trying to establish the right of all children to receive a full education.

Over the past four years, a shelter operated by PSP for homeless families with children, has had to settle for a two-and-a-half hour per day school activity program run by an outfit called "The Learning Center."

This is in lieu of the children getting a full day's education. The excuse for this is that these youngsters are supposedly "impossible to educate." About 95 percent of them are Black.

At a recent school board meeting, it was reported that the PSP administration had shifted away from attempting to improve the quality of education within the framework of a one-room-schoolhouse. Instead, it was demanding that its children-in-residence have access to public schools on the same basis as other Minneapolis residents.

Last fall, the PSP administration set up a program of its own because the Learning Center did not have qualified teachers and did not serve all of the children who should be enrolled in grades one through six.

The instructors who worked with these children told the administration that most of them were quite capable of handling course work offered in the regular schools, and some of them ought to be considered for placement in the most advanced courses offered by the school district for their grade level.

PSP plans to use its space for after-school, evening, and weekend programs, and will put every effort into seeing that the schools "mainstream" these children, as the law requires.

PPS is basing its demand for "mainstreaming" on the grounds that to deny equal access to public schools for homeless children is a violation of the federal McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by Public Law 101-645 in 1990.

Section 721 (3) of this act states: "Homelessness alone should not be sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment."

Homeless children denied access to education

Axel Koester



Considerable resistance has been mounted to the idea of mainstreaming homeless children by the Learning Center.

The Learning Center is a subsidiary of the Minneapolis Community Action Agency (MCAA), an antipoverty body with solid connections to the local Democratic Party-dominated political establishment.

MCAA has received funding at all levels of government. Its executive director, William Davis, is a prominent figure in the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP.

The Learning Center is hot-wired to the Minneapolis School Board, which has a couple of members on the Learning Center's board of directors. One of them is Len Biernet. His wife is executive director of the Learning Center. Another is Larry Harris, a former PR man for the Minneapolis public schools, who came out of retirement to work as a consultant for the Minneapolis school system.

It will be interesting to see how Democratic Party politicians, who run the city administration, the city council, and the school board, will handle this situation.

The Learning Center and the Minneapolis School Board appear to believe that they are in a position to negotiate with the PSP.

The Minneapolis School Board apparently is coming up with offers to settle this dispute with the PSP short of the full compliance with the McKinney Act that the organization for the homeless demands. But the PSP has gone too far in demanding equal access to education for children in its shelter—and has brought too much attention to this issue—to be in a position to cut a deal with the school board.

The McKinney Act of 1990 was recently used as a lever by the Texas Legal Aid Society to force the Texas legislature to rescind laws that placed obstacles in the way of enrolling homeless children in public schools.

If PSP obtains an injunction against the Minneapolis public schools for noncompliance with the McKinney Act, the school district could lose its federal funding.

The demand to open up school enrollments for homeless children is not only in the immediate interests of homeless families. It is also in the interests of working people who are a check or two away from the streets. It is a demand that should be taken up by the leadership of the Black community and the labor movement in Minneapolis and elsewhere. ■

Every Russian a capitalist?

By NAT WEINSTEIN

Faced with one failed plan after another designed to accomplish a leap into capitalism, Russian President Boris Yeltsin has come up with a new one. The idea is to distribute free vouchers alleged to be worth between \$40 and \$60 to every Russian citizen—reportedly roughly equal to four months wages—to exchange for shares in state-owned enterprises, or turn the vouchers over to mutual funds to invest in their behalf, or just sell them. The plan is set to begin on Oct. 1.

Similar plans are being implemented in Czechoslovakia and Poland. Yeltsin's plan is said to eliminate drawbacks in the other two countries' plans.

Leaving aside the technical differences between the privatization schemes, they have certain basic features in common. The most important is that they are all designed to create the illusion that the material wealth of these societies will be fairly divided between every citizen—man, woman and child.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

In the first place, the total shares freely distributed amount to only a portion of the claimed value of the publicly owned enterprises.¹

The Russian scheme, for example, provides for only 49 percent of the ownership to be distributed free. The other 51 percent of the assets in each enterprise may be purchased by its "managers and employees," who are to "submit bids" for buying up the major portion of each enterprise.

This means, one, real control of each enterprise will ultimately reside with "managers and employees."

Even if shares distributed to all citizens are not sold, as their holders are free to do, but invested in one form or another in the enterprises, ownership would be so dispersed that real control would rest in the hands of "managers and employees."

And two, the "managers," that is, the Stalinist bureaucrats who remain in control on every level of the state and industrial bureaucracy, generally have "savings" far in excess of amounts saved by the great majority of workers. Consequently, managers can buy, in most cases, more shares than all the workers combined.

There are many other factors that, according to the laws of market relations, will tend to concentrate ownership and control of the nation's wealth into fewer and fewer hands. This means that if nothing stood in the way of these privatization schemes, a classic war would unfold between would-be "robber barons."

Each bandit, or group of bandits, swindling away the vouchers in one way or another, would also swindle and rob each other as they fight their way to the top of the heap of grasping neo-capitalist entrepreneurs.

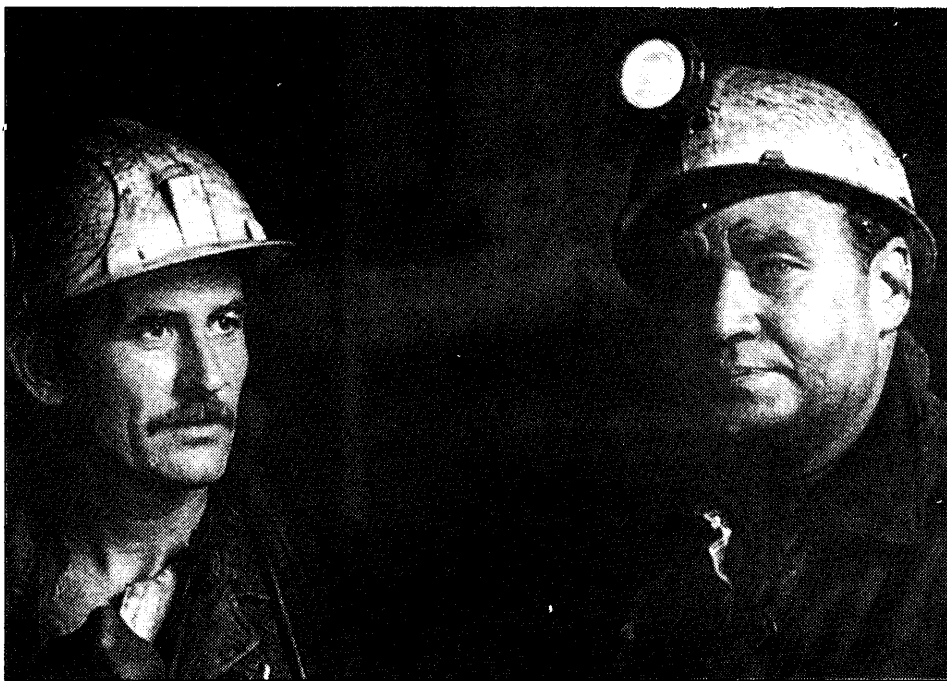
This scenario would have some similarity to the process that concentrated ownership in the United States into the hands of a relatively few railroad magnates, bankers and other successful "robber barons."

But, there are two important differences that distinguish the battle royal opening up in the unravelling workers' states from the historic precedents in the evolution of class society. The initial difference flows from the form of property ownership first established by the October 1917 Socialist Revolution, which transformed Czarist Russia (and later, Eastern Europe, and large parts of Asia) from a society essentially based on private property to one based on collective property.

Now, those leading the "revolution" in property relations are attempting to go against the tide of history.

The "fly in the ointment"

This trying to turn back history leads to the second and most profound difference; something considerably more than a "fly in the ointment" for those who scheme to become capitalists: Unlike every other attempt at the transformation of property relations in history, standing in the way of this one is a powerful social class making



Resentment is growing among both Soviet and Chinese workers as 'market reforms' threaten to ravage social gains of revolution.



up the overwhelming majority of the population. This class, the workers, has everything to lose by the reintroduction of private ownership of the means of production.

Unfortunately for Mr. Yeltsin and his capitalist-oriented co-thinkers, the resistance of workers to their plans has barely begun. Workers have not yet taken a more aggressive course in opposition to capitalist restoration partly because of illusions and hopes that the capitalism that would come would bring a massive inflow of imperialist investment.

The working people reasoned that rapid economic development of their mismanaged economies would provide the material basis for higher living standards comparable to those in the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe.

Their illusions, however, have been considerably dimmed since their high point just after the wave of rebellion swept across Eastern Europe at the end of 1989. This revolutionary tide scared the daylights out of the Stalinist dictatorships, spurring them to launch an accelerated course toward capitalist restoration.

It wasn't long before workers found out that the kind of capitalism imperialists had in mind for these countries was the capitalism of Latin America, Asia and Africa—not that of Germany and other advanced countries of Western Europe. Worker resistance to sacrifices imposed on them, as the necessary pre-condition for market relations, has been rising ever since.

Although uncoordinated and episodic, the workers' knee-jerk resistance has had the effect, so far, of foiling one restorationist scheme after the other. The capitalist-oriented bureaucrats, especially those in charge of the massive state-owned industries, have repeatedly been forced to back down from their various schemes for making a breakthrough toward establishing market relations. Moreover, what they have taken away from workers with one hand,

they have often been compelled to give back with the other. How does this work?

• It is well known that a very extensive system of social guarantees was in place providing economic security for all from cradle to grave. A prerequisite for creating market relations is to eliminate such guarantees, especially cheap prices for food and other basic necessities and the guarantee of a job for everyone. In other words, before capitalism can get off the ground, labor power, the key commodity necessary for capitalist development, must be made subject to market forces.

• While the state has made some headway toward this goal, those in charge of managing large-scale industry have been compelled by strikes and other actions to compensate workers for the higher cost of living—mostly in the form of outright grants of food and other necessities. And the local managers have been largely blocked from laying-off "redundant" workers.

Capitalist investors hold back

The world's would-be capitalist investors in the degenerating workers' states are well aware of the enormous obstacles standing in the way of profitable investment. Even optimistic reports in the mass media from time to time are heavily tinged with doubt. And, lately, most often they have been downright pessimistic.

A report by Louis Uchitelle in the July 2, 1992, *New York Times*, speaks volumes. It's headlined, "On the Path to an Open Economy: A Decrepit Steel Plant in the Urals." The author compares steel plants like this one (Magnitogorsk) with "the dinosaur steelworks in the United States that were forced to close a decade ago..." He writes further, "The steelworks are one of many giant state enterprises in company towns across Russia that have emerged as a powerful political force because they keep workers housed and fed. But their clout runs counter to the pressure from industrial nations on President Boris

N. Yeltsin to move quickly to a market economy, even if this leads to layoffs and labor unrest..."

"If we close the plant, there are no other jobs," said Anatoly Starikov, the 51-year-old general manager of the steelworks. "People would have to look for work elsewhere, and in Russia that is unrealistic. If we halt part of the production, then half the city will be hurt. That is also inadmissible."

Later on, under the subhead, "Protecting Workers Not Stockholders," Uchitelle writes: "While the executives who closed Lackawanna and Homestead responded to pressure from stockholders, Mr. Starikov will not have shareholders until the steelworks are privatized, which is not expected for at least a year and could take much longer. His constituents remain the townspeople he would have to lay off. They and their families make up half the population in this company town of 450,000 people."

"Company towns" like this one are what make up the ex-Soviet Union and the other countries of eastern Europe.

The Times author continues his perceptive report: "The workers have the power, and the managers try to satisfy them so that they can hold on to their own positions, and keep alive their hopes of some day becoming owners," said Aleksander Titkov, a Russian economist and sociologist. "These managers are operating in a middle ground between the old socialist state and the markets..."

"While the government remains the nominal owner of these giant enterprises, Mr. Starikov and his peers exercise most of the authority. They set production and wage levels, bank their revenues instead of turning them over to the state, buy their raw materials and make their own investment decisions. The government, in fact, has become more adversary than ally."

The capitalist media's characterization of these industrial bureaucrats as "hard-liners, opposed to privatization," reflects its tendency to picture them as pro-socialist. This, clearly, is not the case. The factory "bosses" have had no choice, as the *Times* article explains, but to bow—temporarily—to the threat of "worker unrest." Later on Uchitelle spells this out. He writes:

"The industrial nations are backing Mr. Yeltsin and his economic team, even at the cost of layoffs and bankruptcies. But the unrest that might result from widespread unemployment has become a bargaining weapon for the managers and their representatives in Parliament, among them Vladimir Klugvank, the 34-year-old Mayor of Magnitogorsk.

"I understand the position of Mr. Gaidar to stabilize the ruble," Mayor Klugvank said, referring to the acting Prime Minister, Yegor T. Gaidar. "But don't forget: You can bend a stick up to the point that it breaks. Otherwise you will have social explosion."

Such reports pepper the pages of the more informative capitalist publications. A not untypical incident, in Albania, is briefly reported in the Aug. 27, 1992 *San Francisco Chronicle*:

"Albania's government said yesterday that it is ready to use force to quell riots by arms factory workers angered by job losses, Tirana radio said. The workers, who began protesting Tuesday [Aug. 25] in the town of Polican about 110 miles southeast of Tirana, have set ablaze factory offices, besieged the town council and taken hostage the town's chief of police."

Trouble brewing in China too

The New York Times, in an earlier edition (June 11, 1992), reported a marked shift in mass sentiment away from support to privatization in China. A piece titled, "Factories in a Changed China Suffer Strikes and Sabotage," by Nicholas D. Kristof, is significantly more pessimistic than most reports on the progress of capitalist restoration in China. The author writes:

"Worried by layoffs and rising prices, many Chinese workers seem increasingly disenchanted by the capitalist-style changes taking hold in shops and factory floors around the country. As a result, for the first time since China began liberalizing its economy more than a dozen years ago, many ordinary citizens seem to be no

(continued on next page)

Prospects for political revolution

A growing number of socialist-oriented observers have been watching the events unfolding in the bureaucratized workers' states with great interest. Many of these people, however, have become pessimistic, concluding that capitalist restoration is, for all practical purposes, an accomplished fact.

Even many who looked to Leon Trotsky's perspective of a political revolution by Soviet workers that would take that country back onto the road of world socialism have all but given up hope.

Trotsky, along with V.I. Lenin, was a central leader of the Russian October Revolution. After Lenin's death in 1924, he became the foremost opponent of the Stalinist-engineered destruction of workers' democracy and its establishment of a counter-revolutionary bureaucratic dictatorship over the first workers' state.

In his book, "The Revolution Betrayed," first published in 1936, Trotsky explained that Stalinism had placed one foot in the camp of imperialism and that its course was toward capitalist restoration. But he also predicted that Soviet workers were an enormous obstacle blocking the road back to capitalism. He explained why political revolution was in the cards and that the working class would have every chance to overthrow the restorationist bureaucracy and turn the Soviet Union back onto the revolutionary road leading to world socialism.

Many in the socialist movement have been disoriented by the failure, thus far, of an independent political movement of workers—organized in their own name and advancing their own class interests—to emerge in these countries. Socialist Action, however, remains convinced that the workers there have not yet spoken and, moreover, are certain to have the last word.

What hampers political revolution?

While only those with the dubious ability to see into the future can lay out a line-by-line scenario of coming events, it is only possible for us mortals to see the general outlines of events in the future.

To begin properly, we must first answer the following closely connected questions: What stands in the way of a resurgence of the working class in these countries? And, what objective developments will set-off the inevitable struggle by them for political power and genuine socialism?

The most decisive factor standing in the way of the revival of revolutionary struggle in the disintegrating workers' states is the same factor that has brought the level of class consciousness and combativity of the powerful working class of the United States and the rest of the imperialist world to one of its lowest levels in this century. This temporary decline in militancy is rooted in an unprecedented four decades of relative prosperity in these centers of world capitalist power.

Workers in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China saw no chance of obtaining aid for revolutionary struggle from a revived workers' movement in the capitalist West. To workers in the East, imperialist capitalism appeared to be vir-



tually omnipotent.

This exaggerated impression of capitalism's power is backed up by the relatively subdued level of class struggle in the imperialist centers since the end of the 1940s—except for brief episodes of mass worker mobilizations such as the 1968 general strike in France.

This is in contrast to the repeated revolutionary challenges in the decades between the two World Wars and their immediate aftermath.

(For example, the German revolutions of 1918 and 1923, the British general strike of 1926, the Spanish Civil War, and the rise of the CIO in the United States after World War I; and the revolutionary upsurges in Eastern Europe, France, Italy, Greece, and China after World War II.)

In those 30 or so years the potential shown by workers for conquering state power was demonstrated for all to see in one revolutionary upsurge after another in the industrialized countries and throughout the world. The only thing standing in the way of socialist revolution in those years was the subjective factor—the failure of workers to construct a political party capable of leading them to revolutionary success.

Moreover, while the failure to solve the problem of revolutionary working class leadership—the subjective factor—remains the central problem to be solved, the relative stability of capitalism has made the subjective factor an objective one for small revolutionary socialist groups.

Of course, it has now become unmistakably clear that the prolonged period of relative capitalist stability is rapidly approaching an end. A crisis that threatens to shake all sectors of the capitalist world to its foundations is rumbling beneath its surface. And while, so far, the

world's ruling classes have been able to keep a lid on the volcanic forces gestating underground, they have nevertheless been seriously weakened.

Crises on the horizon

This is expressed in such things as imperialism's inability to yet take advantage of the gigantic shake-ups in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Even the powerful German imperialists have expended more of their capital reserves to integrate the former East Germany into their economy than they expected. This has compelled them to try to make their working class foot the bill.

This has already begun to jolt German workers, the most powerful in Western Europe, toward class struggle in defense of their living standards as is evidenced by the recent successful railroad strike.

Moreover, German capitalism's capacity for getting a firm grip on their economic woes is, for the first time since World War II, in doubt.

The Germans, carrying the rest of Western Europe in their tow, have been forced to risk destabilizing all of Europe and the United States by following a financial policy that runs counter to the needs of the rest of the capitalist world. They have been raising interest rates to fight inflation and attract capital to their economy. Meanwhile, the rest of the world has been lowering interest rates in the hopes of reviving their stagnating economies.

This factor—the long period of relative stability that is the root cause of the relative passivity of workers in the imperialist centers of world capitalism—is mainly responsible for holding back the working classes in the degenerating workers' states from beginning their own struggle, in their own name and in their own class interests.

Hence, it is unlikely that a mass revolutionary workers' movement can be built in the workers' states if it appears that its basic premise—the revolutionary capability of the working class, especially in the most developed capitalist countries—seems to conflict with the evidence of the last 40 years.

Why? The basic social, economic, and political problem of the workers' states from the outset was that the social revolutions beginning in October 1917 have been essentially restricted to the backward countries of the world. The basic premise of revolutionary Marxism is that the construction of socialism can begin only at the highest economic levels reached by capitalism.

