

A Socialist ACTION

"Platoon"
A controversy.
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on page 15.



FEBRUARY 1987 VOL. 5, No. 2 50 CENTS

Mass protests demand: "Stop racist attacks"



Impact Visuals/Bill Biggart

Above: Howard Beach, N.Y. protest against racist violence on Dec. 27. In Forsyth County, Ga., 25,000 marched on Jan. 24. Thousands more protested around the country during MLK birthday celebrations.

By MAY MAY GONG

Anger has spread throughout the Black community in response to recent racist mob attacks in the Howard Beach section of New York City and in Forsyth County, Ga.

Chanting "What do we want? Justice!" over 3000 people braved the freezing weather to march on New York's City Hall on Jan. 21. The Day of Protest was the culmination of several marches and rallies organized during the last month.

A one-day boycott of white-owned

**The legacy of
Malcolm X,
See back page.**

businesses was also organized on Jan. 21 to emphasize demands that New York City authorities act to put an end to racist violence and that they apprehend and punish the thugs who attacked three Black men in Howard Beach.

In that incident, on Dec. 20, Michael Griffith, a Black construction worker, was struck and killed by an oncoming car as he fled a gang of white youths. He and his two companions, Cedric Sandiford and Timothy Grimes, had been beaten repeatedly for over 25 minutes with baseball bats, tire irons, and tree limbs.

The driver who killed Griffith has not been indicted to date, although he obviously committed a hit-and-run. In fact, only three of the lynchers were booked, and charges against them of murder, manslaughter, and assault were quickly dropped in favor of lesser charges of "reckless endangerment."

District Attorney John Santucci—under investigation himself for relations with organized crime figures—announced that his department was making background checks on the three victims.

Blaming the victims

But what crime did the victims commit? Griffith, Sandiford, and Grimes were "guilty" of merely walking into a pizza parlor, where they attempted to use the phone because of car trouble.

Because the presence of Blacks in a white neighborhood was considered "suspicious," the police were called. The police arrived immediately, but soon left—allowing a lynch mob to gather outside.

Police officers claim that they came a second time, after neighbors reported several whites beating three Blacks to death in the street. But again, the cops "saw nothing" and left.

There is growing evidence that the scandal-racked administration of Mayor Edward Koch is guilty of a cover-up in its failure to pursue the case. In a concession

(continued on page 7)

National coalition calls April 25 antiwar action

The U.S. government is plunging ahead in its drive to widen the war in Central America.

Despite the contragate scandal, the Reagan administration is requesting another \$100 million in aid to the contras—on top of the \$100 million approved by Congress last June. "We will not abandon the contras," Office of Management and Budget Director James Miller said.

But the American people overwhelmingly oppose government aid to the contra terrorists. A recent Gallup poll revealed that 75 percent of the population believe that Congress should cancel \$40 million in aid from the package approved last June and slated to be released this month.

Another poll conducted by ABC Television and the *Washington Post* revealed that 53 percent of the American people believe that President Reagan has been lying about the extent of his knowledge of the Iran/contra arms deal.

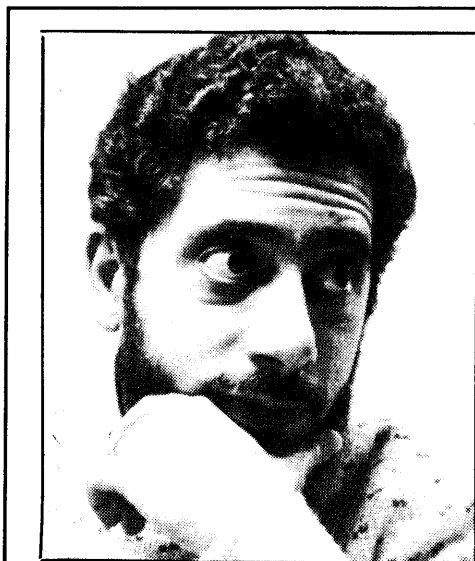
Reflecting this growing anger at the government's policies of intervention and duplicity, a coalition of labor and religious

leaders has come together to call for a national antiwar demonstration on April 25. The march and rally in Washington, D.C., will demand an end to U.S. intervention in Central America and an end to

U.S. support to apartheid in South Africa.

In coordination with the action in the nation's capital, a Western states

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SPECIAL INTERVIEW

**Don Rojas
speaks on
lessons of
defeated
Grenadian
Revolution.
See pp. 8-9.**

Student protests sweep China, See pp. 10-11.



Fundamentalists blast Cinderella

By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

On Oct. 24, 1986, U.S. District Judge Thomas G. Hull ruled that the Greeneville, Tenn., school board must pay damages to parents whose rights have been violated. He also ruled that the school board must allow parents to teach reading to their children at home.

The case began in June 1983 when fundamentalist Christian parents challenged the reading series of books selected by the school board. These books, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, are used by schools throughout the country.

The fundamentalist parents complained that if their children read the entire Holt series they "might adopt the views of a feminist, a humanist, a pacifist, an anti-Christian, a vegetarian, or an advocate of one-world government." Judge Hull agreed.

What were these books and why did the parents object to them?

- "Cinderella:" "Because it mentions magic."
- Shakespeare's "MacBeth:" "Because it mentions witchcraft and magic."
- "The Wizard of Oz:" "Because it portrayed a witch as good and because it depicted traits such as courage, intelligence, and compassion as personally de-

veloped—rather than God given."
 • "The Diary of Anne Frank:" "Because it suggested that all religions are equal in a passage by Anne." ("Oh, I don't mean you have to be orthodox...I just mean some religion...It doesn't matter what, just to believe in something.")

• "The Revolt of Mother," a short story about a woman challenging her husband's authority: "Because it attacks the Biblical family."

• Stories about dinosaurs: "Because the creatures were said to be older than the Biblical account of the beginning of the

world."
 • A story that depicted a child's imagination as a "third eye:" "Because such representations were considered occult and put too much emphasis on imagination."

• Stories about religion (other than Christianity), including the beliefs of American Indians and followers of Islam.

