

# Socialist ACTION



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## Why Malcolm X has endured nearly 30 years after his death

"Malcolm X," directed by Spike Lee, starring Denzel Washington.

By JOSEPH RYAN and  
ROLAND SHEPPARD

Malcolm X "was the most electric personality I have ever met, and I still can't quite conceive him dead. It still feels to me as if he has just gone into some next

### MOVIE REVIEW

chapter, to be written by historians."

These were the words of author Alex Haley at the end of his epilogue in the book, "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," published shortly after the African American revolutionary was assassinated.

And this is certainly the feeling viewers will have when they leave the theatre after seeing Spike Lee's admirable movie,

which is based scrupulously on the "Autobiography."

Undoubtedly, the movie, like the book, will enjoy a long life. Interest in the life and ideas of Malcolm X—to the chagrin of the American ruling class—just won't go away.

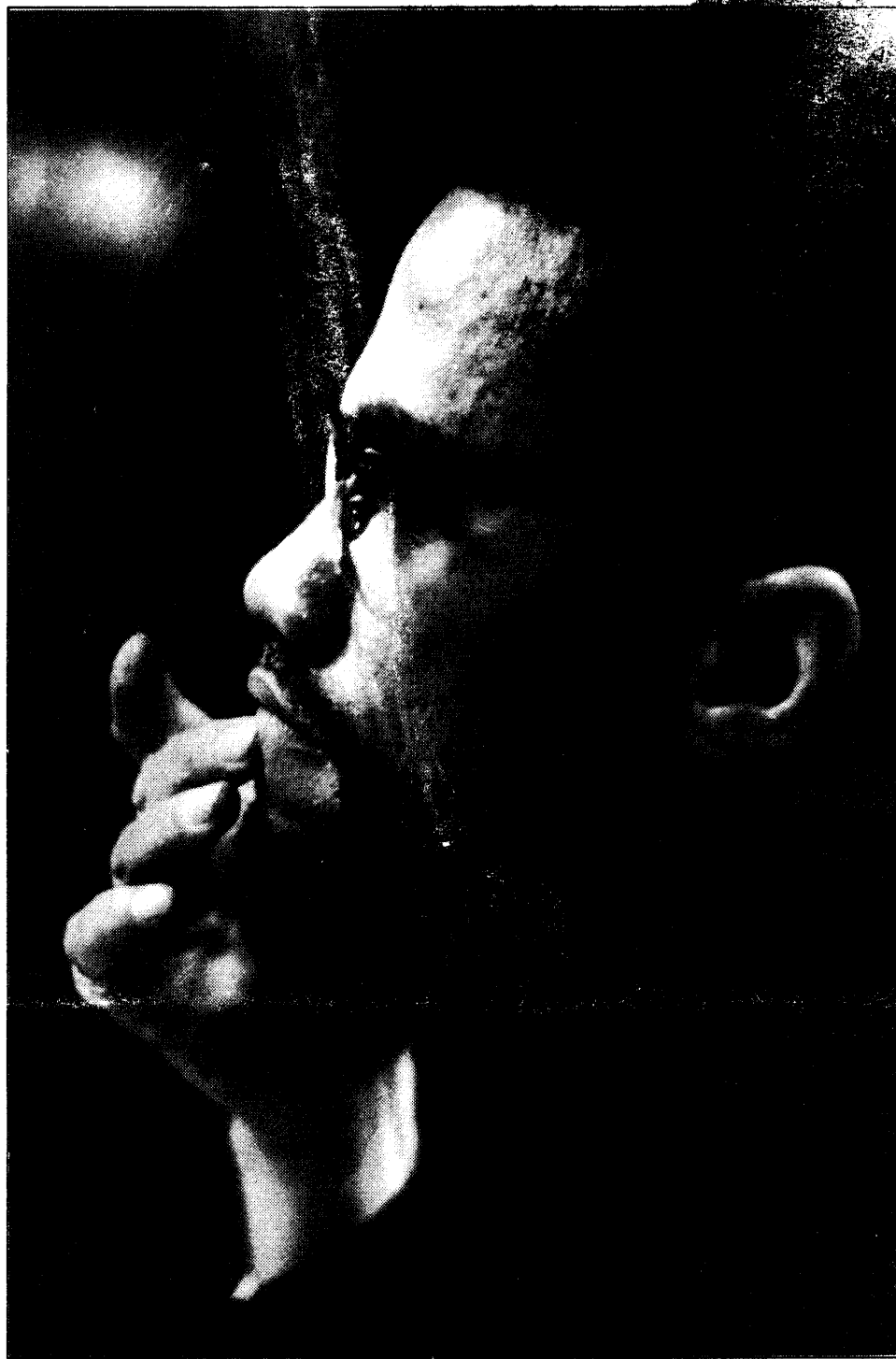
The making of this movie had been a goal for Spike Lee ever since he came on the cinematic scene with his critically acclaimed movie, "She's Gotta Have It," almost 10 years ago.

Likewise, no other movie has ever been so eagerly anticipated, nor sparked as much controversy even before its release.

Spike Lee was hassled from the beginning both by charges from some Black nationalists that he was too "bourgeois" to make an accurate movie about Malcolm X and by pressure from Warner Bros. studios to stay within the shooting budget.

(At one point, when Lee went over-budget, the studio took control of the film from him. It was given back only when

(continued on page 8)



ROY SCHAT

## Rights of Black majority undermined by ANC concessions in S. Africa

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Negotiations are set to resume between the African National Congress (ANC) and the white minority government of South African President F.W. De Klerk.

The ANC's major demand in the talks is the establishment of an "interim government of national unity." Until recently, the ANC had portrayed the "interim government" as merely a *transitional* power-sharing arrangement with De Klerk, which would dissolve once elections were held and majority rule was established.

In past articles, we have warned against power-sharing, however "temporary," with the white minority parties. We have pointed out that such a coalition (often termed a "popular front") will serve to disorient and demobilize the movement for Black liberation.

The Black working class, we said, must be organized in its own interests independently of the white ruling class and its government.

Last month, unfortunately, the ANC went a step further in its plan to share power with the De Klerk regime. On Nov. 25, the ANC's national executive committee approved a proposal that the ANC invite all parties with "proven support"—

such as De Klerk's Nationalist Party and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's reactionary Inkatha Freedom Party—to join a coalition government. This would be done even if the ANC had defeated these parties

in parliamentary elections.

This concession was put forward, purportedly, in order to speed up the process of negotiations. But many commentators point out that the plan, if put into effect,

could actually delay for five to 10 years the time when Black people in South Africa achieve majority rule.

### "Sunset clause"

The idea of joining a long-term coalition government with the ruling-class parties was first raised last year in an interview that ANC General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa gave to the *London Financial Times*. But the current plan stems from a proposal put forth a couple of months ago by Joe Slovo, an ANC leader and the chairman of the South African Communist Party.

Slovo proposed a "sunset clause" to be inserted into a new constitution that "would provide for compulsory power sharing for a fixed number of years in the period immediately following the adoption of the constitution." Slovo suggested that power in the new cabinet be shared by different parties on the basis of proportional representation.

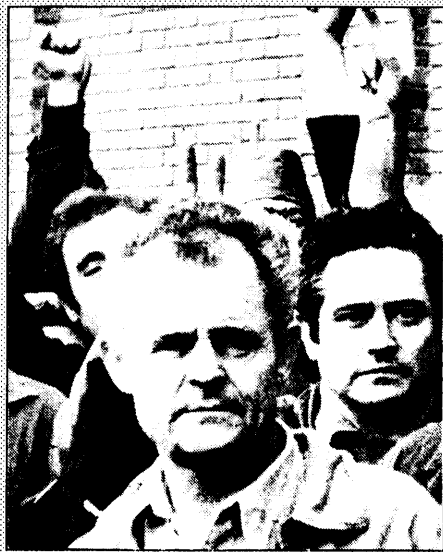
Within weeks, Slovo's "sunset" began to boil over into the media in an unprecedented public debate. Several top leaders of the ANC strongly denounced the Slovo document.

Pallo Jordan, an ANC leader and an independent socialist, pointed out in *The Weekly Mail*: "There appears to be a deep-seated pessimism that runs through Joe Slovo's proposals. True, we have not defeated the regime. But neither has the regime defeated us. The thrust of the document suggests that we are suing for the

(continued on page 15)

### The challenge of building a revolutionary alternative in Poland

See pages 12-13 for  
on-the-spot  
evaluation of the  
social crisis in  
Poland and the  
potential for building  
revolutionary parties.



# Long arm of the church in Ireland



## Fightback

By  
Sylvia Weinstein

On Nov. 25, the voters of Ireland voted on three constitutional amendments concerning abortion. Voters approved by about three to two amendments guaranteeing access to information on abortion and birth control and making it legal for women to travel abroad to secure abortions.

The voters rejected by two to one an initiative to permit abortion—but only if the mother's life is in danger. If approved, these words would have been inserted into the Irish Constitution: "It shall be unlawful to terminate the life of the unborn unless such termination is necessary to save life, as distinct from the health, of the mother where there is an illness or disorder giving rise to a real and substantive risk to her life, not being a risk of self destruction."

The Catholic Church, the "moral majority" in Ireland, opposed this third section of the referendum. As it was, the wording of this section was so obtuse, it could well have been written by the Pope.

But the Church chose—only for tactical reasons—not to oppose the right to information about birth control, nor the right to travel. They needed to appear "reasonable."

In any case, the Church will try to stop the right to go abroad for an abortion by other means. They sponsor a very active "Right to Life" group that takes every opportunity to seek out women who travel to England for an abortion and splash their pictures, addresses, and names in the Catholic press. This results in women and their families being harassed by phone calls night and day.

In Northern Ireland, the Protestant church takes over from the Catholic one. They too, have their "Right to Lifers" who take it as their God-given right to control the reproductive lives of women. They too, harass women who travel to England for abortions—meeting them at airports and ferries and shoving "fetus" photographs in their faces.

Historically, the Catholic

Church has made 180 degree shifts on the issue of abortion. In the year 1140 (before capitalism), Pope Gratian announced, "He is not a murderer who brings about an abortion before the soul is in the body." In 1234, Pope Gregory IX upheld that ruling.

In 1588, Pope Sixtus V abruptly announced that Church and secular penalties should be the same for abortion and murder. Three years later, however, Pope Gregory XVI reversed that decision and abolished all penalties for abortion except for those after "ensoulment."

It was not until the 18th century, when capitalism was ascending throughout Western Europe, that the Catholic Church adopted and kept its present stand on abortion.

The Church's current stand on abortion is based on four principles: (1) God is the author of life. (2) Human life begins at the moment of conception. (3) No one has the right to take an innocent "human life." (4) Abortion at any stage of fetal development is the taking of innocent human life.

To make sure this is fully understood, Dr. Austin O'Malley, a major Catholic mouthpiece, writes in "The Ethics of Medical Homicide and Mutilation," "An innocent fetus an hour old may not be directly killed to save the lives of all the mothers in the world."

But it's not the medieval minds of Catholic princes who are responsible for the oppression of

women. Today, the utterings of the Church hierarchy and other fetus-fetishers on this question reflect the views of the capitalist class.

The denial of abortion rights is part and parcel of a social system in which women are condemned to second-rate status—including wage levels close to half that of men. But it's not men as such who profit from the oppression of women but the capitalists.

Thus, without encouragement by the captains of industry, finance, and government, the churches wouldn't and couldn't get away with their mischief.

### When does "ensoulment" begin?

Harold J. Morowitz and James S. Trefil, authors of "The Facts of Life; Science and the Abortion Controversy," blasts the Catholic and fundamentalist Christian churches out of the water. On conception they write:

"There is probably no question more frustrating to a scientist than, 'Does life begin at conception?' It's like asking an engineer if a building begins when the blueprint is made. The only correct answer—yes and no—is profoundly unsatisfying.

"A frequent argument against abortion is that a new DNA 'blueprint' comes into existence at conception creating the possibility of a new life. But this argument, which owes its existence to advances in molecular biology, is threatened by studies of parthenogenesis—birth with-

out conception. There is the possibility that DNA can be manipulated so that females can actually have virgin birth. Can the church be against virgin birth? Even eggs discarded during menstruation have the future possibility of becoming 'potential life.'"

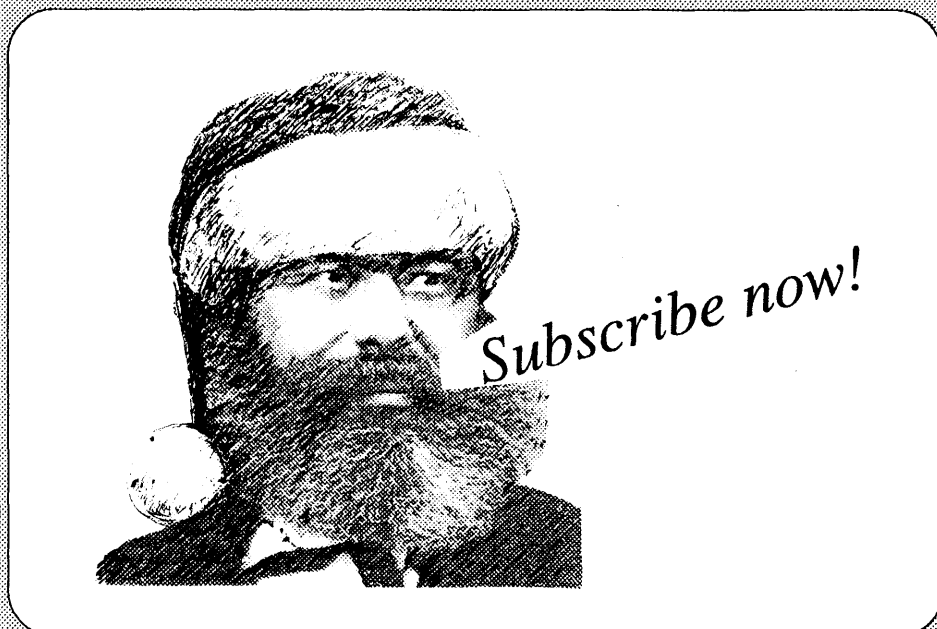
Morowitz and Trefil argue further: "Are we obligated to provide every unfertilized egg with a chance to develop? Do we outlaw menstruation?"

Then they give the ensoulment argument the *coup de grace*. They write: "It is generally accepted that what distinguishes us from other animals—what makes us human—is the highly developed, outer layers of the human brain—the 'gray matter' or cerebral cortex. The cortex is the seat of emotions, sensations and other characteristics we consider human. So it can be argued that when a fetus acquires a functioning cortex, it has acquired humanness.

"[But] just as a pile of microchips isn't a computer, a collection of brain cells isn't a brain. It is only around the 25th week (the start of the third trimester) that the connections start to be made and the cortex starts to function. Before that, the fetus is a human in the strict biological sense, but has not acquired the characteristics that distinguish humans from other animals."

Morowitz and Trefil conclude that *Roe v. Wade* is right to allow abortion before the onset of the third trimester. ■

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And don't forget: A *Socialist Action* subscription can make a nice gift for your friends this holiday season.—the editors

## Socialist ACTION

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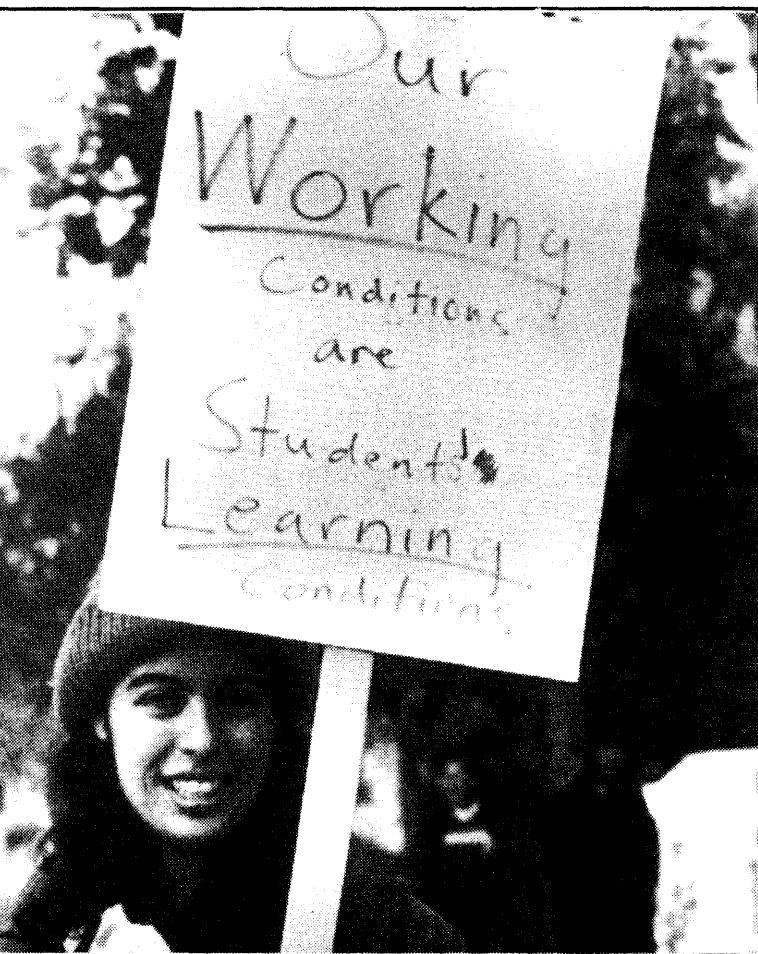
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# U.C. grad students strike for union recognition



JOSEPH RYAN/SOCIALIST ACTION

By HAYDEN PERRY

BERKELEY, Calif.—The University of California (UC) here and in Santa Cruz are attempting to add union-busting to the curriculum. In response, hundreds of United Auto Workers (UAW) picket signs have been ringing the campuses as teaching assistants and research assistants strike for recognition of their union.