That's why the leaders of the Russian Revolution looked to the extension of their revolution to one of more developed capitalist countries as their only real hope for socialist development.

Backward Russia, most of eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba, need the enormous material resources that would come from a socialist revolution in Germany, England, France, Japan, or the United States, to reach the productive levels of advanced capitalism and surpass it.

To sum up, then: When the coming crises of collapsing capitalist stability once again impels workers everywhere toward revolutionary mass action in defense of their living standards, the world's working classes will once again demonstrate that they alone have the capacity to rescue the human race from capitalist barbarism.

As in the past, every victory by workers in any country will inspire workers in every other country to follow their example, and ultimately go forward toward an authentically new order of world socialism.—N. W.

(continued from previous page)

longer agents of change but obstacles to it. Workers in several cities have attacked factory directors who have tried to introduce market-oriented changes, and there are growing reports of strikes and acts of sabotage.

"Those incidents suggest that opposition to fundamental change is increasingly coming not only from octogenarian Communist hard-liners [sic] but also from many ordinary blue-collar workers."

A little farther along Kristof points more accurately to the real roles of workers and bureaucrats. He writes:

"There's enormous frustration out there with the reforms," a Chinese economic official said. "The leaders are running scared.... Reform used to be very easy...[but] in the 1990s, the agenda is different. While virtually all Chinese endorse

'reform' as a general slogan, many workers worry about what it will mean: higher rents, rising rice prices, and destroying the 'iron rice bowl' system that guarantees workers stable employment and steady incomes.

"According to a folk ditty now making the rounds among workers: Before liberation, we had a clay rice bowl. Then Chairman Mao gave us an iron rice bowl. Deng Xiaoping [currently the most authoritative spokesman for the Chinese Stalinist dictatorship] poked a hole in it. Since reform, we've had a porcelain rice bowl."

The Times reporter gives his readers a taste of how workers view the attack upon their economic security: "A porcelain rice bowl looks rather elegant," a manual laborer in her 40s explained dryly. "But it's no more sturdy than one made of clay." A 26-year-old woman who works in a factory said that when she was in the university,

she believed that most Chinese wanted more economic liberalization. But now she figures that aside from intellectuals, many people are against fundamental changes....

"Early this year, a laid-off driver at a toothpaste factory drove his truck over his boss, a pioneering manager who had shaken up his factory by adopting Western-style management practices. The central Government suggested that the factory manager be hailed as a 'martyr' for reform, but the factory workers refused to nominate the manager for the honor....

"The Government's talking about smashing our iron rice bowls, and making us pay for our own medical care," said a 29-year-old worker in Beijing. "Companies are even beginning to lay off workers! Of course folks are angry...."

The Times reporter concluded on this obvious note: "Top leaders reportedly met recently to discuss the problem and decided

to proceed cautiously for fear of setting off labor unrest."

"Labor unrest" is something that terrifies Stalinist bureaucrats, because the bureaucracy does not have real roots in the collective economy. It is a parasitic growth that can be swept away rapidly in an upsurge, as happened, in a matter of weeks for example, during the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

Unless the bureaucrats can transform themselves into capitalists, they have no future. But in the attempt to do that, they are putting their necks in a noose. ■

¹ The claimed value here of enterprises is no more reliable than the alleged value in dollars of wages paid in rubles—wages in these societies are only a small part of actual compensation, which includes a large portion of living costs provided free or below the cost of production.

By ASHER HARER

George Novack was born in Boston, Mass., in 1905. He died in New York City on July 30, 1992.

For most of his 86 years of life, Novack was deeply, passionately involved in the struggle for socialism, for the American revolution, which, as Leon Trotsky said, "will lift the whole world on its shoulders!"

I first met George Novack in 1941, at a convention of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). To me, Novack was one of the "old timers," one of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. I was a trade-unionist newcomer who had just begun to study Marxist theory, Marxist philosophy. Novack already had a name in this field. I wanted to talk to him.

Luckily, during a lunch break, we happened to be seated at the same table. I introduced myself and asked a few questions. I was rewarded with a short lecture on the great importance of studying Marxist philosophy. He was very helpful and friendly. He suggested books, like Lenin's "Materialism and Empirico-Criticism." In parting, he told me that I should write to him if I had further questions. I did so.

The next time I came to New York, I slept on a couch in George and Evelyn's front room. (Evelyn Reed, Novack's wife and political collaborator, author of several books on women's liberation, died in 1979.)

We became friends. Of course, we talked mostly politics and about people involved in politics. I knew nothing of his early life until his book "Polemics in Marxist Philosophy" came out in 1978.

In his own words: "As the only son of immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe, I escaped the lot of a rabbinical student thanks to the voyage of my father and mother to the New World late in the 19th century. This fortuitous circumstance has buttressed my belief in the determinate effect of their social situation on people's destinies. Growing up in the suburbs of Boston, I was directed in high school toward Harvard. ... To my family this upward step on the educational ladder was to provide a passport to success and wealth in one of the professions or as a business executive. Alas for the dreams of parents for their children! My university training was to be put to quite different uses."

A student at Harvard

At Harvard, Novack began in the field of creative writing and literature, but soon switched to philosophy. This was in the early, conservative 1920s when capitalism was booming—no courses in Marxist philosophy were available. He studied every philosopher from Plato, to Kant, to the pragmatism of John Dewey. Later, as a Marxist, he was to put all this valuable knowledge to good use.

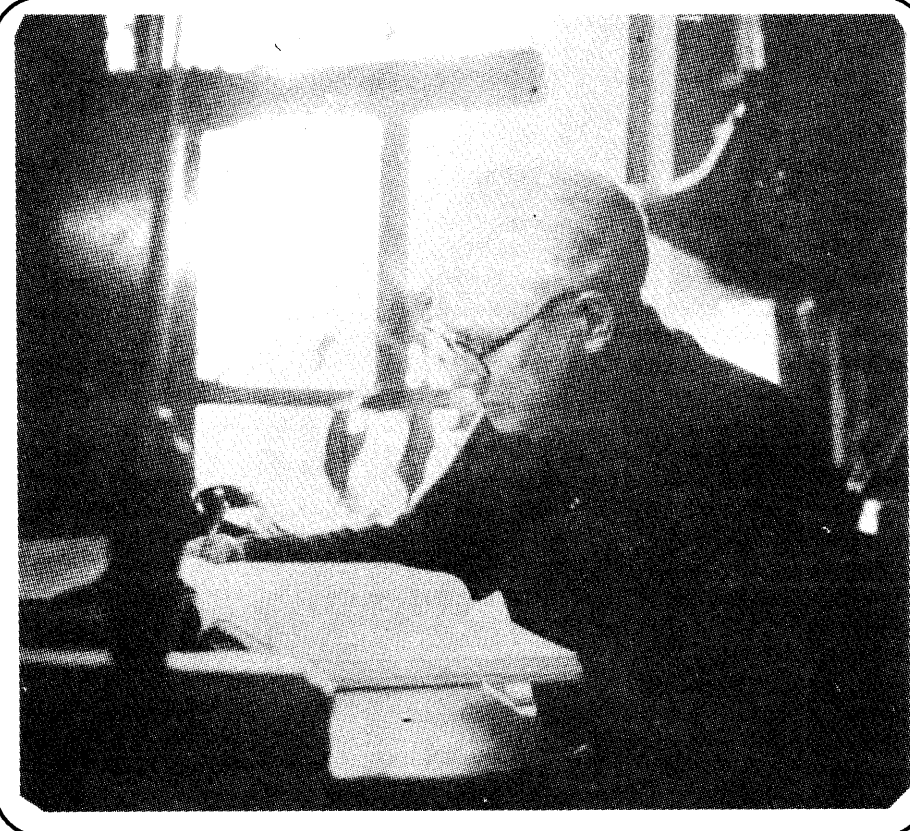
While at Harvard, he also read the non-recommended books of the "muckrakers"—Upton Sinclair's exposures of the evils of capitalism in "The Brass Check" and "The Goose Step," and Lewis Mumford's "The Golden Day," a criticism of the crass commercialism of 19th century American culture.

Novack recalled that "at the end of the book, Mumford invoked Walt Whitman's invitation to remold America along plebeian, democratic lines: 'Allons! The road is before us!'"

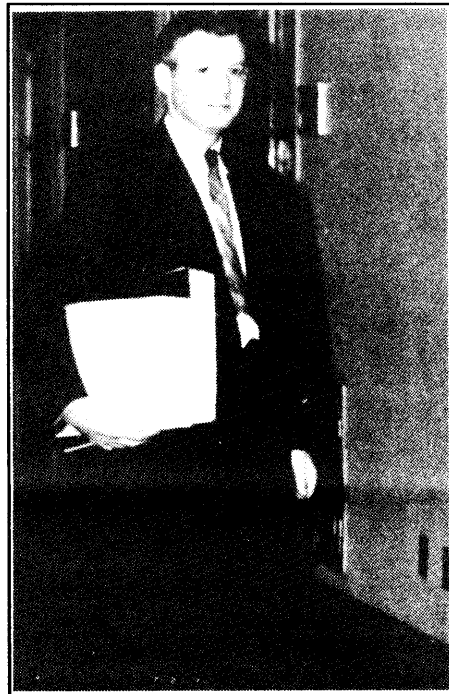
"As naively idealistic youth will do, I took this injunction more literally than the author intended, and wanted to send him word that I was all set to join the glorious crusade to conceive the new world he projected. When I later migrated to New York and became acquainted with Mumford, I soon saw the unrealism of his utopian plans for making this country into a 'complete and harmonious society' without a political confrontation with the power of the ruling class." ("Polemics," pages 14 and 15.)

By 1927, Novack had become bored with Harvard and left without a degree. In New York, he entered the publishing business. In a short time, he became the advertising manager for the big publishing

GEORGE NOVACK REMEMBERED



George Novack in 1979



Novack in 1944 on his way to present petitions for release of Minneapolis 18.

firm, E.P. Dutton (1929 to 1933).

Alan Wald, in his book "The New York Intellectuals" (University of South Carolina Press, 1987), relates how Novack in New York became acquainted with leftist writers and activists, including Trotskyists. Wald says that under the impact of the 1929 stock market crash and the subsequent Great Depression of the 1930s, Novack "reoriented his thinking." He began to study Marx and Trotsky.

Novack continued to work in the publishing business, but became more and more involved in politics. He played a key role in several major battles in the defense of civil liberties. This included the Scottsboro Case in Alabama in 1933, where nine black youth were falsely accused of raping two white women. The youths were sentenced to death or long prison terms. On appeal, the sentences were overturned and they were freed.

In the fall of 1933, Novack attended a meeting at Irving Plaza in New York at which James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman and Diego Rivera—the Mexican muralist—proclaimed the need for a new international to replace the Stalinist international. Soon afterwards, Novack joined the fledgling Trotskyist group headed by Cannon—the Communist League of America (CLA)—and plunged full time into political activity as a speaker, writer, and organizer.

Defense of Leon Trotsky

On Jan. 9, 1937, Leon Trotsky and his wife, Natalia, arrived at the port of Tampi-

co, Mexico. Trotsky, exiled by Stalin and hounded from country to country, had been granted political asylum by Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas.

In the words of Natalia Trotsky: "Lev Davidovich [Trotsky] warned that he would refuse to disembark unless friends came to meet us ... the GPU had its agents in Mexico ... then a launch drew up and all our fears evaporated. We were greeted by honest and smiling faces ... Max Shachtman, George Novack, who introduced himself as secretary of the Trotsky Defense Committee in the United States; the painter Freda Kahlo ... the artist Diego Rivera; journalists; Mexican officials; and comrades. ... There was encouraging news from New York; the whole New World seemed to have been incensed by the Moscow crimes. We gulped the air of freedom." ("The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky," Victor Serge and Natalia Sedov Trotsky, Basic Books, Inc., page 210.)

In 1936, Novack became the national secretary of the American Committee for Defense of Leon Trotsky. He helped organize the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made Against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials. In April 1937, this commission—chaired by eminent philosopher and educator John Dewey—went to Mexico, interrogated Trotsky for eight days, and concluded: "We therefore find the Moscow Trials to be frame-ups. We therefore find Trotsky and Sedov [Trotsky's son] not guilty." ("Not Guilty: Report of the Commission," Harper & Brothers, 1938.)

James T. Farrell, author and close friend of Novack and the American Trotskyists, said that Trotsky "utterly demolished the macabre fables of the Moscow Trials for any human being who is susceptible to reason." ("New York Intellectuals," page 139.)

In 1941, when the U.S. government indicted 29 leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and Trotskyist leaders of the Teamsters union in Minneapolis, Novack became national secretary of the Civil Rights Defense Committee (CRDC). One hundred and fifty unions, representing five million workers, and hundreds of other supporters of civil liberties, backed the Minneapolis Case victims. (A detailed story of the Minneapolis Case appeared in *Socialist Action*, December 1991.)

A Marxist educator

George Novack was a person of many talents. In my opinion, however, his greatest contributions were as the Marxist scholar and educator who most successfully blended political activity with the production of popular pamphlets and books that reached a broader public. His

style is lucid, popular, but never superficial, completely accessible to beginners in the study of Marxism.

Novack took up the polemical cudgels against just about every opponent or critic of Marxism, Trotskyism, and any enemy of historical materialism and dialectical materialism. He wrote or edited 15 books, ranging from "Origins of Materialism" (Pathfinder Press, 1965) to "Polemics in Marxist Philosophy" (Pathfinder 1978).

In "Polemics" (pages 269-70), Novack tells of a conversation he had with Trotsky the day after Trotsky landed in Mexico. "Trotsky brought forward the name of Max Eastman ... he became tense, agitated. 'Upon going back to the States,' he urged, 'you comrades must at once take up the struggle against Eastman's distortion and repudiation of dialectical materialism. There is nothing more important than this. Pragmatism, empiricism, is the great curse of American thought. You must inoculate younger comrades against its infection.'"

Novack was greatly influenced by this conversation. He did what Trotsky asked of him.

In "Pragmatism Versus Marxism, an Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy" (Pathfinder Press, 1975), he explains and refutes the philosophy of history of the American capitalist class, starting with Benjamin Franklin: "Time is money" and "Wealth is happiness."

Novack asks the question, "What is pragmatism? First pragmatism is what pragmatism does. It is the habit of acting in disregard of solidly-based scientific rules and tested principles ... pragmatic people rely not on laws, rules and principles which reflect the determinate factors of objective reality, but principally upon make-shift, rule-of-thumb methods and improvisations based on what they believe might be immediately advantageous. Such is the kind of practice out of which the theorizing of pragmatic philosophy has grown."

He then cites a Mobil Oil Corporation advertisement: "Businessmen are pragmatists, and with their daily feedback, they readily abandon dogma whenever their survival instincts tell them to. It has become less and less a question of what they want to do or might like to do, but what their common sense and survival instinct tell them what they have to do." (Page 17, my emphasis.)

He goes on to explain that the pragmatist theoreticians, especially liberals like John Dewey, are both progressive and reactionary: They want to reform capitalist society to meet the needs of the proletariat and they support many progressive causes, but their basic philosophy defends capitalism.

Read Novack! His books are available at Socialist Action bookshops and booktables. ■

In 1979, when Evelyn Reed died, my wife, Ruth, and I invited George to visit us in San Francisco. He came and stayed for several days. Mostly we reminisced about Evelyn. George played Fats Waller phonograph records (Evelyn's favorite) over and over again, with tears in his eyes. We renewed our friendship.

But in 1981, when the new Jack Barnes leadership of the Socialist Workers Party began to renounce Trotskyism, to destroy democracy in the SWP—and then in 1983 proceeded to expel and ostracize most of the surviving founders of the party—Novack remained silent. He neither attacked nor defended, but simply retired to the sidelines. He would no longer talk politics with old friends and comrades.

Cannon explained in his book "The History of American Trotskyism" that some people cannot surmount the wall of ostracism. I believe that problem was George's personal tragedy. He knew better.

However, George Novack will always be remembered with respect and affection for the great contributions he made to the study of Marxism.—A.H.

The mounting offensive against U.S. workers and the coming fightback

Carl Finamore/Socialist Action



The following is an abridged version of the labor movement section of Socialist Action's 1992 Political Resolution.

The complete resolution was approved by majority vote at the 5th National Convention of Socialist Action, held in San Francisco, Calif., July 30-Aug. 2, 1992.

The past decade has been marked by the continued decline of the standard of living of the American working class.

This is directly related to the world crisis of imperialism. There are no signs that there has been any reversal in this downward trend. To the contrary, it appears that the initially limited and measured attacks by the capitalist class, directed against the least organized sectors of workers, are today escalating and directed at the main bastions of the industrial working class.

The massive layoffs in the automobile industry, in rail, and elsewhere—already implemented, in addition to those contemplated in the next several years—can only have a ripple effect in all related production sectors.

Each day, reports of longterm layoffs and plant closures—amounting to hundreds of thousands of job losses—shock a working class that for the first time in decades has come to see job security as the number one priority in their lives.

Announced layoffs at General Motors, amounting to 74,000 in four years, and accompanied by the closing of 21 still-undefined plants, are matched by similar figures in other industries.

The right to a job, once considered a fact of life for most people in capitalist America, is now taken for granted by no one.

As in the past, the effects of the continued decline of capitalism are felt most acutely by the most oppressed sectors, especially in the Black and Latino communities and among women. We fully expect these sectors to be in the forefront of the coming fightbacks.

For a time government bureaucrats and public agencies tried to camouflage, by statistical juggling, the extent of the layoffs and unemployment. But the reality could not be kept hidden for long, especially from those who were the victims.

Nationally syndicated columnist Carl T. Rowan summarized the predicament faced by those who fool around with the figures:

"How on earth," Rowan writes, "do 241,000 American jobs disappear in the month of October [1991] and still permit the Bureau of Labor Statistics to tell us last Friday that the unemployment rate

"The right to a job, once considered a fact of life for most people in capitalist America, is now taken for granted by no one."

was unchanged at 6.8 percent?"

Rowan answers his own question succinctly: "Because the jobless rate was distorted by the fact that some 300,000 out-of-work Americans became so helpless in October that they stopped looking for jobs, and the government stopped counting them as among the jobless."

Rowan, who estimates the real unemployment rate at over 10 percent and who forecasts that "terrible misery lies ahead for millions of Americans," also factors into the picture the millions, not counted in the statistics, who work part time jobs at wages below the poverty line.

"More and more Americans," Carl T. Rowan concludes, "including Republicans and Bush supporters of every stripe, long ago looked at the unemployment lines, the welfare and food stamp rolls, the death of Pan Am, Eastern and Midway airlines this year, cutbacks at IBM and dozens of other corporations, and accepted a reality that Bush evades in his political desperation: America is going to hell without even a handbasket in terms of the economy."

Working more for less

Even the real unemployment rate, well over 10 percent, masks another reality that has crept into the fabric of American life: Millions of Americans, previously employed at union wages, have been compelled to accept work at qualitatively reduced wage rates.