Child abuse

In December, the court granted these fundamentalist parents \$50,000 for the alleged violation of their rights. What it should have done is fine the parents for

violating the civil rights of their children.

Children should have the right to exercise their minds and develop their imagination. What these parents are doing, with the court's help, constitutes a form of child abuse.

The fundamentalist parents sound like descendants of the Salem witchhunters. They are followers of modern-day hypocrites such as Ronald Reagan, Gerry Falwell, the Rev. Pat Robertson, and other "moral" upholders of U.S. imperialism—both Democrats and Republicans.

Educators recognize that "play" is, for children, "work." They know that for children to develop their creativity and their intellect, they must be able to use their minds unhindered and unchained.

Make-believe

All children engage in a common conspiracy of "make-believe." They can be either male or female, grown-up or children, pirate or princess, Batman or Robin, movie star or rock star, good guy or bad guy...in the space of a few minutes.

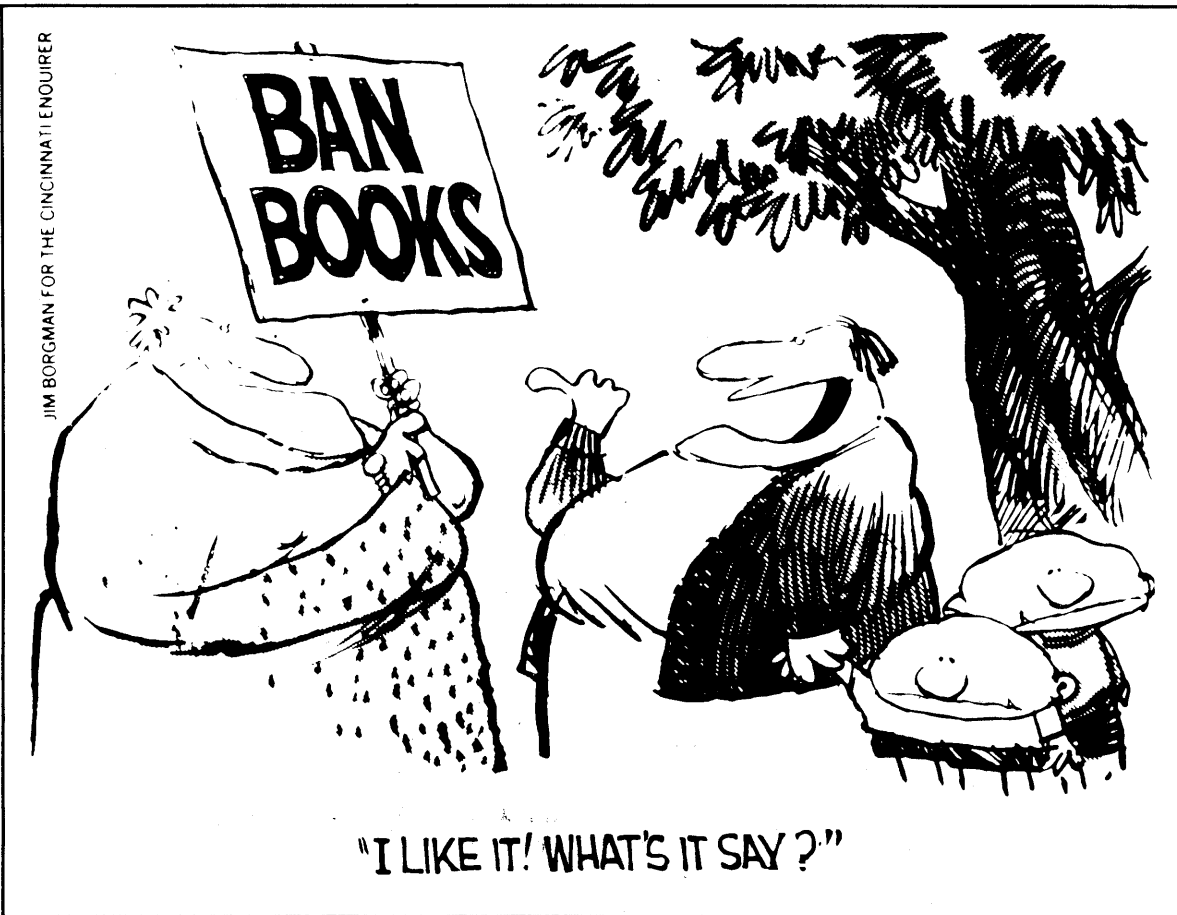
When my three-year-old grandson and I are in the park, he allows me to be Luke Skywalker and he becomes Princess Lea. We make swords out of sticks, and our space ship can be a tree stump or a park bench. But he must give the count for blast-off. He expects me to honor this make-believe world—or else he would not let me play.

How sad that those fundamentalist parents locked into their own malignant "moral" world have locked themselves outside of their children's playful make-believe world.

But the people who really live in the world of make-believe are the fundamentalist parents who have faith in the likes of Reagan and Falwell—whose morality comes from the sewer they have been sloshing in.

Their morality boils down to justifying their economic system, which is one of exploitation and oppression. And their morality is supported by any lie they can make up.

Our morals are based on the needs of the oppressed and the exploited. And only the truth will help make us free. ■



Capitalism chokes on its own production

By W.I. MOHAREB

Financial institutions around the world are in trouble. In 1986, the 25 largest U.S. banks were forced to write off over 1 percent of their total loans. This is nearly four times the 1981 rate of 0.29 percent—itself a post-Depression high.

In 1980, 217 banks were on the U.S. government's list of financially troubled "full service" institutions. At the latest count, some 1500 banks graced the roll—10 percent of U.S. banks, with the list growing at the extraordinary rate of one a day.

As of mid-November, 125 U.S. banks had failed since the start of 1986, another post-Depression high. The figures do not include limited-service banks such as savings and loans, or non-federally insured banks—which are generally in worse shape.

The total debt owed to capitalist institutions worldwide at the end of 1985 amounted to a massive \$8 trillion, with "de facto" defaults growing rapidly.

Crisis of overproduction

What is happening? After all, didn't 1986 mark the fourth year of a capitalist "economic recovery?"

