



Over 2 million workers shut the country down ...

French workers show the way!

Over 2 million French railroad workers and other public employees are striking and demonstrating against the government's plans to increase their taxes while it cuts their jobs, health care benefits, and pensions.

Their unions are so strong and their jobs are so important, that they have shut down the country. Many are openly denouncing the Socialist and Communist Parties, the largest parties in the working class, and are calling for a *new* working class party.

They may force the government to retreat and withdraw the plan; they may even bring down the government.

France is a country in which revolutions have gone very far.

In 1789, the French people rose up against the aristocracy that had enslaved, starved, and tortured them for centuries. They chopped off the aristocrats' heads and established more democracy for the people than ever before.

In 1871, workers of Paris rose up against the new aristocracy, the bankers, businessmen, and landowners. They armed themselves, established a workers' democracy made up of directly elected workers' representatives, the famous "Paris Commune," and held off their enemies for two months. It was the first workers' democracy.



During World War II, French workers were the backbone of the underground and armed resistance to the Nazi occupation of France. After World War II, they were in the front ranks of the strike wave in the U.S. and

Europe.

In 1968, French workers and students organized the general strike that brought down the famous French president, Charles DeGaulle. They were in the front ranks of a world-wide

**No to Yokich's betrayal of the Caterpillar workers! — page 5.
No to U.S. troops to Bosnia! — page 8.**

French workers show the way. . .

wave of working class and popular revolutionary struggle, not only against the capitalist powers, but also against Socialist and Communist Party labor bureaucracies.

French workers and students have fought so hard for their rights, that today they have the legal right to organize strikes like the general strike taking place today. They have public health care, public child care, public education, including Ph.D. programs and stipends for young students so that they can live on their own and not at home, and fully-paid, one month vacations, every year, by law.

They don't want to give up these things.

The general strike in France is nothing but the most open and dramatic expression of the new working class and socialist revolution that is developing throughout the world.

Workers and students are not only sick of the corporations, they are also sick of the labor bureaucracies — whether they call themselves trade unionists, socialists, or communists — who claim to represent the workers but work with the corporations against the workers.

The revolution is working class because the working class is in the front ranks. The revolution is socialist, because the working class naturally fights for more social control and ownership of basic resources. The more public, social, or common control and ownership of basic resources, the more unified the working class is, the more powerful the working class is, as the general strike in France shows. The more private ownership, the more divided and weak the working class is.

What can workers and students do to advance the new revolution that is developing?

— Support the struggles of all workers and oppressed peoples — Detroit newspaper workers, Caterpillar workers, the Million-Man March, the French workers' general strike, Cuba, Mexico ...

— Fight for actions to be larger and more unified like the French workers' general strike ...

— Build workers parties to fight for political power and crush the resistance of the bosses and the labor bureaucracies ...

New Life ☐

“The railroad workers are determined ...”

Interview with Patrick Seignon, French railroad worker, November 30, 1995

What do you think of this strike? What are your aims?

Patrick: The aim is to annul Juppe's plan. I think that if Juppe withdraws his plan, that he himself will be forced to withdraw. And this is very political! The railroad workers are determined to go this far. The sectors that are joining us in the strike are also in the process of becoming as determined as we are. The difficulty is getting through the next weekend. There might be a deactivation of the movement or some maneuvers from certain apparatuses to stop the movement.

The railroad workers are in the vanguard of this offensive. Why?

Patrick: The railroad workers are the motor of this mobilization for two kinds of reasons: the first is this sector's important capacity to mobilize; the second is the amplitude of Juppe's attacks. The railroad workers can go very far, if other sectors join them. If the rise of the offensive persists, the railroad workers can go on for a long time. We are on the verge of putting a government of the Fifth Republic in danger. We must be determined, but without being blind.

On the political plane, this third “election in the streets” [French workers just voted in two rounds of elections — trans.] shows that the workers have more confidence in their own actions than in elections. You signed the ART's call for the creation of a new workers party. What political space is there for this party and what forces could and should participate in it?

It is true that a political perspective for workers is needed. I just talked with some teachers; they said, “our unions aren't giving us slogans.” There is an absence of political direction for workers. The working class has lost its political “head.” With some old comrades, revolutionary militants. It is necessary to find a way to politically rearm the working class. Concerning the Socialist Party, I think that this party has nothing to do with a workers party. The Communist Party carries within it the disgrace of Stalinism. It is incapable of serving as a leadership for the workers movement.