On Nov. 24, close to 1000 students and workers—including a delegation of unionists from the NUMMI automobile plant in Fremont, Calif.—joined a rally at UC Berkeley to support the strike.

The university says the teaching assistants are not employees because they are also graduate students. They work about 20 hours a week lecturing and grading papers. Three thousand graduate students work part time at these and other jobs that are crucial to the functioning of the university.

As the university's budget is slashed, the graduate students become ever more important. Today they teach 60 percent of the courses. While many of the faculty have tenure and other contractual protections, graduate student employees have virtually none.

In 1983, teachers assistants formed the

Association of Graduate Student Employees (AGSE). In 1987, AGSE members voted to affiliate with District 65 of the UAW to gain resources and organizing experience and to become part of the nationwide union movement. Graduate student employees at the Universities of Michigan, Oregon, and several other states have also affiliated with the UAW.

It took several years for AGSE to win recognition as the student employees' organization. Finally, in 1989, the administration at UC Berkeley signed an agreement covering job posting, paid healthcare, tuition waivers, and workload limits, which protect the quality of teaching on the campus.

Last September, the UC administration refused to renew the union recognition established in 1989. They said their authority to reach an agreement with AGSE had been revoked by the Board of Regents. This unelected body of wealthy conservatives was thus able to veto union representation for 3000 university employees.

UC Berkeley negotiators broke off talks with AGSE on Nov. 12. AGSE members responded by striking and setting up a picket line. It became a mass picket line of several hundred, as undergraduates boy-

cotted classes and joined their teachers marching around the campus. With the support of the students, 70 percent of the classes were cancelled the first day.

A statement by AGSE said, "This strike will end immediately if the university promises AGSE in writing, a place at the negotiating table to work on agreements about teaching conditions, workload, and other employment issues. Such a place is granted to all other university employees."

University officials replied they were willing to discuss "matters of mutual interest" only through graduate student groups that are already recognized. They cited the graduate associations in various departments, schools, and colleges of the university.

Andy Cowell, spokesperson for AGSE, pointed out they always had the option of joining a graduate association. "But AGSE is a labor union, and to be an effective representative of labor, you cannot be part of management."

Meanwhile 300 AGSE members on the UC Santa Cruz campus have struck on the same issues. This is the culmination of two years of fruitless discussion. Besides earning broad student support, the strikers have won the endorsement of the Santa

Cruz Central Labor Council. Teamsters and unionized local transit services will not cross the picket line.

The Board of Regents, who will have the deciding voice, are determined to oust AGSE-UAW from the statewide UC system. While they are inflicting budget cuts and fee hikes on the students, confronting a union with the power of the UAW behind it is the last thing the Regents want.

The Regents have just increased student fees by over \$600 per year starting in 1993. Meanwhile, graduate student instructors have lost 11.3 percent of their real take-home earnings to inflation, tax increases, and fee hikes. Graduate student researchers have lost 14.6 percent.

AGSE is trying to shut down the Berkeley campus completely by maintaining solid picket lines that students will refuse to cross. But the administration is pressuring the students by pointing to the interruption of their education.

So far, a majority of the students remain solidly with the strikers. The series of fee hikes are endangering their education more than the AGSE strike. To win this strike, heavy pressure must be exerted. It will take not only the support of the students, but the heavy muscle of the auto workers on behalf of their student brothers and sisters.

By BARBARA PUTNAM

Students in the University of California (UC) system have been hit with a double whammy—a steep hike in fees and cutbacks in educational programs. But students on the UC Santa Cruz campus are fighting back.

A committee of the University of California Board of Regents is recommending a \$605 hike in student fees. The 20 percent increase would mean that student fees in 1993 would be more than double those for the 1990-91 school year. And it follows increases of 24 percent and 40 percent in each of the last two years.

A delegation of outraged students, mainly from Santa Cruz, attended the Regents meeting in San Francisco on Nov. 19. Tobin Fried, a UC Santa Cruz senior who is president of the UC Student Association, said: "To believe any student attending UC will be able to come up with these additional fees is both classist and racist."

In the meantime, a Santa Cruz student group called Concerned Students, which just formed this quarter, has been leading a campus protest against budget cuts amounting to \$5.4 million.

On Nov. 10, hundreds of students took part in a sit-in outside the chancellor's office, which led to negotiations between students and university officials over a list of student demands. That evening, police viciously attacked the students who did not immediately respond to orders to leave the area. Twelve students were arrested.

## Santa Cruz students protesting cutbacks are attacked by police



But this only added fuel to the fire—hundreds more students joined a protest rally the next day.

One of the organizers of the sit-in said that the students were shocked by the appearance of police in riot gear, who gave no indication that they would use anti-riot tactics to remove the protesters. Students video-taped the police wading into the crowd and using clubs and mace to disperse them. This video was shown the next day to an angry overflow audience in the McHenry Library on campus.

Police authorities tried to justify their extreme use of force by citing the level of anger of the protesters—as if the anger were not justified. Because of fee increases, education is more and more unaffordable for the majority.

Many students are forced to extend their college years because they cannot afford

to go to school fulltime. They are not consulted before the axe falls on student programs they need to graduate. They have been driven to sit-ins and other forms of protest because the only response to their demands for no more cutbacks is more cutbacks.

On Nov. 11, UC Santa Cruz officials held a "General Forum" to present their reasoning behind the budget cuts. Predictably, they did not allow for any dialogue with students. According to Concerned Students leader Steve Hodges, 30 to 50 students showed up and refuted the administration's rationalizations.

The next day, Hodges told *Socialist Action*, a secret press conference was called by the administration so they could give out their version of the cutbacks with no student participation whatsoever. Campus radio station KZSC and *City on*

*a Hill*, the student newspaper, were excluded as well. From outside the press conference, students loudly protested their exclusion.

Press representatives inside began to question why the students were not permitted to attend. Hodges believes that UC Santa Cruz officials walked out of their own press conference due to the reporters' questions and the ruckus the students were making outside. Sympathetic reporters from the official press conference then began to interview the students.

Concerned Students has a core of 30-40 student leaders ready to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to realize their demands. The students are demanding, first of all, that charges be dropped against the 12 students who were arrested. Their other demands are aimed at involving students in decision-making and keeping important programs that are being cut.

For example, there are plans to move the Rape Crisis Center into the Healthcare Department, which the students believe trivializes its importance. The student demands also champion programs affecting minority students, such as "Spanish for Spanish Speakers" and other programs that increase diversity.

Hodges gave a striking statistic that reflects the effects of cutbacks: The African American population at UC Santa Cruz stood at 3.1 percent last year but dwindled to 1.9 percent in 1992. One of the key demands is for programs that will increase diversity through recruitment and retention of minority students.

# Minneapolis Black community fights racist police dragnet

By CYNTHIA BURKE

MINNEAPOLIS—Since Sept. 25, being Black in this city makes you a murder suspect. Sept. 25 was the day that Minneapolis police officer Jerome Haaf was fatally shot while on a break at the Pizza Shack, a cop hangout. Witnesses say the shots were fired by two young Black men.

From the moment the suspects' description went out over the police radios, the Democratic Party mayor, city council, police department, and the Police Officers Federation (the so-called police union) dropped any pretense of probable cause or due process. The most glaring incidents of brutality were excused as "aggressive law enforcement."

Immediately, police put out the word that the killing was done by gang members, probably in retaliation for the beating by transit police the day before of a blind Black man who was 10 cents short of bus fare.

To this day, the police have presented no evidence of gang involvement other than references to anonymous informants.

Last May, an organization called United for Peace was formed by Minneapolis gang leaders opposed to violence between gangs and in the city as a whole. A deputy police chief approached Sharif Willis, president of the group, for some aid and advice. A faction in the police department and the federation opposed this relationship.

The day of the shooting, police first detained Willis at police headquarters for three hours without charges and later showed up at his home in force. According to those present, up to 50 police trained rifles on the house. The people inside immediately called community leaders and the media to head off police plans to open fire and provoke a shootout.

Willis, who was not inside the house, was handcuffed outside. "I told them I'd have everybody come out if that's what they wanted but they didn't want that. They wanted a media event.

A news crew arrived, the house was



CYNTHIA BURKE/SOCIALIST ACTION

searched and no guns were found.

The *Star-Tribune* newspaper reported that Willis had helped police identify suspects, which Willis flatly denies, and then took four days to correct the error. This, plus the long and pointless detention of Willis earlier in the day, was a clear attempt to label him as a police informant.

Two men arrested at Willis's home and two more men arrested two days later were all released on Sept. 28 due to lack of evidence. Police Chief Laux held a news conference that day, "breaking ties" with Willis and United for Peace (ties which United for Peace leaders say never existed to start with) and claiming that Willis is involved in unspecified criminal behavior.

Al Berryman, head of the Police Officers Federation, the cop "union", issued a list of demands to the City Council for more funding and increased police powers and for establishing ties with "responsible" organizations, like the Urban League. The group

bought radio time to broadcast an ad designed to whip up racist fears among whites and warning Blacks that "violence must stop or the jobs will continue to leave, your neighbors will keep moving."

Within hours after the start of the police dragnet, leaders of the movement against police brutality swung into action. This movement has a proud record of consistency and visibility going back for years. The largest demonstration in the country in response to the acquittal verdict in the cop beating of Rodney King—over 6000 people—took place in Minneapolis.

A Sept. 29 press conference was organized, which denounced the reign of terror and produced firsthand victims and witnesses. Those present at the conference heard firsthand from Leroy Gray, the blind and handicapped man who was beaten by transit police.

Prominent organizers of the news conference—and an Oct. 3 speakout and Oct. 10

rally—were Chris Nisan, central movement leader and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) candidate for U.S. Congress, and Mel Reeves, editor of the *Minneapolis Spokesman* newspaper.

About 200 people of all ages and races attended the speakout. Chris Nisan told the crowd, "We will not allow the murder of Officer Haaf to obscure the reality of who is responsible for the climate of hatred, fear, and violence in which we are forced to live—the police and the government."

Denise Bender-Lacy described how her 19-year-old son and 16-year-old nephew were taken to police headquarters "intimidated and humiliated and called every conceivable name in the book."

Residents said that police put black "mourning bands" for officer Haaf on their badges and conveniently taped across their badge numbers so that they could not be identified by their victims.

The speak-out demanded justice for LeRoy Gray and other recent victims, an end to the cop crackdown, an end to the slander and frameup of those alleged to have been involved in the murder of Officer Haaf—such as Sharif Willis, who addressed the meeting—and an end to threats of violence against anti-police brutality activists.

On Nov. 17, police arrested and charged two men and a 15 year-old boy with the Haaf slaying. The two men were among those originally detained right after the shooting and released for lack of evidence.

One man had come in to police headquarters voluntarily shortly after the shooting accompanied by his employer to deny involvement.

A third man was charged but was not arrested until a week later. The man, Mwati Mckenzie, contacted United for Peace from Chicago, where he was staying when he learned that a nationwide search for him was underway.

Mckenzie feared that Chicago or Minneapolis police might kill him if he turned himself in without escorts with cameras. United for Peace leaders, along with KARE-TV reporters flew with McKenzie from Chicago to Minneapolis, where Mckenzie surrendered to police. He told United for Peace he wants only to clear his name.

The big-business media and the police are busily convicting the men before the trial. This can be seen in a recent *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* editorial, which congratulates the police for doing an "admirable job," speaks of the need for police to feel appreciated, and concludes with a ringing "well done" for Chief Laux and his police force.

## Meatpacking workers fight for union in spite of weak organizing drive, ineffective leadership

By CYNTHIA BURKE

ST. PAUL, Minn.—In July 1991, workers at Long Prairie Packing in South St. Paul voted 92 to 65 to join the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW). Fourteen months later, the union was decertified by a vote of 97 to 68.

What happened in the meantime is a tragic case of a union being outwitted, outorganized, and outgunned by a company that pays \$6 an hour for a filthy, dangerous job, makes the workers buy their own tools, and whose employees cite unsafe working conditions as their number one concern.

When the workers voted for the union, they expected that a contract would be negotiated between Long Prairie and the UFCW addressing safety, wages, overtime, and all the many grievances at the plant.

Long Prairie hired the Omaha, Neb., union-busting consulting firm of Berens & Tate to direct their "negotiations" with the UFCW. The company stalled and stonewalled until a year had passed. Federal labor law then dictated that since there was still no contract, the pro-union vote should be set aside and a new vote held.

According to labor activist and histori-

an Peter Rachleff, this is called surface bargaining. "It's a delaying tactic. For every week they [management] hold on, one or two union sympathizers get fed up and quit, moving on to the next packing-house or some other low-wage job.

"The company expects the turnover will work in its favor. It's been very successful. Looking at the 1980s, you'll see that only half of all elections that unions have won have resulted in contracts."

Long Prairie is a subsidiary of a company called Rosen's Diversified Industries, which owns 11 businesses, including the Upper Midwest's largest supplier of farm chemicals. The company had estimated revenues of \$425 million in 1990. More than half of that, or about \$250 million, comes from the packing plants they own.

Rosen's Diversified bought the South St. Paul plant three years ago; the union had been broken by the previous owner 10 years ago. The work force is largely Hispanic, and the workers have long complained of racist harassment by supervisors.

By the time the UFCW realized that management was not going to sit down and negotiate in good faith, and that no court or government official was going to compel them to do so, valuable time had been lost. Most of the workers who were

active in the 1991 organizing drive had been fired on trumped up charges or had simply given up in despair and no longer worked at Long Prairie.

The UFCW never understood the need to go directly to the members and enlist their aid in pressuring Long Prairie.

Last February, Raul Valdez, an employee in the boning room, and five other men were working when one had to leave to go to the doctor. After that worker left, the line speed was not reduced and the men could not keep up. Valdez, who was the only one there who spoke any English, objected. He was sent home on the spot and was later fired.

In an impressive demonstration of solidarity, the other four workers walked out in protest. A plantwide union meeting followed, where all the workers pledged their support. However, since there was no union contract, Valdez never did get his job back.

This incident showed the potential for organizing the workers in the plant, but the union never mobilized that potential or effectively responded to Long Prairie's incessant anti-union bribery and blackmail. In fact, the union had only minimal contact with the new members for the whole period of the stagnant negotiating process.

The UFCW leadership has the mistaken idea that government intervention would favor the workers. The union leaders pinned their hopes on passing a bill that would substitute binding arbitration for negotiations in the negotiation of first contracts. Their response to the defeat in South St. Paul was to announce plans to petition and lobby the Minnesota legislature in favor of this bill last August.

About three weeks before the second union election, the UFCW organized a solidarity party, supposedly to publicize and build support for the organizing drive. In reality, the rally was a thinly disguised campaign rally for state and local Democratic Party candidates, who stood to benefit from being associated with a cause as widely respected within the labor movement as that of the Long Prairie workers.

Meanwhile, Long Prairie management had its strategy well planned, as the deadline for the contract passed and the second vote came closer. The company sponsored free beer busts and dinners for the employees. Privately, supervisors told workers that those who voted for the union would be fired and those who voted "no" would get raises.

The company held captive meetings where speakers told the workers that the union only wanted their money. If the union was serious, they declared, why was there still nothing to show for the pro-union vote months ago?

On the eve of the vote, the company sent a personal letter to the wives of all the workers warning them that the union would force their husbands out on strike, take dues money, and give nothing in return.

A rank-and-file committee was formed, which wrote leaflets and organized within the plant. But the committee operated on a shoestring without the resources necessary to counter Long Prairie's propaganda. These workers have not given up, however. They are continuing to draw out the lessons of the election, as they lay plans for a renewed drive at the plant. ■

# Flurry of debate surrounds teaching of Afrocentrism in urban schools

Several U.S. cities have taken steps to weave African and African American history and culture into their public school curriculums. But the issue has ignited a backlash from those who criticize the reforms as divisive and even "separatist."

Below, we present two views from Baltimore concerning that city's efforts to introduce elements of Afrocentrism into public education.

By DR. WALTER GILL

BALTIMORE—Few issues are drawing the attention of educators and local neighborhood associations in the educational reform movement as much as the infusion of the Afrocentric perspective into the school curriculum. Perhaps more so than any other city, Baltimore has been thrust under the gun in grappling with these issues.

Baltimore school officials have merely cast a gent's eye on the importance of community and parent's input into the process. Nor have they thoroughly examined the historical significance of the Afrocentric movement, its humanism and universality.