To understand the problem, one must ultimately turn

to the explanation offered by Karl Marx. The fundamental contradiction of capitalism, Marx pointed out, is that between the growth of the productive forces and the restrictive forms of capitalist property relations.

This inevitably leads to overproduction, which in turn causes unemployment. The full-time equivalent of a half-billion people worldwide are unemployed today.

Overproduction does not mean that more is produced than is necessary to meet human needs. Rather, more commodities are produced than can be sold at a profit on the world market. At the same time, human needs are not met.

Indeed, since the 1960s, overproduction has assumed gigantic and generally growing proportions throughout the capitalist world. In 1984, the last year for which reliable figures are available, 33 percent of the total practical U.S. capacity lay idle.

Not a single industry group reached even 85 percent of capacity; several were below 60 percent. Construction, mining, and materials-handling machinery recorded 48 percent of capacity.

When asked why their factories were operating below capacity, 89 percent of plant managers cited "insufficient orders" as the most important reason. That is, overproduction.

An international crisis

The problem is hardly limited to the United States. Four years ago, some two dozen industries in Japan were classified by the government as "structurally depressed" because of overproduction. The list has been growing rapidly, especially in the past year. Among affected industries are chemicals, textiles, shipbuilding, and lumber.

Eighty percent of Japan's aluminum industry has been idle since 1974. In 1985, the brand-new Brazilian steel industry was operating below 40 percent of capacity. The

oil industry in the Arabian peninsula was sputtering below 25 percent of capacity.

Worldwide, the capitalist oil and oil-refining industry has been operating well below 50 percent of capacity. Even then, "too much oil" has been produced, and thousands of wells have been shut—while millions spend hours a day searching for firewood for lack of cooking fuel.

In 1984, the giant U.S. food industry operated at 69 percent of practical capacity. Still, as far as the capitalists were concerned, "too much food" was produced; farmers went bankrupt, while one out of six people in the capitalist world was crippled by hunger.

Although aggregate international statistics are not available, there is reason to believe that at least 35 percent of capitalist industrial capacity worldwide lies idle today.

The debt crisis

Overcapacity and overproduction are at the heart of the debt crisis. There are no sales, no profits, and no ability to repay principal and interest.

The further development of the productivity of labor under capitalism can only exacerbate this. This is why the debt crisis is getting worse three full years into a recovery. Other factors which contribute to the debt crisis—including speculation, personal corruption, capital flight, and hoarding—are also derived from this fundamental contradiction.

And although the economies of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and other workers' states are not suffering these problems to the same degree as the capitalist economies, they are not immune from them. After all, they are part of a single world economy.

Capitalism is choking on its own production. In the last analysis, this is what makes repayment of the \$8 trillion capitalist debt virtually impossible, regardless of the efforts of the bankers, the International Monetary Fund, and their local agents.

Attempts to force the underdeveloped countries to pay even a portion of the debt will mean increased misery for millions. Ultimately, capitalism can only offer the world the prospect of financial collapse and economic ruin. This irrational economic system must be replaced by a new society oriented to peoples' needs instead of the profits of a few. ■

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Political report from our 2nd National Convention:
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By HAYDEN PERRY

Euphoria has gripped Wall Street as the stock market reaches historic highs, economic indexes turn upward, and headlines speak of a fifth year of recovery. Other headlines, however, suggest the darkest days of the Great Depression.

"General Motors will shed 27,000 workers." "Gemco Stores closing: will lay off 4000." "Bank of America lays off 5000; expects 5000 more to go." For the last decade stories of plant closings, retrenchments, and layoffs have sent ripples of fear through all corporate levels from the executive suite down to the shop floor.

No one's job is safe, as rumbles of impending change shake up even the most solidly established enterprises. A number of scenarios playing in the business world today can lead to workers being thrown on the industrial scrap heap long before their productive years are over.

The rust bowl of the Midwest is one such scenario. Steel mills with obsolete equipment cannot compete with newer foreign plants. Mill owners choose to shut down and move their capital elsewhere rather than reduce profits. The thousands laid off have no hope of getting another job at comparable wages.

Layoffs have a ripple effect throughout the community. When 20,000 steel workers in East Chicago were laid off, another 10,000 jobs in the community were lost within a year. Nationally, about 2.5 million factory jobs have disappeared in the last decade.

Steel is one of America's oldest industries. But electronics, one of the newest, is also offering dwindling job opportunities. With few exceptions televisions, radios, and tape recorders are no longer manufactured in the United States.

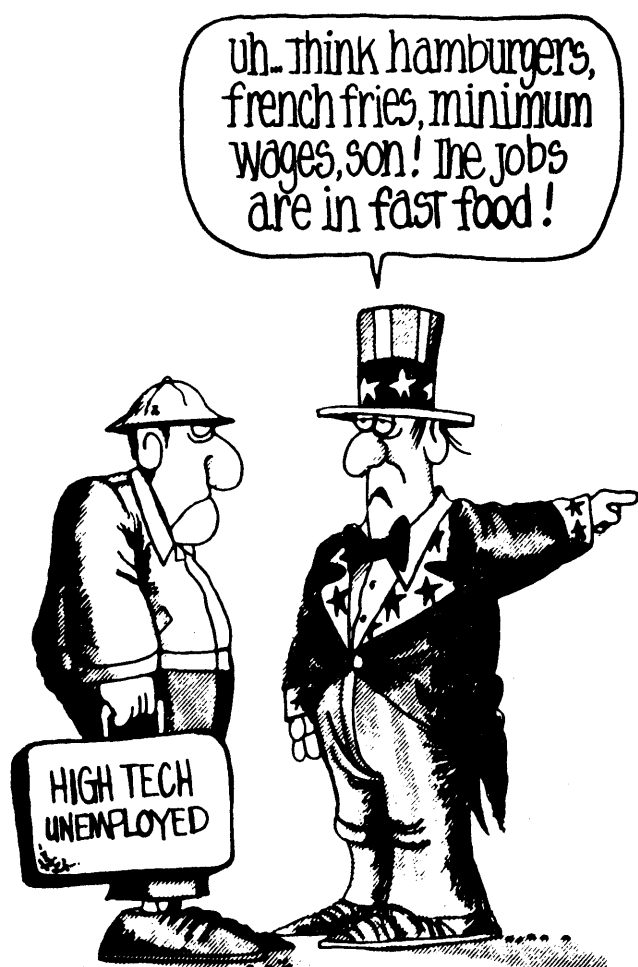
White-collar layoffs

Even clerical work has been transferred to low-wage countries. Instant satellite communication has made this possible. American Airlines sends its passenger tickets to be processed in Barbados. Computations from the West Indies are fed into a master computer in Tulsa, Okla.