The question that is arising, and that we have to take up, the young and the old generation, is the question of a workers party. This demand has to come from these militants in order to build a revolutionary left. This is



Railway workers burn railroad ties in Marseilles.

what we are trying to do with the ART, taking into consideration all the organizations that have emerged on the political landscape.

What would you say to the European workers and the workers throughout the world who are looking at this social movement in France, and have the same concerns that you have?

For starters, I would say to all these workers: “I hope that the workers of France don't let you down.” I hope that throwing Juppe out of power will inspire all European workers to resume the fight. If this inspires workers, it can give a second wind, in order to continue the struggle and establish a socialist Europe against the Europe of Maastricht [this refers to the Maastricht agreement, made in the interests of a whole series of huge multinationals by various European governments — trans.] Because, naturally, we are for a “workers Europe.”

Note: Patrick Seignon, is a railroad worker and president of the Association pour la Reunion des Travailleurs (Association for Workers Unity). He is an independent Trotskyist. Almost all workers in France consider themselves socialists and/or communists of some type. The biggest division is between the Social Democrats and Communists on the one hand, who are part of and support the labor bureaucracies in Europe and the old USSR, and the Trotskyists, who oppose all forms of privilege and oppression. ☐

More on the French workers strike ...

French public sector employees have been on strike since November 24. The strike is a result of the government's austerity plan, which will tighten pension rules, cut health care, as well as cut retirement benefits for public employees.

The strike has gained much support, although only 10% are unionized. An opinion poll in *Le Parisien*, a daily French newspaper, shows 62% of the population supports the strike. The reason for this could be that many French workers feel they owe what they have to the unions!

The strike has completely halted the public transit system. No buses, trains or subways are operating. The police have lifted parking restrictions to allow for more use of personal vehicles. As a result, traffic has increased to a point where the highways are backed up for hours. As well, the postal service has 80 out of 139 sorting offices closed and the strike has spread to state-owned gas and electricity companies.

Students in state universities have joined with the workers. They have been sitting down in the universities and demanding more money for repairs on rundown facilities and more teachers.

A labor union federation has appealed to workers in banks, auto plants, and hospitals to support the strike; union leaders called for all state salaried workers to walk out.

The French strike shows what a country that has a political party representing the working people can accomplish. The people of France have gained much from the labor movement, and are willing to take to the streets to protect their gains.

In the U.S., where the workers have no party of their own, workers are hit with labor laws that hinder their ability to strike (Taft-Hartley) and are put in the position of going out on strike and being forced into situations that cripple the strike (Caterpillar).

The U.S. labor movement should look to France for inspiration and work towards building a party for working people. Supporting LPA is a positive step in that direction.—Tim James □

“Call of the One Hundred” French railroad workers call for a new working class party

Union militants, fighters, leaders of associations, are launching a call to the entirety of the forces of the workers movement for the creation of a new kind of party, anti-capitalist, united, democratic, which expresses in the most loyal way the aspirations and demands of the current social movements.

The presidential elections haven't settled anything. A true abyss separates the aspirations of the social movements and the big political forces that lead us.

This crisis situation has already been expressed, in a period of “electoral truce,” in the exceptional rise of a power movement of strikes, that have raised the specter of a third social election. In this phony democracy, the Fifth Republic, the right and the left have done nothing but alternatively serve the interests of the bosses, attacking the workers. The 1.6 million votes that Arlette Laguiller received showed that hundreds of thousands of workers and youth are looking for a true alternative, and there is no doubt that this aspiration is shared by millions of those that have opted for another electoral candidate.

There exists a space for a true party of the workers.

All of our energies must now be mobilized so as not to lose this opportunity. There is urgency because the bosses and the government are going to attack all our gains, because unemployment is rising, because racism and the extreme right keep gaining ground.

The time has come to build a big party of the workers that takes a clear stand on the terrain of the political defense of the exploited.

Let's mobilize ourselves around an emer-

gency plan that responds to the questions raised by the socialist struggle of tremendous magnitude that are on the horizon:

- For the abolition of unemployment
- For a radical reduction in the number of working hours, without losing wages ...
- For “zero layoffs” ...
- For a decent home for all
- For increasing the ability to buy, following the example of the workers at Renault, who demand 1,500 francs for all
- For the defense and improvement of all the social conquests and the public services
- For equal rights, equality for men and women, equality for French and immigrants.