The two-tier wage system—which was originally designed to reduce the wages of a future generation—has now, a decade later, come home with a vengeance, as the current adult generation is now employed at second or third tier rates.

In addition, whole sectors of the working class, previously paid relatively high wage rates, find themselves now doing the same work as in the past—and often even

more work—for less.

The cushioning effect of the two-income family, which yesterday allowed most workers to retain a standard of living roughly equivalent to their parents, has been eroded. And today's youth, even if they are able to find work, and even if they live in two-income households, cannot live as their parents did in terms of standard of living.

Over the past 20 years, the percentage of families with two incomes has increased from 41.5 percent to 58.1 percent.

The ratio of debt to income for the same families has increased in the same period from 61.8 percent to 80.2 percent, while the percentage of income paid for taxes has increased from 20.9 percent to 22.6 percent.

The percentage of income paid by "rich families" declined in the same period from 35.9 percent to 26.7 percent.

The estimated decline in real wages of 13 percent over the past 10 years, excluding inflation, is but one measure of the depth of the assault on the employed work force. The attacks on jobs and wages have been accompanied by drastic cuts in the social wage: healthcare, unemployment insurance, and other social benefits previously won in sometimes bitter social struggles.

Today's youth face the bleakest prospects in decades. School tuition hikes have significantly reduced access to higher education and job training. The cost of housing, not to mention the cost of everyday living, has escalated far beyond their capacity to pay. The dream of home ownership is gone, more often than not replaced by the reality of living, communal style, in crowded apartments at superinflated rents, or, at home for extended periods, with parents or relatives.

The decline of capitalism has brought

with it the usual signs of terrible social disintegration.

Countless thousands of previously-employed workers are now among the homeless, literally cast onto the street with no hope. The vast cuts in health services have deeply affected millions. The trillions spent on the federal war budget contrasts as never before with the inadequate sums spent on cures for diseases such as AIDS, cancer and heart disease.

And finally, the level of environmental destruction has reached dangerous proportions, at the work place and in society as a whole.

The combined effect of these attacks has deeply affected the consciousness of the working class. The degree of confidence in capitalism and in capitalist politics is at an all time low. Receptivity to socialist ideas should be

on the rise in the months and years to come.

Rightward shift of ruling class

Every opinion poll registers growing disillusionment with both the Democrats and the Republicans. The growing discontent at the work place, the increased questioning of government support to the capitalist plunder of public resources (continuing bailouts of the rich), and the contempt held for corporations whose claims of "poverty" are matched only by the astronomical salaries paid to top executives, all point to the increasing hostility of working people to the status quo.

Most important, fewer of today's workers believe that the current economic crisis is a temporary aberration, to be reversed with the election of a new president or with the implementation of a magical new economic policy.

They are beginning to realize that there are fundamental structural flaws in the U.S. economy, that will not be addressed by either the band-aid social measures advocated by liberal capitalists, or the conservatives' policy of continued gifts and tax breaks to the rich to supposedly "stimulate" the economy.

While we have seen a definite shift to the right in ruling class politics, we have not seen a significant corresponding shift in working class thinking and action.

The employers, as always, seek to place the blame for the inherent horrors of their system—including war, poverty, unemployment, racism and sexism—on the oppressed themselves. The maximization of profits requires the bosses to set one sector of the workers against another.

Ruling-class-promoted theories of racial and sexual inequality are designed to lower the wages of the most oppressed and, at the same time, to exert a downward pressure on wages of the working class as a whole.

The emergence of capitalist politicians like David Duke and Patrick Buchanan is an expression of a general shift to the right in ruling class circles. The Dukes and Buchanans today articulate in the most virulent forms the same ideas promoted with more sugar coating by the ruling class as a whole.

A central function of these extreme-right politicians is to appear as an "anti-establishment" force for change. Their more blatant anti-Black, anti-woman, anti-

(continued on page 10)

(continued from page 9)

union, anti-gay, anti-lesbian, and anti-poor; declarations are directed against the no-less reactionary Democratic Party "liberals."

Compared to Duke and Buchanan, the run-of-the-mill capitalist politicians look like liberals—even as they scamper, under this prodding, ever rightward. The ultraright thunder thus serves to exert pressure from the ruling class to counter the growing anti-capitalist moods that are developing as a result of the deepening economic crisis.

Lessons of the Gulf War

One year ago, many left political currents bemoaned what they considered to be a rightward shift in public opinion following the U.S.-led imperialist slaughter of the Iraqi people during the Gulf War.

We rejected this notion. During the months preceding "Desert Storm," we witnessed a degree of unity and confidence among the components of the antiwar movement unprecedented in decades.

The platforms of the movement and the composition of its mass actions revealed a generalized discontent with the conditions of life in capitalist America. The involvement of labor unions, including rank-and-file activists, the women's movement, oppressed nationalities and youth, in massive contingents in the streets, exceeded anything seen in the recent past. In a period of a few weeks, mass actions involving almost one million people developed.

Despite a jingoistic media at the service of the warmakers, literally every opinion poll conducted before the actual start of the war indicated majority opposition to U.S. intervention.

This was particularly noted in the Black community, where the most oppressed feared that their children would again be among the first to be spent as cannon fodder in a racist war. Black-led protests in cities like Oakland, Calif., compelled

school boards to discontinue their policy of turning over the names of recent graduates to local military recruiting centers.

Organizations in the Black community like the Nation of Islam spoke out forcefully against the Gulf War, with leading representatives in Chicago and Boston agreeing to speak at public meetings as supporters of the growing protests.

The antiwar movement developed in the face of a difficult tactical situation confronting its central leadership. Sadaam Hussein was seen by no one as a representative of the oppressed. His record of genocide against the Iraqi Kurds, against Iran when it was in opposition to imperialism, and against his internal opposition, was well known.

In spite of this, the vast majority knew full well that the U.S. government's aims were even more reactionary than that of the Iraqi capitalist government and had nothing whatever to do with support to the right of oppressed nations to self determination.

The "patriotic fervor" following the war's quick end was more an expression of relief that American youth would soon return home unharmed than an expression of support for the racist and genocidal war organized by U.S. imperialism. In addition, hardly anyone knew of the extent of the vast slaughter perpetrated by the virtually unchallenged combined forces of world imperialism.

A little more than one year later, this "patriotism," which we characterized as "a mile wide and an inch deep," has evaporated. President Bush himself has seen his popularity, as measured in the opinion polls, slump dramatically despite his occasional efforts to call up his role in the Gulf War to deflect the attacks he faces from all quarters for the faltering economy.

Trade union polls

The nationwide polls among trade unionists—initiated by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) together with the New York-based Labor Institute—are indicative of

Offensive against America



It's been a long time: Over 500,000 trade unionists demonstrated in Washington, D.C., Sept. 19, 1981. In the interim, government and employers have increased

current trends in working-class thinking.

These organizations have been associated with the educational efforts of Labor Party Advocates, an organization initiated by OCAW official Tony Mazzocchi. The surveys were conducted among OCAW locals, International Association of Machinists (IAM) locals, and several other locals of public employees, autoworkers, and construction trades workers. A number of OCAW and AFSCME full-time staff units were also surveyed separately.

Of the 15 locals surveyed, huge majorities indicated that health benefits, job security, and wages were their central concerns.

One of the IAM locals involved in the polling was based in a defense plant. The plant's relation to a section of the defense industry facing cutbacks led 73 percent of the 256 members who responded to list "job security" as their main concern. This was usually placed a high second by other locals.

In response to the question, "What kind of job is labor doing in the field of political action?", 71.1 percent of this defense plant local responded, "A poor job" or "A very poor job."

In response to the question, "Who best represents the interests of working people?", 14 of the 15 locals recorded majority votes for the category "neither party." The choice included the categories "Democrats" and "Republicans," as well as "neither party."

All but two locals (representing postal workers) answered "yes" in the majority to the question, "Do both parties care more about big business than they do about working people?" Eighty-two percent of the defense-plant local also said, "yes."

Finally, nine of 15 unions registered majority "yes" votes to the question, "Is it time to build a new party for working people independent of the Democratic and Republican Parties?"

Three union staff units were surveyed. Not unexpectedly, they ended up on the opposite end of the rank-and-file votes in relation to virtually every issue surveyed. Only 25 percent of the 56 full-time OCAW staff surveyed, for example, agreed with the proposition that it's time for labor to build a new and independent party of working people, as opposed to 52.8 percent of the OCAW rank and file.

State of the fightback

There is a general decline in the level of confidence in capitalism among U.S. workers, including a rising level of fear and anxiety about the future, increasing uncertainty about the permanency of employment, about ability to pay bills, about mounting worker indebtedness to banks and credit card outfits, and generalized skepticism about the future.

Today, millions of workers, who carry the burden of heavy home mortgages and car payments—not to mention other debts, high rents, etc.—are well aware that they are not far from disaster should they lose their jobs.

Whole communities have been thrown into turmoil with the closing of "obsolete" plants, a fact of life that is becoming generalized across the country, as is the spectacle of literally thousands of workers waiting on endless lines to apply for handfuls of jobs. The increased level of consciousness resulting from this assault, however, has yet to be matched by even the beginnings of a concerted fightback.

During the past decade, there has been an overall retreat of the working class as a whole—and the unionized sector in particular—in the face of the employer offensive. With a few notable exceptions, the retreat occurred without a fightback.

Workers, stunned by the attacks, were at the same time cautious about entering the field of struggle—especially when it appeared there was still room to retreat and survive. But this "room" has narrowed considerably in the past period, as the ruling class—despite carefully calculated efforts to avoid big confrontations with the major industrial centers of working class power—is compelled to attempt to raise its rate of profits by further reducing the general standard of living.

The idea that concessions could be recouped in the future—perhaps with the next upturn—or that the decline in wages and working conditions could be absorbed with perhaps a modest extension of the work day, a bit more overtime, working a few more days, a profit-sharing plan, or perhaps the additional income of a spouse or other member of the family unit all tended to militate against an immediate fightback.

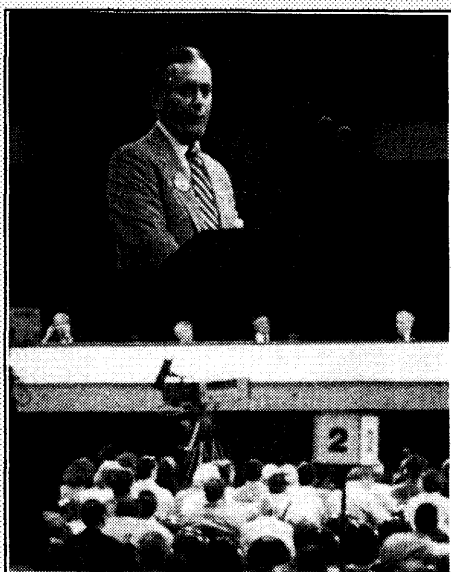
The decades-long relative stability of world capitalism, albeit marked as it was in several countries of Europe by occasional outbursts of working class struggle, tended to dampen the prospects for revolutionary socialists in the imperialist centers and in the United States in particular.

It appears that this period of relative stability is coming to a close. The capitalist margins for manipulation of the economy to postpone major confrontations with decisive industrial sectors of the working class have narrowed considerably.

Significantly, the hard-nose approach of the Caterpillar Corp. to the striking United Auto Worker (UAW) members last April, is one important sign that the U.S. rulers are preparing for a showdown with the still-powerful unions based in industry.

And the fact that the UAW misleadership capitulated to Caterpillar, when the employer threatened to hire replacement workers, is another confirmation that a

Fightback formations are emerging

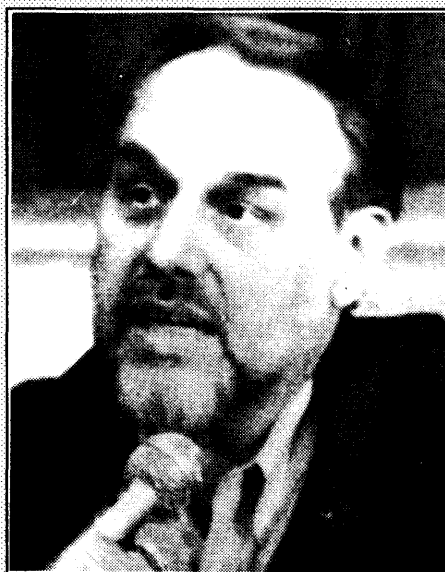


Teamsters' Ron Carey

One important symptom of the new mood among organized workers was the election of Ron Carey to the Teamsters union presidency. Carey, who was an underdog, ran on a platform of no concessions to the employers and democratic reforms within the union. While it is too soon to judge the policies and mettle of the newly elected Carey leadership of the Teamsters, the new leadership's capacity to lead the ranks in the kind of struggle necessary to reverse the trend of defeats will be tested in the coming months.

The Carey victory should not be underestimated. The door is opened wider than ever for democratic currents to wrest control of the still bureaucratically controlled local and regional Teamster units. This will not be an automatic process, nor will it be accomplished by directives from the top. As in the past, it will require a class-struggle leadership prepared to mobilize the angry ranks against the bosses in mass confrontations in the best labor traditions.

Another union reform movement is led by Jerry Tucker of the New Direc-



Autoworkers' Jerry Tucker

tions Caucus of the United Automobile Workers (UAW). Tucker recently challenged UAW president and hardened business union bureaucrat Owen Bieber for the UAW's top spot. And although he lost the election, Tucker and New Directions represent a rebellious trend in the UAW membership, which has dropped from 1.4 million in 1974 to 930,000 today.

Tucker has spent most of the past 20 years as a union staffer. He supports a caucus platform that includes planks on union democracy, "more equitable collective bargaining," organizing the unorganized and labor solidarity, not to mention talk of considering "independent political action."

With the bitter taste of the Caterpillar defeat still in their mouths, and the knowledge that the big three automakers will try to win the same concessions in upcoming contract negotiations, the UAW rank and file will be increasingly receptive to the ideas advocated by New Directions, which is, at this stage, basically a reform movement and not a class struggle left wing. ■

continue their policy
of recent gradu-
ating centers.

Black community
spoke out force-
fully during the
Vietnam War, with leading
figures in Chicago and Boston
addressing public meetings as
well as leading protests.

Development in the
industrial situation con-
fronted leadership. Sadaam
Hussein is one as a represen-
tative. His record of
brutality against
Iraqi Kurds, against
the position to imperil
international opposition,

A vast majority knew
the government's aims
were more than that of the
imperialist and had nothing
to do with the right of
self-determination.

Following the
collapse of the expression of
youth would soon
become an expression
of a genocidal war
of imperialism. In addi-
tion, the extent of
the violence perpetrated by the virtu-
alized forces of world

One year later, this
situation was characterized as "a
deep," has evaporat-
ed. Itself has seen his
role in the opinion
of the attacks he faces
in a faltering economy.

Opinion polls

Among trade union-
ists in Oil, Chemical and
International Union
of the New York-
area are indicative of

Emerging



Owen Bieber

ited Automobile
er recently chal-
lenged and hardened
at Owen Bieber
t. And although
Bieber and New
York rebellious trend in
the area, which has
been a tradition in 1974 to

st of the past 20
years. He supports a
platform that in-
cludes planks on
equitable col-
lectivizing the
solidarity, not to
be "independent

of the Caterpillar
plants, and the
three automakers
concessions in
negotiations, the
will be increasingly
advocated by New
York in this stage, basi-
cally and not a class

Offensive against American workers



It's been a long time: Over 500,000 trade unionists demonstrated in Washington, D.C. on the first Solidarity day, Sept. 19, 1981. In the interim, government and employers have increased attacks on working people.

current trends in working-class thinking.

These organizations have been associated with the educational efforts of Labor Party Advocates, an organization initiated by OCAW official Tony Mazzocchi. The surveys were conducted among OCAW locals, International Association of Machinists (IAM) locals, and several other locals of public employees, autoworkers, and construction trades workers. A number of OCAW and AFSCME full-time staff units were also surveyed separately.

Of the 15 locals surveyed, huge majorities indicated that health benefits, job security, and wages were their central concerns.

One of the IAM locals involved in the polling was based in a defense plant. The plant's relation to a section of the defense industry facing cutbacks led 73 percent of the 256 members who responded to list "job security" as their main concern. This was usually placed a high second by other locals.

In response to the question, "What kind of job is labor doing in the field of political action?", 71.1 percent of this defense plant local responded, "A poor job" or "A very poor job."

In response to the question, "Who best represents the interests of working people?", 14 of the 15 locals recorded majority votes for the category "neither party." The choice included the categories "Democrats" and "Republicans," as well as "neither party."

All but two locals (representing postal workers) answered "yes" in the majority to the question, "Do both parties care more about big business than they do about working people?" Eighty-two percent of the defense-plant local also said, "yes."

Finally, nine of 15 unions registered majority "yes" votes to the question, "Is it time to build a new party for working people independent of the Democratic and Republican Parties?"

Three union staff units were surveyed. Not unexpectedly, they ended up on the opposite end of the rank-and-file votes in relation to virtually every issue surveyed. Only 25 percent of the 56 full-time OCAW staff surveyed, for example, agreed with the proposition that it's time for labor to build a new and independent party of working people, as opposed to 52.8 percent of the OCAW rank and file.

State of the fightback

There is a general decline in the level of confidence in capitalism among U.S. workers, including a rising level of fear and anxiety about the future, increasing uncertainty about the permanency of employment, about ability to pay bills, about mounting worker indebtedness to banks and credit card outfits, and generalized skepticism about the future.

Today, millions of workers, who carry the burden of heavy home mortgages and car payments—not to mention other debts, high rents, etc.—are well aware that they are not far from disaster should they lose their jobs.

Whole communities have been thrown into turmoil with the closing of "obsolete" plants, a fact of life that is becoming generalized across the country, as is the spectacle of literally thousands of workers waiting on endless lines to apply for handfuls of jobs. The increased level of consciousness resulting from this assault, however, has yet to be matched by even the beginnings of a concerted fightback.

During the past decade, there has been an overall retreat of the working class as a whole—and the unionized sector in particular—in the face of the employer offensive. With a few notable exceptions, the retreat occurred without a fightback.

Workers, stunned by the attacks, were at the same time cautious about entering the field of struggle—especially when it appeared there was still room to retreat and survive. But this "room" has narrowed considerably in the past period, as the ruling class—despite carefully calculated efforts to avoid big confrontations with the major industrial centers of working class power—is compelled to attempt to raise its rate of profits by further reducing the general standard of living.

The idea that concessions could be recouped in the future—perhaps with the next upturn—or that the decline in wages and working conditions could be absorbed with perhaps a modest extension of the work day, a bit more overtime, working a few more days, a profit-sharing plan, or perhaps the additional income of a spouse or other member of the family unit all tended to militate against an immediate fightback.

The decades-long relative stability of world capitalism, albeit marked as it was in several countries of Europe by occasional outbursts of working class struggle, tended to dampen the prospects for revolutionary socialists in the imperialist centers and in the United States in particular.