As Dr. Molefi Kete Asante (a consultant to the Baltimore schools) points out, the idea of "mainstream America" is nothing more than a myth meant to maintain Eurocentric hegemony. Native American, African, Hispanic, and Asian children are still taught about themselves from a European perspective.

The Afrocentric perspective is not anti-European. As a theory, it is against material-structuring, sexism, racism, ignorance, and monoethnic hegemony in the curriculum. The aim of the Afrocentric approach is not to divide the country but to help it flourish effectively and function efficiently.

Urban education in the United States is facing a dilemma in attempting to address a European multicultural curriculum. Barbara J. Jackson Shade concludes in her book, "Culture, Style, and the Education Process," that school systems in general operate on Euro-American cultural rules and, as such, respond negatively to children from other cultural backgrounds.

For example, some research has shown that African American children purposely do poorly in school because they don't want to be accused of acting white. This is due, in part, because these students doubt their own intellectual ability and because they define academic success as white people's prerogative.

In Baltimore's schools, where more than 81 percent of the students are African American, the continued use of a European multicultural curriculum could have a devastating effect on the academic achievement of these students.

## An insensitive report

Perhaps it is politically correct to say that the European-centered curriculum is now "multicultural." If so, then no stronger argument exists for the infusion of an African perspective into the present curriculum than a recent report from the Abell Foundation.

Titled, "'The Melting Pot' Under Challenge: Afrocentrism and Multiculturalism in Baltimore City Schools," the report reeks of European-American insensitivity. At a time when urban erosion, gerrymandering, and the elimination of school busing has re-created segregated schools, the report's use of "we" and "our children" is a white-wash. Is this the same "we" as in "We

the People?" Is it the same "our children" as in the 62 percent of Baltimore City school children classified as poor?

Using Thomas Jefferson as an example, the report states that he borrowed heavily and wisely from the writings of many cultures when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Okay, but how about the illiterate Iroquois Indians? They had the first form of democratic

government in this country and recognized women's rights. Many of their ideas were followed in writing the Articles of Confederation—the forerunner of the U.S. Constitution.

The report finds it necessary to define "minority cultures" as African, Hispanic, and Asian. No mention is made of Native Americans.

The very use of the word "minority"

is burdened with an accumulation of negative meanings. How can "minority" be applied to four-fifths of the world's population? That's more than 4 billion people of color.

## Raising self-esteem?

The self-serving argument that the Afrocentric curriculum will raise self-esteem among non-white students is an attempt to dilute the curriculum's true purpose—to present information accurately.

Data does not exist to verify that an Afrocentric perspective will improve academic achievement or self-esteem, or better prepare students for college or jobs. But data does exist that clearly shows that the present school structure is woefully inadequate for many students.

According to the 1991 Maryland School Performance report, Baltimore City schools failed in all but one of the 13 academic categories. After 12 years of schooling, 43 percent of the graduates were not prepared for either college or jobs.

The Baltimore City schools and surrounding school districts are making a conscientious effort to infuse materials into the curriculum that reflect non-European history and culture. Unfortunately, all too often, these materials are still referred to as "minority."

According to a *Sunpapers* article on the new curriculum, Dr. Thomas H. De Laine, the Coordinator of Special Projects and Initiatives, said: "We do not have an 'African American curriculum;' we have a curriculum that is multicultural in focus, and we are emphasizing this year the African American content and culture."

African and African American material are to be completely infused into the elementary school curriculum this fall, at the middle school level by next September, and in the high schools in late 1994. Dr. De Laine says that Hispanic, Asian, and Native American studies will be infused into the schools in coming years.

Parents and some community groups have protested the recent appointment of Maurice Howard as assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Mr. Howard, who does not hold a doctoral degree, is a European American and is looked upon as a ploy to maintain a European-centered curriculum.

Parents and neighborhood associations must take more responsibility for fighting against the poor education practices of the inner city. Any attempt to implement a modified diversified curriculum—by whatever name—will not be successful without parent-student-teacher partnerships.

The continued racial segregation and economic dichotomy in society can only be resolved through education and training. An Afrocentric perspective may be the key in modifying the spiraling failures of many urban students.

John Ruskin, the European scholar, said: "Education does not mean teaching someone something they do not know. It means teaching them to behave in a way in which they do not behave."

And Booker T. Washington declared: "Call education what you please. If it fails to bring about results for the masses, it falls short of its highest end."

All students need to be educated so they know who they are and from where they come, in order to be a credit to their race. All students need to be educated to think for themselves and trained to earn an honest living—for "cold cash makes no enemies." That's life. It should also be an opportunity for student success in a place called school. ■

Walter Gill is the author of "Issues in African Education" and writes on current trends in urban education.

## VIEWPOINT



ROBERT MAASS/NEWSWEEK

## Who will implement the program?

By TEHUTI AMEN  
IMHOTEP

Parents and concerned residents of Baltimore's African American community have attended sessions of the school board in order to protest the recent appointment of Maurice Howard, a white man, as the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

Following are major excerpts from a speech delivered to a school board meeting on May 21, 1992. It is reprinted by permission of the author.

Mr. President, Dr. Amprey, and the other board members, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. We have had the great opportunity of benefiting from the brilliance of Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, chairman of African American studies at Temple University, as a consultant for the development of an Afrocentric curriculum for the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS).

He has eloquently explained to us how the African child sits outside the material that is currently presented in the classroom under the European curriculum. He has explained the importance of why African children need an Afrocentric curriculum to ground-root them into their own historical experience and culture, thus increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence—and ultimately helping them to become productive citizens.

Therefore, the Afrocentric curriculum must be implemented through grades K-12 without hesitation. Without doubt it will improve students' success in particular and in society in general.

In addition, the very nature of Afrocentricity means that you look at and interpret the world through Black eyes. Now, to ensure the effectiveness of this curriculum and staying consistent with the nature of Afrocentricity, the person who will lead the office of curriculum and development must also see the world through Black eyes and be rooted in the Black experience.

The awesome responsibility of being the vanguard for the liberating education of African children must be under the leadership of a Black man or woman who is rooted in Afrocentric thought, knowledge, and practice. It is an insult to us as a race of people to have an inexperienced man or woman in Afrocentricity lead us in employing this curriculum.

Furthermore, we will assume that white people mean well in their efforts to help bring and sustain the Afrocentric curriculum. Therefore, if white people do not have any current or future plans to displace and/or dilute the effectiveness of this curriculum, we then ask them to move aside and to let the Black person—who is qualified—take us to the Afrocentric side of education.

We don't want you out of the process, but we do want you out of the leadership role in the office of curriculum and development.

In conclusion, at all costs, an effective Afrocentric curriculum must be implemented from grades K-12. The implementation must be expedient, well-executed, and sustainable. An experienced Black man or woman who is rooted in Afrocentric thought, practice, and knowledge must be the captain of the ship in the Office of Curriculum and Development. ■

# The 'New Teamsters'

## one year after Carey victory

### Rank-and-file reform movement holds 17th convention

By HAL LONDON

ST. LOUIS—On Oct. 23-25, over 500 International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) activists and reform officials gathered here for the Teamsters for a Democratic Union's (TDU) 17th annual convention.

TDU is a rank-and-file reform movement that was formed in the 1970s to fight for union democracy and against corruption. They were instrumental in the election victory of new Teamsters president Ron Carey.

The conference was, in part, a celebration of the surprise victory of Ron Carey's reform slate in the December 1991 Teamster election. It also afforded activists the opportunity to exchange information and to review what had been accomplished in the first nine months of the New Teamsters.

In addition to the general sessions, jurisdictional meetings and workshops on such topics as contract campaigns, the free trade agreements, and union by-law reform were held.

Most of the new General Executive Board, many new international representatives, and a growing number of local officers were present. Ron Carey briefly attended, spoke, and thanked the body for their support.

So the alliance between reform officials and the rank-and-file movement continues. Some, like International Vice President Diana Kilmury, urged TDU to keep mobilizing, to push the officials so as to offset the pressure from the companies, government, and the old guard bureaucracy.

#### Old bureaucracy still entrenched

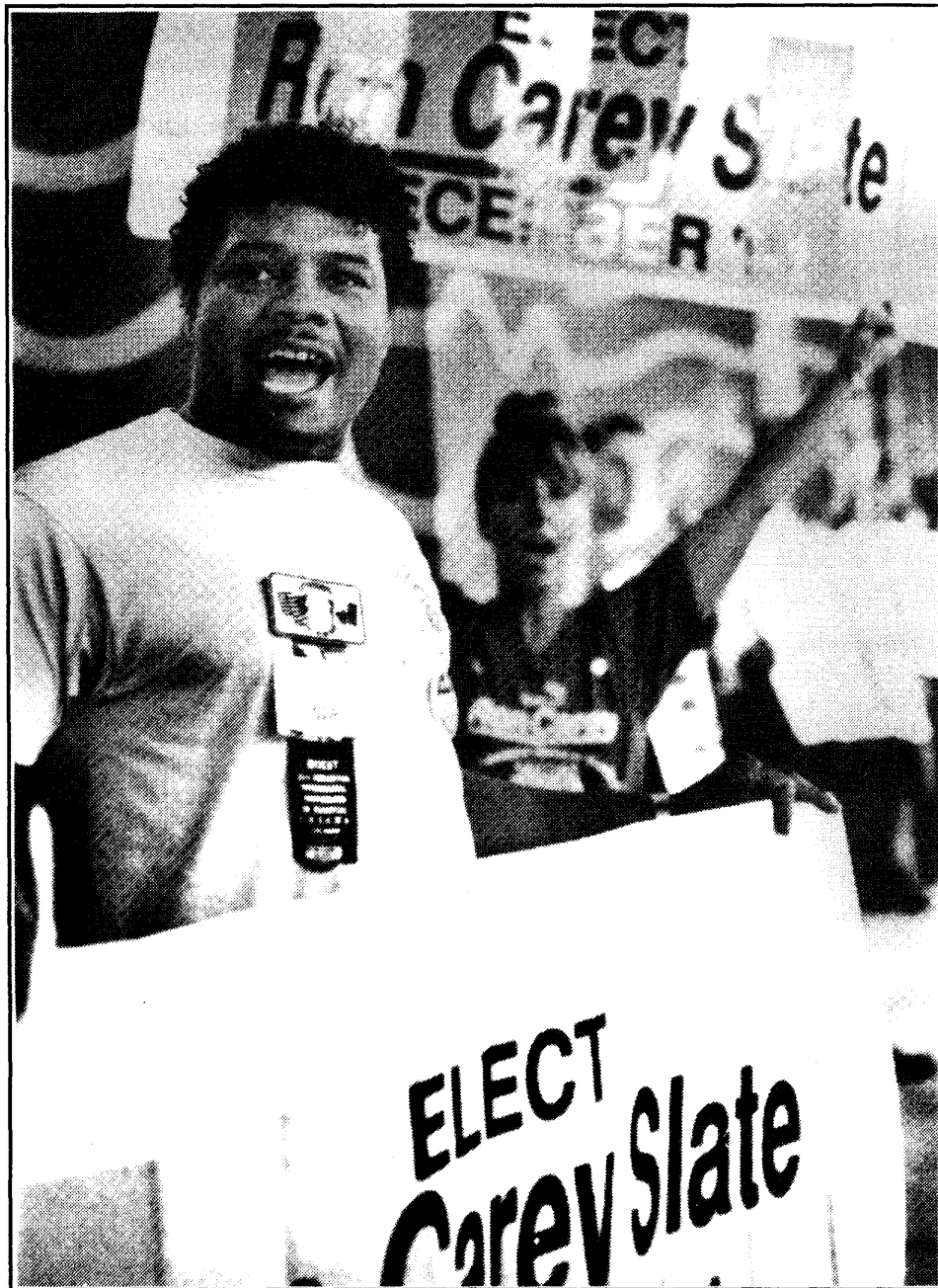
Carey seems to be moving cautiously. Some activists expressed impatience and questioned whether Carey wants to empower the ranks. On the other hand, Carey's running mate, International Vice President Mario Perrucci, thanked TDU by name and warned the Old Guard to "get on board, or get out of our way."

The old bureaucracy remains deeply entrenched in the locals, area conferences, and joint councils. Under the IBT's constitution this is where most of the power and finances lie.

According to Rick Smith, a TDU leader: "Although (Carey) won the popular vote, the vast majority of the international's power structure remained opposed to change. ... [The] solution was to get rid of the worst of the Old Guard, keep those who may get on the program, and begin placing reformers in positions of power. ... Whether [this] strategy will work or not is up to question. ... TDU should not ... be timid about offering constructive criticism and offering alternatives to the new administration."

Pete Cammarata, another long-time TDU leader said that: "Carey's overall goal is not about building an independent rank-and-file organization. He espouses honest trade unionism, a form of service unionism. ... He generally believes that the power in the union flows from the officers. ... This is different from TDU's goals, which stress that power comes from organization and education of the rank and file and officers."

But very few of the local "old guard" bureaucrats are "honest, hard working officials" as Carey has allegedly claimed. They will not be reformed into genuine workers' leaders who could help



transform the Teamsters into a fitting instrument for the defense of the membership' interests in the coming difficult period.

To strengthen the union in the face of the new challenges, Carey will have to involve every potential activist. Reliance on sectors of the old union bureaucracy, whose existence depends on a passive rank and file, contradicts the need to mobilize the ranks.

However, most TDU leaders stressed a unity of purpose and long-term alliance with the Carey administration, while working independently in some areas.

Important new initiatives are underway. For example, \$34 million has been committed to organizing—but the organizing department seems slow to use rank-and-file and volunteer organizers. Some grievance panels are being reorganized. Most of the old international reps have been replaced.

A pilot program to respond to the employers' "team concept" strategy (labor-management cooperation programs), which undermines unionism, is being launched. A human rights committee is being created to "increase opportunities for participation by all members, organize the unorganized, and make the Teamsters union an even more effective voice for justice and dignity on the job, [and] in our community."

The international is promulgating new by-laws that local activists hope to use to win election of shop stewards, hold impartially supervised mail-ballot elections, and cap officers' salaries.

#### Showdown with UPS

But the real test of the New Teamster's mettle will likely be the United Parcel Service (UPS) contract, which

expires in July 1993. UPS is the largest single employer of Teamsters. Three years ago, UPS management outmaneuvered the IBT on the contract vote, and won major concessions.

International Vice President Perrucci, heading the UPS campaign, promises an aggressive effort in upcoming contract talks. Carey will personally co-chair the contract negotiations.

Management has already begun their counteroffensive, and can be expected to play hardball.

This contract fight may define the relationship of forces between the union and employers for some time.

On assuming office, the Carey administration inherited some 85 poorly prepared, losing strikes. It has been trying to cut the losses with greater activism, corporate campaigns, and consumer boycotts.

In the well-known case of the *Pittsburgh Press* strike, the Teamsters organized mass picketing, defied court injunctions and mobilized solidarity to stop the newspaper from using scab labor.

The carhaul contract negotiations earlier in the year—which cover truck drivers who carry cars from the factories—was seen as one of Carey's first tests of strength after being elected. Some gains were won in the new contract because the union convinced the carhaul bosses that an effective strike was being organized.

Much discussion at the TDU convention focused on how to prepare for and win strikes today. Unionists are keenly aware that isolated strikes, run as they have been, are losers.

TDU should help the IBT draw a criti-

cal balance sheet of tactics—such as corporate campaigns and in-plant "strategies"—that try to substitute for effective strike action.

Discussion should focus on approaches that mobilize the membership, build solidarity beyond the workplace, and spread the action as needed in order to successfully stop production and defy the injunctions and fines imposed by the bosses' courts.

#### Government intervention

The New Teamsters has created an ethical practices committee to fight corruption internally. However, the government is trying to extend and expand its interference in union affairs beyond that established by the consent decree signed by the Old Guard leadership.

Specifically, a three-member independent review board is to assume responsibility for overseeing the union, with the federal administratorship ending soon.

The board, however, is stacked two to one against the union by government appointees! William Webster, ex-head of the CIA and FBI, is the supposedly "neutral" member! Webster is also on the Board of Directors of Anhaeuser Busch—one of the largest Teamster employers—and on the board of the notoriously anti-labor Pinkerton security agency.

Carey has been protesting that "some in government are intent on draining our treasury and weakening our power." This problem is not going to disappear under an *anti-labor* Clinton administration, which will likely do what it can to prevent the development of a democratic, militant Teamsters union.

Despite Clinton's anti-labor record in Arkansas, the union support given him legitimizes his administration and disarms working people before the coming bipartisan attacks on our living standards and social services.

And despite TDU's remaining formally politically independent, Clinton/Gore buttons and literature abounded at the convention. Militants were unable to point to any credible alternative.

The convention closed with TDU's favorite orator, Bill Slater (who wore a Clinton button), warning: "Working people have been written off by both parties and there's no alternative. ... Unions should support Tony Mazzocchi's effort to start a labor party."

TDU's formal stance of political independence has become increasingly inadequate in the new situation as the wide support for Clinton at its convention shows.

Class-conscious unionists should find ways to educate on the need to break from the bosses' parties, and support independent labor candidates.