These mobilizations must have a legitimate political expression in a new party, since experience shows that while the social struggles can force the bosses to retreat, to the extent that the bosses exercise political power, they take back with one hand what they conceded with the other.

This party must be a political organization that is united, democratic, anti-capitalist and internationalist. It must bring together, without excluding any one, all the components of the workers' movement, from the moment that they take a stand along these lines.

For the new party that the workers need, we want to act so that all those who share this concern begin to come together, to organize, at places of work, study, neighborhoods, in order to discuss and act together, setting aside all sectarianism. □



Thousands of striking workers clash with police in Nantes and are hit with tear gas.

"The movement is much deeper than 1968 ..."

Interview with a French revolutionary, Michel Guillaume, December 7, 1995

New Life: Are the strikes and the picketing that are now taking place against French law?

Michel: At the moment, the strikes, the picketing, and the demonstrations are not going beyond the current legal framework which is very liberal in France.

NL: Is it possible for union leaders or workers to be fined and/or arrested for participating in these strikes and/or picketing?

Michel: There isn't any repression against the strikers or the pickets.

NL: Is there a danger that union workers may be replaced with non-union workers?

Michel: In general, the strikers are blocking all the activity in the country like the trains, the mail, the schools ... There are attempts to use private transportation companies and to organize the private distribution of mail.

NL: What are the picket lines like? Are the workers armed in any way? Do the police and/or strikebreakers attack the picket lines?

Michel: At the moment, there aren't any confrontations between the strikers and the police, or the non-strikers. There have been some demonstrations where there has been violence at the end, but it is difficult to see if it is young people who are desperate or if they have been manipulated by the police. Nevertheless, yesterday, there were violent confrontations between the miners, who are on the verge of being wiped out, [because of changes in the economy—trans.] and the police.

NL: What is the relationship between the rank-and-file and the leadership of the different unions in this fight?

Michel: The union leaders have been forced by the power of the movement to organize strikes and demonstrations. All their attempts to divide the workers, have, for the moment, been submerged by the strikers. The middle-level leaders in the unions are mandated and controlled by the daily general assemblies of the strikers.

NL: What kind of a role are the different political tendencies playing in this struggle? What are revolutionary Trotskyists

fighting for?

Michel: The Socialist Party and the Communist Party have been absent from the forward march of the general strike. The Socialist Party has basically the same position as the Prime Minister on the question of reforming Social Security. The Communist Party, which has been promoting "constructive opposition" to Chirac, is now demanding that he keep his election promises!

We of La Commune have been saying: 1) that the central slogan must be for a general strike to force Juppe to withdraw his plan; 2) that organization of the strike must be by the general assemblies and strike pickets. Our slogans can evolve in function of the situation.

The other groups have been handicapped by their previous analyses. They saw in the election of Chirac a victory of the right and wished for a third round in the streets [in France, in elections, there are two rounds; in the first round, there are many candidates; in the second round, the two candidates with the highest number of votes remain and voters vote for one of two; when people in France say they want a third round in the streets, that means that they think that the people will have their say in the streets no matter who wins the second round] without seeing Chirac's extreme weakness, and the fact that the social crisis was already there (the Air France strike, Alstom, Renault ...).

NL: The capitalist newspapers here are saying that this has nothing in common with 1968, that there's nothing to worry about. What do you think?

Michel: On one point, they are right. The movement is much deeper than the movement in May, 1968. And, above all, Stalinism's strength hardly exists anymore. [A Stalinist Communist Party linked to the privileged dictatorial bureaucracy in Moscow played a major, and debilitating, role in the French workers' movement for many years — trans.] They are wrong on the second point, because a defeat for Juppe would mean a defeat for all the European bourgeoisies and even more. The general strike, which concerns the public sector (2 million strikers) and is beginning to win the private sector, is opening a period of revolutionary crisis that is going to raise the problem of government very soon.

Note: Michel Guillaume is a member of La Commune, a revolutionary socialist and Trotskyist tendency in France, named after the famous Commune in Paris in 1871, a revolutionary working class government established by thousands of French workers who rose up against bankers, landowners, and businessmen who were starving them, and which was later crushed by these same forces. He has been active in the French workers' movement since the 1960s. □

Statements of support from U.S. workers

Dear Friends in Solidarity,
We are extremely proud of what you are doing to bring change to the labor movement, not only in France but for workers world-wide. For our class of people, your sacrifice is greatly appreciated.