It appears that this period of relative stability is coming to a close. The capitalist margins for manipulation of the economy to postpone major confrontations with decisive industrial sectors of the working class have narrowed considerably.

Significantly, the hard-nose approach of the Caterpillar Corp. to the striking United Auto Worker (UAW) members last April, is one important sign that the U.S. rulers are preparing for a showdown with the still-powerful unions based in industry.

And the fact that the UAW misleadership capitulated to Caterpillar, when the employer threatened to hire replacement workers, is another confirmation that a

new union leadership will have to be forged if the capitalist offensive is to be smashed.

But workers will not lightly enter the field of battle in decisive showdowns with the employers. They are aware of the stakes involved, of the power of the employers, and of the fact that they will receive little or no support from their misleaders. Yet, more and more, they will become aware that there is no alternative to struggle. To do less means being driven

back further into despair and unaccept-
able economic hardship.

The trade union bureaucracy

The 1991 AFL-CIO-sponsored mobilization of 325,000 workers in Washington, D.C., on Solidarity Day (Aug. 31) indicated both the deepening disorientation of workers, and the still-existing capacity of the trade-union bureaucracy to play a historic role as the "lieutenants of capital" in the workers' movement.

In this regard, it should be noted that the current misleadership of the unions has achieved a level of betrayal unmatched in previous generations. Its still firm grip on the unions has been accompanied by unprecedented efforts to integrate the unions into the institutions of the capitalist state.

It will require a mobilization of workers on a scale matched by, if not greater than, the mobilizations that launched the industrial union movement and the drive in the 1930s to remove this parasitic element from the workers' movement.

The level of bureaucratization of the unions is accompanied by an unprecedented level of corruption. The ruling class is totally familiar with this phenomenon, and in fact has consciously cultivated it over the decades.

This corruption serves a two-fold purpose for the employers. First, it results in "sweetheart contracts" in which workers' interests are secretly traded under-the-table payoffs to union officials. The short-term benefit to the bosses is always greater than the cost of the under-the-table payoffs.

But even more valuable to the employers is the longterm benefit resulting from the fact that the acceptance of bribes hangs over the head of bribe-takers, a future threat of exposure and imprisonment effectively locks the union official in the bosses' hip pocket.

In some construction trades, dec-

Mazzocchi's Labor Party Advocates

Where is it



LPA's Tony Mazzocchi

It has now been over a year since Labor Party Advocates (LPA) began its agitational campaign for a labor party based on the unions. Its central leader and public spokesperson, Tony Mazzocchi, has spoken to union and citywide meetings across the country. With few exceptions, his meetings have been organized by various left or socialist groups. They have universally failed to attract any significant sectors of the rank and file.

The meetings usually attract an assortment of left and socialist groups, a few officials who have given lip service to LPA, and a few local activists involved in union affairs.

The small size of these meetings essentially reflects the very low level of working-class combativity. In most cases, real efforts were made to publicize Mazzocchi's meetings within the broad labor movement. In New York City, a claimed distribution of 30,000 leaflets, many to union members, resulted in an

audience of 100. Smaller meetings took place in most other cities.

Meetings for Mazzocchi organized in local labor unions have resulted in the best to good rank-and-file attendance, depending on the caliber of those responsible for these meetings.

We note in this regard that there is a vast difference between the expressed rank-and-file sentiment for a labor party and a willingness to take the first organizational steps toward this goal. One thing to record an affirmative response in an LPA-sponsored opinion poll is quite another to take concrete steps toward independent political action.

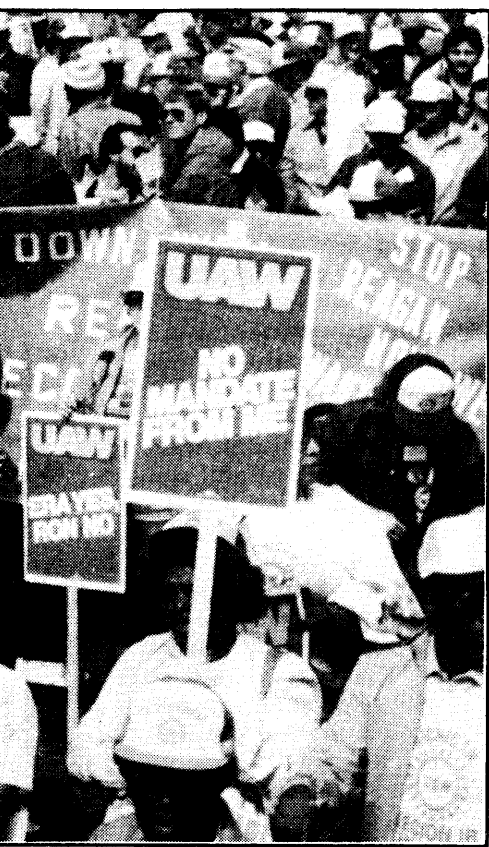
Socialist Action rejects the criticism of Mazzocchi's "leftist" critics that his minimal response to his efforts there is a product of LPA's lack of a program. Its failure to actually run candidates, to initiate "big" conferences, or even to improve its technical functioning, if Mazzocchi were to act on these criticisms, it is doubtful that his efforts alone—he is the only prominent official now promoting this goal—would make any measurable difference.

There are several more readily apparent reasons why the response to LPA has been so modest.

First, and most important, LPA is a product of a real fightback in the ranks of labor. Real moves in the direction of a break with capitalist politics and an advance toward a labor party will come from the struggles of the ranks and not from the field of action in the economic arena. Such a course of action will lead them from the outset into conflict with the capitalist state and all its representatives.

A fighting labor movement—a movement that breaks with the decades-long class-collaborationist union poli-

American workers



Washington, D.C. on the first Solidarity Day increased attacks on working people.

back further into despair and unacceptable economic hardship.

The trade union bureaucracy

The 1991 AFL-CIO-sponsored mobilization of 325,000 workers in Washington, D.C., on Solidarity Day (Aug. 31, 1991) indicated both the deepening discontent of workers, and the still-existing capacity of the trade-union bureaucracy to play its historic role as the "lieutenants of capitalism" in the workers' movement.

In this regard, it should be noted that the current misleadership of the unions has achieved a level of betrayal unmatched in previous generations. Its still firm grip on the unions has been accompanied by unprecedented efforts to integrate the unions into the institutions of the capitalist state.

It will require a mobilization of the ranks on a scale matched by, if not greater than, the mobilizations that launched the industrial union movement and the CIO in the 1930s to remove this parasitic growth on the workers' movement.

The level of bureaucratization in the unions is accompanied by an unprecedented level of corruption. The ruling class is totally familiar with this phenomenon and in fact has consciously cultivated it for decades.

This corruption serves a two-fold purpose for the employers. First, it usually results in "sweetheart contracts" in which workers' interests are secretly traded for under-the-table payoffs to union officials. The short-term benefit to the bosses is always greater than the cost of the under-the-table payoffs.

But even more valuable to the employers is the longterm benefit resulting from the fact that the acceptance of bribes forever hangs over the head of bribe-takers. The future threat of exposure and possible imprisonment effectively locks the corrupt union official in the bosses' hip pocket.

In some construction trades, decades of

class collaboration and givebacks have combined with the overall longterm depression in the industry to reduce the number of working tradespeople to a fraction of past union membership.

The spectacle of extremely high-paid bureaucrats presiding over union locals with many fewer members has become commonplace. It is clear that union dues are insufficient to pay their salaries. Union activity among these layers often consists of internecine warfare, such as raids on other unions, to retain their fiefdoms.

It is not unlikely in this period that many local unions will disappear outright or—as is more and more the case in the construction trades, rail, and elsewhere—the weaker locals will be absorbed in raids from larger union bodies. The result of the decades of relatively unchallenged rule by today's bureaucracy is a continuing decline in the percentage of unionized workers.

Industrial unions still decisive

Despite this decline, however, the decisive power of the industrial unions remains intact. The industrial unions in the heartland of American industry retain full capability to bring the economy to a grinding halt, as was spectacularly shown during the first few days of the shortlived, and leaderless, railroad workers' stoppage last year.

The increase in the number of union officials getting the boot from the rank and file, highlighted by the wholesale ouster of the corrupt top national leadership of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, is another indication of growing discontent in the trade union movement.

Similar ousters were registered in the rubber workers union and in the rail unions following the capitulation of the union bureaucracy to the government's imposition of a rail contract granting the employers virtually all of their major demands.

The top leaders of the rail unions had

been in office for decades. Last summer, the national conventions of the three major rail unions ousted their top leaders.

These events in rail, coupled with those in the Teamsters [see box on page 10] and elsewhere, have sent shockwaves through the bureaucracy. Their incapacity to offer any solution to the mounting employer attacks—other than reliance on the Democratic Party—is more widely understood than ever before by the rank and file.

But the eviction of a growing number of discredited bureaucrats in rail and in other unions has yet to be accompanied by the emergence of a fightback layer, or a class-struggle left wing. It is one thing to vote an official out of office; it is quite another to develop a class-struggle leadership.

The government/employer attack in rail is an instructive example of what they have in store for workers in the key industrial unions. In the epoch of imperialist decay, Trotsky explained, even the mere existence of independent trade unions cannot be tolerated by a ruling class that is ever more compelled to exercise total control over every aspect of capitalist production. The trade unions, he explained, become—through the bureaucracy—mere appendages of the capitalist state.

To the extent that the bureaucracy stands in the way of a real fight against the employers, increasing numbers of the rank and file will learn in the concrete about the bureaucrats' role as labor lieutenants for the employers.

Linking with natural allies

In summary, the industrial unions will be decisive in the coming struggles. But a genuine class-struggle orientation means that every sector of the class must be brought into the struggle.

The industrial unions, powerful as they are, are not enough to overcome capitalist power. As the confrontation between the industrial working class and the employers heats up, a new leadership will emerge that realizes that they have to reach out to their natural allies—the unemployed, the organized, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and women—if they are to win against the combined might of the employers and the government.

But to win these natural allies to their side in the fight against the employers, the unions will have to formulate a social program that addresses the needs of all working people. The unions will have to unconditionally support and champion the special demands of oppressed minorities and women.

Ultimately, these confrontations with the employers—and the government—to be successful, must be based on the democratic control of the union by the ranks.

This will be especially true when they use the weapon of the strike to stop the employers at the point of production. Winning a strike will involve direct and immediate confrontations with the repressive institutions of the capitalist state, as well as with the combined economic power of the employing class.

Against these odds, the only possibility of success rests in the formation of a class-struggle leadership—a leadership capable of mobilizing the entire working class and all its natural allies and thereby lead the coming workers' upsurge to victory.

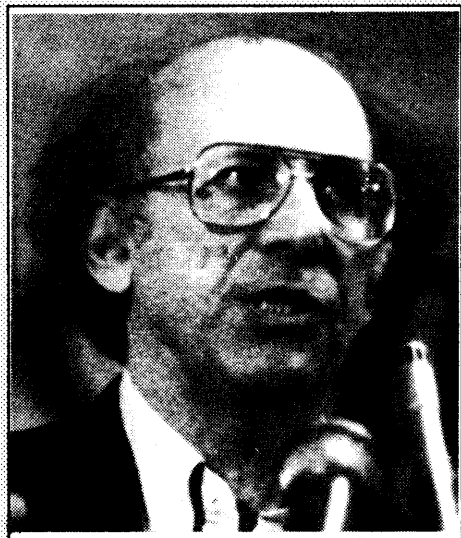
Furthermore, while union democracy is a prerequisite starting point today, it is just the beginning of the solution to labor's problems.

The class-struggle left wing formations we advocate will combine full union democracy with a strategic orientation toward a united and independent working class fightback in the economic and political arenas. The classical approach laid out by Trotsky in the *Transitional Program* will stand us and the coming generation of union fighters in good stead as the battles approach.

We remain confident that the coming mass fightback and heightened mass consciousness will provide the basis for a class struggle left wing in the unions. Such a development will reinvigorate the trade unions and other fighting institutions of the working class and, in the course of the struggle, change the world. ■

Mazzocchi's Labor Party Advocates:

Where is it today?



LPA's Tony Mazzocchi

It has now been over a year since Labor Party Advocates (LPA) began its agitational campaign for a labor party based on the unions. Its central leader and public spokesperson, Tony Mazzocchi, has spoken to union and citywide meetings across the country. With few exceptions, his meetings have been organized by various left or socialist groups. They have universally failed to attract any significant sectors of the rank and file.

The meetings usually attract an assortment of left and socialist groups, a few officials who have given lip service to LPA, and a few local activists involved in union affairs.

The small size of these meetings essentially reflects the very low level of working-class combativity. In most cases, real efforts were made to publicize Mazzocchi's meetings within the broad labor movement. In New York City, a claimed distribution of 30,000 leaflets, many to union members, resulted in an

audience of 100. Smaller meetings took place in most other cities.

Meetings for Mazzocchi organized by local labor unions have resulted in modest to good rank-and-file attendance, depending on the caliber of those unionists responsible for these meetings.

We note in this regard that there is a vast difference between the expression of rank-and-file sentiment for a labor party and a willingness to take the first organizational steps toward this goal. It is one thing to record an affirmative vote in an LPA-sponsored opinion poll, or in a conversation at the union hall. It is quite another to take concrete steps toward independent political action.

Socialist Action rejects the criticisms of Mazzocchi's "leftist" critics that the minimal response to his efforts thus far is a product of LPA's lack of a program, its failure to actually run candidates, to initiate "big" conferences, or even to improve its technical functioning. Even if Mazzocchi were to act on these criticisms, it is doubtful that his efforts alone—he is the only prominent union official now promoting this goal—would make any measurable difference.

There are several more readily apparent reasons why the response to LPA has been so modest.

First, and most important, LPA is not a product of a real fightback in the ranks of labor. Real moves in the direction of a break with capitalist politics and an advance toward a labor party will derive from the struggles of the ranks as they take the field of action in the economic arena. Such a course of action will lead them from the outset into conflict with the capitalist state and all its representatives.

A fighting labor movement—a movement that breaks with the decades of class-collaborationist union policies,

begins to throw up new leaders based on engaging the ranks in struggle, begins to register some real victories, and reaches out to the broader working class and its natural allies—will also be compelled to take the first important steps toward independent working-class political action on the electoral arena, as well as in the streets and on the picket lines.

Second, it would be a mistake to underestimate the hatred and mistrust of the ranks for the current bureaucracy. The idea that the present misleadership of the unions could inspire the ranks is illusory. Any labor party moves on their part would be, at best, mainly a means for putting pressure on capitalist politicians for a few crumbs.

While Mazzocchi has been given access to platforms to advocate his ideas by a significant layer of union officials, he appears to understand that such access will be abruptly ended if he goes too far.

The union bureaucrats have their own reasons for the friendly reception they give to Mazzocchi. They see his efforts as a potential lever to press for concessions from the politicians.

The politicians however, long ago called their bluff. They are well aware that no sector of today's labor hierarchy is prepared to do anything other than whimper unconvincingly about a labor party.

Unlike the bureaucrats, however, Mazzocchi's efforts appear to be sincere. He has spent a good portion of his life as a union militant, supporting many of the just causes of the progressive and labor movements.

Mazzocchi has opened a vital debate in the trade union movement. Discussions on the need for a labor party will serve to educate the first layers of emerging fighters about the need for independent political action. ■

Historical roots of ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia

(Part one of a two-part series)

By GERRY FOLEY

The turbulent history of the Balkan peninsula explains the complexity of the national question in the former Yugoslavia. No people living in this highway of invasions, this border between Central Europe and the Mediterranean, between the Near East and the West, has ever been left to itself long enough to build a stable national life, let alone an enduring national state.

From the early Middle Ages, the Balkan peninsula was an area of competition between the Byzantine empire, the patron of the Eastern Orthodox religion; Austria, the main medieval Catholic state; the city state of Venice; and later between the Austrian and Ottoman Turkish empires. The Austro-Hungarians and Ottomans ("Turks") fought over it for nearly 400 years.

Until modern times, the Balkans have been marked by important population movements. As the Ottoman empire lost its hold on the area, hundreds of thousands of Turks, as well as Muslim Slavs and Albanians, fled to Anatolia—where they are known as Muhajirs and still represent a distinct thread in Turkish culture.

The policy of the Slavic nationalist states that grew out of rebellions against Ottoman rule in the 19th century has generally been to drive out the Muslims, even those who speak the Slavic languages, as an alien element bound up with the Turkish occupation. This was the objective of the Yugoslav monarchy between the First and Second World wars, and most recently of the Stalinist regime in Bulgaria and the Great Serbian neo-Stalinist strongman, Slobodan Milosevic.

In Yugoslavia, at the end of World War I, the dominant Serbian nationalists were able to exploit social grievances against the Slavic Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina (who are generally known as Bosniaks, although some apply this term to adherents of all three religions in Bosnia-Herzegovina.) More than 90 percent of the Bosnian landowners were Muslims, having gained this status under the Ottoman feudal system. Three-fourths of the serfs were Serbs.

The collapse of Austro-Hungarian rule in



Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a result of Austria's defeat in the First World War (1914-18), was followed immediately by Serbian peasant rebellions that unfortunately led to pogroms against the Muslim population in general. After December 1918, there was a new wave of Muslim flight to Turkey.

"Serbianizing" Kosovo

The Great Serbian rulers of the Yugoslav state established in the wake of World War I were also determined to get rid of the Albanian Muslim majority in the Kosovo region, located to the southeast of Bosnia (see map), both by forcing them to emigrate and by colonizing the area with Serbs and Montenegrans. They were, however, unable to "Serbianize" the area. The Yugoslav Stalinist government under Tito, which resumed this policy in the 1950s, also failed. The population of the Kosovo

area is now 90 percent Albanian.

All the attempts to displace the Kosovo Albanians were defeated by the prevailing poverty of the region, which discouraged lasting settlement by the better off Slavic peoples.

Being mostly Muslims, the Albanians make up the second largest Muslim group in the former Yugoslavia, along with the Bosniaks. The Albanians, however, are not confined to the Kosovo region. Their area of settlement extends into Macedonia, where they form an important minority.

According to Serbian nationalist mythology, the Kosovo region is the cradle of the Serbian nation, from which the Serbs were driven by the Ottoman rulers and their Albanian auxiliaries. The salvation of the Serbian nation, therefore, is supposed to include re-Serbianization of the historic heartland.

Kosovo was the site of a major battle

between the Ottomans and the Serbian ruling house, along with various Christian allies, in 1389, which ended in defeat for the latter.

Serbian historical mythology

The Christian defeat at Kosovo has traditionally been viewed as the end of the powerful medieval Serbian state, although the Serbs did not come under direct Ottoman rule until after the fall of the Byzantine state in 1453. The Battle of Kosovo gained a special importance in Serbian tradition since it served as the setting for an impressive cycle of epic poetry.

The tradition of epic and historical folk poetry was one of the foundations on which Serbian nationalism was built in the 19th century. Under Ottoman despotism and feudalism, the conditions of tribal warfare that form the basis for such oral literature survived until very late times.