As one manager remarked, it does not make any difference if the computer is around the corner or around the world. A data processor might make \$250 a week in the United States. In Barbados the weekly wage is \$50.

For the first time since the Great Depression, middle-management and white-collar workers—who expected lifetime careers—are finding themselves out on the street.

General Motors has 142,000 white-collar workers. They expect to lay off 35,000 of



Workers lose jobs in economic "recovery"

them by 1989 as divisions are consolidated and office automation shrinks the clerical staff. AT&T has eliminated 45,000 jobs in the last two years. As for lifetime careers, as one manager put it: "We have to reassess our commitment to our workers."

Not all the unemployed are in the cities. Out in the country working farmers are losing their land and livelihood as they struggle under a mountain of debt. Foreign buyers are fading away as other countries increase their food production. In 1986, the United States actually imported more foodstuffs than it sold abroad.

The prices American farmers get for their crops won't pay the interest on their debts, and they get sold out by the bank. As displaced farmers move off the land, businesses in farm towns close and more workers lose their jobs. The farm-equipment industry has laid off thousands of workers—who have little prospect of being rehired.

"Restructuring" America

Not all layoffs are due to the flight of capital to low-wage countries. With the end of the post-war economic boom, corporations have had to slim down and cut costs. In the process middle management, white collar, and production workers are laid off.

If management fails to restructure the corporation, the dreaded raider will do it even more ruthlessly. These pirates seize control of a company by buying its stock—usually with borrowed money. This is debt that the captive company must repay by superexploitation of its work force and sale of its assets.

When the raiders come aboard, everybody's job is at risk. The old management is soon out, but often with golden parachutes—pensions and bonuses that put them on easy street. The rest of the crew is left to fend for themselves.

There are few reports of new jobs being created through a takeover, but plenty of horror stories of mass layoffs as the new management moves in. Wells Fargo laid off 2000 employees when it merged with Crocker Bank in California.

One group of workers learned they were out of a job when their discount cards were no longer honored at the company cafeteria. At another company, locks were changed

on certain doors while employees were at lunch.

It was explained that morale often sank so low when layoffs were announced that computer programs might be threatened. Better to avoid the low morale and bitterness until the jobless workers are out on the street.

Out goes the union

Restructuring corporations is often a means of eliminating union contracts and union jobs. Lucky Stores in California has closed its Gemco chain of discount stores, laying off 2300 union employees. The chain will reopen soon with a new name but none of the old employees.

Dayton Hudson Corp., which bought the Lucky chain, will hire an entirely new non-union crew. Local 1100 of the Retail Clerks union has lost 41 percent of its members through stores in the San Francisco Bay Area closing down and reopening as non-union discount houses.

Even if a firm is making money, higher-paid workers can lose their jobs when two-tier contracts are signed. These permit the employer to pay a lower wage to newly hired workers. Older workers may be conned into thinking this would not affect them. But soon subtle pressure, or not-so-subtle pressure, is exerted to ease them out so lower-paid workers can replace them.

Economists estimate that over 13 million jobs have been lost in the last five years. Yet the official unemployment rate (which is greatly understated) has remained close to 7 percent.

This is because some 9 million new jobs have been created—nearly all service jobs such as fast foods, fitness salons, express mail companies, instant printers, and video rental stores. About 67 percent of those laid off find low-paid unorganized jobs of this type.

Nearly three-fifths of the new jobs created between 1979 and 1984 paid less than \$7000 a year. A steel worker often earns less than half the wage he or she made in the mill.

Earnings are also reduced by the tendency of employers to offer only part-time and temporary jobs. About 25 percent of the workforce work at home, for outside contractors, or part time. The percentage of these "contingent" workers has doubled

since 1980.

In retail trade, 40 percent of the work force is part time. Airlines employ nearly 50,000 part timers. Wages average \$4.17 an hour vs. \$7.05 for full timers.

Employers also cut costs by contracting out some of their work. A pipe fitter at the USX Gary Works steel plant—earning \$13 an hour—was laid off when the company contracted out that part of their production. The laid-off worker was rehired by the contractor to do exactly the same work—but for \$5 an hour and no insurance or other benefits.

A "two-tier workforce"

Restructuring corporate America means restructuring workers into two tiers. A thin layer of better paid union workers remains at the top. But these workers are in constant fear of being pushed into the lower tier of unorganized "contingent" workers and service workers who often live only slightly above the poverty line.

Below the poverty line are the unemployed. The many homeless and hungry are becoming more and more visible on our city streets.

The capitalist establishment has given up on the unemployed. They say a 7 percent official rate—or 8 million unemployed—is equivalent to full employment since workers are moving from job to job. Up to now, an unemployment rate of 4 percent was considered cause for concern.

Union bureaucrats have also ignored the unemployed and unorganized. They have sought only to preserve their own jobs by giving concessions to ever rapacious bosses. This has not stopped the precipitous decline in union membership.

Calling for "Buy American" campaigns is counterproductive. What is an "American" car? Parts for a car made in Detroit come from a dozen countries around the world.

A better slogan for the labor movement would be "Thirty for Forty"—cut the workweek to 30 hours with no reduction in pay in order to create new jobs.