I hope our labor leaders are watching your courage and dedication and will learn from you the power we have as a working class.

I wish I could join you in your victory over greed and tyranny.

From Decatur, Illinois, we wish you well and every success. It is time to become a unified world-wide labor movement and end corporate fascism forever.

In Solidarity,
Mike Griffin, Locked Out Staley worker
UPIU 7837

To striking French workers:
We want to express our solidarity with you and your strike against the government's plans for anti-working class budget cuts. Workers in the U.S. and throughout the world are facing similar problems. Your strike shows the way forward.

Victory to the French workers' strike!
Down with the government's anti-working class plans!
Signed by 25 members and friends of Detroit Labor Party Advocates at their December meeting

To our Sisters and Brothers in France:
We see similarities in the austerity measures proposed by the French and the United States governments. In Amerikkka, the reaction of the people to these attacks has not reached the level it has in France. We are inspired by the actions taken by the people in your country and sincerely hope that the example will act upon here. Keep on keeping on and keep on Refusing and Resisting!

Our Solidarity!
The Detroit Chapter of Refuse and Resist!

Go to Yokich's betrayal of the Caterpillar workers!

Caterpillar workers have been striking for 17 months. But Steve Yokich and Dick Demaker, the top leaders of the UAW, just decided to call off the strike, cut off the workers' strike pay, and send the workers back to work without a contract, and without a guarantee that the 150 workers who have been illegally terminated will get their jobs back.

Caterpillar workers have had absolutely no opportunity to discuss this and vote on whether or not they want to do this.

UAW leaders presented a contract to Caterpillar workers that was ten times worse than the contract that Caterpillar workers originally turned down, according to Larry Solon, president of the Caterpillar workers' local in Decatur, Illinois, UAW Local 751. This contract calls for different pay for the same work, overtime without overtime pay, abolishes the grievance procedure by allowing supervisors to decide whether there is a grievance or not, and virtually abolishes the union as well by forcing the union to accept scabs as members and outlawing trials against union members who crossed the picket lines. In other words, it calls for setting up a company union in Caterpillar plants tied to the UAW. At the same time, it calls on members to keep paying dues and sending them to Detroit.

UAW leaders told Caterpillar workers that they were going to cut off their strike pay and force them back to work no matter how they voted on the contract.

80% voted against the contract in Decatur; 80% in Peoria. 87% voted against it overall.

But the UAW leadership didn't get the message. It cut off the strike pay and ordered workers back to work any way.

The UAW leadership's decision is totally undemocratic, a betrayal of the Caterpillar workers and workers everywhere.

It's the striking workers who have the democratic right to decide if and when they are going to end their strike and go back to work under what conditions. A small handful of "leaders" don't have the right to make this decision for them, behind their backs, and against their will. When workers vote down a contract, it is the responsibility of the leadership to *escalate* efforts to win the strike, not to surrender.

The top UAW leadership says there is no alternative. This is a lie.

Staley workers are still locked out; 32,000 Boeing workers are striking; 2,500 Detroit newspaper workers are striking; London, Ontario workers are organizing a one-day general strike; railroad workers are on the verge of national strikes; the Million-Man March on Washington just took place; there's a general strike in France; UAW locals and other locals across the country have been calling for a one-day national strike in solidarity with Caterpillar workers, newspaper workers, and other striking workers; there's going to be a convention to found a labor party in June, 1996.

There are lots of things that the UAW could do to escalate the fight against Caterpillar — organize mass picketing and demonstrations to stop the scabs, a labor march on Peoria and Decatur, a one-day national work stoppage, independent labor candidates for office, actions in Caterpillar plants in other countries.

Its failure to do this shows that it has more ties to the bosses than to the masses of workers in the factories.

What should workers do in this situation?

First, it is necessary to tell the truth. It's necessary not to give in to the pressure of the top UAW leadership to lie or keep quiet. What the top UAW leadership has done is

wrong. It is Caterpillar workers themselves who have the democratic right to decide whether they want to go back to work or not. It's the UAW leadership's job to do what the majority of Caterpillar workers *vote* for them to do.