This could be done through debate in the pages of TDU's *Convoy Dispatch* newspaper, by having a Labor Party Advocates workshop at the next convention, and through the union as a whole as opportunities present themselves. Lessons should be drawn from the Canadian Teamsters' experience in building a labor party, the New Democratic Party (NDP).

The convention showed that the Teamster reform movement is continuing to build on its electoral victory with modest gains. However, no union can be a model in isolation. Only a deeper mobilization of the rank and file will make possible the transformation of the union into a class-struggle instrument.

TDU is growing, but not fast enough. It voted to direct more of its organizing resources beyond the trucking jurisdiction, where TDU membership is concentrated, especially targeting minority and women Teamsters.

With such "forgotten Teamsters" becoming a greater percentage of the workforce, the New Teamsters' strength is tied to the fights against racism and sexism. ■

By JOSEPH RYAN

SAN FRANCISCO—Sean McGowan may now think he has the "luck of the Irish," but because of a recent decision by the San Francisco Immigration Court granting him political asylum, some of it may rub off on the cases of other Irish Republicans that British authorities want to get their hands on.

McGowan's victory is the first time that a U.S. court has granted asylum to an Irishman because he faced death threats in British-occupied Northern Ireland.

The court's decision to vacate a deportation order against McGowan could have a direct influence on the cases of Jimmy Smyth and Kevin Artt, two escapees from Northern Ireland's notorious Long Kesh concentration camp in 1983.

Both Smyth and Artt were arrested by the FBI in June 1992—Smyth in San Francisco and Artt in San Diego—and charged with making false statements to gain a passport. British authorities have made it clear that they want both men extradited back to Northern Ireland.

McGowan's case is a precedent because he has a prison record in Northern Ireland. As a member of the Official IRA, McGowan was convicted of armed robbery, possession of firearms and membership in the Official IRA and served almost eight years in Crumlin Road Jail and Long Kesh.

When he was arrested, McGowan was beaten and tortured by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). He filed brutality charges and, in return for dropping those charges, was sentenced to five years in prison instead of the 20 years he could have gotten.

Shortly after he was released in May 1983, however, the Ulster Volunteer Force, an outlawed paramilitary death squad, immediately began to threaten him.

McGowan told *Socialist Action* that once you are fingered as a former IRA man your life is in immediate danger. So Sean McGowan had no choice but to leave—or face death.

#### Deportation equals death sentence

McGowan, who had been to the United States on two previous occasions, came to stay in 1985 when he settled in San Fran-

# Irish Republican granted political asylum in S.F.

cisco and worked in construction. And like thousands of other undocumented workers, he constantly had to look over his shoulder in fear of being nabbed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the hated *La Migra*.

But McGowan's luck ran out in September, 1989, when he was apprehended by the INS and arrested with another man who was their main target. Since then,

danger if he was deported to Northern Ireland.

According to an article written by Mary O'Donnell in the November 1992 *San Francisco Gael*, a local Irish community newspaper:

"The testimony presented by McGowan's lawyers, Jim Byrne and Susanna Iglehert, included 'corroborative evidence with regard to threats made on his life, details of the

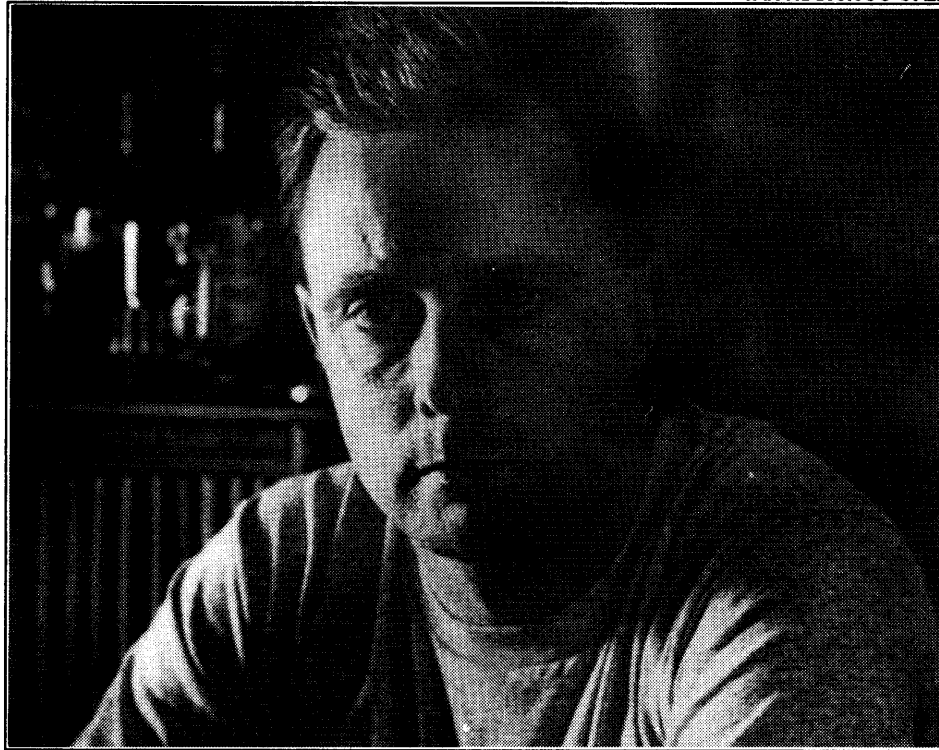
morning to make sure a bomb hadn't been planted.

With his three year ordeal now behind him, McGowan is tremendously relieved and wants only to "get on with my life."

But political activists in the Irish community here are understandably optimistic about the chances of winning political asylum for Smyth, Artt, and many other Irish Republicans who came to the U.S. to escape British terror.

They don't want any more Irish Republicans to end up like Joe Doherty, who was imprisoned for years in the United States before being deported to Northern Ireland—where he now languishes in prison. ■

SAN FRANCISCO GAEL



Jimmy Smyth: Sean McGowan's victory could help his case for asylum.

McGowan has been out on bail fighting his case.

The centerpiece of McGowan's political asylum appeal was that he faced a death sentence if he was returned to Northern Ireland. Judge Lawrence DiConstanzo, who heard the case, was obviously convinced. He ruled that there was justifiable reason to believe that McGowan's life would be in

British government's Stevens Inquiry, which verified reports of collaboration between the British security forces and loyalist paramilitary death squads, and substantiation that killings by loyalist death squads have dramatically increased."

Judge DiConstanzo was also swayed by the testimony of McGowan himself, who related how he had to check his car every

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# FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL! Stop the Execution!

By DAWN REEL

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a Black journalist and community activist currently on death row in Pennsylvania. He was arrested on Dec. 9, 1981, after he intervened in the police beating of his brother during a street altercation in Philadelphia. A police officer was killed in the incident; Abu-Jamal also was shot and seriously wounded.

In July 1982, a jury with only one Black person on it convicted Abu-Jamal for the murder of the police officer. He was given a death sentence.

The prosecution argued that the death penalty was warranted because of Abu-Jamal's involvement in militant political causes. In 1968, at the age of 14, Abu-Jamal was Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. Later, he became a supporter of the MOVE organization, which was the frequent target of attacks by the Philadelphia cops.

In 1980, at age 26, Abu-Jamal was elected president of the Association of Black Journalists.

In October 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court denied both of Abu-Jamal's petitions for a rehearing on his sentence. Since then, his death warrant has been sitting on the desk of pro-death-penalty Gov. Robert Casey. Casey has already

signed 15 death warrants—and could sign Abu-Jamal's at any time.

A worldwide campaign, supported by Amnesty International, has flooded Casey's office with letters, calls, and telegrams demanding a new trial for Abu-Jamal. Noted civil liberties attorney Leonard Weinglass and NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyer Steven Hawkins are gathering evidence of irregularities in Abu-Jamal's trial and confirming his innocence. They expect to file a motion to overturn his conviction.

On Dec. 9, the 11th anniversary of Abu-Jamal's arrest, a march will be held in Philadelphia to demand, "Stop the execution!" Buses and caravans will depart from other areas of Pennsylvania and from New York, Washington, D.C., and Boston. The march will begin at Broad and Jefferson Streets at 11 a.m. and go to City Hall for a noon rally.

For more information, tee-shirts, videos, and speakers, contact Equal Justice USA/Quixote Center, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

Telephone (301) 699-0042. Tax-deductible contributions toward Mumia's legal expenses should be sent to Black United Fund/Mumia Abu-Jamal Defense, 419 S. 15th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19146. ■



# ... Why Malcolm X endures

(continued from page 1)

Lee was able to raise money from a number of Black entertainers and business people.)

In spite of all this distraction, Lee has turned out a film that keeps you engrossed for almost three and a half hours and accomplishes what the book does: *You want to know more about Malcolm X.*

In the opening scene, Spike Lee dramatically reminds the audience that the social conditions and racism that radicalized Malcolm X still exist in full force today.

With Malcolm X's voice in the background, and video images of the L.A. police beating of Black motorist Rodney King flashing by, a flaming American flag slowly burns into an "X."

Lee adheres almost to the letter of the book, with the movie constructed in three distinct sections: Malcolm X when he was a street hustler in the 1940s; his time in prison, where he served six years for a burglary conviction and was converted to the Nation of Islam; and his meteoric rise in public consciousness as a brilliant spokesperson and organizer for the Nation of Islam.

This last section includes Malcolm X's break with the Nation and gives some heretofore unknown insight into the growing friction and jealousy between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammad.

Actor Denzel Washington does an excellent job of making you believe you are seeing Malcolm X. He obviously studied film clips of the man quite closely and is most effective when he becomes the Malcolm X we all know—a firebrand speaker who was brutally and eloquently frank about the racial oppression faced by African Americans.

This is by far the best section of the movie, the part the audience is eagerly

awaiting, because it is here we see the man who called himself "the angriest Negro in America;" the man who could tap right into the frustration and anger of the disenfranchised Black masses.

## "Life of changes"

Malcolm X told Alex Haley shortly after his split from the Nation, "My life has been a life of changes." And in the movie, Spike Lee documents these

when he told his story to journalist Alex Haley. Lee's script, based on Haley's book, succeeds more in depicting the life Malcolm was abandoning than in suggesting where his life was headed at the time of his assassination.

Lee undoubtedly saw his movie the same way that Malcolm X saw his biography: An example to other Black people—especially Black youth—of a man who rose from the ashes to become one the greatest Black leaders in American history. Consequently, he spends over a third of the movie on Malcolm's life as a

trying to murder him. "I'm going to tell you something," he says to his wife during a telephone call on the eve before his assassination. "The more I keep thinking about this thing, the things that have been happening lately, I'm not at all that sure it's the Muslims. I know what they can do, and what they can't do, and they can't do some of the stuff recently going on."

As he is speaking the camera pans to another room where FBI agents are listening in on a phone tap.

## The last year

JOSEPH RYAN/SOCIALIST ACTION



Lee accurately portrays Malcolm's efforts to build an independent Black political organization—the Organization of Afro-American Unity—and his first trip to Mecca, where he revised his opinion of white people after observing the brotherhood that existed between Black and white Muslims.

But because of Lee's sole reliance on Haley's epilogue, Malcolm's rapid political evolution in an anti-capitalist direction is never acknowledged. His conclusion, stated on many occasions, that you can't have racism without capitalism, is muted in the film.

No mention is made of Malcolm's opposition to both capitalist political parties—the Democrats and the Republicans.

Nothing is said about his opposition to the Vietnam War. And his

second trip to Africa, where he met with heads of state to internationalize the African American struggle, is omitted.

Malcolm said to Haley on a couple of occasions during his final year that his life and ideas were changing so quickly that he thought the "Autobiography" might be rendered obsolete.

This is because the "Autobiography" was about Malcolm X, the Black Muslim. And although Malcolm remained a Muslim, in his last year he also became Malcolm X, the Black revolutionary.

But even though beset by these omi-

(continued on next page)

# ... Revolution Rap

(continued from page 16)

la fureur de dire," Ed. Loris Talmart, Paris 1990.)

But Public Enemy's revolution rap is above all political—a fact that the repressive apparatus of U.S. capitalism has quite rapidly understood.

Chuck D raps in their second album: "The FBI was tappin' my telephone/ I never live alone, I never walk alone/ ... Your CIA, you see, I ain't kiddin'/ Both King and X, they got ridda' both/ A story untold, true, but unknown/ ... Tappin' my phone, they never leave me alone/ I'm even lethal when I'm unarmed/ 'Cause I'm louder than a bomb."

If this is so, Nelson and Gonzales comment, than after this album the (government's) secret file on the group ought to have grown substantially. In particular, after the release of "Fight the Power," which turned out to be the biggest-selling 12-inch in the history of Motown Records.

It was composed for Spike Lee's film "Do the Right Thing," which beamed the name Public Enemy across the entire world.

"The best thing about rap, it's a last-minute warning, the final call, like the Nation of Islam paper—a last plea for

help on the countdown to Armageddon," Chuck D explains.

Several years ago, Chuck D predicted that around 1995 Black people would openly confront the power centers of the United States. He declared that the main goal of the group's artistic activity was the formation of 5000 potential mass leaders. From that came the slogan: Instead of carrying gold chains, we need to have gold brains.

Concerning Chuck D's announcement that a revolution is approaching, Alan Light comments in the January 1992 issue of *Rolling Stone*: "Coming from any other recording artist, you might dismiss this as sci-fi nonsense or affected angst. But this is the leader of Public Enemy, the most intensely scrutinized and revered rap group around."

When Chuck D started wearing an L.A. Raiders cap, millions of Black kids—and many of their white contemporaries—put one on, too

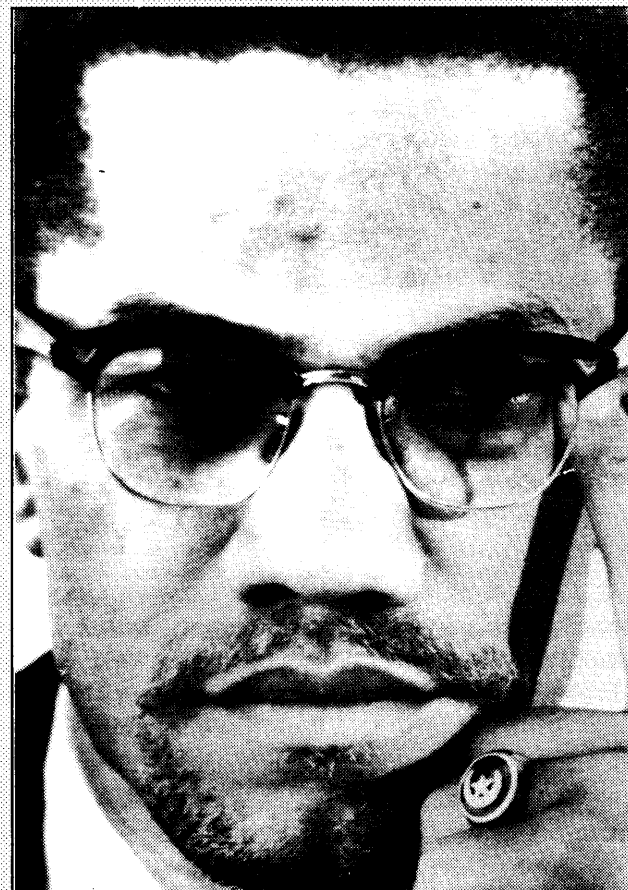
Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and other militants working for Black liberation during the 1960s were introduced to countless youths by Chuck D's references to them. "So when Chuck D talks of street uprisings and Armageddon," says Light, "it can't be written off."

(Part II of this series of articles will appear in next month's issue of *Socialist Action*.)

# WHO KILLED MALCOLM X?

HEAR A PRESENTATION BY ROLAND SHEPPARD AND KWAME M. A. SOMBURU, TWO EYEWITNESSES TO THE ASSASSINATION OF MALCOLM X ON FEB. 21, 1965. LISTEN AS THEY REFUTE THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTENTION THAT MALCOLM WAS KILLED SOLELY BECAUSE OF HIS FEUD WITH THE NATION OF ISLAM. FIND OUT ABOUT THE COVERUP AND THE REAL ASSASSINS.

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FORUM





By KATHY LOWE

*Spike Lee's new movie is based on the book, "The Autobiography of Malcolm X." The following review of the book is reprinted from Socialist Outlook, a biweekly newspaper published by Fourth Internationalists in Britain.*

The best reason for reading "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" is offered in its pages by the author himself:

"Why am I as I am? To understand that of any person, his whole life from birth must be reviewed. All our experiences fuse into our personality. Everything that ever happened to us is an ingredient."

With frankness and flashes of gentle, self-deprecating humor, Malcolm X tells his story to Alex Haley as a series of recollections and anecdotes intercut with his beliefs and political thought at different stages of his life.

He takes the reader through his "nightmare" childhood—the racist murder of his father, his mother's mental collapse, the breakup of the family, and on to his days as a Harlem hustler that ended in a prison cell.

Behind bars, he tells us: "I had never, up to then, been so truly free." With time on his hands and frustrated by his semi-literacy, he set about painstakingly copying out each page of the dictionary by hand.

He devoured books from the prison library, discovering the worlds of philosophy and literature. Above all he discovered history—in particular, the horrors of the slave trade and the early struggles against colonialism.