A major task of the labor movement is to extend protection to the impoverished service workers. This calls for an organizing drive with all the power and enthusiasm generated by the rise of the CIO in the 1930s. ■

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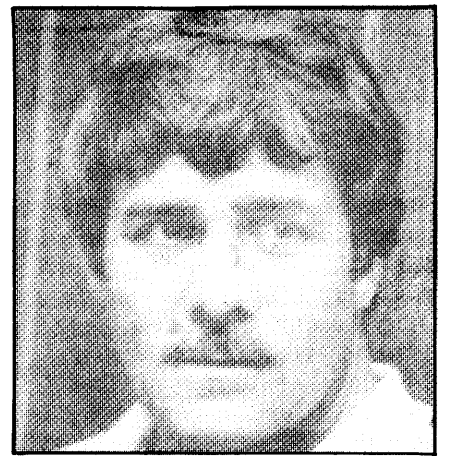
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Jim Guyette

Hormel strike leaders speak:

"Let's clean up our own union movement..."



Ray Rogers

The following is an interview with Jim Guyette and Ray Rogers about the current situation faced by Hormel strikers in Austin, Minn.

Jim Guyette is the former president of Local P-9, which led a militant strike against the concessions demanded by the Hormel meatpacking company. He was suspended as president last spring when the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) international leadership placed P-9 under trusteeship.

Ray Rogers is the director of Corporate Campaign Inc., and was a consultant to P-9 in its strike.

The interview, which is printed below in an abridged version, was conducted on Nov. 20, 1986, by Ben Stone, author of "Memoirs of a Radical Rank and Filer." [See review page 14.] Stone has made this interview available to a number of left publications in the United States.

Question: Where does your union stand right now in its struggle with the Hormel company?

Guyette: Well, the struggle involves not only the Hormel company, but the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), which is doing the bidding of the company at this point.

The company and the international officials are both saying that the boycott of Hormel products has to stop, which tells us that the boycott is having an effect on the company. We know the company is laying off people in other plants. We know the company has sharply reduced its production in the Austin plant and other plants.

Question: You say that the heads of the AFL-CIO have given their support to the international. How do you assess that and how do you plan to cope with it?

Rogers: In terms of assessing it, certainly the leadership of the UFCW and the AFL-CIO feel much more comfortable sitting down with the corporate executives than they do sitting down with the rank and file.

Their interests are not in the interests of the rank-and-file worker. If they were, they could never be involved in this betrayal of our union.

Question: So part of your fight has been to educate the rank and file of any union that has a similar bureaucracy to fight back and bring back democracy within the trade-union movement?

Rogers: I think that one of the big things that has come out of the P-9 struggle is that we've really torn away the facade that the top leadership of the unions has put up. You know, reporters have been going down to these AFL-CIO conventions down in Bal Harbor, Fla., and they come out and say, "What a waste of time. We have to cover it. But nothing ever comes out of it."

It would really be good if the rank-and-file members who pay their union dues could see what goes on at these conventions. They would see that their so-called leaders have no solutions for their problems.

Guyette: I think it's time we started calling things the way they are. If there are illegitimate, irresponsible union officials who are more interested in rings on their fingers than they are about representing their rank and file, then let's say that and let's do something about it. Let's clean up our own union movement.

Question: What are some of the things that can be done to clean up the union movement?

Guyette: We come up with two paths that can be taken, one of which is to work from within. Some are doing that. The other way is to create a legitimate labor organization which the workers see as an alternative. That was the seed for the development of the CIO in this country.

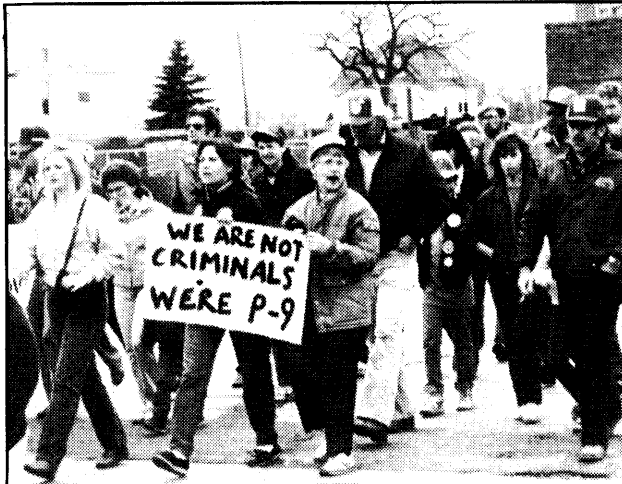
That is what we are doing in Austin. The people in Austin decided to set up the North American Meatpackers Union (NAMPU) because they want a democratic union representing the rank and file and to break up the prostitute relationship that exists between the Hormel company and the international union.

Then you will have real collective bargaining taking place. We must also deal with the problem of the cops and the courts and the Republican and Democratic parties, who claim to represent the people.

But P-9 is in a situation where it is dependent on people's ability to help them in this struggle through financial contributions, through boycotting of Hormel products, and through their solidarity and support.

Question: Where does NAMPU stand right now in its quest for certification?

Guyette: There is going to be an election within the



Socialist Action/Mark Harris

plant for the people to vote on who they want to represent them. At this point there are between 800 and 900 people who are victims of the agreement between the Hormel company and the UFCW. The only way these people will ever get their jobs back is if NAMPU prevails in an election.

People inside the plant who scabbed signed a petition to vote for a new union. The UFCW is delaying the vote because they have made an assessment of those in the plant and know that, if a vote were held today, they would lose the vote.

Question: In the plant?

Guyette: In the plant. Because people have seen what kind of an organization the UFCW is, and people don't want any part of it. And the Austin plant typifies what's happening in the meatpacking industry. The UFCW leadership has been unable to organize in the meatpacking industry because people do not want to join a union in order to give away concessions.

Question: So if NAMPU should prevail, there should be a tremendous increase in union membership in meatpacking?

Guyette: I think that if NAMPU prevails in the election in Austin, you're going to see a landslide occur in the meatpacking industry.

Question: What are the prospects and perspectives of NAMPU?

Guyette: NAMPU can get as big as it wants to get because NAMPU represents democracy in the union. Democracy is a funny thing. When people understand democracy, when they see how it works, everybody wants it.

Question: Isn't part of the problem overcoming the apathy of the rank and file within the other locals and unions?

Guyette: We think this can be overcome very easily, if there is a will to do it. It was overcome in Austin. Union meetings used to be attended by 40 to 50 people. All of a sudden, there were big meetings attended by hundreds. There can be many Austins.