Second, it's necessary to escalate the fight for a new policy and a new leadership in the UAW, a policy of class struggle and class confrontation, not class collaboration and class conciliation. UAW members should get in direct contact with Caterpillar locals, find out what their demands are, and fight for all UAW locals to support the demands of the Caterpillar locals against the Caterpillar bosses. The struggle against the Caterpillar bosses isn't over; it's going to continue in a different way. If top UAW leaders won't support the Caterpillar workers, local leaders and members must.

New Directions should be in the forefront of this fight.—M. Guttshall.

Note: Margaret Guttshall is a member of the National Writers Union, UAW Local 1981, and was an alternate delegate to the UAW Convention in Anaheim, California, in June, 1995. She is also a supporter of New Directions. The views expressed in this article are her own, not necessarily those of the National Writers Union or New Directions. □

Notes

The media has been making a big deal out of **Clinton's opposition to the Republican's budget cuts**. Both Republicans and Democrats, Dole and Clinton, are in favor of cutting funds to Medicaid and Medicare, they simply disagree about how much. They are reaching an agreement as we go to press.

The **presidents of the striking newspaper unions** in Detroit have called off all forms of picketing at newspaper headquarters, plants, and distribution centers. They are focusing only on leafletting firms that are advertising in the scab paper. They have started a campaign of lies, innuendo and pressure aimed at isolating and discrediting the **Unity Victory Caucus** which has been fighting for actions necessary to win the strike — mass picketing, a national labor march on Detroit, a one-day national work stoppage. All workers who care about winning the newspaper workers' strike should support the Unity Victory Caucus and its struggle.

Cecilia Rodriguez, representative of the Zapatistas in the United States, has just made a public statement denouncing an attack on her in Mexico in which she was raped and sodomized. This attack is a direct result of U.S. corporations and their support to and collaboration with the most

reactionary forces in Mexico. Without the support of U.S. corporations and the U.S. government, the reactionary and anti-popular government in Mexico and its armed forces would fall. All working class, popular, and democratic organization in the United States should make a common fight to get all U.S. forces out of Mexico now and stop all forms of U.S. aid to the Mexican government. Readers should send solidarity statements to Cecilia Rodriguez, c/o 601 N. Cotton Street, #A103, El Paso, Texas, phone/fax 915-532-8382.

Mark Curtis, a meatpacking worker and member of the Socialist Workers Party who was framed up, falsely charged with rape, arrested and imprisoned, has just been paroled. This is a great victory for the working class. We are very glad that Mark is finally out of prison. Readers can send statements of solidarity and support to: SWP, 7414 Woodward, Detroit, MI 48202.

Members of **New Life** sold over 45 copies of the last issue of *New Life* to workers and students at American Gear and Axle and Wayne State University. Black workers and students were especially glad to see that workers and students of other ethnic groups support the Million Man March, and they were very interested in the struggle for socialism as a necessary part of the struggle for the liberation of the Black people.

Why I support Labor Party Advocates ...

Alan is a young grocery worker who recently joined Labor Party Advocates. Here he discusses his experiences in the Navy, in his union and in support of the striking Detroit newspaper workers. He also reflects on the coming labor party....

One of the first things I would like to ask is: why did you join the military?

Joining the military was a way to straighten my life out. And I wanted to see the world and get money for college. I grew up on welfare, but I always wanted to go to college — I wanted to be an accountant. There really weren't any other avenues I could have taken. I was working part- to full-time making \$6 an hour, and I had dropped out of high school. I tried different jobs, but there was nothing where I could make decent money to even take care of myself. At the time I lived with my mom. I was 19 — it was the end of 1990 when I went in, right around the Persian Gulf war.

What can you say about boot camp, overall?

They degrade you a lot. They try to get you used to taking orders. Like, if you don't follow orders, then you get punished, they make you do exercises, and stuff like that. The other people in boot camp were basically in the same circumstances, they weren't really going anywhere with their lives. All of them were working class, except a few. And they did it basically for money to go to college.

So where did you go after boot camp?

I went to school for my rate, the job classification that I signed a contract to do. Then they sent me to Virginia, where I did retail sales on a ship — at the ship store. We carried marines, so anytime marines were needed anywhere we would bring them. Our fleet was used as a show of force, to control the waters outside of different countries.

What would you say about your experience in the military?