"Book after book showed me how the white man had brought upon the world's black, brown, red, and yellow peoples

## Now that you've seen the movie, read the book

every variety of the sufferings of exploitation."

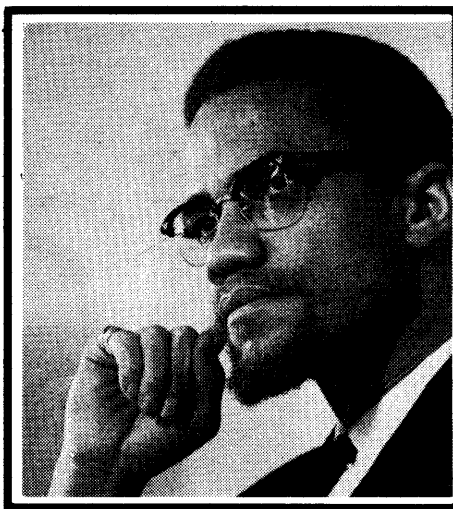
He tells of his conversion in prison to the Nation of Islam and, on his release, of his ardent ministry in the service of its leader, Elijah Muhammad. "I was a zombie then," he was to say to a journalist just before his death. "It cost me 12 years."

Even before his transition from separatism to nationalism and his final break with the Black Muslims, his emergence as a national figure championing the poorest Black people was already making Elijah Muhammad nervous.

Malcolm would publicly pour scorn not only on the racist white society but on what he termed the "fancy bourgeois Negroes" who wanted to be part of it at any price. In the last year of his life—after the formation of his own group, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, and his visits to Africa—he was rapidly moving in a socialist direction.

His shadow writer, Alex Haley, who did not publish the book until after Malcolm X's assassination and who added his own lengthy epilogue, has been rightly criticized for skating over this evolution.

Even so, the accounts of some of Malcolm X's last mass meetings, his speeches, and his public statements on a whole range of issues show something of the changes and intense questioning he was going through right up to the time of his death.



Most harrowing to read is Haley's description, in the epilogue, of the weeks leading up to Malcolm's brutal assassination in 1965. Malcolm X had made clear to the press and to friends that he believed his life was in danger. In fact, he expected to be killed at any time and was desperately trying to make financial provision for his wife and four daughters.

Harassment and death threats had become a daily occurrence. He was followed everywhere. His family narrowly escaped a firebomb attack on their home.

His ideas and his stature had made him too dangerous, not only to the Black Muslims, but to the state. Haley describes how Malcolm X, just before his death, told him he no longer believed it

was the Black Muslims who were out to murder him. Certainly, when he was gunned down that February afternoon in Harlem, the 20 police who had been supposedly assigned to his meeting to protect him were nowhere to be seen.

The "Autobiography" may be inadequate on its own as a tool for understanding the immense contribution of Malcolm X to the cause of Black liberation and socialism. It does, however, provide an indispensable insight into his life and into the deeply rooted racism of American society. ■

### Malcolm's impact in other countries

*Malcolm X and his message are becoming known around the world. "X" caps and tee-shirts are popular with young people from Japan to the countries of Africa. Many wear the clothing as a mark of identification with American Black culture and politics.*

*In Europe, Black immigrant youth have shown a special interest in Malcolm X's ideas. They look to Malcolm X as a symbol and a guide for their own resistance to the wave of racist attacks on the Black community.*

*An opinion poll taken several months ago in a suburb of Paris showed that Malcolm X is the most popular foreign leader among Black youths there. He is even more popular than Nelson Mandela. Malcolm X's influence is sure to increase when Spike Lee's new movie is released in Europe in March 1993.*

## ... Malcolm X

(continued from previous page)

sions, which represented some of the most important indicators in Malcolm X's political development, the movie still works as an anti-capitalist vehicle because it has an explicitly pro-Black nationalist message.

In that vein it would be a mistake to view this movie with any preconceived notion of what the conclusions *should* be.

What Spike Lee does do exceptionally well is depict Malcolm X for what he basically was: A militant, uncompromising fighter for Black liberation—by any means necessary—who taught Black people that to win freedom they had to fight for it.

But Lee also gives us the private side of the man; how much he loved his family; his tortured anguish during the split with the Nation; the pressure he felt while living under the constant threat of assassination; the harassment from the U.S. government.

Lee documents and Denzel Washington portrays convincingly the frenzied pace of Malcolm X's last year—buying as much time as he could to build an independent Black political organization.

Some critics on the "left" have criticized the movie because they say it gives the impression that Malcolm was moving politically closer to "moderate" positions; that he was evolving towards the reformism and non-violence of Rev. Martin Luther King and others because he proposed to work in a united front with any Black organization that was involved in a struggle. Nothing could be further from the truth, and if the movie is ambiguous on this it's because of Lee's reliance on Haley's epilogue.

Malcolm X told Haley how he interpreted his offer to other civil rights organizations:

"I'll explain it this way, sir. If some men are in a car, with a destination in mind, and you know they are going the wrong way, but they are convinced they are going the right way, then you get into the car with them, and ride with them, talking—and finally when they see they

## Harlem residents fight to save site where Malcolm X spoke, was assassinated

By DAWN REEL

NEW YORK—"No Sellout! No compromise! Columbia University, hands off the Audubon!" This chant reverberated throughout the streets of Harlem on Nov. 28.

About 175 community residents, militant Black youth, and Columbia University students converged on the Audubon Ballroom/San Juan Theatre Complex to protest the university's plans to raze most of the complex and build a biotech center.

Residents fear that such a facility will have dangerous effects on their health. In addition, they are outraged that the building where Malcolm X spoke, formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity, and was assassinated is going to be destroyed by the hated local slumlord—Columbia University.

The participants in the rally—organized by the Save the Audubon Coalition and the December 12 Movement—are determined to save 100 percent of the Audubon Complex, as

are on the wrong road, not getting where they were intending, then you tell them—and they will listen to you *then*—what road to take."

### An ongoing discussion

Spike Lee's "Malcolm X" will probably be seen by nearly every Black person in the United States. You can add to those numbers millions of other oppressed nationalities—like Latinos—and millions of white people, especially youth.

For that reason alone, Spike Lee has made an invaluable contribution to the discussion on the life and ideas of Malcolm X. The movie will whet the appetites of young people to learn about

Malcolm said, "by any means necessary."

They are planning a demonstration on Dec. 5, and collecting the names of numbers of people who are willing to face the bulldozers when Columbia sends them.

Columbia university officials have said privately that the university will destroy the Audubon Complex over Christmas break, when students are home for the holidays. Most students, however, are outraged at the university administration's historic acts of environmental racism.

A diverse "Save the Audubon" coalition has been formed at Columbia. It includes the Earth Coalition, the Black Students Organization, and other groups. They are planning a rally on campus at 12 noon on Dec. 3.

For more information, contact the Malcolm X Save the Audubon Coalition, Box 1047, Harlem, NY 10037. Phone (212) 781-0899. The Bernard-Columbia coalition may be reached at (212) 923-9475. ■

Malcolm X in his own words. What did he really say in his many speeches and interviews, especially during his last year alive? What did others, those who loved him and those who hated him, say about him?

It is for this reason that the faint praise that Malcolm X, the movie, has received in the capitalist press is still offset on the same page by slanderous attacks against Malcolm X, the man.

When the movie opened, associate editor A.S. Ross of the *San Francisco Examiner* wrote a scathing article questioning the veracity of both the book and the movie.

"Are we being given a reasonably accurate measure of the man—or a mythical portrait, an idealized mannequin, whose importance in death far outweighs the

impact he had in life?" Ross then goes on to cite facts from a book by Bruce Perry, "Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America." This is a book that activists in the Black community consider to be a blatant character assassination of Malcolm X. (See "New Malcolm X Biography Slanders the Man and His Ideas," by Roland Sheppard in the February 1992 issue of *Socialist Action*.)

But the real reason for Ross's concern is stated in the middle of the article:

"According to a Newsweek poll, Malcolm X is a hero to 84 percent of African Americans aged between 15 and 24. ... If we do not look more closely behind the myth and learn from Malcolm's shortcomings as well as his strengths, the film will do more harm than good."

Ross would do much better if he examined the myth of American democracy and prosperity to understand why Malcolm X won't die.

To paraphrase the words of Victor Hugo concerning the assassination of the French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat:

"They say Malcolm is dead. No. Malcolm is not dead. Put him in the Pantheon or throw him in the sewer; it doesn't matter—he's back the next day. He's reborn in the man who has no job, in the woman who has no bread, in the girl who has to sell her body, in the child who hasn't learned to read; he's reborn in the projects in Harlem; he's reborn on the streets of Watts; he's reborn in the unheated tenement; in the wretched mattress without blankets, in the unemployed, in the working class, in the brothel, in the prison, in your laws that show no pity, in your schools that give no future ... Oh, beware, human society: You cannot kill Malcolm until you have killed the misery of poverty, the scourge of racism." ■

**Gulf War resister, TAHAN JONES, remains in prison at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. Friends and supporters can send their holiday greetings to this courageous Black fighter for a world of peace to:**  
Corporal Tahan Jones, USMC  
Social Security # 564 43 9553  
Confinement Facility, Marine Corps Base, Camp LeJeune, NC 28542

# Byelorussian rock scene: How rock 'n roll is being used to preserve language, cultural heritage

By GERRY FOLEY

In Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia, in mid-September, I talked to Vitaut Martynenka, an expert on the Byelorussian rock music movement and a participant in it. He is a journalist writing for a newspaper directed to youth, a poet who writes rock lyrics, and coauthor of a book in Byelorussian on rock music in the former USSR, *Praz Rock-prysmu, "Through the Prism of Rock Music,"* (Belaruski Instytut Navuki i Mastatsva, New York, 1989.)

The Byelorussian cultural movement is radical, similar to the cultural movements of minority peoples in Western Europe, where national culture is identified with the movement for national independence.

Although the young Byelorussian intellectuals often describe themselves as "rightists," in opposition to everything associated with the Communist Party, their cultural aspirations are in clear conflict with the logic of capitalism. Privatization has offered a certain space for independent artistic activity.

However, as the following interview indicates, the market offers no solution for popular cultural movements. Only a democratic control of the economy and the society could do that. Thus, the solution for the Byelorussian cultural movement is the same as for the Irish and Welsh, a democratically run socialist economy.

**Socialist Action:** What is the relationship between the national movement and Byelorussian rock music?

**Vitaut Martynenka:** When we first started writing about rock music, we didn't know yet what influence it would have on the national renaissance. There was a group of journalists who wanted to write about rock music, which in general was banned in the Soviet Union. We simply wanted to help musicians who wanted to play this music. Why should this style of music be banned? It was on that level.

The idea of a Byelorussian renaissance already existed. It gradually became expressed. We started writing about rock music in the early 1980s. At first people wrote only about rock music in the West, mostly about American. But gradually under the influence of nationalist organizations, we began looking for our own kind of expression.

**SA:** What sort of nationalist organizations, cultural or political?

**VT:** Politics were still illegal. It is just a club of lovers of the Byelorussian language. They were only concerned with speaking Byelorussian. But it didn't end there. They wanted to study history, and that got them into a number of dangerous areas. Then they started down another road. The organization was banned. They started another organization, called "The Bell." This organization already functioned in Byelorussian. That was basic. They decided to do anything that was allowed. They decided to work on certain historical themes. They worked on preserving Byelorussian monuments. There was politics, but it was concealed.

We journalists began thinking, "We write about music, why not write about music in our language?" "We write about music in English, in Polish, in Russian." That was one stage. At later stage, I understood that a people that does not have its own mass culture can't have any culture. In our country, they wrote that mass culture isn't serious. It's something silly, done in a cabaret.

But ordinary people in discoteques, in stores and so on are constantly listening to music. And it's all Russian. You can't expect them just to go to museums to look for something Byelorussian, something of their own, and have everything else be foreign.

Mass culture forms consciousness. We



Byelorussian rock groups "Mroya" ("Dream"), above, and "Bonda," below, are two of the most popular ensembles. Many of the new rock groups were influenced by the Polish and Hungarian rock scene.



fought for high culture. But that is an abstract struggle. In our conditions, it was essential to fight for a mass culture of our own, because there was no such thing.

There were a few ensembles. They went to the U.S., to Europe. They sang Byelorussian songs. They even performed in Siberia. But they fell under the influence of mass culture, and began to sing in Russian.

When we started writing about Byelorussian rock music, we ran up against a problem. There was a kind of Byelorussian popular music. But the artists spoke Russian at home. Everything was Russian. Only when they performed, they sang in Byelorussian. They weren't able to inspire the people with enthusiasm for Byelorussian culture. We found musi-

cians who were under the influence of the underground political organizations—that is, those who officially study history.

Some of them were poor musicians. Some were better. We encouraged the desire to develop a Byelorussian culture. They got better when they started to perform in public, and their numbers increased. Because we reached a level where it was possible to criticize them, to distinguish their strong points from their weak ones.

At the beginning, everything that was in Byelorussian was good. I would say we were afraid of the Russians. We wanted to show them that we had something. We were afraid to be critical and praised everything. Gradually this problem disappeared.

Today, Byelorussian rock music is on

## Across the Continent

I met young Byelorussian intellectuals who identified the cause of Byelorussian national culture with that of the cultural-political movements in the Celtic countries, in particular Ireland, which are generally socialist-oriented.

In the case of the Welsh Language Movement (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg), which is most like the Byelorussian cultural movement, the manifesto of the organization says explicitly that the cause of the Welsh language cannot triumph under capitalism.

The position of the Byelorussian language, however, is most similar to that of Welsh or Basque or Scots. That is to say, as a natural means of communication, it has receded to some poor rural areas. Without basic social and political changes, therefore, it could be expected to die out in a generation or two. Its situation most resembles that of Scots because unlike Basque and Welsh, it is closely related to the language of the oppressor, Russia.

A young Byelorussian intellectual told me that the impulse for the Byelorussian national renaissance came from the rise of Solidarnosc in Poland in the 1980s. The country became formally independent after the collapse of the neo-Stalinist putsch in Moscow in August 1991, before the national movement had been able to oust the Communist Party from power. The local national-democratic movement, the Popular Front, is strong in certain regions, notably Minsk, but it is still a minority movement.—G. F.

an international level. Records of Byelorussian groups are being released in Poland. But there is a problem with the Melodiya record company. It monopolized the whole business. It had factories in several cities, and everything went through Moscow. Now, by nature, records are mass-production business. If you look at Melodiya's catalog, it includes more than 400 pages, in which Byelorussian records take up half a page. And all the other peoples of the USSR [other than Russian] take up maybe 20 pages. All the rest is in Russian.

**SA:** Obviously, before rock music developed there was Byelorussian folk music. What sort of a relationship did you have to the folk music scene?

**VT:** A kind of folk music was broadcast over TV. The scenarios were worked out in the Communist Party Regional Committee. This repelled people from folk music.

"The Bell" people collected folk music that had survived in the countryside, authentic folk music, which had a political aspect. "The Moscovites shout, but we are not afraid." In Byelorussian folk songs, the neighboring people are always called "Moscovites." Because, "Rus" or Russia was the name our people used for themselves, for historical reasons. This was preserved in folk songs. These songs therefore aroused additional feelings besides musical. Because the folk music played on TV was artificial folk music. It referred to "our Russian brothers," or "Russian older brother," and so on.

The first Byelorussian rock group sang folk songs, but with a rock rhythm. They had arrangements of pure folk songs and purely rock arrangements. And they had their own songs based on folk traditions. Then independent rock music developed. It might use folk poetry or classical poetry. The "Pyesnyari" [named for traditional wandering singers] concerned themselves with arrangements of Byelorussian folk music. They were noted for that. But they did not have a big influence.

But in America there is Danchyk. He is a cabaret-type singer. He started out under the influence of traditional strolling singers. He took music arranged by the *Pyesnyari*. And then he started to use the work of Byelorussian emigrant poets and Byelorussian folklore. What the *Pyesnyari*

(continued on next page)

# Solidarity with Jozef Pinior!

By PETER TURGEV

Polish Trotskyist Jozef Pinior, organizer of the Socialist Political Center (SOP) in Wroclaw, Poland, is once again having problems because of his political and trade-union activity.

Pinior is the best known of the Polish Trotskyist activists. In 1981, he was a member of the presiding committee and treasurer of Solidarnosc in the Lower Silesia region (Wroclaw). A member of the Regional Strike Committee (RKS) of underground Solidarnosc from Dec. 13, 1981, he became president in October 1982, replacing his comrades W. Frasyniuk and P. Bednarz, who had been arrested in the meantime.

Between 1982 and 1987, he was a member of the national leadership of Solidarnosc (the underground TKK and then the public TRS). In 1987, he was a founding member and one of the main leaders of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP). Since 1990, he has organized the Socialist Political Center.

As a result of his political activity—mostly organizing strikes and solidarity activities—Pinior was arrested and imprisoned several times by the Stalinist authorities. All these arrests and convictions appear in his police record—they are considered as ordinary crimes because as we all know there are no "political prisoners" in Poland.

A lawyer by training, Jozef Pinior has not been able to find stable employment despite the change of regime in 1990. It is clear that his political opinions, which he does not hide, are a factor in this.