Such folk literature, however, hardly gives an accurate picture of the population movements on the Balkan peninsula. The legend that the Albanians stole the lands of the Serbian population of medieval Kosovo was disputed by Branko Horvat, one of the most courageous of the Titoist reformers.

In his book, "The Kosovo Question," published in 1988, Horvat explained that the Albanian and Slavic populations were still fluid at the time, and that there were backward and forward movements, with Albanian stockraisers living side by side with Slavic agriculturalists.

The political center of the medieval Serbian state at its height was far to the south, in what is Macedonia today, since that was the area closer to Byzantium, and therefore the richest part of the dominions of the Serbian dynasts. The decline of Byzantium and the Ottoman advance changed that situation, and the Serbian centers shifted toward the north, where the center of gravity of the Serbian population remained.

At the time of the Ottoman Turkish conquest of the Balkans, the Albanians and Bosnians were the outsiders among the older populations, both for the same reason. They were on the edges of the feudal system.

The Albanians remained semi-tribal until modern times. Among them, there is still a very elaborate system of blood feud, based on tribal law, which is described in the works of the best-known modern Albanian writer, Ismael Kadare (notably in his "Broken Spring").

Origins of the Bosniaks

Feudalism was also late in taking hold in Bosnia. Mountains and forests isolated the Bosnians. And there were no major Roman

(continued on next page)

The Albanians were particularly useful for the Ottomans, since they were generally in conflict with their feudalized neighbors and had the military organization and mores typical of nomadic peoples. They played a major role in the Ottoman army and administration not only in the Balkans but in the empire as a whole. For this, among other reasons, the Albanians were the last Balkan people (with the possible exception of the Bosniaks) to develop distinct national consciousness and aims.

The Ottoman empire, at the outset, was not feudal. It was the sort of society that Marx and Engels described as oriental despotism. But despite its repellent name, this system for a time had advantages over European feudalism. The Ottoman state was strong enough to foster trade and concentrate the resources of vast dominions.

Thus, in the Middle Ages, the Ottoman capital of Istanbul had a population of over a million, when London and Paris had populations of around 25,000. Moreover, craft production, finance and trade were left largely in the hands of the empire's Christian subjects who continued to live in the old Greco-Roman cities it conquered. The Ottoman empire was not Turkish in any national sense. In fact, it was anti-Turk.

Even the word "Turk" was a term of abuse, being used only for the Turks who continued a nomadic or semi-nomadic tribal life. Indeed, during the golden age of the Ottoman empire, the sultan faced far graver challenges from the tribal Turks of eastern Anatolia than from any rebellious

Christian subjects or European rulers.

In order to prevent feudal fragmentation and maintain the unity of the state, all title to land was vested in the sultan.

Moreover, his military elite and civil service were based mostly on Islamized foreigners of Christian origin, cut off from their families and thus entirely dependent on the sultan.

The Ottomans did not have a concept of nationality as we know it. They conceived rather of religious communities. Thus, they tended to see all the Christians as being one community and all Muslims as another.

For them, there was no essential national difference between the Slavic or Albanian Muslims and Turkish Muslims.

Their Christian subjects tended to see things the same way.

Under the Ottomans, the Christians



Albanian soldiers in the service of the Ottoman Empire

enjoyed certain guarantees, although they were politically subordinated to the Muslims. Thus, some Christians could be Ottoman patriots, as were, for example, some important Romanian boyars in the 19th century, who saw the sultanate as a bulwark of conservatism.

The rise of modern Turkish nationalism made it impossible for the non-Turkish peoples to identify with the Turkish state. It ushered in national oppression in the modern sense, that is, attempts to make the state ethnically homogeneous. The

genocide against the Armenians is an example of this tendency.

Turkish nationalism was also fed by the increasingly impoverished Muslim masses' hatred of the Christian minorities, who had been left in control of the commercial wealth by the Muslim military and bureaucratic aristocracy.

The Muslim peoples of the Balkans began also to rebel against Ottoman authority, since, among other things, it was less and less able to protect them from the Christians. The most prominent example of this was the Bosniak rebellion of the 1830s led by Husein-kapetan Gradasevic, which aimed at Bosnian autonomy within the Ottoman empire.

The discontent of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman empire had been increasing since the 17th century, when the earlier oriental despotism finally broke down into a particular oppressive form of feudalism.

The state itself was fragmented, when the function of levying taxes and tributes was sold to those who offered to squeeze the most from the sultan's subjects. The Austrians started pushing the Ottomans back down the Balkan peninsula, encouraging Christian rebellions.

In 1690, the Ottomans were still able to crush a major Serbian rebellion, provoking a huge exodus of Serbs to Austrian-controlled territory. This flight and other waves of refugees from Ottoman repression and pillage led to a large Serbian minority living on Croatian lands.—G.F.

(continued from previous page)

cities. (In general, in Europe, feudalism arose as a hybrid of the vestiges of Roman class society and the class differences beginning in the nomadic tribes that overran the empire.)

Bosnian resistance to the feudal order was reflected in the growth of the Bogumil religion, which was less hierarchical and exploitative than the Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches.

Thus, for example, the Bogumils were denounced by the Orthodox cleric Kosme in these terms: "They are enemies of God, who preach disobedience to superiors, who curse the rich, beat up priests, curse the nobles, who call those who serve the emperor and his officials godless, and forbid the serfs to work for their lords."

The Catholic church, in particular, the supreme institution of European feudalism, was determined to crush the Bogumils and put increasing pressure on the Bosnian rulers to persecute the sect. Thus, from the standpoint of those who followed in the Bogumil tradition, and those who in general resented the pressures of the feudalist churches, the Ottoman conquest represented liberation. They went over *en masse* to Sunni Islam, which has a simple theology and little clerical hierarchy.

Until the times of the reformation, Sunni Islam continued to appeal to rebels against the Catholic hierarchy in the European lands bordering the Ottoman empire. Under Ottoman protection, centers of Protestant learning developed in Transylvania, where Hungarian princes were granted autonomy by the sultan.

The "Yugoslav" peoples

The three historically recognized Slavic nations of Yugoslavia, the Croats, the Slovenes, and the Serbs, became differentiated as a result of the different external pressures that bore on the Slavic tribes soon after their settlement of the Balkan peninsula.

The first to establish a feudal-type state were the Slovenians, but they were quickly caught up in the course of development that led to rise of the Austrian empire. The ruling classes became entirely German-speaking. Only the peasantry continued to speak the Slavic language. The origins of the Slovenian literary language were laid by Protestant religious propagandists.

The Croats came under the impact of the declining Byzantine empire and Venetian republic, as well as Austria and Hungary. Their lands came to include the old Roman-Byzantine cities of the Adriatic coast, which came under strong Venetian influence. The city-state of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), a satellite of Venice, retained its independence through the Middle Ages. Croatian literature goes back to 16th and 17th century authors who wrote in the Italian Renaissance style. Medieval Croatia was thoroughly feudalized and Catholicized.

In the face of the Ottoman onslaught, the Croatian nobles accepted the overlordship of the Austrian empire. But they survived as a class and retained a certain autonomy. That provided a basis for a socially conservative Croatian nationalism, represented, for example, by General Jelacic, who commanded the counterrevolutionary reconquest of Vienna in 1848. But a radical democratic nationalism developed later based on the peasant movement, while the frightened Croat landlords sought rescue from the Serbian monarchy.

The Serbian feudal class, which developed in the context of Byzantine, Eastern Orthodox civilization, was smashed by the Ottomans. But in the 19th century, a rising rural bourgeoisie took the leadership of Serbian peasant rebellions. The two dynasties—the Karadjordjevici and the Obrenovici—that competed for control of the Serbian monarchy brought into being by these rebellions were founded by successful pig farmers who developed trading operations. The emerging Serbian state, which was involved in constant wars, also developed a strong military caste.

Role of language

Montenegro had served as a sort of Serbian redoubt under the Ottomans. The population of this rugged mountain area have an Eastern Orthodox tradition and identify as Serbs. But their national consciousness has been given a somewhat different shape, among other things, by a stronger survival of patriarchal and semi-

tribal mores.

The languages of the Balkan Slavs have remained close. Serbian and Croatian are the same language, distinguished only by stylistic differences and the alphabets commonly used to write them. (In the Near East there is a long tradition of writing the same language in different alphabets, according to religion.) Slovenian is a semi-detached branch of the Serbo-Croat family of dialects.

Thus, on the basis of language alone, 19th century nationalists could make a case that the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs could be one nation, if they were freed from the foreign overlords that divided them.

The concept of a Yugoslav nation first arose in Slovenia and Croatia, which were briefly occupied by Napoleon's armies. It was expressed as "Illyrianism," from the

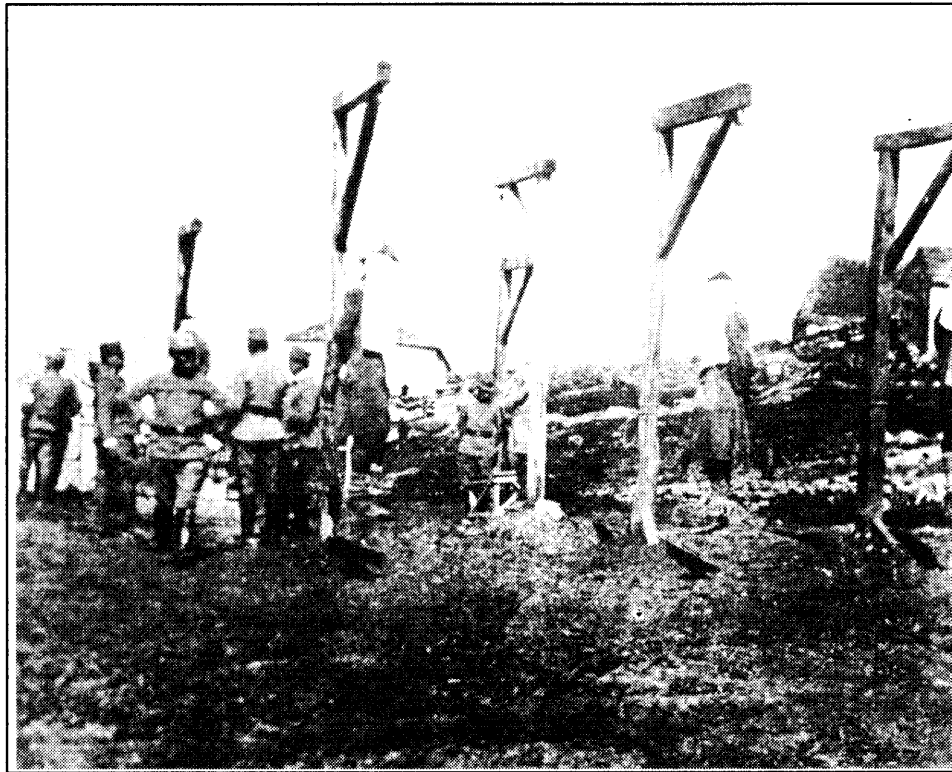
there was a revolutionary situation in the Croatian countryside. The Croatian masses, naturally enough, were not attracted to "unity" under the sordid Karadjordjevic dynasty.

The various parties in the territories formerly under Austro-Hungarian rule, mainly conservative ones, set up a Yugoslavist National Council in Zagreb to rule both Croatia and Slovenia and negotiate unity with Serbia. But it was viewed by the rebellious masses as an organ of their oppressors, the rich. The Council had to appeal to the Serbian state and army to "restore order."

A National Council official in Zlatina wrote: "The people are in revolt. Total disorganization prevails. Only the army, moreover, only the Serbian army can restore order. ... The mob is pillaging the



Gavrilo Princip: He assassinated Archduke Ferdinand.



Serbians hanged by Austrians in reprisal for assassination of Archduke.

"Although Serbia and Montenegro were overrun by the Austro-Hungarian armies, they put up a credible resistance to one of Europe's great powers and ended up on the winning side."

Illyrians, a pre-historic people believed to be the ancestors of all the Yugoslav peoples.

Later, the idea of Yugoslav unity was pressed by an ambitious Serbian ruling class which had a state of its own. Conversely, the question became more complex for the "brother peoples." Their hesitations were fostered by the Austro-Hungarian rulers. On the other hand, among others, revolutionary youth were attracted to the idea of a Yugoslav state that could be fully independent of Austria-Hungary and could build a modern society.

The revolutionist who assassinated the Austrian archduke in 1914 in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, giving the Austrians and their German allies the pretext to launch World War I, belonged to a Yugoslavist revolutionary group.

Although Serbia and Montenegro were overrun by the Austro-Hungarian armies, they put up a credible resistance to one of Europe's great powers and ended up on the winning side. In the collapse of the Hapsburg empire, the popularity of south Slavic unity increased.

However, there were different concepts of unity. The Serbian state leaders saw it simply as an expansion of Serbia. Progressive Serbs, as well as Croats and Slovenes, were repelled by that notion, looking instead to some sort of democratic federation. On the other hand, the rise of social unrest that followed the collapse of Austro-Hungarian rule helped to convince the conservatives and middle classes that a strong Yugoslav state, even if Serbian dominated, was the only hope of order.

The Serbian monarchy

While the authority of the old regime remained more or less intact in Serbia,

merchants, since all the landed estates have already been destroyed. Private fortunes are destroyed. The Serbian army is the only salvation."

The insurgent Croatian peasants were calling for a republic. Three peasant republics were actually proclaimed for a short time. Demands were raised for socialization of the land and for a constituent assembly. The chief of the Croatian peasant party, Stjepan Radic, took the leadership of the opposition to the establishment of a unitary state under the Serbian monarchy. In the National Council he called for a confederate solution. He was the only member of the body to vote against unification, which in fact was imposed by the advances of the Serbian army.

Established in such conditions, the new Yugoslav state could not but be an instrument of Great Serbian national oppression. Radic led the Croatian opposition to it until 1928, when he was assassinated in parliament by a Serbian reactionary. In the crisis created by his murder, King Alexander abolished constitutional government.

Tribes or nations?

In the first period of the Yugoslav state, the Communist Party (CP) took a unitarist view of the national question, inadvertently putting themselves in the same camp as the Serbian monarchy and the Croat and Slovene conservatives who looked to it as a guarantor of order. The CP accepted the theory that the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were three "tribes," but one nation.

Subsequently, the Stalinized CP zig-zagged on the national question. In the mid 1930s, it came out for a federal Yugoslavia. Regardless of the motivation for the shifts, the abandonment of the CP's

previous dogmatic position made it possible for it to become more responsive to aspirations of the various nationalities. Under the royal dictatorship, the CP collaborated to varying degrees with a spectrum of anti-centralist forces, even some radical nationalists.

On the theoretical level, Slovenian CP leader Edward Kardelj's book, "The Development of the Slovenian National Question," published in 1938, marked a departure. Kardelj abandoned Stalin's famous five criteria for nationhood. He offered a new, if vague definition, of nations, based on their social history. Thus, the defining feature for the Slovenians was their national alienation from a German-speaking nobility and bourgeoisie. The Croats were marked by the continuity of feudal development, and the Serbs by a rising aggressive rural bourgeoisie.

The CP, Kardelj argued, had missed major opportunities because of its wrong line on the national question. "In reality, this [position] meant following the bourgeoisie's politicians, because the Serbian and Slovenian bourgeoisies were quick to indulge in verbiage about a false Yugoslav nationalism; the Serbian bourgeoisie, because this facilitated imposing its dominance, the Slovenian, because this was an easy way to conceal its deals with the Serbian bourgeoisie aimed at crushing the revolutionary democratic movement of the Slovenian workers and peasants."

Because of the lack of a real national Slovenian bourgeoisie, Kardelj concluded, only a socialist revolution could achieve the national aspirations of the Slovenian masses. On this question, his position corresponded to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Thus, he wrote that after the failure of the 1848 revolutions, the bourgeoisie in general could not solve the national question and that it therefore "became an integral part of the proletarian revolution."

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the national question became decisive for the CP. The oppressed Albanians, in particular, welcomed the fascist invaders as liberators. A tiny Croat nationalist faction—turned fascist—returned in the baggage of the Italian armies and took charge of a so-called Independent Croatian State. All of the bourgeois armed groups that competed with Tito's partisans were based on nation alone, hostile to the other nationalities, and complicit to one degree or another with the occupiers.

Only the CP was able to achieve the necessary unity against the German and Italian occupiers. And in order to accomplish this, it had to offer a perspective to the various nationalities of achieving their aspirations within a union in which they would have a large measure of autonomy. This policy was a keystone of Tito's victory over the occupiers and the local bourgeois forces; significantly, the only partisan movement that successfully drove out—on its own—the fascist occupiers during a bloody four-year war.

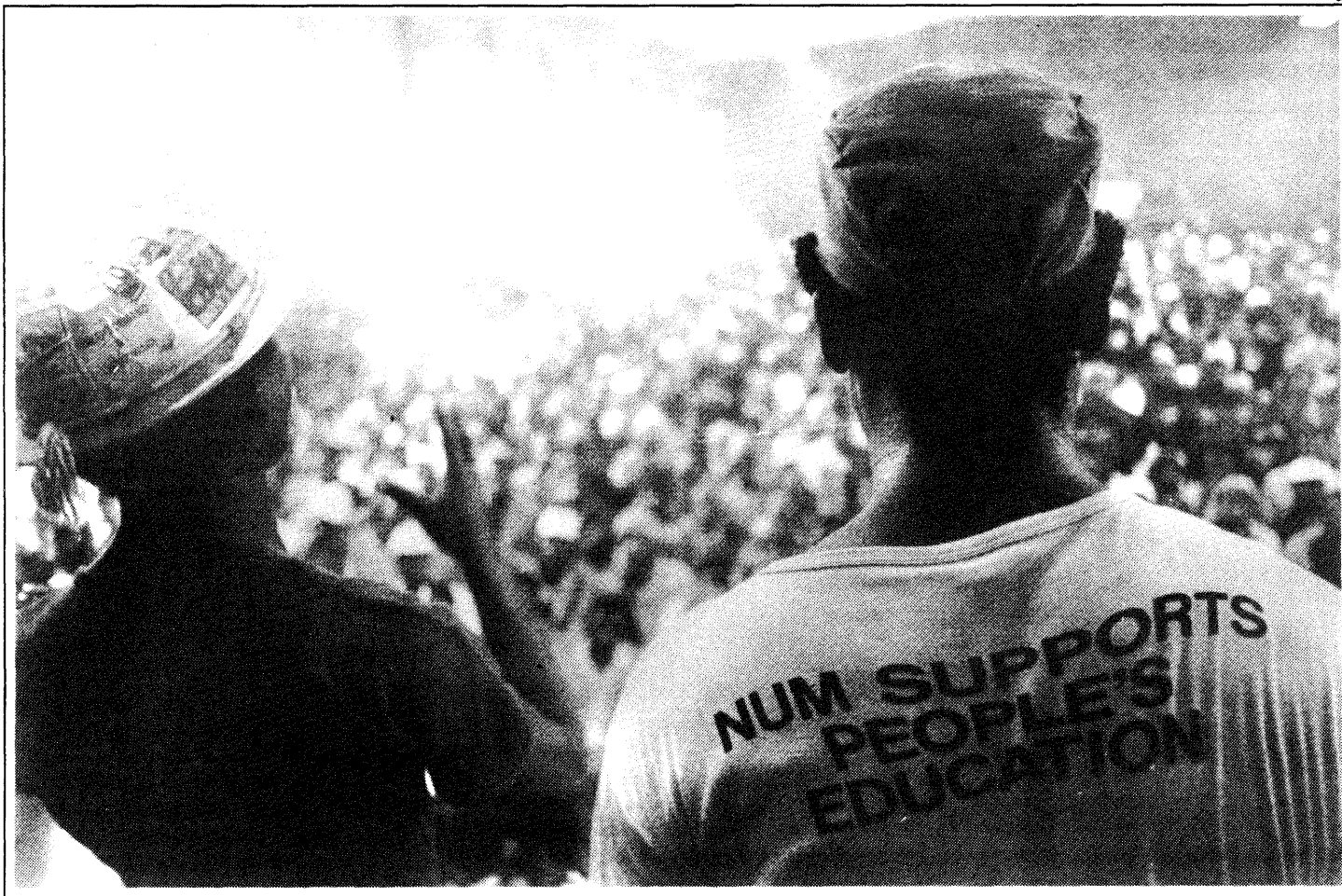
However, the Stalinist regime set up by the CP began almost immediately to retreat from its promises to the oppressed peoples. That betrayal is what set the stage for the present conflict, as I will explain in my article in next month's *Socialist Action*.