The way I see it, the military is a show of force for our country. We use it to show other countries that we're more powerful than they are. It helps when they want things out of other countries. We live in a very greedy country, which is mostly based on finance and corporations. When we went over for Desert Storm, there was a lot of talk about protecting oil wells. It wasn't to stamp

out any threat — not that I heard about — it was more about the damage it would do to our country if we didn't have access to those oil wells.

When did you get out of the military?

In April of '95. I had taken a military leave so I got my old job back. I got all of my seniority from when I was gone, and that helped me get full-time. Normally, it takes two or three years.

With the union, I got all the pay raises from when I was on military leave. Without the union I wouldn't be making \$10 an hour now, I would probably have come back at \$6, the same rate as when I left. Also, because of my union, at my job they offer health care even for part-timers, though it's not all paid for. And basically, if you do your job you have job security — your job's not going to be gone.

How did you get involved in the Detroit newspaper workers strike?

When I got back, I saw what state the unions were in — the harassment they were getting from employers, and bigger corporations. Like with the News, I couldn't believe what they were doing. So I went to picket lines to give my support. The main thing I've gotten out of that is that I've seen how people unite over a cause, and how people can support other people when they're down. It shows human kindness in the '90's — like people walking around on the picket line handing out food, because they know people have been there a long time and they're hungry. And even if you're only out there an hour, they're still grateful for you coming to show your support.

Then you joined Labor Party Advocates?

Yes,... I think a political party for the workers is what we need, because we're getting shafted right now. The government doesn't care about the workers and I think we need to get someone in there who cares about workers. We need to change some of the laws against labor. The way I see it, right now the cause of labor is being crushed. That's one of the reasons I go to the picket lines, because it affects everybody.

What do you want to focus on with Labor Party Advocates?

At this stage, we need to get more people to join Labor Party Advocates, we need more

support from more people. So, what I can do (and other workers like me) is to talk to people at work, maybe put up LPA posters that talk about how we need a labor party. We need to let more people know that it exists, that there's going to be a labor party for working people. We can go to plant gates to get to the workers, and to union meetings.

One of the things that I think is very positive about LPA is that it focuses on building a party based on class, because the vast majority of us are working class. What do you think about that?

The way I see it, once the labor party gets started more people will learn about the unions — which will help to unionize a lot of places. And that will benefit people who aren't in unions, too, because the more money the unionized people have, the more non-union will get.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Well, I think you should ask if I think a labor party will succeed, because when more people learn about it, I think it will succeed. □

Next Meeting Detroit Labor Party Advocates

**7 pm, January 17
UAW Local 600
Dix and Wyoming**

**Discussion on Labor Laws:
Why is it so hard to strike
and to organize in the U.S.?
Discuss what rights workers
have and don't have.**

Call 313-730-4530.

New Life is a socialist bulletin published in the interests of the labor party movement. New Life is a supporter of International Workers Unity, a tendency of the Fourth International, the world party of the socialist revolution, founded by Leon Trotsky and his co-thinkers. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of New Life. These are expressed in editorials. **Editorial Board:** Margaret Guttshall, Tim James, Kim Morgan, Fred Russo. **Address:** Box 441283, Detroit, MI 48244. **Phone/fax:** 313-584-6556.

The first successful workers revolution was in Russia

November 7 was the 78th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the most important event of the 20th century. In some ways, it has been the single most important event in all recorded history.

We salute all revolutions — from the uprising by Spartacus in ancient Rome to the great American and French Revolutions, to the South African Revolution of today.

When we raise our eyes up to the highest banner, we see the Russian Revolution waving above all the others.

Why?

Millions of working people, people who gave everything so that a few could have everything, gave birth to their own society. They overthrew the czar of Russia and all the governments marshaled to protect him. They took back all the social wealth — the factories, the banks, the land — that they had created.

They replaced individual ownership of society's wealth with collective ownership. For the first time in history, the nameless masses had a name — owners of all of Russia's wealth.

The vast majority of Russians were peasants. Peasants slaved for aristocratic landowners. They lived a life without change, without education, without food. They seized the land and burned down the estates time and time again, but they never could rid Russia of these homegrown parasites.

The Russian workers were all former peasants. They supported the peasants' struggles.

The czar was the head warden in Russia. There were over 100 nations imprisoned. Slavic peoples in the west, peoples of color in the south and east longed to be free of the ever-present czarist armies and tax collectors. They cheered when Japan defeated Russia in the 1905 war.