Rogers: There are some locals that have only one meeting a year. But even in those cases where they may hold more meetings, the rank and file is never given an opportunity to get up and say anything. There's never a presentation about the kind of a program that people can believe in—no kind of vision.

So that's the situation you have from the international structure on down. And that's because if the rank and file starts taking some interest and wants to do something, it might decide to vote the people at the top the heck out and have a real union, like P-9, where the members decide everything.

Question: The Democratic governor of Minnesota, Rudy Perpich, sent in the National Guard against P-9. No Democratic Party politician stood up for P-9. Does this mean that most strikers have become disillusioned with the Democratic as well as the Republican Party?

Rogers: I can tell you one thing. From talking to the rank and file in Austin, I have a hard time believing that anyone cast a ballot for Rudy Perpich.

Question: Is it true that several P-9 strikers ran as candidates on an independent ticket in Austin?

Rogers: Yes. There was "Skinny" Weis (sheriff of Mowar country), Floyd Lenesch (alderman-at-large), Randy Emilusen (alderman-at-large), and Tom Keough (state senator).

Guyette: There were some people who ran, but I think that Austin, Minn., has to be viewed in the context of the American public itself. Ronald Reagan was elected by only 32 percent of the people in this country. Twenty-three percent voted for Mondale, and 45 percent didn't vote at all.

That means that there are a tremendous number of people who are frustrated and disillusioned in the two-party system. Look who came to Austin. Jesse Jackson. The idea of the Rev. Jackson coming to Austin would have been a foreign idea just three years ago.

Question: Jesse Jackson has given no indication that he is ready to split from the Democratic Party. Would it not be better to have an independent political party based on the labor movement, i.e., a labor party?

Rogers: Certainly, I would like to see a political party that really represents the interests of working people.

Guyette: I definitely think there is a need for a party to represent the working people, a party to represent the farmers, who are working people.

It seems to me that there's something wrong in this country when farmers go broke and working people lose their jobs. We have grain inventories stockpiled, and yet the lines of the hungry and the displaced seem to grow and grow. There is a need for change and that need is growing day by day.

Question: Is there any kind of publication put out to keep the public informed as to the developments taking place in P-9?

Guyette: Before the trusteeship, we had a publication called *The Unionist* that came out every week. The UFCW has taken that over, which they claim they have a right to do. They have reduced it to a comic book, making caricatures of Ray and myself.

Our support group in Austin is putting out a newsletter, which is distributed on Fridays together with groceries.

Question: What is it called?

Guyette: The *Support Report*. You can get it by writing to the United Support Group, P.O. Box 396, Austin MN 55912. ■

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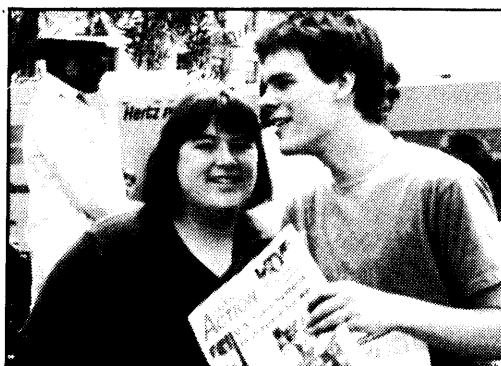
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Union stops steel bosses' demands for concessions

By BILL O'KAIN

CINCINNATI—Not too many strikes are being won these days. But even in the midst of the worst bargaining atmosphere in this country in decades, one small union in Middletown, Ohio, was able to gain a significant victory.

The lessons of this strike need to be understood by every union man and woman in this country—and by every international union and union federation.

Middletown is a small city located about half-way between Cincinnati and Dayton in the south-west corner of Ohio. Fifty thousand people live in the town and the immediate area.

Since 1900, the economic life of Middletown has been dominated by Armco Steel. Armco is the fifth largest steel producer in the country.

In 1981, Armco employees accounted for nearly 36 percent of that city's income-tax revenue. As a result of concessions and layoffs, that figure dropped to about 26 percent by 1986.

The Armco Middletown plant currently employs about 4300 hourly workers. It is one of the most modern steel-making locations in the country.

The Middletown Works, the company's first and most profitable plant, is one of six Armco steel plants across the country. Company figures for the period between 1980 and the first half of 1986 show negative profits from all Armco operations (steel and non steel), but good profits from the Middletown Works.

In 86 years of operation, there had never been a work stoppage at the plant.

A union transformed

Representing the 4300 employees at the plant is the Armco Employees Independent Federation (AEIF). This union is not affiliated to the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) or any other union body or federation.

The AEIF was established in 1943. For most of its existence it had been seen as nothing more than a pro-company watchdog. The union had never had a strike.

Year after year, contract after contract, things were quiet. The AEIF contract would consistently follow the national USWA contracts, obtaining basically the same benefits.

But concessions demanded by the company in early 1986 brought an end to the tranquility of labor-management relations in Middletown.

Not willing to give up their relative economic prosperity without a fight, the membership of the AEIF elected a whole new executive board, throwing out those past leaders tainted with a concessionary attitude.

The anger of the rank and file was amplified and given direction by this new leadership. Capitalizing on the mistakes, false claims, and arrogance of the company, the union executive board, led by its new president, Ray Back, united the once docile membership against concessions.

The union set out to learn—and learn fast—how to wage an effective fight against the company's concessions demands. Representatives of the AEIF were sent to the founding conference of the National Rank and File Against Concessions (NRFAC). The AEIF became a founding member of that organization in December 1985.

The AEIF also sent representatives to the two national rallies that were held in Austin, Minn., to support members of Local P-9 in their strike against the Hormel company. The AEIF invited a representative of Local P-9 to speak to its executive board in Middletown. It also became active in the Adopt-A-Family program to financially aid the striking Hormel workers.

A union newspaper was started. Contacts were established with other union locals in

the area. Union hats were made, and kids from a special-education class were hired to make "AEIF—No Concessions" buttons, which were sold in the plant.

Through big ways and small, the union began building that sense of internal solidarity that is so important to a successful struggle.