But it is above all his "criminal" record that prevents him from gaining access to

most of the functions for which his training is appropriate. Thus he is the victim of a professional blacklist.

Like many other Solidarnosc leaders from the 1980-89 period, Jozef Pinior has made a request to the Ministry of Justice, asking that his trials and convictions be overturned and his record expunged.

This demand has been refused for his last conviction, which took place in 1988 during a massive strike wave. This has provoked widespread indignation in Poland not only among trade unionists but also among certain political forces who support the present government as well as in the leftwing parties of a Stalinist orientation.

A broad democratic campaign has started in Poland. Pinior's Polish co-thinkers are asking for material support to pay the legal costs for the four appeals that Jozef Pinior has to make. This will cost about \$5000.

Letters of protest should be sent to the Polish Minister of Justice (with a copy to Pinior).

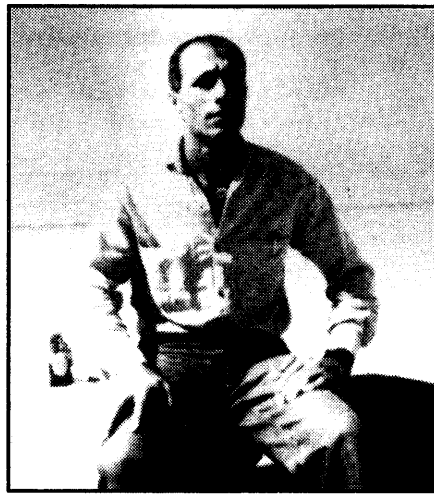
The letters/petitions should be sent to: Zbigniew DYKA, Minister of Justice, Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwosci, Al. Ujazdowskie, 00-950 Warszawa, Slr. poczt., 33, Poland.

With a copy to: Jozef Pinior, c/o Pracowniczy Fundusz Przemyslowy, Rekodzielnicza 16, 50-991 Wroclaw, Slr. Poczt. 1442 Poland. Or fax (4871) 51 20 07.

The financial solidarity contributions (even modest ones) should be sent by bank transfer to:

Jozef Pinior, Bank Zachodni, Wroclaw, Poland, Account No: 389206-01020386-017879-152-1.

# FREE MORDECHAI VANUNU!



By JOSEPH RYAN

Mordechai Vanunu is an embarrassment to the Zionist Israeli government. Vanunu has been locked up in solitary confinement in an Israeli prison for over six years because he revealed Israel's nuclear weapons development program to the press.

In September 1986, Vanunu, who worked as a nuclear technician at the Nuclear Reactor Center at Dimona, Israel, briefed the *London Sunday Times* about Israel's "top secret" nuclear weapons program. For years, Israel denied possessing nuclear weapons, and inside Israel itself, public discussion on the subject was considered taboo.

Immediately after the story was published, an arrest warrant was issued for Vanunu by Israeli authorities charging him with espionage.

Only days after his interview with the *Times*, Vanunu was lured from London to Rome by Israeli Mossad agents,

drugged, and then kidnapped back to Israel, in total violation of international law. At his subsequent "closed" trial—lasting from August 1987 to March 1988—he was convicted of treason, espionage, and revealing state secrets. He was sentenced to 18 years in prison. In May 1990, an appeal against his conviction was rejected by the Israeli Supreme Court.

Virtually all the time Vanunu has served in prison so far has been in solitary confinement—2250 days in total isolation!

Vanunu's conviction and harsh treatment has triggered an international outcry of protest. As the newsletter published by *The Campaign to Free Vanunu and for a Nuclear Free Middle East* states, "Vanunu's kidnapping was illegal under international law; his trial was a travesty of justice; and his continuing detention under such degrading conditions is an affront to humanity."

Three resolutions demanding Vanunu's release have been passed by the European Parliament and numerous scientists, editors, and civil libertarians have sent telegrams to the Israeli government. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize from 1987 thru 1990.

Vanunu's only "crime" is that he wanted the citizens of his own country to know that their government—behind their backs—was developing weapons of mass destruction—making it the only country in the Middle East with nuclear capability.

For more information, contact The Campaign to Free Vanunu, 6 Endsleigh St., London WC1H 0DX. Tel./Fax 071 387-5096.

## ... Byelorussian rock

(continued from previous page)

could not perform here for political reasons, he performed in America. He is a major figure, very popular here.

He was born there in a Byelorussian family. That is, his father was Ukrainian and his mother, Byelorussian.

SA: Are there folk elements in Byelorussian rock music today?

VT: Yes. Every group has them in differing degrees. I can think of one, for example, that played pure rock, but in Byelorussian, and the use of the Byelorussian language itself forced them to employ folk music intonations. I can think of another that uses arrangement of folk songs, and certain melodic patterns in their own compositions.

SA: Is there a clear difference between the Byelorussian rock music and Russian rock music scenes? In Wales, there is a clear difference between rock music in Welsh and English, because rock music in English is commercial; it is possible for groups to make a living by performing it. But rock music in Welsh is an idealistic endeavor, with a different sort of relationship between the performers and audience. Welsh rock musicians would be considered traitors if they sang in English.

VT: It is the same here. Take the Bonda and Kryama groups. They only sing in Russian at their rehearsals as a joke to reinforce the idea that they will never perform publicly in it. Byelorussian rock music developed quite independently. No local school of rock music in Russian ever developed in Byelorussia.

If anything, Byelorussian rock music developed under the influence of Polish rock music and Hungarian rock music. That is because first the Hungarians and then the Poles showed that it was possible to have national schools of rock music.

Among the first Byelorussian musicians, the Mroya ["Dream"], was not so much under the influence of Polish rock as under the influence of political organizations, unofficial organizations, such as "The Bell."

But the Bonda group and Kryama came

by a different route, because Polish rock differs sharply from rock in English, which is also performed in Poland, Germany and so on, that is, from commercial rock. Polish rock in the Polish language has a flavor of its own. Byelorussian rock musicians began trying to do that too. And under the influence of national consciousness, they came to turn more to Byelorussian themes.

When we started writing about rock music, we wrote about ensembles in Moscow. We helped Russian rock music become popular here, in the sense that we broke the censorship against this type of music and helped it become known. But later we realized that we were spreading a foreign mass culture. It was foreign to us.

We looked for something of our own. We started to form a rock club among the musicians around us. They were Russian speaking. But a national consciousness had already ripened. And one of the tasks of the rock club was to develop Byelorussian music.

Some of the musicians recognized the need for Byelorussian music, but they said that they could not write lyrics in the language. "We can sing in Byelorussian, but we cannot compose in it. Give us lyrics in Byelorussian and we will sing them."

SA: Can it be said that there are two musical mass cultures in Byelorussian? In Ireland there were at the beginning of the present struggle. There was a rock music culture, linked to the international youth radicalization, and a traditional-music culture linked to the national movement. At the onset, the two schools were antagonistic, but after a time, to a considerable extent, they fused.

VT: In Ireland, there were clearer political differences. Here we had a totalitarian system. The difference was between what came from the state and what did not. The Byelorussian rock groups were not taken into the state structure. They couldn't make money from their performances.

They went to work in Siberia, where wages are higher in order to earn money to buy guitars. Here you had to work nearly a year to earn enough money to buy a guitar. They gave free concerts, because musicians outside the state structure were not allowed to charge. So, they were independent.

SA: Does the same system exist today, or can independent musicians now earn a living?

VT: Today, independent organizations exist in every town, and they can organize concerts, and charge what they like. They just have to pay a tax to the government. It's business like in the West. But literature in Byelorussian is not profitable. It is possible to sell editions of 5 million of a book in Russian.

In Byelorussian, you get editions of five thousand. In Byelorussian even translations of classical literature have very slow sales. For example, a few years ago a translation of "Pan Tadeusz" [the most popular work of the Polish national poet, Adam Mickiewicz] was published in an edition of 12,000 copies.

In five years they have not been able to sell them all. Books in Byelorussian have no commercial interest. And the same was said of rock music in Byelorussian.

SA: Are there record companies today that produce recordings of Byelorussian music?

VT: There was a *samizdat* [underground] in cassettes. It is still true that cassettes are being made privately, and circulated with the musicians or song writers getting any royalties, without anybody paying taxes. This is a rather large-scale phenomenon.

SA: Do you have access today to TV?

VT: We are raising that question today. One clip of the rock group Bonda has been shown on TV once. The musicians payed the technicians themselves. Today, a festival of Byelorussian rock music is held in Poland. All the Byelorussian groups go there and come here from there. In Poland, there is a public and money. The TV goes there.

We journalists have been writing about the need for opening up a niche for Byelorussian on Byelorussian TV, since it is supposed to be Byelorussian TV. This should start with Byelorussian mass culture, which is not generally well known. People are talking about Byelorussian culture, but it has not been getting on TV.

The problem is that the TV professionals here are people who couldn't make it in Moscow. We have a provincial Russian studio.

SA: What percent of Byelorussian youth do you think are interested in Byelorussian rock music?

VT: The most popular rock music is in Russian. There is no advertising for the Byelorussian groups, and so there is no comparison in record sales. On the other hand, one of the most popular Moscow groups can barely fill a third of a hall when they come to Minsk. But Mroya, which is not considered a popular group on the same scale, can fill halls here.

So, it is hard to give any statistics, because the Byelorussian rock groups are not a serious business. It is a purely voluntary thing, a hobby. It has a potential for reaching 70 percent of the youth. But now I would guess that about 10 percent of Byelorussian youth are influenced by Byelorussian rock music. There are only a few records in Byelorussian, but every day a dozen new Russian records come out. The influence of Byelorussian rock, therefore, is modest but already perceptible.

SA: In Ireland also the fans of traditional music are a minority, but a large minority. Anglo-American popular music predominates, but Irish music is not just listened to by nationalist intellectuals but by significant layers of the population.

VT: Here also after a mass meeting, not just youth went to a rock concert but also older people, and they enjoyed it. Rock music is not aimed at intellectuals; it also has a more emotional aspect. But here rock music appeals to intellectuals, and it may be for that reason that it is so distinctive and has such a high level. There are ideas in the lyrics, and often they could be published as poetry.

SA: That is like Welsh rock music. The performers say that there is a fundamental difference between music and poetry, but the fact remains that the lyrics are often good poetry, not like in ordinary rock music.

VT: Yes. The Byelorussian rock composers and performers want to influence their public. The performers try to make the words understandable. Rock poetry does differ from ordinary poetry. It has a high intellectual potential. But it has its own patterns and phrasing, which make things more understandable through music.

# The challenge of building a revolutionary alternative in Poland

By JAN SYLWESTROWICZ

Following is the second article of a two-part series. Last month, the author described the mounting anger of Polish working people in the face of a deteriorating economy and the government's efforts to restore capitalism. This year has seen the most widespread and militant strikes in Poland in over a decade.

WARSAW—Given the growing dissatisfaction with the effects of capitalist "reform" in Poland, the discrediting of the new entrepreneurs and pro-capitalist politicians responsible for the reform program, and the resurgence in combativity within the working class, exemplified in the strike wave of summer and early autumn, conditions would seem to be ripe for a rapid development of left forces.

The greatest problem facing the left in all of Eastern Europe since the move towards capitalist restoration started, has been the identification of socialist politics with the old Stalinist regimes. Yet it is clear that at some point this must be outweighed by popular resentment regarding the brutal reality concealed behind the politicians' promises of capitalist utopia: The marked victory of the "post-Stalinist" party in the recent Lithuanian elections would appear to bear this out.

Notwithstanding that party's attempts to dress itself in nationalist garb, and the fact that it is firmly committed to continuing the transition to a capitalist market economy, there can be no doubt that the election result reflected the wholesale disillusionment of working people with market reforms. It also demonstrated their readiness to support forces that claim to stand for left politics in the hope that these will halt the slide to social decline and poverty.

Will the "left" in Poland be able to build on the opportunities that are at present opening up? To answer this question, we should examine both the existing state of those forces claiming to represent left and working-class politics, and also the key debates taking place—within the genuine left, at least—on the strategy to be pursued in the coming period.

## The Stalinist party

The largest political party popularly associated with the left is the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP), heir to the previous Stalinist Communist Party. Its current significance rests largely on its representation in the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish parliament), where it has the second largest parliamentary fraction—a fact its leaders are fond of stressing.

However, this appearance of strength is misleading. While the SdRP received the second largest amount of votes in last autumn's elections, its overall score was only just over 10 percent. Bearing in mind that the turnout at the polls was 40 percent, this means that the party whose predecessor had ruled the country for 40 years collected the votes of only one out of every four adult Poles.

Moreover, the party ran on a joint list with other formerly Stalinist organizations, such as the OPZZ trade union and the Women's League. And although the SdRP candidates dominated the tickets, a large amount of their voters were mobilized by the other organizations.

This is hardly surprising, given the party's organizational weakness. The old Polish Communist Party claimed three million members in 1980. Ten years later, this had fallen to two million. These people were in their overwhelming majority members of, or connected to, the privileged ruling bureaucracy.

Thus, when the party decided to dissolve at a special congress in January 1990, only some 40,000 were prepared to stay on and continue political activity in the SdRP, which was founded in its place.



**'The militants who can be won to the idea of revolutionary socialist politics in Poland today are first and foremost those who have learned about Stalinism and capitalism the hard way...'**



The other 1,960,000 members decided discretion was the better part of valor: Their chances of moving from being Stalinist bureaucrats to capitalists or capitalist bureaucrats seemed better if they severed their ties with the past.

Those who joined the SdRP were in the main aging minor officials in the party or trade-union apparatus who believed the new party might protect them more effectively from the wrath of the people or who hoped it might offer them a career doing the only thing they knew how to do—being a professional *apparatchik*.

Nevertheless, the party also contains some examples of the classic layer of Stalinists-turned-capitalists. An outstanding example is SdRP member of parliament I. Sekula, a former Stalinist deputy and prime minister. Today, he is a multimillionaire sitting on the boards of numerous private companies—most of them set up with assets stolen from state enterprises.

The social composition of the SdRP, together with its association with the old Stalinist formation, in themselves rule out this party developing greatly in the near future. It will most probably perform creditably in the upcoming elections, although not as well as its Lithuanian counterpart.

Yet this will primarily reflect a protest vote against the political parties currently in power, rather than a vote for what the SdRP represents.

In political terms, this party presents no hope for the Polish working class. As with all the Stalinists-turned-social democrats, it staunchly supports the restoration of capitalism.

In fact, it has supported virtually all the most important pieces of pro-capitalist legislation adopted by the Sejm, and at the end of October rescinded the current coalition government—an alliance of hard and soft liberals, Christian Democrats, and neofascist Catholic fundamentalists.

Without the votes of SdRP members of parliament—including its leader, A. Kwasniewski—the government would have seen its proposed budget for 1993 defeated and would have been forced to resign.

To cap all this, the "post-Stalinists" have consistently refused to do the only thing which would allow them to genuinely expand their influence—all themselves unequivocally with those sectors of the working class coming into struggle in defense of their material and social interests.

The SdRP refused to intervene in the strikes of the summer and autumn. In an interview published in early October, Kwasniewski explained that "as Social Democrats ... we wish to maintain excellent relations with both workers and employers," which is why "we have distanced ourselves from the recent strikes."

Old habits die hard. Even when "reformed" Stalinists can stand to gain

substantial political profit, they instinctively rebel against the idea of being on the same side as the workers.

## The Union of Labor

The only other party represented in the Sejm that also considers itself to be on the left is the Union of Labor (UP), a social-democratic formation made up of former Solidarity activists. This party has only a handful of seats, having won barely 2 percent of the vote in the last elections. It has some well-known individual members, however, most particularly Zbigniew Bujak, former chairman of Solidarity in the Warsaw region in 1980-81 and during martial law, and Ryszard Bugaj, previously a leading economic adviser to Solidarity.

Unfortunately, the social democrats of the UP share most of the sins of the Stalinist-social democratic SdRP; they are fully agreed that capitalist restoration is the only possible way forward, although they frequently plead for "capitalism with a human face."

Their members of parliament have consistently supported right-wing, anti-worker legislation. They even voted for the most reactionary of all of Poland's governments since 1989, the government of Jan Olszewski, formed in November last year (and dismissed after seven months). During the recent strikes, the UP also failed to support the workers outright, offering instead to "mediate" between the workers and the government.

Supporters of the UP are very thin on the ground: The party has probably several hundred active members at the very most. This prevents it from utilizing the one advantage that could work in its favor—its identification, at least partially, with the mass democratic and pro-worker tradition of Solidarity in 1980-81.

However, in recent weeks, party leader Bujak has taken the initiative in organizing a broad campaign against the draconian anti-abortion bill (see accompanying article). This could allow the UP to begin to play a more significant role.

## Clarity needed on Stalinists

Aside from the two parties described above, the Polish left constitutes a very broad spectrum of forces, from small groups of unrepentant Stalinists, through pacifists, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, to those claiming continuity with revolutionary Marxist traditions. The latter are still very weak (the largest group, itself extremely modest in size, being the Polish Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Left Current.).