(To be continued)

COSATU spokesperson Alan Roberts:

“There is a legacy in this country of terrible social imbalance”

Paul Weinberg



Socialist Action Co-editor Michael Schreiber visited South Africa in June. While there, he conducted interviews with leaders of the major organizations of the Black liberation and trade-union movements.

Following are major excerpts from Schreiber's interview with Alan Roberts, regional secretary for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the Western Cape.

With close to 1.5 million members, COSATU is the largest union federation in the country. Together with the African National Congress, it organized a giant political strike on Aug. 3-4 of over 4 million people.

This interview took place in Capetown on June 3, 1992.

Socialist Action: What, in your opinion, are the most pressing issues the labor movement in South Africa must deal with?

Alan Roberts: We are locked into a radical process at the moment, in regard to our alliance with the ANC [African Nation-

“To be able to push through our own economic demands, we must remove the state and install a democratic government.”

al Congress] and the SACP [South African Communist Party]. To be able to push through our own economic demands, we must remove the state and install a democratic government.

Now, there is CODESA [the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, the negotiations forum with the government]. And you are probably aware that there is a breakdown in CODESA at the moment on the question of the interim government—

how the state sees it and how we see it—as well as on the question of a body to draw up the constitution. That is one of our major focuses at the moment, to dislodge that deadlock.

We see that for two reasons. One is that political rights—one person, one vote—affects us whether we are trade unionists, workers, or whatever, as people in this country, because our people have never had rights before.

And the violence that we see now is at its highest peak. More people are dying now than died during the state of emergency [in the late 1980s]. We see that as part of the state's strategy to try to undermine our structures in the community and all democratic structures.

At the second level, we have been calling for a national economic negotiations forum. We mean to stop the unilateral restructuring taking place by capital and the state. We've seen changes taking place in the tax system that are loaded in favor of big capital.

SA: I am told that unemployment in South Africa is now well over 40 percent.

AR: Yes.

SA: What demands would you address to the employers and the government in order to create more jobs?

AR: The economy is in a very bad state at the moment. And there have been massive retrenchments [layoffs] taking place over a long period of time. Now, we feel that the orientation of production in this country has been more towards luxury goods. In fact, we're seeing a shift towards mechanization. We are not opposed to mechanization, but the way it is used in this country is at the cost of jobs.

We don't have any power to challenge that. We challenge it as trade unionists, of course, but we need to take it into the macro level. And that's one of the issues we want to discuss in the economic negotiations forum.

SA: What do you mean by the macro level?

AR: The macro level? Let's say the national political level—via the national economic negotiations forum—and look at things like the type of restructuring taking place. We should be party to that, and look more at labor intensive industries. And then, of course, job creation schemes.

One area where we feel that jobs can be created is by providing services in the community—for example, electricity. Most of the African people in this country live in houses where there's no electricity. And there is a very serious shortage of housing as well. Just look at any of the cities. You'll see that there's a major squatting problem.

So we feel that if we look toward those areas of providing basic necessities for people, that in itself can go a long way in job creation. Building houses, providing electricity can go a long way in boosting the economy.

SA: I remember that when COSATU was formed, one of the planks in their program was to demand a shorter work week, while keeping the same pay.

AR: Yes.

SA: To what degree do you still raise that demand?

AR: The reason I don't mention it is because it has been an ongoing demand. All of our unions, in their wage demands at

(continued on page 17)



**AZAPO Speaks:
We will not take part
in the CODESA process**

Following are excerpts from an interview with Molatlegi Thlale, a central leader of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO).

AZAPO is the major organizational continuation of the Black Consciousness movement, which was initiated by Black students in the early 1970s. AZAPO was formed in 1978 “to fill the leadership gap” after the banning of all Black Consciousness organizations the year after the 1976 Soweto rebellion.

This interview was given to Michael Schreiber on June 11, 1992, in Johannesburg.

Socialist Action: The CODESA [Convention for a Democratic South Africa] negotiations have now been suspended. But there is talk about restarting negotiations between the white regime and the African National Congress and its allies. Do you think that AZAPO would take part in these negotiations at some point?

Molatlegi Thlale: Definitely not. We will not take part in the CODESA process. Now, in the future, or at any point in time. We will never participate in CODESA—for reasons that are probably well known to you. But briefly, it was created by the government to blunt

the liberation efforts of our people, and can never deliver the goods whatsoever. It is meant to entrench the minority rights and privileges and keep white supremacy in place.

SA: AZAPO, I believe, was the first Black liberation organization to raise the call for a constituent assembly—a conference of the liberation organizations to draw up a new constitution. When was that?

MT: As early as 1982. It was contained in our education policy. We came up with it at the time that it was fashionable to talk about a “national assembly.” That was at the formation of the United Democratic Front, which was mainly Charterist [adhering to the Freedom Charter, the program adopted by the African National Congress]. And at that time, the government was bringing into place this gimmick that we see today—the Tricameral Parliament. Several components of the liberation movement then thought to

(continued on page 16)

NACTU spokesperson Mahlomola Skhosana:

**“An interim government for whom?
They’ve got to spell it out.”**

Eric Miller



Following are excerpts from an interview with Mahlomola Skhosana, the first assistant general secretary of the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), a major union federation in South Africa. The interview was given to Socialist Action Co-editor Michael Schreiber in Johannesburg on June 10, 1992.

Socialist Action: What are the major campaigns that NACTU is engaged in at the moment?

Mahlomola Skhosana: We are experiencing a deep recession. The recession has led to massive retrenchments [lay offs]. One of our major campaigns is for a moratorium on retrenchments—to halt big business from retrenching us and to find other alternatives for that.

We are also involved on a major campaign on education, and we are involved in campaigns with organizations outside NACTU—like the anti-VAT [Value Added Tax] campaign.

SA: What demands are you raising in the campaign against the Value Added Tax?

MS: We are demanding that basic foodstuffs should not be taxed. Medicinal services and medicine itself should not be taxed. Electricity and water should not be taxed.

SA: And how are you carrying out the anti-VAT campaign? Through what sorts of actions?

MS: Last year, we campaigned and eventually ended up with a national strike of two days—on that issue alone. This year, there’s a lot of confusion. We’re at a situation where the ANC [African National Congress] wants to call a national mobilization on the demands of CODESA [Convention for a Democratic South Africa, the negotiations forum with the government]. If we’re going to start another campaign, it might confuse people, but eventually, if nothing happens, we’ll have no alternative but to embark once more on the mass action.

But now what we’re going to do, for example, with the ever-increasing prices of food, is to target certain foodstuffs. For example, if they increase the price of bread, we will then target bread—say for a week—and say nobody buys bread. The following week, we’ll target, say, red meat, or target white meat, until we can get a proper response.

SA: You pointed out that the ANC has

“Do we ask people to march in the streets, do we ask people not to go to work, to demand a government that is going to detain them and torture them?”

now embarked on a campaign of mass action oriented toward CODESA. What is NACTU’s stance on this negotiations process with the government?

MS: First and foremost, we have been skeptical about the nature of the composition of CODESA as such. Because if you look at the people there, you have all the Bantustan puppets—those people who come from the “homelands.” They have never been democratic. They have never been on our side. We cannot negotiate freedom with puppets.

We been pursuing the struggle to remove the regime from office—not to be assimilated into their structures. CODESA is not removing the regime. CODESA is finding accommodation. It is to ameliorate apartheid.

SA: In your opinion, has the CODESA negotiations process had an effect on trade-union developments and struggles?

MS: To a certain extent, yes. I’ll say why. South Africa’s media has made CODESA the “thing.” Workers are hoodwinked to wait—to hold your horses—and see that something “good” is coming. You understand? The media has, to a large extent, succeeded in doing that.

The question is, for those who are coming to workers and asking workers to vote for them—what will be there for the workers? What is the incentive?

So we need to sharpen the workers as to what kinds of questions to ask. For example, the ANC is demanding an interim government. The question is, with whom? They’ve got to spell it out.

Also, there are people who are complaining that the ANC tortured them. I think

you’ve read about that. And the ANC is not denying that they did those things. Now, one of the working groups of CODESA—Working Group One—in which the ANC was represented, came with a recommendation that the interim government must have the power to detain people without trial.

There’s a common denominator there between the ANC and the Nationalist Party [of President De Klerk]. The Nationalist Party government is equally notorious about detentions without trial. How can you combine the viciousness of the ANC and the viciousness of the Nationalist Party and hope you can have democracy?

Do we ask people to march in the streets, do we ask people not to go to work, to demand a government that is going to detain them and torture them? There are lots of contradictions there. Workers need to know these things and to ask questions of the leadership of the ANC. It will be interesting whether the ANC leadership is interested in getting into public debate over these key questions.

SA: NACTU, as well as COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions], has called for an economic forum with the government and the employers. Could you explain this demand?

MS: We intended to put together an economic forum to deal with immediate issues that affect workers. One of those issues is that of retrenchments, which I talked about. The economic forum must negotiate the question of a moratorium on retrenchments.

We want to discuss the question of job creation in this country. Job training. We

want to discuss the question of investment—because South African big business is disinvesting in the country. They’re taking their money here and investing in other countries, to create employment in other countries.

There are billions of rands locked in the stock exchange every day in this country. What about this money? It’s not getting out of the stock exchange. We have problems where big insurance houses that control pension funds of workers are not investing this money in job creation. They’re investing this money, I think you’ll see—either in Durban, Capetown, Johannesburg—there’s always a new building coming up. They put all that money into buildings. So we need to discuss those issues.

It’s a forum in which we in NACTU are looking to make specific demands on big business as well as government. We will not accept that the initial economic forum be linked to CODESA, nor do we accept that the economic forum be an advisory body to the government. We’re not advising, but going there to make specific demands.

SA: What about the “workers’ summit” that NACTU was planning together with COSATU? It was scheduled to be held at the end of May, and at the last minute was cancelled.

MS: It wasn’t cancelled. It was postponed.

SA: What were some of the reasons behind the postponement?

MS: First and foremost, people make a mistake to think that here in South Africa, workers are in COSATU and NACTU. There are more workers outside COSATU and NACTU. And we have accepted that. We recognize that. For the summit, we had not reached out enough to get those workers who are outside COSATU and NACTU.

One of the things that were going to be discussed there, for example, was a declaration of workers’ rights in this country. Which means that once we’ve got a document of workers’ rights, it is a document we want to be inscribed in the constitution. Now, that is not a decision that can be taken by COSATU and NACTU members only. You need to get everybody to have input into that document.

If you look at the labor laws in South Africa as they stand, workers are allowed to strike but they are not protected even if they follow the procedure. They can still be dismissed for going on strike. What we need to do is to inscribe the constitutional right of workers to go on strike—so when they get dismissed, we can then take their case to a constitutional court.

SA: Could you explain? When you say you want to reach out to other workers, do you mean to workers who are not organized—so that everyone could attend the summit—or do you mean to other unions?

MS: To other unions who are not necessarily in one of the two major federations. We are inviting workers from what we usually call in this country the “independent” trade unions, that is, not affiliated to either of us.

SA: Now, back to the question of NACTU and COSATU, what are the prospects for merger of the two big federations?

MS: I think at this point, the prospects for merger must be postponed. But at this stage, we are involved in interaction and working together on those issues on which we fully agree—like the VAT issue or the moratorium on retrenchments. So on those issues that affect workers directly, we have common positions, and we work together.

SA: On the local level?

MS: Local, regional, and national. However, there’s a larger struggle with a political history. There have been a number of strands throughout the struggle—that is, strategies, ideas, ideologies. We’ve always had different approaches historically.

If you look at COSATU now, they have this alliance with the ANC and the SACP [South African Communist Party]. If you have a new federation, where is it going to align itself politically? We in NACTU will not align ourselves politically, but some in COSATU will be rigid—they won’t see

(continued on page 16)

...NACTU

(continued from page 15)

themselves outside the alliance.

Our members come from various political schools. You don't organize workers on the basis of their political beliefs but on the basis of their shop floor struggles. That means they come from all sorts of strands. As a result, we in NACTU have fraternal relations with a number of political organizations.

And we are independent in making decisions. We are not politically linked to any political grouping. People can claim us, but whoever makes a claim—either PAC [Pan-Africanist Congress] or AZAPO [African People's Organization] or whatever—we are not linked to them.

SA: So you think that, at this point, COSATU's adherence to the Tripartite Alliance [with the ANC and the SACP] obstructs the merger process with NACTU?

MS: That would be one of our demands. If we have a federation, is it going to continue? Because we don't want it linked to any political opinion. Workers have got specific demands and problems.

So we believe the trade unions should be independent. If you look at Africa today—Zimbabwe, for example—the union movement there has completely broken out of the party. Separate institutions all over Africa today. Now we can't go back where Africa comes from—leading ourselves to political parties. Because the labor movement in Africa is disengaging. So we can't go back and repeat their mistakes, because our colleagues in Africa are telling us, "Don't do it!"

SA: In the United States, we have so-called independent unions, yet they are really linked to the Democratic Party. But American union leaders claim to run the unions like a "business," negotiating wages and so forth with the employer, without taking "political" stands. How does NACTU view this pattern, which the AFL-CIO in my country puts forward for the rest of the world?

MS: It doesn't work for them. For example, the leadership of the AFL-CIO would like American workers to vote Democratic Party. But the workers are voting Republican.

SA: The problem in the United States, at least, is that there is no real alternative for workers to vote for. There is no workers' party, no labor party. What would you say for South Africa? Would you advocate a workers' party here?

MS: At this stage, I don't think it has a chance. I'll tell you why. Because there's this big euphoria that this government is going to deliver something. Until such time that the workers come to the conclu-



sion that these people are fakes—and the masses come to that conclusion—you are not going to have such a development.

What we can do at this stage is to continue to educate and conscientize workers about issues that affect them—so they can understand that as workers they've got problems. Politicians have got political aspirations. And for them to get their aspirations—which is nothing more than an accumulation of wealth—they've got to ride on the backs of the workers.

SA: Several people whom I've spoken to here in South Africa have told me—in discussing the problem of unemployment and retrenchments—that it is necessary to attract more investment, especially foreign investment. But it is often said that the struggle by the workers is scaring away investment. Is there indeed a contradiction between those two things—the need to create new job opportunities and the fight for workers' rights?

MS: That argument can be summed up in one word—nonsense. For the simple reason that unemployment in South Africa—we have 5 million people unemployed in this country now—has been the process since 1924. Black people have been systematically kicked out of the mainstream economy of this country through various laws, administrations, and social engineering.

Now, those companies who are coming to invest in this country are going to invest in high technology. But our people don't have the technological or academic knowledge to be able to be trained. So even if these companies are coming, how many people are they going to employ? Very few.

So for the question of overcoming the unemployment problem in South Africa, we have to look at, for example, the housing problem. We need almost 6 million housing units. If you solve the problem of putting up houses, in a short space of time you are creating employment for masses of people. You build those houses, you electrify those houses. Once people have electricity in their homes, they'll need electric appliances. And so, you kick-start the

economy in that fashion.

SA: But these things aren't profitable as far as the private corporations are concerned.

MS: Are we looking at profits, or are we going to improve the quality of life of the people? We in the labor movement think profits are important, but you can only judge your success in terms of the quality of life. This country must invest in human beings. We must invest in those ventures that improve the quality of life.

SA: What are the issues in the ongoing radio and television broadcasting strike? I believe that concerns a NACTU affiliate?

MS: Yes, MWASA [Media Workers Association of South Africa]. Basically, the SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation] is a government institution. Within that structure, racism is inherent. You can't run away from that fact. Black people are discriminated against in terms of their working conditions. It's even worse for the women. Our sisters don't get any senior positions there, even if they qualify.

We're looking for more than simple wages. We're looking to change the structure there. Our people should have the same opportunities that other people are given. If it's a question of our people not having skills, then SABC must make sure that people working there are given every opportunity to study and improve themselves—like that given to other people.

SA: How long has the strike been on?

MS: This is the third week now.

SA: Does there seem to be any motion?

MS: No, there doesn't. You see, the problem is that if you fight the SABC, you're fighting this government. Now, if they're going to relent, then they're going to capitulate. We're now being told that part of the problem with management is that the white unions are saying that if they give in, then they'll also go on strike. So, that's Catch 22 for management.

But we say, it's none of our business whether they go on strike or not. If they were honest and wanted to sacrifice some of their class privileges, they should have joined in the strike by now. And the problem would have been resolved.

You can't have two people doing the same job—a highly paid Black DJ, for example, will get about 40,000 rand a year. And you counter that with what the white DJ gets. The white DJ will get more than 160,000 a year. It's really an ocean apart.

SA: Is it possible to set up picket lines that would not let the white workers onto the premises?

MS: We don't have that culture in South Africa. But what we are considering is to ask for support in the community at large by withholding payment of licenses [for television ownership] to the SACP.

Companies we've got agreement [a union contract] with—like food companies and pharmaceutical companies—we're asking them to withhold their adverts. We're telling advertising agencies to withdraw their advertising from SABC. You must understand that we're talking to the white capitalists, so we're not getting a response. But we keep on pushing.

With companies, it's very easy. Like at Unilever. The workers at Unilever will simply go on a one-day strike over this issue, saying, "You mustn't continue to support SABC with adverts. Withdraw them!" We'll use the pressure of the workers. And we think once we get to that level, then SABC will start responding.

SA: Is there anything else you'd like to say to our readers?