Armco is intransigent

The company had set a deadline of July 31, 1986, in the contract discussions with the union.

The union, wanting to fully inform the membership about what the company was planning, printed up the company's 30-page contract proposal and distributed it to the membership.

The outrageous concessions demanded by the company strengthened the resolve of the membership to fight. Four hours before the deadline, the company decided to continue negotiating and to extend the contract that was currently in effect.

However, in late August the situation was again quickly approaching the boiling

point. Armco, still insistent upon major concessions, had set a final deadline of Aug. 31. At that time, if no agreement was reached, the company would implement its own terms.

only thing it needed: a membership ready to fight and a leadership with a will to lead and not turn back.

On Aug. 25 the union and the company reached an impasse in the bargaining.

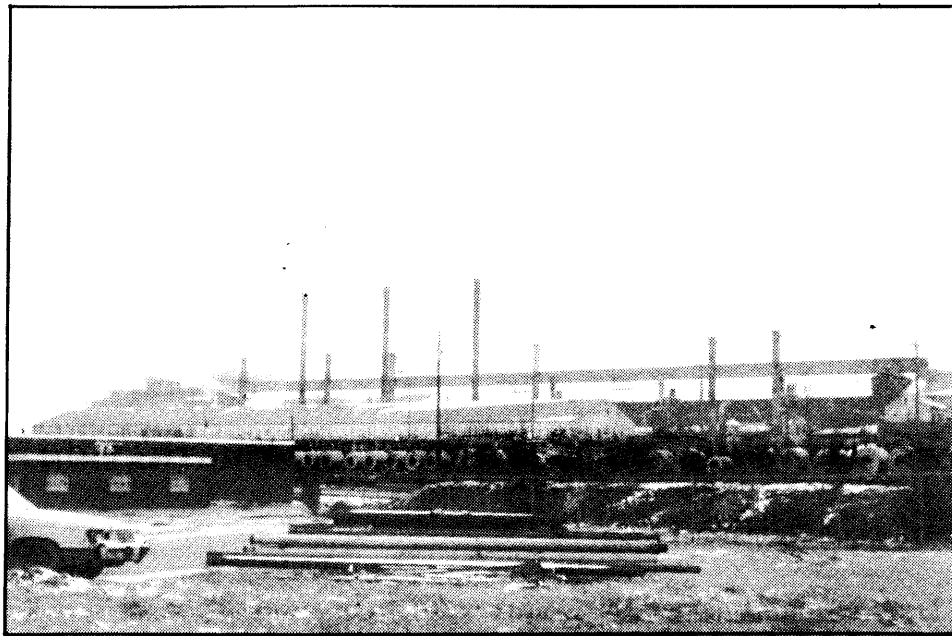
In the face of a Sept. 1 deadline set by the company, the AEIF called for a demonstration of support for Aug. 26. Over 3000 steelworkers showed up. Chanting "No Concessions," they circled a two-block area in front of the local Armco offices. Hundreds of signs were visible with the slogans: "We Won't Work More For Less," "No Contract, No Work," and "No Concessions."

The size and militancy of the demonstration gave the workers at Armco a sense of their own power.

On Aug. 27, the union made its final offer. It would agree to extend the terms of the current contract for the length of the next contract. The next day, the company rejected the union's offer.

On Aug. 31, the company implemented its own concessionary contract.

The union had decided previously that if



Socialist Action/Bob Henes

"Since 1900, the economic life of Middletown has been dominated by Armco Steel, the fifth largest steel producer in the country."

The concessions the company wanted included:

- a \$.50-per-hour wage cut;
- a \$.25-per-hour cut in incentive base pay;
- a two-tiered wage system;
- Sunday work to be paid at time and a quarter—instead of time and a half;
- a cut in vacation pay;
- the institution of a sham profit-sharing system.

Union officials estimated that the concessions would cost each worker from \$3000 to \$5000, depending on the length of service.

The company was dealing from a position of strength. Concessions contracts won by other steel companies from the USWA guided Armco's strategy. Armco threatened to declare bankruptcy and to leave Middletown, which would throw the entire region into economic chaos.

Armco also seemed to think that the old way of thinking about the company as a stern but kind father still prevailed in large sections of the work force.

For its part, the only sure thing the union had going for it turned out to be the

company implemented its own contract, the union would be forced to declare a lockout by the company.

An Ohio appellate court ruling in 1983 had found that if an employer imposed a contract on its employees in which the pay and benefits were less than the previous contract, the employees were thereby being locked out by the company. This ruling would make AEIF members eligible for unemployment benefits in Ohio.

Firm and well prepared

A union meeting was called for Sept. 2 to discuss whether to work under the company-implemented contract or declare a lockout and stop work. The vote was to be carried out during the next three days. Some 3000 union members attended the meeting in another show of union strength.

On Sept. 3, the first day of the voting, 2000 members showed up to cast their vote. Local newspapers reported that voters were marking their ballots publicly—not in the voting booths—as a demonstration of their commitment.

The next day, as the voting continued, the company's threats became more shrill. Economic catastrophe, bankruptcy, and the destruction of the community became the basic company themes. Armco also threatened the benefits of the retired workers.

On the evening of Sept. 5, the final day



of the voting, the results of the vote were given. Of the 3839 workers who voted, 3592 (94 percent) voted to walk off the job. Only 247 voted to continue work.

That night, picket lines went up at the plant's 18 gates.

When asked about the possibility of scabs or others trying to take their jobs, AEIF President Ray Back said, "They will not be allowed in the gates." When asked about the 10 Armco warehouses in the area, Back said, "We will picket each one. We want to stop steel going to the customer."

Prior to walking off the job, the union had made considerable preparations for support.

A women's committee of about 300 spouses of Armco workers began around-the-clock provisions for food for the picketers. It was common to see wives and children of union members on the picket line.

Area businesses supported the picketers by donations of food. Local unions also helped out. Union workers at a local supermarket collected food for AEIF members. Another local union made sure the picket lines were supplied with wood for the chilly nights.

On Sept. 9, the company, in an attempt to scare the workers, moved trucks past the picket lines loaded with steel manufactured before the walkout.