Many Russian workers were the daughters and sons of these peoples. Poverty and oppression drove them to work in the big factories of the oppressor Russian nation. They supported the right of these nations to break the czarist chains.

The vast majority under 30 years old, the workers early on embraced socialism. They attracted to their side the finest and brightest students and democratic intellectuals.

The Russian workers movement joined the international workers movement. From the workers movements of Germany, England and France the Russian workers learned about modern capitalist societies. They learned about bourgeois democracy and workers democracy.

The Russian workers first broke the czar's stranglehold in February, 1917. While the czar still remained, the workers built new organizations, workers councils, that were the seeds of the new government inside the old society.

The hands that dug potatoes and welded cars also voted every day, deciding the fate of their country. The silent tongues of the oppressed were freed and they debated in a hundred languages the fundamental questions of war, peace, freedom, socialism.

The workers councils were lively organizations of workers rule. There was freedom of speech for all different tendencies. Any worker was free to speak her or his mind. New alliances of workers from different factories and cities were formed.

Weary of aristocratic offices and four years of world war, the lowest-ranked soldiers in the czar's army created soldiers' councils. They fought for democratic control of that most undemocratic of institutions. Peasants created councils, angered by their sons' useless deaths in the war, and by starvation while their stolen crops fattened generals and lords. Peasant councils became the nerve center for renewing the centuries-old battle for ownership of the land.

After the February revolution, many workers leaders thought the revolution had been won. They had weakened the czar and created the councils. That was enough.

The czar and his supporters thought differently. They plotted against the workers. They organized an army to attack the cities where the workers and their supporters were strongest. In August the workers with their peasant allies defeated these armies.

The workers arrived at the conclusion that the czar and his governments had to go. On November 7, 1917, the workers took all power away from the czar and set up a government of workers councils.

The second, workers revolution broke the back of all the oppressive institutions in Russia. Without the czar's armies, the nobles and lords fled

from their estates and the armed peasants. With the collapse of the old regime, and the support of the workers for self-determination, many nationalities declared their independence and built their own nations.

The world shook as workers and oppressed around the globe, in support of the revolution, filled the streets with demonstrations, shut down countries with general strikes, and even organized uprisings with workers council governments. Tens of millions peered through the door that the revolution had opened and saw their future. It was a glorious sight to behold!

But, centuries of poverty and oppression cannot be overcome in a few years. For four years the workers and peasants fought armies funded by the big powers. Workers of advanced countries did not succeed in taking back social wealth at home. The revolution became isolated.

This change created a new leadership, a leadership marked by defeat. It collaborated with the rich. It murdered all the leaders of the revolution. This regime, hated by the Russian workers, was soon hated by workers around the world. Its name is the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Russian Revolution proved that ordinary people can own all the wealth and can organize all the activities of the entire society. It proved that even the most uneducated and poorest workers fresh off the farm, can create a more democratic society than czars and ministers educated in the finest schools of Europe.

For this contribution, workers of the world will keep a special place in their hearts for the Russian Revolution.

What remains of the Russian Revolution is the collective ownership of social wealth. This is only one, small, aspect of this great revolution. But, it means that Russian workers were and are born differently than other workers. They are born owners, naturally, of all around them. They will not part with their wealth lightly.

The Berlin Wall which separated workers East and West, linked Western capitalists to their Russian servants. Breaking this chain in 1989 initiated the next Russian Revolution.

The Russian workers have broken the stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracy. They are rebuilding unions; they are founding workers parties. They are reconnecting to the fighting workers and oppressed around the world.

Workers of other lands are joining the Russian workers in struggle. They are studying how to win; they are molding new programs and leaders to replace those dependent on the rich and linked to the Stalinists.

As they study and struggle, they will reach back through history and illuminate their books, their meeting rooms and their battles with the bright light of the first great workers revolution, the Russian Revolution. — Fred Russo ☐

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No U.S. troops to Bosnia! Lift the arms embargo!

Let the Bosnian people fight for their rights!

Clinton claims that sending U.S. troops to Bosnia is going to bring peace to Bosnia. This isn't true.

The U.S.'s "peace" plan is very undemocratic, unjust, and oppressive to the Bosnian people.

The people of Bosnia Herzegovina have been struggling to establish their own nation, separate and apart from Serbia and Croatia, since 1991. The Bosnian people are a multi-ethnic people, with Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim origins, many of whom have been living together and intermarrying for many years.