MS: Yes. A lot of people, because of what they read, believe there are changes in this country. But those of us who are on the receiving end know very well that there is good talk in South Africa. People are saying things you want to hear. But when you come on the ground—there's nothing. The quality of life is still the same.

So, there is no move toward democratization in South Africa, because for us democratization is not simply having politicians sitting in some parliament. Democratization means that you free people from squalor. You free people from ignorance. You free people from disease. And those things are not happening. So there's no democracy.

As in the French Revolution, it was the bourgeoisie who benefited. They were able to buy houses and property. But the poor didn't have money to buy. That's what is happening in South Africa.

The Black elite is like those in America. It is the Black elite that is given opportunities to buy houses in white towns and pay more than three times what the house is worth. And the poor can't afford it.

We must judge society from the poor who have had their quality of life improved. If those people's lives are still the same—or they are worse off—there's no democracy.

So don't take for granted that there is freedom in South Africa now. There is not. There is freedom for those who can afford to pay—the "French bourgeoisie." For the ordinary worker, there is still hell. ■

...AZAPO

(continued from page 14)

participate in a national convention. And we said, instead of a national convention, we're calling for a constituent assembly.

SA: And so, at this time, 10 years later, how do you view the call for a constituent assembly?

MT: The call for a constituent assembly is only relevant insofar as it has the capacity to galvanize, for one specific goal, all components of the liberation movement participating as one entity. In that kind of scenario, we see our participation being relevant.

But once it is used to emasculate the liberation efforts of our people, you cannot participate in such phenomena, because they are not aimed at redressing the situation, but are meant to entrench the white-privilege government.

SA: What are the major slogans that AZAPO is now putting forward?

MT: As of now, we're putting forward slogans as an alternative to CODESA—such as the "Solidarity Front," which would be comprised of all elements outside of CODESA who are against

CODESA and have the interests of the oppressed masses at heart. At the community level, regional level, and even the national level.

SA: What would be the activities of the Solidarity Front?

MT: Those elements making up the Solidarity Front must be able to come together on one basis only—to push and galvanize the oppressed people toward replacing the government.

SA: What major activities is AZAPO participating in?

MT: Mass action, demonstrations—

SA: Around what issues?

MT: On issues of the day, like the dispossession of our people. That is the main issue we should highlight. If we forget that issue, then we are doomed. These are issues that are not addressed by CODESA.

SA: By dispossession, do you mean of the land?

MT: Land, in particular. Because it is through land that all other things become relevant. There is no way you can gain political power without land. There's no way you can gain economic power without land. Or that social responsibility has any meaning without land.

SA: What do you propose for the

redistribution of the land?

MT: Land distribution is not something we can formulate a blueprint for now. We can just give the general picture.

You may well know, since you belong to a socialist group, that land forms the basis of wealth. And for you to talk meaningfully about the socialist order, based on the proper redistribution of wealth, you must have land as the basis of that. There is no way that you can redistribute land, and the subsequent wealth underneath our feet, without socialist perceptions.

SA: On another topic, am I correct that AZAPO raises the slogan of "Black majority rule?"

MT: Yes, the social question arises here from the national question ... [tape is muffled] of the Black majority.

SA: Is there any contradiction, in your opinion, between Black majority rule and nonracialism?

MT: We talk about "antiracialism." We see ourselves as an antiracialist organization. We see ourselves as bringing about a situation through which race does not play a role in society.

SA: What is your position on self-defense against the violence by Inkatha

and the police?

MT: First and foremost, we must make it clear that we in AZAPO put the question of violence squarely, without any hesitation, on the doorstep of the government. This government is very violent.

Now, the kind of violence we are seeing today is made to look like "Black on Black" violence. But it is not. It is fifth-columnists who have been coopted by the government, and who are on the payroll of the government, used to perpetrate violence on behalf of the government in order to make our people war-weary and unable to fight for their demands.

SA: How can the Black community defend itself?

MT: There's no way they can defend themselves except to keep all the structures that they've created as a result of the activities of the government in place. You can not begin to even think about the dismantling of the people's liberation movements—particularly their armed forces.

... If you demobilize yourself by disarming your own armed forces, you are then playing into the hands of the government. ■

...COSATU

(continued from page 14)

the national level and the plant level, have been raising it—and still raise it.

We have never achieved yet the 40-hour work week, but we see that as one way of opening up more jobs for other people to come in. There has been a lot of resistance to that. But there have been some victories. Unions have managed to bring the working week down from 50 or 48 hours to 46 or 44.

SA: In individual industries?

AR: Yes, in individual industries and individual companies. You see, COSATU has developed quite rapidly over a short space of time. We only launched COSATU at the end of 1985. So we had to organize ourselves and structure ourselves to design programs that would put us in a position to be able to fight around these demands in a more powerful way.

When we united as COSATU, our affiliates were still bargaining at the plant level. So *central* bargaining became one of the major demands in our "living wage" campaign. To win a demand like the 40-hour work week, we need to bargain at a much higher and broader level. Because at the plant level, you get one plant agreeing to, like, 44 hours a week, the other sticking to a longer week; it will depend on the balance of forces in that plant whether they're going to win the demand or not.

SA: OK, now you're speaking about making these demands against the employers, whereas a moment ago you mentioned the idea of bringing in more labor-intensive investments. Do you agree with those people who say that it's necessary to downplay the demands of the workers in order to attract investments from abroad?

AR: There's been a debate in COSATU, and at our last economic policy conference this issue was discussed. An investment code was discussed, and a certain guidance was tabulated, but these aren't detailed programs. But one thing we do believe is that foreign investment will be necessary to assist in rejuvenating the economy and bringing in higher forms of technology because our industry is quite far behind. But we don't see that happening entirely at the cost of workers.

SA: Since I've been in South Africa, I've heard a lot about the "social contract," that is, a long-term overall accord between the unions, the employers, and the government. To what extent do you—and COSATU—think this would be desirable?

AR: The social contract is in debate at the moment. There has been no resolution as to whether we will go into a social contract or not because there are various schools of thought in COSATU as to the issue. Part of the debate is whether it enhances the struggle for socialism or whether it dampens it. For one thing, it unifies COSATU.

SA: What does?

AR: I mean that COSATU has adopted socialism as its guiding slogan. Now, there are various schools of thought on socialism itself—or the road to socialism. That's fine. That's healthy. But about the social contract itself—that debate hasn't been resolved.

Now, in the national economic negotiations forum, certain demands are to be put forward by COSATU. Here are some of the issues we're raising—housing, job creation; we're very concerned about retrenchments. And we have the view that capital does things the way it sees fit.

We wish to bring in the question of taxes as well. You heard about the VAT [Value Added Tax] strike we had last year. It was a massive strike.

We want to reopen those types of issues. Now, that might appear as if we already want to engage capital in South Africa in a social contract. But what will actually come out of the negotiations forum are agreements that will have to be made into law.

SA: Let me try to tackle this question from another direction. In this country today, I often hear the media and the politicians speak of the "New South Africa." Do you think that the employers and working



“... there is never a situation where an official negotiates on behalf of the workers and makes decisions without a mandate from the general workforce.”

people can indeed be "partners" in building this so-called new society?

AR: If we're going to talk of employers and workers being partners, or cooperating, in building the New South Africa, then we're talking about a social contract. That's my understanding.

SA: I agree.

AR: Then we are sort of subjecting our sectional interests to national interests. That is basically what underlies the social contract. Now, I don't think at this stage we have a clear definition for building the New South Africa—how we're going to do that or what our different roles are going to be in that.

There are some definite views as to what needs should be met for the people of South Africa—the oppressed and the deprived. There is a legacy in this country of terrible social imbalance. Wealth and security are for the white community, whereas in the Black community there's been years of neglect.

So we feel that any new government that comes to power is going to have to have a bias toward that section of the community—if we are to have a real meaningful peace. But peace can't just be structured into agreements, contracts, or constitutions. It must be derived from satisfaction.

SA: Let me turn to something else—the prospects for a merger between COSATU and NACTU [National Council of Trade Unions]. Now, when we first started talking, you mentioned the Tripartite Alliance between COSATU, the ANC, and the Communist Party. Do you think that COSATU's alliance with these other two groups might be an obstacle toward forming a unified trade-union federation with NACTU?

AR: I would not see that as the only obstacle. If, say, we withdraw from the alliance, that does not solve the political problems that exist between us. In my own opinion, the basic causes of why we exist as two different federations—or the reasons why we have not come together to form one federation—are political differences.

SA: What are those differences?

AR: By and large, in COSATU, there is strong support among the membership and leadership—I'm not saying everyone—for the ANC and the SACP.

This dates back to the MDM [Mass Democratic Movement of the late 1980s] days when we were launched. We took the Freedom Charter as our political program, and went into an alliance in the MDM, or the UDF [United Democratic Front], which the state correctly said then was a front for the ANC—although we were denying it then!

Now, NACTU, similar to COSATU,

has had tendencies within it representing all the political organizations. But seemingly, in my opinion, the strongest faction within NACTU is the PAC [Pan-Africanist Congress] supporters. So whether we withdraw from the alliance or not does not remove that problem. That force remains within COSATU, and that other force remains within NACTU. At the moment, NACTU is not part of a formal alliance with the PAC, but it operates in that fashion.

So I don't think it's as simple as that—to say that if we withdraw, we'll have unity within the next year. There are a lot of questions to solve and a lot of problems to work through.

The other thing, through our own experience, is that when we launched COSATU we had 36 unions. It was a very painful process to put those unions together through mergers—to form industrial unions.

And I think in looking at the question of unity, you mustn't overlook that. It will be one of the most difficult areas to overcome; should we come together, all of the unions in various industries will have to merge to form industrial unions. There's a question of leadership, a question of politics, a question of resolution—and there's always the fear, when the smaller union enters the merger, of being dominated by the other.

SA: In areas where there are parallel unions affiliated with both NACTU and COSATU, has there been an increased tendency to work together?

AR: No, I wouldn't say there has been an increased tendency to work together. But there is one instance, in fact, in which one of the NACTU unions is talking merger with NUMSA [the metal workers' union affiliated with COSATU]. That is their metal union, MAAWUSA. Seemingly, it is going to withdraw from NACTU, because there are agreements structured already between them to form one union. And there's no talk from NUMSA of withdrawing from COSATU. It's very obvious that NUMSA is the biggest union in COSATU, and it's much larger than MAAWUSA.

Of course, there is "poaching" at stake, though that's a terribly negative term, where our affiliates go off and organize in a specific industry occupied by NACTU. But they've been doing it for quite some time—and it's still going on. That's a source of tension between NACTU and COSATU.

SA: In the United States, the issue of trade-union democracy has increasingly come to the fore. Perhaps you've read about the situation in the Teamsters union, where a highly bureaucratized leadership

was recently replaced in union elections. What steps are being taken to ensure democracy and rank-and-file control of the unions in South Africa?

AR: I have not seen the constitutions of unions in the [United] States, but the constitutions of unions in COSATU must be firstly based on workers' control. The key office-bearer positions must be occupied by workers. And the powers of selection and leadership function are covered by the constitution.

And a certain form of structure must exist in each union that draws out the participation of workers in the branch, regional, and national structures. There is always a bias towards the workers, minimizing the powers of full-time officials. In fact, the only full-time person who is an office bearer would be the secretary-treasurer.

Now, I've seen that within the ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, dominated by the AFL-CIO] the presidents and vice presidents of this federation in a lot of cases are full-time people. That is not allowed in our situation.

There is one exception. The president of the NUM [National Union of Mineworkers] is a full-time person. But there is concern about that in the other affiliates, because it is seen as a threat to the principle we have always upheld.

I would say that the only guarantees we have to keep the unions under the control of the workers is in our style of working, based on the constitution. And, of course, our negotiations, conducted in the plants and on the national level, are conducted by the workers themselves with the assistance of the unions. But there is never a situation where an official negotiates on behalf of the workers and makes decisions without a mandate from the general workforce.

There was an example of that last year, when SARHWU, the South African Railways and Harbour Workers Union, had their national negotiating team—which was comprised mainly of workers as well—enter into an agreement on wages without referring it back to the general membership. This created massive discussions in the union. The entire leadership was suspended and kicked out. Workers occupied the offices and took over the whole union.

This action was very drastic. But it was a message to the leadership as to how the workers will react if they violate workers' control.

SA: In the United States, the old tradition of a rank-and-file negotiating committee is now the rare exception.

AR: I understand. But we will fight for that practice to remain here. The danger is of cooptation—when the union becomes totally bureaucratic and the workers don't have a say anymore. And then it can go in any direction. It can end up in the hands of the Mafia, as some of the unions in the States have.

I'm very glad to hear what you've been telling me about the Teamsters union, because it's very important for us and for the international workers movement to know that our unions internationally are emerging into vibrant fighting forces. ■

Our readers speak out

Grace Carlson

Dear editors,

I commend you for running the news of Grace Carlson's death. [See the August 1992 issue of *Socialist Action*.] This news wasn't in *The Militant* [newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party—or, if it was, I missed it.

However, Grace Carlson wasn't the first woman to run for vice president. The first woman to run for vice president and have her name on the ballot of several states was Marie Brehm, the 1924 Prohibition Party candidate. Brehm received 56,292 votes, from 15 states. The Prohibition Party (which still exists) is very proud of having been the first party to nominate a woman for vice president.

Also, in 1884, the Equal Rights Party announced that it was running Belva Lockwood for president and Belle Boyd for vice president. However, this group didn't actually line up slates of presidential elector candidates, and thus wasn't credited with any votes.

Richard Winger,
San Francisco, Calif.

Grace Carlson 2

Dear editors,

The article about the life and death of Dr. Grace Carlson, the Socialist Workers Party vice presidential candidate in 1948, was excellent, but it contained one glaring error. I knew Grace quite well from 1934 to 1943, when I left Minneapolis. She was a dialectical materialist at that time, not a Catholic. I fact, I sent a woman who was a good Catholic, but wanted to join the Socialist Workers Party to talk with Grace, and Grace convinced the woman of the philosophy of dialectical materialism.

Grace herself returned to the Catholic Church in 1953. She always considered herself a socialist, however, and treated socialists with respect. But in the years she was active in the Socialist Workers Party, she was not a Catholic.

David Cooper,
Montebello, Calif.

Choice!

Dear editors,

The article on the Freedom of Choice Act in the August issue of *Socialist Action* explained the coopting of the women's movement by the Democratic Party. The pro-choice women's movement has been maneuvered into supporting the Democrats, once again, in the hope that those elected by women's votes will pass the Freedom of Choice Act some time "later."

The fact that the Democrats are callously and cynically using the pro-choice issue was not even sugar-coated in a recent article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Democratic Party operatives stated that the pro-choice issue was doing so well (for them, the Democrats) that there really was *no reason* to pass the Freedom of Choice Act this year.

In other words, it doesn't matter how many more teenage Becky Bells or poverty-ridden Rosie Jimenezes die because of restrictive abortion laws between now and election day. All that matters is that American women believe in the deception that the Democratic Party candidates can be counted on to defend abortion rights in the "future."

The objective of the Freedom of Choice Act, from the point of view of the Democrats, was never to defend abortion rights; it was only to win votes in a year when more workers than ever before are becoming convinced that neither party can be counted on to defend our interests.

Kathy Setian,
San Francisco, Calif.

Two Nations

Dear editors,

Your August issue was good, as usual. I particularly liked Joseph Ryan's review of Andrew Hacker's "Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, and Unequal." By coincidence, the book was published only two months before the great Los Angeles revolt—the nation's first multi-ethnic urban revolt.

Hacker pointed out that from the West India trade of the Northeastern colonies of America to the cotton exports that helped pay for northern industrialization, America's economy depended largely on slave labor. However, he did fail to make clear that everything was based upon land stolen from the Native Americans, most of whom were murdered.

It's easy to forget the past when the present has so many problems. In a nutshell: Capitalism is no longer working. Even apart from the current depression, the American economy has stagnated. For the past 10 years, the capitalists have failed to invest in the ingredients of economic growth. Since 1980, the United States has spent a smaller share of its income on net new investment than at any other time since World War II.

We are not likely to ever have an economic boom as we did at the close of World War II. Our working class living standards will continue to decline steadily.

The working class works beneath the earth and above it, inside buildings and in the rain and snow, with the spade, the crowbar, and the computer. We are laying the foundations for some new, monstrous civilization to be controlled and owned by useless capitalists.

When we think of all this, we can realize what crimes were committed to build the ancient civilizations. The seven wonders of the world—the Egyptian pyramids, the Hanging Gardens, the great temples, the Greek statues—what hideous crimes gave them birth!

Plato lied. The created things of this world are not a reflection of the ideal, but products of human sweat, blood, hard labor, and lives. It is we who built the pyramids, cut the marble for the temples and statues, pulled the oars in the galleys, and died in the wars—while they wrote poems and dramas and rationalized their crimes by appeals to God.

There can be no beauty if it is

paid for by human injustice, nor truth that passes over injustice in silence, nor moral virtue that condones it.

If the world's wealthy power elite doesn't destroy the earth's forests and oceans, they will use us to erect huge monuments to them—soaring buildings, highways, and factories. But our hands will carry every brick. And we shall be forgotten, drowned out by the voices of the jurists, the philosophers, the poets, the priests. Our masters will produce their own beauty, virtue, and truth.

All this will happen unless we fight the scourge of the earth, those responsible for its destruction, the small criminal ruling class of hopelessly inept selfish people who have created a monstrous Frankenstein system they can no longer control.

What is the answer? I think it is in Nat Weinstein's booklet, "Socialist Action: Who We Are, What We Stand For," which ends with these words: "Socialism is the only road leading away from poverty, inflation, unemployment, imperialist war, totalitarianism—all the worldwide scourges of decaying capitalism. Socialism can save humanity from capitalist barbarism and open up a new world for all people..."

Victor Saxe,
Oakland, Calif.

USSR today

Dear editors,

It's difficult to get real information about Russia from American newspapers. Self-congratulatory paens to the victory of capitalism leave out important details. In May and June, I spent a month in Russia, and I found the situation a little different than reported.

The "free market" is not working. The hundreds of sellers behind the Bolshoi Theater are not incipient capitalists developing Milton Friedman's ideas, but impoverished workers and pensioners selling their last possessions. It would take Pango to imagine an elderly woman selling one sweater as some sort of vindication of capitalism.

Possibly Arbat Street in Moscow is a better example of capitalism: Some years ago, it was a political and cultural street, where poets stood and read poems and artist sold their paintings. Now it has become a tourist trap where tourists can buy stolen religious icons, Russian army hats, and wooden painted eggs. And the criminal gangs take a percentage from each seller.

Kiosks sell off-brand French perfumes, Russian brandy with French labels, cardboard containers of fruit juices with expired dates on them. All the over-production and junk of Europe is thrown at unsuspecting Russian consumers.

The expected wave of foreign investment has not taken place. Instead of \$19 billion from the IMF, maybe 1 billion is contemplated. Of course, Americans build hotels. The new Radisson in Moscow is straight out of Beverly Hills, though there is not a single Russian who can afford to pay \$200 a night.