Recent events are opening up a new audience for the views of the revolutionary left. Taking advantage of these new opportunities, however, is predicated on a correct understanding of the principled socialist positions on what is happening today and the strategy needed to construct an authentic socialist force within the working class and among women and youth activists. (In many respects, the questions posed here are also reflected in debates taking place throughout the international workers' movement on the nature of events in Eastern Europe.)

The first key question in this regard revolves around the attitude to be taken to the so-called post-Stalinist forces. Unhappily, there are many people—both in Poland and in other countries of Eastern Europe—who themselves are far removed from Stalinist thought but who have developed an orientation towards these forces in an attempt to overcome the isolation, up to now, of genuine socialists.

This is suicide for revolutionary Marxists, and as so often is the case when political strategy is based not on principle but on feelings of frustration or opportunist calculations, the effect can be quite the opposite: Rather than influence the Stalinists, these socialists can end up beginning to accept the distorted Stalinist view of the world.

In terms of theory, this orientation is based on a failure to understand two important points: First, that it has been the Stalinists who have acted as the driving force of capitalist restoration (and as previously mentioned, the Polish "post-

(continued on next page)



## International solidarity needed to defend abortion rights in Poland

In response, a group of parliament members have been organizing to present a motion in the Sejm demanding a referendum on the issue. The question given to the voters would be: "Do you agree to the criminalization of abortion?" The most recent opinion polls indicate that 74 percent of Poles would answer "no" to this question. Only 20 percent would answer "yes."

At time of this writing, it seems unlikely that this motion will obtain the necessary majority. In addition, President Lech Walesa, who is empowered to call referenda himself, has declared he will refuse to do so on this issue.

In this situation, a broad campaign has started in recent days to gather signatures on a public petition for a referendum.

At present, such a petition would have no effect in law, although a bill on human rights to come before the Sejm shortly includes a clause providing for the calling of a referendum where one is demanded by 500,000 people.

The purpose of collecting signatures, said Zbigniew Bujak—the

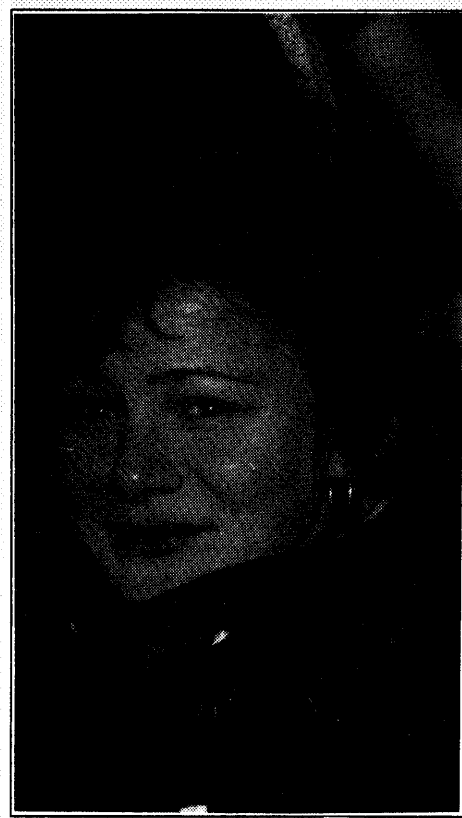
former Solidarity union leader who is now a social democratic member of parliament and who heads a newly-established Civic Committee for a Referendum—is to exert pressure on the Sejm and demonstrate the strength of public feelings on the matter.

The extent of the mass mobilization around the referendum issue within just a few days of the initiative being launched has caught all Poland by surprise.

Petitioners are appearing everywhere—mostly young women. People can be seen collecting signatures at places of work, in apartment blocks, outside supermarkets, etc.

Nevertheless, given the determination of the anti-abortion forces, a tough battle lies ahead. This is why Polish women's groups are appealing to supporters outside the country to take solidarity action to indicate to the Polish government the scale of international outrage at the barbaric legislation they are trying to introduce.

An additional consequence of the campaign has been to threaten the breakup of the ruling governmental



PETER TURNLEY

coalition. Faced with the mass response to the proposed bill, two of the coalition parties have come out in favor of a referendum, thereby infuriating the fundamentalist Christian National Union, a participant in the coalition government that has been the main force behind the anti-abortion bill from the outset.

It seems extremely likely that the battle for a referendum will shake up Polish politics considerably.—J.S.

WARSAW, Nov. 26—A drastic anti-abortion bill, drafted by Catholic fundamentalists, has passed the committee stage in Poland's Sejm and may be presented to members of parliament for approval at any time.

The bill provides for prison sentences of up to two years for both doctors performing abortions and the women concerned, even in cases of rape. The wording of the bill also covers the use of IUDs.

## ... Poland

(continued from preceding page)

Stalinists" are characteristically unwavering in their support for the capitalist market). Attempting to build an alliance against capitalist restoration together with these forces is thus totally absurd.

Second, that the main obstacle to the development of the left in Eastern Europe has not been the practice of some "really-existing socialism" in the abstract, one which did not succeed due to "objective" constraints, but the widespread identification of the anti-worker Stalinist regime, one of terror and oppression with genuine socialism.

This idea was consciously fostered by the Stalinists when they were in power. Today it is being fostered by the pro-capitalists now in power—and by those same Stalinists—in arguing that capitalism is unavoidable since "socialism failed."

Increasing the influence of socialist ideas within the working class involves the most consistent of battles to expose the historic lie that Stalinism and socialism are somehow related (aside from beginning with the letter "s"). The idea that this battle can be waged shoulder-to-shoulder with the historic liars themselves is preposterous.

In terms of practice, any orientation to the "post-Stalinists" is a real recipe for disaster. In Poland today, this means abandoning an attempt to intervene in the real struggles of the working class, which were boycotted or sabotaged by the SdRP.

It means cutting yourself off from the best worker militants, and also the best militants in the women's and youth movements. In particular, the youth, who are now becoming very involved in a wide range of democratic struggles, generally tend to be influenced by semi-anarchist ideas more than anything else. Their rejection of Stalinism and the "post-Stalinists" is complete (and fully justified).

### Concepts of "group ownership"

The second key question where clarity is essential among socialist forces concerns the whole issue of capitalist restoration and how it is to be fought. Here again, moved by similar ideas to those described above—in this case, a fatalistic conviction

that no real struggle against restoration is possible because of the weakness of socialist forces—there are many on the left who have given up the defense of nationalized industry.

Instead, they prefer to argue for various alternative forms of ownership, promoted as a "third way." These are usually forms of "group ownership," e.g. workers' cooperatives, workers' share plans, etc.

In particular, the term "self-management" is often used in this context, which is a complete misunderstanding. Self-management is just what it says, a form of management, not of ownership. In fact, the Polish Trotskyists argue for "self-managed enterprises" in the form put forward during the Polish revolution of 1980-81; i.e., nationalized enterprises under direct democratic workers' control.

The dangers of compromising on the principle of resistance to the privatization of nationalized industry are very serious. Above all, promoting "cooperatives" and other ideas of this type actually means misleading the workers.

Far from cushioning them from the effects of capitalist restoration, these forms of ownership—in the context of the capitalist market, the only economic regulator possible in these circumstances—would quickly result in the workers bearing the full burden of restoration, with the dubious consolation that they themselves would be the ones to cut their own wages and make each other unemployed.

(This is precisely why certain ardent proponents of the free market also support such schemes. They believe they could accelerate the privatization process, quickly leading to the development of new capital concentration and the emergence of a native capitalist class.)

There is a more general theoretical error which underpins the wrong approach described above, namely, the concept that the workers will not struggle to defend nationalized property because they do not identify themselves with a socialist project.

This turns reality on its head. The direct motivation for workers to fight all forms of privatization, including "group" privatization, is not theoretical or ideological, but the defense of their own basic interests. Rather than socialist ideas leading them to defend nationalized property, it is

much more likely that their necessary defense of nationalized property will make them more open to socialist ideas.

The truth of this is being confirmed in practice. "Group ownership" concepts are rapidly losing all resonance inside the working class itself. At the beginning of the capitalist restoration program, these concepts seemed attractive to many workers, who associated them with an end to Stalinist state-run inefficiency and greater economic power for the workforce. Now, however, the prevailing trend is for workers to struggle against all forms of privatization; this was seen in the summer strikes.

The slogan increasingly heard in workers' demonstrations and even taken up by sections of the trade-union bureaucracy is, "Defend state industry!" Thus, those who follow in the footsteps of the "post-Stalinists," social democrats, and others in proposing the "moderate" demand of "cooperatives", etc., are heading in the opposite direction from the workers.

### Need for a vanguard party

The last question of strategic importance relates to the question of organization. What organizational form should socialists be proposing to maximize the influence of their ideas inside the movements of the workers and the oppressed?

The Polish Trotskyists, for their part, are convinced that what is necessary is a revolutionary *vanguard party*—this is the lesson of history. Some other forces disagree. Leaving aside the anarchists, who disagree on principle, some currents argue that the discrediting of Stalinism has also discredited the idea of political parties.

They say that the left has to wait for a more opportune moment to begin the process of building a party. Such an approach seems to be common among sectors of the left in other East European countries as well.

This concept could play a fatal role in restricting the capacity of socialists to organize themselves and gain a hearing for their ideas. True, the Stalinists discredited the idea of a Stalinist, bureaucratic-dictatorial party. Well and good!

The idea of a democratic party founded on the Leninist-Trotskyist norms of democratic centralism has never had a chance of being discredited.

In fact, as the limitations of the existing bureaucratized trade unions and the spontaneous, loosely organized social movements become more and more apparent, we believe that the tendency of serious militants will be to demand the creation of a party that can lead the fight against capitalist restoration and attempts to restrict democratic freedoms.

The Polish Trotskyists are committed to just such a project, the construction of such a party. But this will certainly be no easy task.

As the above comments show, the larger "left" formations in Poland are tied to an extremely right-wing version of social democracy, situated firmly in the framework of capitalist restoration. The genuine socialist forces existing in Poland at present are weak, and the seriousness of the debates outlined above indicate that there is still widespread confusion on many basic questions.

Nevertheless, the real hope for the future does not lie in those who have acquired the habit of claiming left-wing credentials while spouting the perverse, warped versions of "socialist" theory espoused by the Stalinists and social democrats.

The militants who can be won to the idea of revolutionary socialist politics in Poland today are first and foremost those who have learned about Stalinism and capitalism the hard way—not from Stalinist textbooks, but through struggle for working-class interests and democratic rights.

These people are to be found in the unions, in the women's movement, and in the youth movement. The Polish Trotskyists have already had significant success in working with these forces, in particular with the youth.

It has proven possible to engage in common action and discussion with young people involved in campaigns against clericalization, racism, and women's oppression, and who also consistently reject both Stalinism and capitalism.

The mass campaign now beginning in defense of abortion rights, which promises to be the largest social movement since the early 1980s, will offer a new opportunity to begin laying the basis for the development of revolutionary Marxist forces in the most reliable way possible—through direct mass struggle. ■

# Why capitalism can't solve the environmental crisis

By ROSE CANARES

(The following article is the final installment of a three-part series on the environment based on a talk given by the author at a Sept. 25-26, 1992, Socialist Action Educational Conference in San Francisco.)

Many governments have proposed laws requiring companies to handle toxics in a way that would protect the environment. In the long run, unfortunately, most of these regulations will yield limited results. Continuing to pollute is more "cost-effective" for the large corporations.

Polluting the environment is consistent with capitalism's number-one motive—profit taking. Furthermore, environmental regulation appears to be at odds with the fundamental need of capitalism to be free of government regulation—especially during times of economic crisis as we have today. The capitalists want to get rid of political regulations that restrict market activity and the exploitation of workers and the environment.

This capitalist backlash against environmental regulation is epitomized by the Council on Competitiveness, which was headed by Vice President Dan Quayle. This council overrides and undermines decisions of the government's regulatory agencies, notably the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

At the same time, the U.S. government has been compelled to respond to public outcries against the environmental disasters that have already occurred. Congress passed a law that established a national priority list to clean up the most dangerously contaminated locations. This law is called the Superfund.

On paper, the Superfund calls for polluters to pay for the clean-up of their sites. But environmentalists point out that there are severe limitations to this band-aid process. Once contamination is released into the environment, its form can be changed—but it can rarely be eliminated. For example, when contaminated soils are incinerated, toxic ash is created; when contaminated water is stripped, it results in either a release of vapors into the air or into filters which must be disposed of somehow.

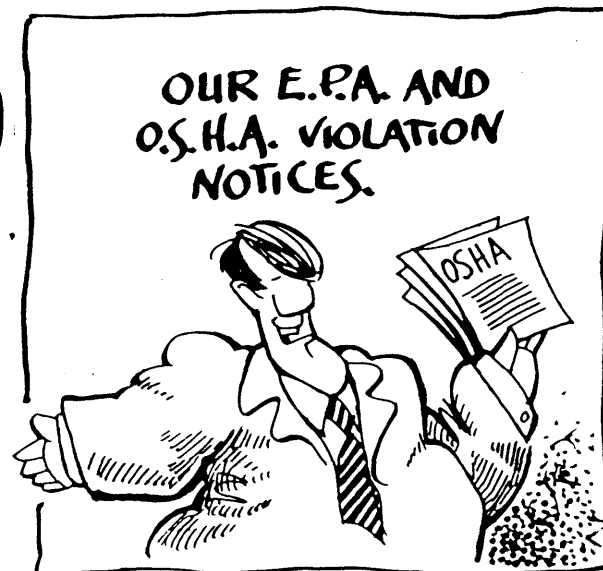
The only effective solution is to modify our methods of production to eliminate use of toxics that are not safely degradable, thus putting health and safety first, not profits.

With respect to the question of who will pay for the cleanup, there is a sharp contrast between the law requiring polluters to pay and reality. Recently, in the aftermath of the Rio "Earth Summit," 48 business leaders came together to declare their position on the environment, in a book called "Changing Course." Although they give lip service to the idea of making the polluting industries pay, they also declare their support of what they call "full-cost pricing." This means passing all "external" costs of a product, including the cost of adhering to environmental guidelines, along to the consumer.

Essentially, this is a case of capitalist class solidarity: "We will all agree to raise our prices simultaneously in order to not drive each other out of business. Meanwhile, we will get consumers to cover the cost of cleaning up the mess we created." Ultimately, they want the working class to pay.

## International mediation

International bodies like the UN have made various recommendations to com-



pensate for the inequities between two world camps: The advanced capitalist countries and the poorer countries—whose resources are being plundered by the first camp, with disregard for health and the environment.

But, of course, the governments that need to be pressured the most to follow better environmental policies are the ones over which the UN has the least authority—those of the advanced capitalist countries. And the plunderers will never agree to UN recommendations voluntarily.

At the much heralded United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) or "Earth Summit" in Rio, the U.S. government said that it would not agree to anything that would undermine the competitive advantage of the U.S. economy.

The counterposing of profit-making to health and environment was made resoundingly clear by the U.S. refusal to sign the biodiversity convention. This agreement would have required the hugely profitable U.S. and European pharmaceutical companies to share profits and technology with the countries that provide most of the raw materials, usually in the form of tropical plants.

Since many of these species are being threatened with extinction, protective measures must be taken in order to preserve them and hold open the possibility to humanity of future cures for disease.

The position of the United States on this matter was echoed on other matters by the governments of Germany and other European countries. They said they would not pursue the environmental initiative on their own, so as to remain "competitive." After all, inter-capitalist competition increases under the effects of the structural crises that now rock the system, so international cooperation becomes less likely. The world leaders were clearly saying that environmentalism and capitalism have contradictory goals.

## Population control

International institutions of capital such as the World Bank subscribe to the Malthusian theory that overpopulation (in poor countries, of course) is the cause of environmental problems. This reasoning

blames the victims for the crisis. The real reasons for high birth rates are:

- 1) High infant mortality rates due to poor healthcare and sanitary conditions.
- 2) A lack of pensions or social security, which makes people look to their children to support them in old age.
- 3) The oppression of women: No reproductive rights.
- 4) Economic insecurity, which makes families dependent on more wages, including from children.

In contrast, we can look at the example of Cuba, where the revolution brought better nutrition, healthcare, education, employment, improved status of women, pensions, etc. In a few short years, the population stabilized at levels equivalent to advanced capitalist countries.

Population control as proposed by the advanced capitalists countries is a form of racial, national, and class oppression. It does not speak to the causes of environmental crises and can never solve them.

## What do socialists propose?

The environmental crisis must be viewed within the specific economic structure of capitalism. No progress can be made in dealing with the environment in the context of an economy based on commodity production and the profit motive.

We have seen that under capitalism, the interests of short-term profits are counterposed to the long-term interests of humanity. A company using toxic chemicals finds it much more cost-effective to dump their waste in a river than to take precautions and process the waste in a way that protects the environment.

It would be as rare for a capitalist to accept extra costs to defend the environment as it is to voluntarily give wage increases. Even if a particular factory owner had a conscience that led him to act responsibly on his own, his competitors who more closely adhere to the rules of profit-making would have the economic advantage and eventually drive him out of business.

But what if every workplace were under the control of workers? The workers could ensure that production methods would be consistent with the long-term interests of humanity and the environment. And they

could ensure that pollutants are not released into the environment in the first place. Through the international rule of the working class—in our own interests, on a global scale—we could accomplish what the capitalists cannot.