The old Serbian Communist Party bureaucracy, its armed forces and its allies — particularly the Chetniks, a fascist group in and around the bureaucracy — reacted to this struggle by attacking Bosnia, by organizing massive rape, torture, and murder of Bosnian people aimed at driving them out of Bosnia, in other words, "ethnic cleansing."

Instead of recognizing the Bosnian people's right to self-determination, to establish their own nation, and the borders that have existed for many years, when Bosnia was part of the old Yugoslavian federation, the U.S.'s "peace" plan calls for dividing Bosnia along ethnic lines and occupying it with foreign troops!

One part of Bosnia will be turned over to the Chetniks, the so-called "Bosnian Serbs," in reality, the racist armed forces that have been trying to terrorize everyone that they think is not "ethnically pure." Another part of Bosnia will be turned over to Croatia and Bosnia.

In short, Bosnia will be divided between the two larger neighboring powers, Serbia and Croatia, and there will not be a single piece of Bosnia that the Bosnian people will be allowed to call their own.

The only thing that the U.S.'s "peace" plan is doing is allowing the Chetniks to get back territory that they had lost, and allowing Croatia to take a chunk. In the last months,

in spite of the U.S.'s arms embargo and all the other obstacles, the Bosnian army has been gaining ground!

U.S. leaders alternately bullied and seduced Bosnian leaders into signing this plan. If Bosnian leaders refused to sign, the U.S. could still continue bombing, send troops, tighten the embargo against Bosnia, etc. U.S. leaders have promised to send U.S. funds and corporations to help "rebuild" as part of the agreement.

But the Bosnian people are undoubtedly suspicious of the agreement. They've seen the U.N. troops sent to help them help the Chetniks instead. For example: U.N. troops took the most important positions in Srebrenica and disarmed the people of Srebrenica. Then, when the Chetniks attacked Srebrenica, the U.N. troops fled! They left the people totally defenseless; thousands were tortured, mutilated and slaughtered.

Just because U.S. leaders have forced Bosnian leaders to sign a "peace" plan that is undemocratic, unjust, and oppressive to the Bosnian people, doesn't mean that U.S. residents have to endorse this "peace" plan. No one is holding guns at our heads.

Just because some right-wing Republicans oppose the "peace" plan and sending U.S. troops on false grounds — they don't want to the U.S. to have anything to do with anyone else on the planet — doesn't mean that working people should support the plan. Just because our enemies oppose something, doesn't mean we should support it. We have to take a look at each and every situation and event and figure out *what is best for the working class*.

Young workers, students, and all working people should speak out against the U.S.'s "peace" plan, demand that Clinton withdraw all U.S. troops, and demand that the U.S. lift the arms embargo so that the Bosnian people can get arms and effectively fight for their right to have their own nation free from Chetnik oppression.

This struggle is especially important for

young workers and working people. Every worker knows how important it is to unite workers of all ethnic groups against U.S. corporations which are trying to destroy our unions and drive down our standard of living. How can we do this if we allow larger and more powerful nations like the U.S. to Serbia to bully and intimidate smaller nations like Bosnia? More, it is the sons and daughters of workers who are going to be forced to fight and die for this miserable cause, and it is the workers who are going to be forced to finance it.

This struggle is also especially important for socialism, communism, and Trotskyism. It is impossible to make any big progress in building a fully socialist and communist society if one ethnic group or nation is allowed to oppress another, as the Serbian Communist Party bureaucracy and its allies have done to the Bosnian people, or if a privileged dictatorial bureaucracy is allowed to oppress working people, again, as the Serbian Communist Party bureaucracy has done.

By turning a blind eye to national, ethnic, and bureaucratic oppression, forces that call themselves socialists, communists, and even Trotskyists, hurt socialism, communism, and Trotskyism, and pave the way for and strengthen the influence of backward organizations.

Workers need to see that revolutionary socialists, communists, Trotskyists, take a strong stand on the side of the Bosnian people, that we have nothing in common with U.S. oppression, or with the privileged Communist Party bureaucracy in the old USSR, that we oppose all forms of oppression, that there is an alternative, and that it will be victorious.

No to the U.S.'s "peace" plan!

No to U.S. troops to Bosnia!

Lift the arms embargo!

Let the Bosnian people fight for their rights!

— M. Guttshall ☐