Foreign hustlers, aka "invest-



ors," with little or no capital themselves, are wheeling and dealing in the bars of hotels to get the bargains while they're hot. Russian lumber is a hot commodity, and the forests face a new ecological onslaught.

The Yeltsin Plan is to privatize major industry, with workers getting 25 percent of non-voting stock. (Obviously, to shut them up.) At the same time, companies "losing money" will go bankrupt and close down. So workers will be given stock in many companies that will be closing down.

And the lucky workers will have pretty stock certificates to burn. Millions of workers will face unemployment, thanks to the ideas of Milton Friedman and Jeffrey Sachs, who succeeded in ruining the economies of Bolivia and Poland previously.

In the middle of September, A Congress to form a Party of Labor is taking place in Moscow. Professor A. Buzgalin and Boris Kagarlitsky tend toward left social-democratic positions, advocating a "mixed" economy together with Yugoslavian forms of "workers control." They will form the basis of this new party together with the old bureaucracy of the Moscow Federation of Unions.

However, most Russian workers do not identify with the old official trade unions. On May 1, the Moscow Trade Union Federation was able to mobilize only some 5000 workers to its rally.

The official unions still have enormous resources, which now face expropriation by the Yeltsin regime. Kagarlitsky expressed his concern to this writer that the Moscow Federation may be interested in the new Party of Labor only as a legal maneuver to protect its property from expropriation. The "independent" unions that split off from the "official" unions have been largely subordinated to the AFL-CIO and therefore spout the Yeltsin line.

Thus, a major question facing

the entire Russian left is whether to work within the existing unions or to build new unions. I attended a meeting of teachers who wanted to form a new union. They represented only 42 schools, while there are more than a thousand schools in Moscow alone.

Teachers' wages have declined with inflation, so that the average teacher earns only \$8 to \$10 a month, equivalent in rubles. A similar process has happened to medical workers. By underfunding the salaries of workers in basic services, Yeltsin is gradually forcing privatization as workers abandon the schools and hospitals to look for better paying jobs.

Russia is beginning to look more and more like a Third World country, a source of raw materials and cheap labor. The average Russian worker is aware he lives worse under the new "free market" capitalism than he did 10 or 20 years ago. While there is enormous confusion, there also remains a tradition of equality that dates from the Russian Revolution.

Earl Gilman,
San Francisco, Calif.

International Viewpoint

A biweekly magazine published under the auspices of the Fourth International

One year subscription: \$47

Send to:
2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France

For forums, classes and other activities, contact the Socialist Action branch in your area!

Baltimore
P.O. Box 16005
Baltimore, MD 21218

Boston
P.O. Box 1046 GMF
Boston, MA 02205
(617) 497-0230

Chicago
P.O. Box 578428
Chicago, IL 60657
(312) 327-5752

Cincinnati
P.O. Box 20109
Cincinnati, OH 45220
(513) 751-1597

Cleveland
P.O. Box 6151
Cleveland, OH 44101
(216) 429-2167

Detroit
P.O. Box 1613
Detroit, MI 48231

Los Angeles
P.O. Box 862014
Los Angeles, CA 90086
(213) 660-2891

For information about other areas, contact the national office of Socialist Action at (415) 821-0458.

Minneapolis
P.O. Box 14087
Dinkytown Station
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 430-1476

New York
P.O. Box 20209 Ca. Fin.
693 Columbus Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10025

San Francisco
3425 Army St.,
San Francisco, CA
94110
(415) 821-0511

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"Cabeza de Vaca," a film directed by Nicolás Echevarría; written by Echevarría and Guillermo Sheridan; based on the 16th-century journals of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. In Spanish with English sub-titles.

The half-century following Columbus's first voyage to America was the Age of the Conquistadors. These military zealots and adventurers, spawned from the Catholic Counter Reformation and the wars against the Moors, are known today for their ruthlessness against the Native American population.

But the conquistador who is probably least known among his fellows, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, was the most humanitarian of their number. He learned to look upon the Indians not only with compassion, but with respect.

Cabeza de Vaca actually lived among the Indians. In

FILM REVIEW

1527, he embarked on a voyage from Havana, Cuba, to the "island" of Florida, in order to help establish a colony and to hunt for gold. After being shipwrecked near Tampa Bay, he wandered across the continent for eight years—from Florida to Mexico. Along the way, he received food and shelter from a number of Indian nations, and in turn was revered by them as a healer and a magician.

This story, told by Cabeza de Vaca in his "Relación" of 1542, has now been brought to the screen. The film "Cabeza de Vaca" is disjointed and somewhat confusing—and yet often spectacularly beautiful. Produced in Mexico just in time for the Columbus Quincentennial celebrations, it will no doubt help to dispel the idea that the Spanish brought a "superior" culture to the New World.

Director Nicolás Echevarría depicts early America with the sense of wonderment that the early Spanish explorers must have had when they first beheld it. In one culture, people clad only in blue, green, and white body paint scurry across the sand like lizards. Another people, decked out like ancient Egyptians, lay out their dead to be torched. And another people work their magic in a Gauguin-like village in a mangrove swamp.

Some of the Indians in the film seem, as Columbus himself reported, "so naive and so free with their pos-

A conquistador befriended by the Indians



sessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone."

The film also depicts the respect given to women and the relatively uninhibited sexual relations of the Native American cultures. The Spaniards looked at this with amazement—as well as embarrassment. Bartolomé de las Casas, the 16th-century chronicler, wrote: "Marriage laws are non-existent; men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please—without

offense, jealousy, or anger. ... If [the women] tire of their men, they give themselves abortions with herbs that force stillbirths, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole, Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man's head or his hands."

But Echevarría refuses to idealize the native peoples in his film. Some of them are warlike—even torturing and enslaving their captives.

Echevarría chooses to concentrate on some of the more fantastical episodes of the Cabeza de Vaca legend. Thus, we see the explorer seemingly raise an Indian woman from the dead. The real Cabeza de Vaca, however, was careful to disengage himself from any charges of having had links with sorcery. In his "Relación," Cabeza de Vaca ascribed his "cures" to the power of Christian prayer.

Cabeza de Vaca believed that the best way to win the Indians to Christianity and the Spanish Crown was to treat them fairly. He wrote in his journal of the grief he felt when he witnessed Spanish soldiers making slaves out of the Indians who had befriended him. "We set about to preserve the liberty of the Indians and thought we had secured it," he complained, "but the Christians had arranged to go and spring upon those we had sent away in peace and confidence."

There is little doubt that Cabeza de Vaca felt some remorse about the role that he himself had played, as a conquistador, in enslaving and destroying the native cultures. Unfortunately, the film does not take full advantage of the opportunity to explore the self-blame that must have been raging inside the man.

Many of the episodes are poorly explained and motivated. The basic "who, where, and when" of the narrative is muddled. Echevarría works best not as a story-teller, but as a painter in filmic images. In that way, the picture of colonial exploitation is displayed brilliantly.

This can be seen in the final shot: A hundred Indian slaves are huddled like ants beneath a gigantic cross of silver. They are carrying it across the desert to be raised above the new cathedral. The slaves are alone except for a single Spanish soldier, who beats a measured time on his drum.

...Cuba

(continued from page 20)

Police" force and implemented a new "Unified System of Vigilance," involving joint activity by the army, the ministry of the interior, police, and the long-standing neighborhood block defense committees.

A second concern about tourism is that while it generates hard currency, tourism does nothing to increase the productive capacity of the economy or the labor force. The Cuban leadership is looking to broader joint ventures to fulfill that role, but most joint ventures to date have been for the construction of tourist facilities.

Improvisation based on reality

In hopes of attracting more diverse investments, the Cuban government has recently authorized foreign capital to have majority control (i.e. more than 50 percent) of new ventures and to impose standard capitalist labor discipline and management practices in these enterprises.

Achieving agricultural self-sufficiency in a fertile tropical country with three or four growing seasons should be manageable, assuming the necessary energy, seeds, fertilizers, equipment, etc., can be secured and paid for. It will likely mean a permanent change of diet for many Cubans, which may not be particularly welcome to some.

Cuba has invested a lot of resources into the development of commercially competitive biotechnology, such as vaccines, and has cornered the market for some of these. Whether Cuba will be able to "maintain its market share" over the long run, I really don't know enough to say.

What existed until two years ago was a single-party state, but with a qualitatively different (better) single party and much greater popular participation than the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. However, revolutionary Cuban political culture has been marked for 30 years by a

siege mentality that has had to varying degrees, depending on the historical moment, a "chill effect" on selected political rights.

The reason for this siege mentality has been the real siege so relentlessly pursued by the U.S. government and so studiously ignored or trivialized by the U.S. media.

This siege has included a full scale invasion; a naval blockade; more than two dozen assassination attempts; a hermetically-maintained economic embargo and large-scale sabotage; introduction of bacteriological viruses directed against plants, animals and people; all kinds of CIA paramilitary and covert operations; the largest U.S. destabilization operations ever mounted; and a massive disinformation campaign aimed primarily at the U.S. public.

The mentality required by a small island to resist the siege of the most powerful country in the world just 90 miles away has been expressed in the slogan: "Within the Revolution—everything; outside the Revolution—nothing."

Naturally, those rightly or wrongly defined to be "outside the revolution" have reason to feel that Cuba has been something less than an open society.

Broaden mass participation

Another aspect of the leadership's response, however, has been efforts to broaden the popular voice in decision-making. The preparatory discussions for the fourth congress of the Communist Party held last October involved tens of thousands of non-party Cubans and touched on everything under the sun, although the actual congress results have gotten mixed reviews.

Additionally, a genuine effort is underway to give government institutions, as opposed to party units, the decisive say in addressing and resolving local problems.

Politically, the "average" Cubans that I spoke to were in one of two general camps.

The first camp consists of people who are not particularly political, who are overwhelmed by the current crisis, and

who simply want out or some undefined "change."

Others are politically minded, but are in opposition to the government and definitively want a "change of government." People in this camp are the ones who are stealing the planes and boats (because of the U.S. refusal to issue visas) to arrive as heroes in Miami, and are often the sole subjects of journalistic portraits of the "real" Cuba.

Overall, this camp is not an insignificant group of people and will undoubtedly grow larger as long as the economic crisis deepens.

The other camp are Cubans who may not complain any less than the first camp, but who are committed to doing whatever is required for Cuba's survival, to carry on with the revolutionary project's goals and ideals, and to making good on all the sacrifices that have been made in the last 33 years. They, too, want changes, but changes within the Cuban concept of socialism.

More than once I had people describe to me in great detail the current difficulties of their lives only to conclude with something along the lines of "Well, what do you expect when you are the only country in the world that won't take orders from Washington, that believes in justice and solidarity, and we're a small, poor island to boot."

Which of these camps is the majority? What do "most" Cubans "really" think?

On such questions, I declare myself incompetent to make any scientific, definitive judgement. In such a short visit, even talking to as many as 100 people, I really wouldn't presume to know how Cubans would "really vote" on the Revolution and its leadership. However, strictly as a personal opinion based on what I heard and saw, I believe the pro-revolution camp to be bigger, more determined and active, and of greater social weight.

Hands Off Cuba!

I cannot emphasize enough our responsibility, our obligation to demand that the U.S. government lift the economic embar-

go, normalize diplomatic and immigration relations, end the sabotage and covert operations, remove the military base at Guantanamo, and respect Cuba's rights as a sovereign nation.

We have this responsibility to ourselves as well, because what kind of people are we if we sit with folded arms while "our" government attempts to grind yet another people, another country into dust? What measure of equality, justice, and solidarity will we ever achieve here if the efforts to achieve those goals in Cuba are crushed underfoot?

A great many Cubans, I believe the majority, are hanging in against formidable obstacles not only to protect what they and their revolution have already achieved, but also to go forward, as best they can, toward creating a society where human needs and human beings come first.

The spirit of these Cubans I think is expressed in a message Fidel Castro sent to solidarity rallies in New York and San Francisco in early February. He wrote:

"We are not preparing for an apocalypse, but we are ready for everything, and we will make every sacrifice necessary precisely because we are convinced that the future belongs to us and that right is on our side. Only those who resist win, those who do not weaken when faced with difficulties, those who have confidence in their ideals and in the moral and revolutionary reserves of their people.

"We Cubans are not and will not be alone in this extraordinary hour. Nobody should feel pity or be sorry for us. One can feel sorrow for traitors and weaklings, but not for a people writing some of the most heroic and honorable pages of its history. What Cuba needs now, above all, is understanding and respect. You give us much more than that when you do not hesitate to express your solidarity with the Cuban people in this crucial moment.

"What is at stake at this very instant in our land is not only the future of our country, but also to a great extent the future of justice, of socialism and of the poor peoples of the world."

Cuba fights the tide

By GARRETT BROWN

We are publishing below an abridged version of an article contained in a personal newsletter circulated by Garrett Brown.

Brown spent two weeks in Cuba, Feb. 12-22, 1992, and here gives a brief report on the situation there since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The article is reprinted with the permission of the author.

While in Cuba I had the opportunity to get around quite a bit. But the fact of the matter is that this was a very brief visit to a very complex reality.

All I can offer is the impressions and conclusions of an honest witness to the slice of Cuban reality I was able to capture in 10 days and analyze based on my own life experience. With that disclaimer in mind, this is what I saw:

Cuba today is facing the most severe crisis of its 33-year-old revolutionary process, a crisis that is primarily economic in origin but has clear political aspects as well.

At this moment Cubans are talking not about the next step forward in development, but rather how to save the revolution itself. I left the island cautiously hopeful that they will succeed, but there are no guarantees in this life, and a lot of what will happen in the next several years depends on us and on the United States.

Basis of Cuba's crisis

Before describing the current crisis, it is essential to put Cuba into its proper context. Cuba is a small, underdeveloped island of 10.5 million people in Latin America. Cuba should be compared to other underdeveloped countries in the Americas, and not to some idealized version of the United States, a country 25 times larger and immensely richer.

Moreover, Cuba's crisis is part of the world economic crisis and a regional crisis as well. There is no Latin American country whose economy is not in crisis today.

On top of all that, Cuba is still subject to the relentless, 32-year war waged by the U.S. government that has included military assaults, economic embargo and sabotage, all types of covert operations, and a massive disinformation campaign.

What existed until two years ago was a socialist, planned economy based on mutually beneficial trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The economy had numerous inefficiencies, and was notoriously short on material consumer goods, but still stood head and shoulders above other underdeveloped countries and had, in fact, achieved "advanced country" status in several areas such as healthcare, education, and nutrition.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its allies has meant a complete rupture of trade relations (85 percent of which were with the Soviet Union) and a massive dislocation of the Cuban economy as a whole.

The key element has been the disruption of oil deliveries (which have declined 60 percent in the last year), requiring major cutbacks in industrial production, urban transportation, use of agricultural equipment, and the necessity of using hard currency reserves for energy purchases.

The trade rupture has also meant drastically fewer industrial raw materials, equipment and spare parts, the disappearance of many consumer items, and large cuts in imported foodstuffs.

Cuba has had to engage in a desperate



"In contrast to numerous other Latin American nations today, in Cuba there are no starving children begging and living on the streets; no schools, daycare centers, or healthcare facilities have been shut down ..."

search for new trading partners and terms of trade in the capitalist world. And for the second time in 30 years, Cuba will have to completely transfer its entire industrial and consumer technology (from U.S. to Soviet to God knows what) at a tremendous cost and dislocation.

This is in the context of a "Third World" country without oil reserves or a self-sufficient industrial or agricultural base, and whose principal exports (sugar, nickel, copper) have world market prices actually below or only marginally above the costs of production.

The impact of all this on daily Cuban life has been severe, to say the least. Food is in very short supply and is now almost completely rationed, which ensures equitable distribution but requires endless hours waiting in lines.

Many factories have closed or hours have been cut back, creating the first unemployment in 30 years. Thousands of tractors and farm machines have been idled for lack of fuel. Urban bus services have been reduced by at least two-thirds, and the buses themselves resemble sardine cans when they arrive. Cultural supplies such as newsprint, film, and other imported goods have almost disappeared altogether.

It is a very, very difficult situation, made all the worse by the fact that Cubans had become accustomed to a steadily rising standard of living, and held similar expectations for the future.

Confronting the shortages

There have been several immediate responses to meet the crisis. Family or

community "victory" gardens have sprung up in the backyards and unused spaces of urban areas. A million bicycles have been imported from China and the Soviet Union, and Cuba is building its own bicycle factories.

Some 100,000 oxen are currently being trained to replace diesel tractors in the upcoming harvests. And there is the resourcefulness of a people who have managed to keep fleets of 1957 Chevys running without any U.S. spare parts for 35 years.

Moreover, the Cuban government's commitment to equality and social justice remains firm, as does the legacy of 30 years of revolutionary achievements.

In contrast to numerous other Latin American nations today, in Cuba there are no starving children begging and living on the streets; no schools, daycare centers, healthcare facilities have been shut down; the war wounded from El Salvador and the thousands of foreign students on the Isle of Youth have not been sent packing despite the economic crisis.

The leadership's hope is that the economy will bottom out in 1992 and a combination of factors will, in the next three to five years, produce both the immediate hard currency needed to survive and the long term capital needed to transform and develop the economy.

Betting on tourism

The areas Cuba hopes to develop are: increased food production leading to self-sufficiency; expansion of Cuba's lucrative biotechnology exports; new joint ventures

with foreign capital, especially West European; and tourism.

The leadership sees growth of the tourist industry as essential to the survival of the Cuban Revolution, but this strategy is clearly the most controversial and potentially the most dangerous.

In 1991, some 350,000 tourists visited Cuba, mostly Canadian and European, and the goal is one million tourists by the year 2000. Tourism has the capacity to immediately generate large amounts of hard currency, without which the island would be simply unable to purchase energy, raw materials, medicines, etc.

However, as one Cuban Communist Party leader told our tour, tourism is like chemotherapy for cancer: it has very powerful side effects, and it can kill you as well as cure you. And once one starts the treatment, the side effects are inevitable.

The side effects are already clearly visible in Cuba. There are basically two separate economies operating side by side: a U.S. dollar economy for the tourists and a Cuban peso economy for the Cubans.

As it is illegal for Cubans to have dollars and prohibited for tourists to use pesos, these economies do not legally overlap. In order to be able to compete in the world tourist market, Cuba has had to reserve its best hotels, restaurants, stores, night clubs, and beaches (and all the food, drink, clothes, etc., that go with these) for tourists with dollars, while the average Cuban has limited or no access to these facilities.

Political Cubans view this disparity and lack of access as a necessary evil; other Cubans see this as simply evil and unfair; and almost all Cubans, I think, feel a certain resentment or uneasiness.

As is always the case when tourism brings together people with "advanced country" resources and people with "Third World" needs, tourism has generated certain levels of prostitution, black marketing, hustling, and other socially corrosive behavior.

To control this, for both economic and political reasons, the Cuban government has created a large, very visible "Tourist

(continued on page 19)