It is helpful to envision what needs must be met by a socialist society and how we would meet them in an environmentally sound way. What kind of housing, transportation, and workplaces would suit us and be protective of the environment at the same time?

Environmental considerations would lead to ending the production of many products. They would lead to the elimination of techniques, production methods, and even whole industries that are intrinsically dangerous, such as the nuclear industry.

Methods of agriculture must be totally rethought. We would no longer rely on dangerous pesticides, derived from nonrenewable energy sources. Research would need to be done to develop alternatives. And we would need to rethink other social models, to produce quality over consumptive quantity.

Today, there are often tensions between the labor movement's demand for jobs and the environmental movement's demands for banning a product or protecting a natural habitat.

It is not possible to fully resolve this conflict under capitalism. However, workers should be on

guard against divide-and-conquer tactics that pit justifiable demands for jobs against justifiable demands for a healthy environment.

Machinists at Westinghouse in Sunnyvale set a good example recently. They sided with environmentalists in pressuring the Environmental Protection Agency to hold Westinghouse accountable in the strictest way possible for cleaning up their PCB mess. Our revolutionary socialist program calls for full employment based on public work projects, including those that would contain, reduce, and remove contamination in order to protect humans and other species from needless death and disease.

The Green parties have raised a demand that corporations be forced to meet the same environmental conditions in their foreign operations as at home. The Greens could take a step forward by extending this demand to wages and working conditions in general. Environmental activists should join ranks with international workers and trade unionists to build a movement committed to these goals.

In the short term, while we are building for a socialist future, we will continue to fight for the restoration of the environment—starting with the water, air, and soil that nourishes us. In the long run, however, we point out to the environmentalists who are leading these fights that there is only one class with both the power and the unfettered will to establish an environmentally sound world order. That is the working class.

Workers have a vested interest in a healthy environment. And unlike the capitalist class, workers have no vested interest in permitting environmental destruction. Rosa Luxemburg once said that the choice is socialism or barbarism. Today we can also say that the choice is socialism or environmental catastrophe.

The tasks of educating and leading the working class forward in the face of deep capitalist attacks are not easy. We need to arm ourselves by learning from the struggles of the past and sharpening our class perspective on all of the issues that confront us today. That is why an organization like Socialist Action is so important. ■

# Our readers speak out

## Still around

Dear editors,

I am still around at 81—steadfast in my beliefs, heart and soul a Trotskyist. I look forward to the enlightening articles in *Socialist Action* and wish to contribute some ideas that I hope will be helpful toward the building of a labor party.

1) The formation of unemployed councils nationally, which will raise the following demands:

2) Two four-hour shifts for every job at \$20 per hour.

3) No evictions for the unemployed from their apartments or homes for non-payment of rent or mortgages

4) Single payment health plan, nationally. This will eliminate all health insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid. Regulate doctor and hospital bills, etc., to be paid by corporations—millionaires/billionaires. Everyone is covered. Also all prescription drugs.

By organizing and raising these demands, the unemployed councils will help bring about the formation of a labor party—bypassing the corrupt bureaucratic union leadership and replacing it by a militant rank-and-file leadership.

Dave Friedman,  
Bloomingburg, N.Y.

## The best?

Dear editors,

I am one of the staffwriters on the paper *Socialist Outlook*. While we do get *Socialist Action*

at our offices, I'd like to have my own copy, and enclose a cheque for the subscription.

I'll just add that, of the American leftist publications occasionally seen in Britain—which include *The Militant*, *BIDOM*, *Workers Vanguard*, and *Socialist Organizer*—yours is easily the most interesting and best produced, and naturally the one closest to my own opinions politically.

Dave Osler,  
London, England

## NAFTA

Dear editors,

Nat Weinstein, in the November issue of *Socialist Action*, marshals many arguments warning workers not to be ensnared in the "Free Trade vs. Protectionism" controversy in his lengthy article on North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Unfortunately, he has fallen into the trap that the American ruling class has set.

Publicly, NAFTA is presented as no more than a trade agreement to lower tariffs and break down all trade barriers between Mexico, Canada, and the United States. This is the appearance—but the reality is quite different.

A free trade agreement was signed with Canada in 1988. Why do they need another one? Actually, NAFTA goes far beyond tariff reductions. NAFTA, if ratified, allows American finance capital, banks, insurance companies, etc. to operate freely in Canada and Mexico as if those countries were two new American states.

NAFTA agreements would take precedence over national legislation—such as labor codes, land ownership, environmental regulations, and restrictions of foreign investments. The object of NAFTA is to extend privatization and undermine labor organizations in each of the three countries.

If one stops to read the text of NAFTA—before dismissing it as just another trade war, a non-issue for workers—it becomes clear that NAFTA is a concerted attempt to further oppress the workers of the three countries in order to better compete with Europe and Japan.

One example: *The New York Times* (Nov. 16, 1992) reported on a little-known clause in NAFTA that obliges Canada to extend the life of patents on drugs from 10 to 20 years. This extends by 10 years the period that the drug industry can gouge consumers. "The shorter period of patent protection has helped keep prices of drugs 32 percent lower in Canada, on average, than in the United States," according to this article.

The article also states that medical costs in Canada are about 28 percent lower per capita than in the United States. In addition, "the trade agreement requires Canada and Mexico to follow the United States' lead and allow exclusive marketing rights for drugs as long as 20 years. The change is expected to cost Canadians about \$400 million annually."

Can workers in any country be indifferent to this?

Asher Harer,  
San Francisco, Calif.

*The author replies:* In his letter criticizing my piece, "Free Trade vs. Protectionism: No Choice for Workers," in the November 1992 edition of *Socialist Action*, Asher Harer cannot help noting that the central point of the piece is directed against both capitalist trade policies. But why choose to direct fire exclusively against NAFTA?

He justifies this one-sided critique by claiming that NAFTA essentially has little to do with free trade and is anti-working class. All right, this trade pact certainly is anti-working class. It must be noted, however, that the existing protectionist status quo is openly and unabashedly anti-working class.

The fact is that virtually all opponents of NAFTA—including those apologists for the labor bureaucracy who claim to be prin-

cipled supporters of proletarian internationalism—warn against workers from south of the border coming north and undermining the wage standards of "American" workers.

The tried and tested position of the revolutionary workers' movement since the time of Marx and Engels, and Lenin and Trotsky, has been to reject all capitalist policies and counterpose to them demands expressing the class interests of workers everywhere.

Nat Weinstein

*Based on a discussion of the issues in the Socialist Action Political Committee, Nat Weinstein was assigned to write the November 1992 piece on NAFTA. This was to be noted in a brief introductory note by the editors, but was inadvertently omitted.*

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**Socialist Forum**  
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New Brunswick, NJ 08903

## ... S. Africa

(continued from page 1)

best terms we can get from a victorious enemy."

Another critic was Harry Gwala, an SACP leader and the ANC chairman in the Natal midlands. He was scornful of Slovo's view that De Klerk's government is genuinely seeking to break with apartheid.

Gwala said: "It would be folly for the liberation movement to imagine that the enemy has suddenly seen reason. The bottom line of the ruling class is to retain the monopoly of the country's wealth and the coercive state machinery. Hence the so-called protection of minority rights. And compromises must be seen in this light." (*The Weekly Mail*, Nov. 13-19, 1992.)

It should be underscored that Harry Gwala is hardly a revolutionary. He remains an unreconstructed (and self-proclaimed) advocate of the policies of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. And Stalin was the main architect of the popular front—which led to disastrous defeats from Spain to Chile to Indonesia.

But now Gwala is simply describing a situation that millions of Black South Africans understand instinctively. This was given vivid expression in the chants raised at rallies last summer: "De Klerk must go!" and "Sweep the assassins out of power!"

Since the ANC's "mass action" campaign of July and August, what a difference a few months has made! Now the watchword is "constructive interaction" with De Klerk.

Indications are that Slovo merely let the cat out of the bag, revealing to the public what most key ANC strategists were already thinking. Several weeks after Slovo made his recommendations, the ANC's negotiations commission—consisting of top policy-makers like Ramaphosa, Thabo Mbeki, Mac Maharaj, and Valli Mossa—issued a paper recommending adoption of Slovo's plan. A month later, the national executive endorsed it as policy.

Other important concessions have also been given to De Klerk. For example, the ANC offered to accept amnesty for members of the state security forces who committed crimes under apartheid. And the legions of white civil servants hired dur-

ing the apartheid era will be retained in a future government.

### Government scandals

The compromises are helping De Klerk's regime to recover from scandals unfolding in the courts and the press.

Last month, files came to light showing that a "third force" in the army and police had attempted to destabilize the ANC and assassinate its members—even while talks with the government were going on.

Documents show, in addition, that intelligence officials hired a convicted killer, Ferdi Bernard, who concocted a bizarre plan to compromise the ANC. Prostitutes and drug dealers were to be used to lure former members of the ANC's guerrilla units into crime.

Many anti-apartheid leaders have demanded that all negotiations with the government be held off until concrete steps are taken to purge the military and intelligence forces. Even De Klerk's ambassador to Washington, Harry Schwartz, declared he was "furious and outraged" because the disclosures were undermining his ability to polish South Africa's image abroad.

But De Klerk refused to listen. He did little more than assign his military chief of staff, Lieut. Gen. Pierre D. Steyn, to investigate the government's covert activities along with a commission headed by Judge Richard Goldstone.

*The New York Times* comments in its Nov. 20, 1992, edition: "Against that backdrop, the behavior of the African National Congress has been remarkable. While issuing pro forma statements of dismay, the congress pointedly declined to pose any ultimatums or threaten to break off talks."

One ANC statement pointed out, "The police and the army have lost all credibility and cannot investigate themselves."

But on the other hand, ANC President Nelson Mandela termed De Klerk's timid action "a good, encouraging step" and said he was "not disappointed."

If Mandela had expected De Klerk to give concessions to the ANC tit for tat, he was sadly disappointed. Speaking to reporters in Cape Town, De Klerk threw water on the ANC's contentions that multiracial elections could be held next year. Instead, he proposed a timetable that would delay the elections until March 1994. ■

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# 'Revolution Rap' and Public Enemy: Their prediction came true in L.A.

By ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI

This is the first in a series of articles on rap music, focussing on the rap group Public Enemy.

"There is something changing in the climate of consciousness on this planet today. Need for change brings on revolution. To revolutionize, make a change, nothin's strange. What we got to say/ Power to the people, no delay/ To make everybody see/ In order to fight the powers that be."—Public Enemy, "Fear of a Black Planet"

"Burn Hollywood burn!" That's what crowds of young Blacks, Hispanics, and even whites chanted at the time of the Los Angeles uprising. They were thus replaying in their own way a "revenge fantasy" created by the rap band Public Enemy: "So step and fetch this shit/ For all the years we looked like clowns/ The joke is over, smell the smoke from all around/ Burn Hollywood burn."

Chuck D, leader of Public Enemy, explains: "That record is about the movie industry and how corrupt it is in its depiction of Blacks. I never said 'Burn Hollywood burn' was burn Watts or South Central down."

But Chuck D did not condemn the seeming misappropriation of his song by the L.A. rebels. He pointed out: "The South Central fires were precision hits. They only burned down what they wanted to burn down. It was calculated. There was just as much precision in the bombing of Los Angeles as there was in the bombing of Iraq."

This analysis is confirmed by James Bernard, senior editor of *The Source*, in his own first-rate analysis of the uprising. *The Source* is the only independent Black magazine of hip-hop music, culture, and politics.

Bernard writes in the August 1992 edition: "Since this was a rebellion and not a riot, businesses were hit; homes, schools, or churches were not hit. In this way, this was class warfare—get the property owners. ... As the most articulate and dramatic cry for sweeping social change since the late '60s, April 30, 1992—the rebellion's apex—cracked the door through which we could finally finish the healing sparked by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements."

## A political platform

It's not surprising that the young people in rebellion made use of a hardcore rap music composition as their hymn and rally cry. Nor is it surprising that the predictions of Chuck D—along with other rappers like Ice-T, KRS-One, and Ice Cube—were vindicated.

"Long before 58 people were killed and racial issues dominated the national news, rap was the sole media outlet through which millions of listeners could hear the anger, frustration, and confusion of America's Black underclass," writes Alan Light, associate editor of *Rolling Stone* in the magazine's June 1992 edition.

For his part, Gregor Ehrlich writes in the August 1992 issue of *Pulse!* magazine, "Rap's current popularity aside, the music has long provided a platform for people who feel they lack any other political voice. The hip-hop community categorizes such policy-minded rap as Afrocentric or Black nationalist."

And in the British *i-D Magazine* (August 1992), Kodwo Eshun writes: "Rap scripted the riots many times before



Public Enemy: Chuck D stands at left. "The clock is ticking." MARK SELIGER

**'It's not surprising that the young people in rebellion made use of a hardcore rap music composition as their hymn and rally cry. Nor is it surprising that the predictions of Chuck D—along with other rappers like Ice-T, KRS-One, and Ice Cube—were vindicated.'**

the events in Los Angeles actually occurred on April 29. "Burn Hollywood Burn," from Public Enemy's third album, "Fear of a Black Planet," is only one example of an audiodramatic inferno which was regarded as yet more hyperbole when it was released in 1990. Now it is that very excessiveness, that sense of being 'too Black, too strong' which is being quoted by conservative magazines like *Newsweek* and *Time* for its prophetic force."

## A common ground

John Leland, who edited a long background dossier for *Newsweek*, pointed out that for over four years, hardcore rap anticipated the Los Angeles "riot"—and it did so in the most graphic images of violence and civil war. He compares the role rap plays today with the one played by rock music during the previous period of "radical integration."

Leland writes: "During periods of integration ... the common ground shared by white and Black listeners was rock and roll. ... Now, as we pull apart, and our

insecurities focus more and more on violence, the shared ground is the often violent frontier of rap.

"If the heart of the culture in the '60s was a fascination with youth, the heart now is a fascination with race. Race has replaced the generation gap as the determining force not just in what music says and sounds like, but in how it is promoted and what it means to different listeners.

"Rappers are the musicians leading the change. ... Popular music is now reflecting deep changes in American society better than any other form of public discussion—just as it did 30 years ago. When Los Angeles boiled over in response to the Rodney King verdict in April, the last people surprised were the fans of rap music, Black and white."

Likewise, it was the rappers who were among the first to work up a balance sheet of the L.A. uprising—like one made by Ice-T. He hoped that "Black people realize it's more a poverty-versus money thing than a Black-and-white thing" and that "the shit would be on until we got to the White House."

Several rappers also raise burning questions about the effectiveness of the Black political leadership. "Now is the time for us to start demanding more from our leaders and find out who can lead us more effectively," declares Yo Yo.

But according to Public Enemy's producer, Hank Shocklee, the uprising showed that it's not possible to count on the current Black leadership: "Those community leaders—the whole of Black America was saying it's the first time we've ever seen them."

## Rap won't be the same again

Havelock Nelson and Michael Gonzales, authors of a guide to rap music and hip-hop culture, consider that the first album of Public Enemy, "Yo! Bum Rush the Show," which appeared in 1987, constituted the first product of the new school of "radical rap." In addition, they say, it was one of the most relevant and ambitious products ever committed to vinyl.

The meteoric rise of Public Enemy deeply transformed rap music and the whole of hip-hop culture and raised them up to a new level. "Between noise and information, sound and sense, Public Enemy conceptualized rap, gave it sense of itself as a total art form," says Kodwo Eshun.

The main personalities in Public Enemy are rappers Chuck D (Carlton Ridenhour) and Falvor Flav (William Drayton), disk jockey Terminator X (Norman Rogers), and producer Hank Shocklee. A fifth member, Professor Griff (Richard Griffin), the "minister of information," was obliged to separate from the group in 1990.

The group is made up of two specialized teams. One team is called the Security of the First World. The other is called the Bomb Squad. "This Bomb Squad isn't destroying property, but conceptions of music—the way it's played and listened to," explains Scott Poulson-Bryant, staff writer for *Spin* magazine (October 1991).

David Dufresne, the author of the French-language book, "Yo! Revolution Rap," comments: "It's understood that we're dealing with a different [kind of] group. Above the crowd; on the one hand, musically, on the other, philosophically."

Dufresne was the one who coined the term "revolution rap." He was no doubt inspired by the term "revolution rock," which was utilized by the British group, The Clash, a decade ago. And this term describes Public Enemy above all—within both of its domains, that of music and that of ideas.

James Bernard writes concerning Public Enemy: "They have fucked with shit in a major way. They restored faith in music; it still matters. They have changed the way people think. They showed us that rap is a voice for a generation's rage, hopes, and dreams. They demonstrated that a pop group could address issues that torment our society's soul. Public Enemy is not just the most important rap act of our time; they are the most important popular music act of our time."

European critics are just as laudatory. In their analysis of the group's second album, "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back," Georges Lapassade and Philippe Rouselot affirm that "the technosound of Public Enemy constitutes a model of the genre; throughout, their sophistication is at the service of the stress, the shock they wish to create. Their rhyme is a perfection." ("Le rap ou

(continued on page 8)