Community support continued to build. It was becoming clear that the AEIF was prepared for a long siege.

Company retreats

On Sept. 10, the company, citing "interest for the customer, a growing concern for the company's financial position, and for the sake of the Middletown area," surrendered and agreed to the final position of the union.

The existing contract was extended to March 31, 1990, with no concessions. The contract was retroactive to the first day of the walkout. The contract still allows for wage reopeners in 1988 and 1989 if the company suffers losses. But in no event can the company unilaterally implement any wage reductions.

That evening, AEIF President Ray Back announced the terms to a cheering crowd at the union hall. In keeping with the democratic character of the strike, the agreement was read at the union hall and printed for distribution to the membership. It was voted on Sept. 13.

With the ratification of the contract by the membership came a realization of the pride and strength shared by the members. While no major economic gains were made, the walkout was an overwhelming victory.

One small union, with support from the community and from individual union locals—but with no help from any international or the AFL-CIO—had finally stopped a major company dead in its tracks.



By CARL FINAMORE

SAN FRANCISCO—Over 200 antiwar and anti-apartheid activists crowded into St. Teresa's Church here on Jan. 13 to hear reports from the leadership of the Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice on the April 25 demonstrations planned for Washington, D.C., and San Francisco.

The meeting voted overwhelmingly to approve a comprehensive proposal from the Mobilization's 35-member coordinating committee to call a Western states demonstration in San Francisco focusing on "No U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Caribbean" and "No U.S. Support to South African Apartheid." The Mobilization's call also retains its demands for jobs and justice and for a freeze and reversal of the nuclear arms race.

Major efforts are being made to enlist the support of anti-intervention, anti-apartheid coalitions, and labor and religious organizations, throughout the Western states.

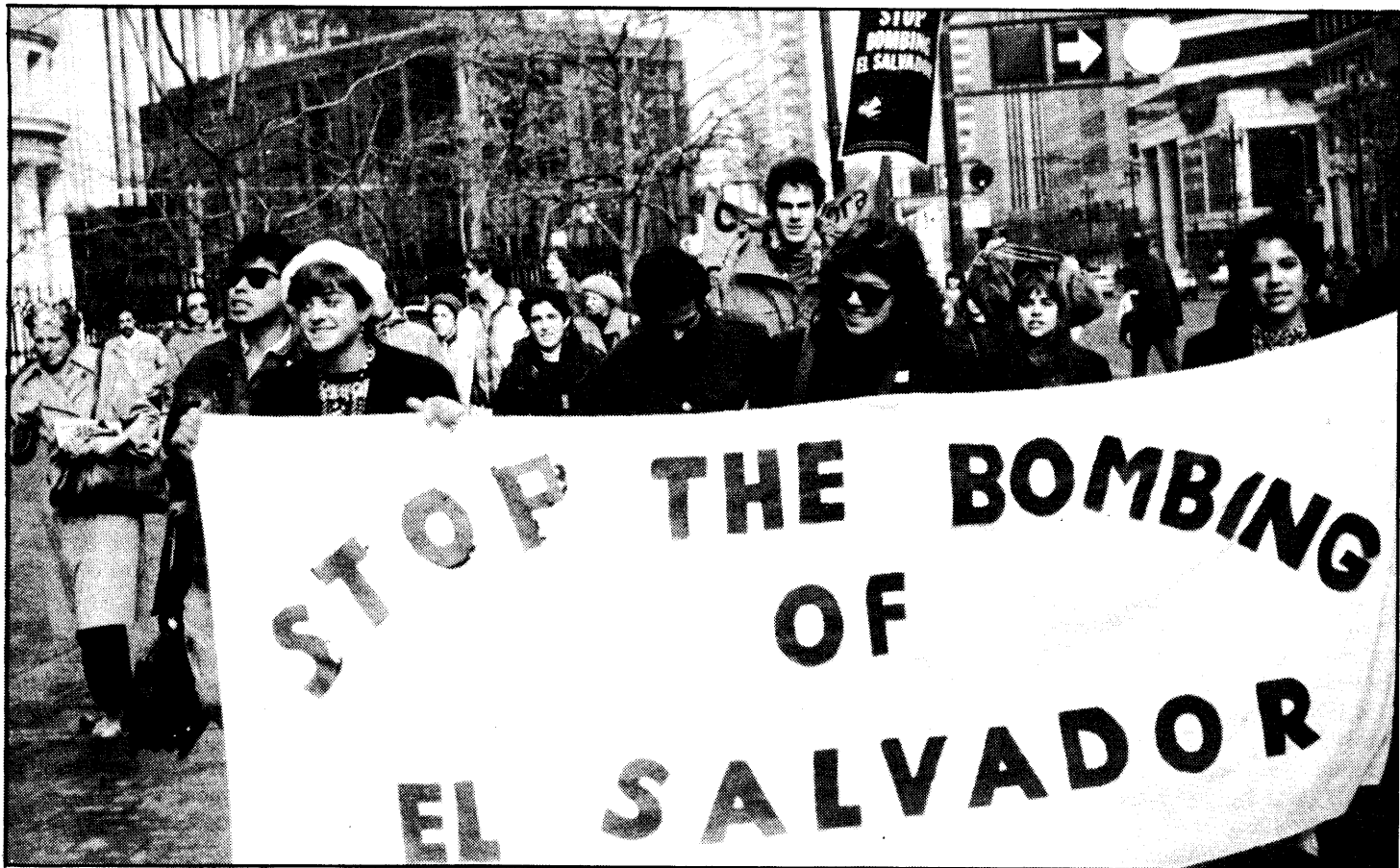
Messages of support were received from Gerry Condon, coordinator of the Northwest Action for Peace, Jobs and Justice in Seattle; from the Los Angeles coalition, which last October organized an anti-intervention demonstration of 10,000; and from organizing committees in Sacramento, Santa Cruz, and Fresno, Calif.

David Reed, chair of the national steering committee for the April 25 demonstration in Washington, D.C., will attend a Feb. 2 press conference to kick off a major publicity campaign in the region. The press conference will be held in San Francisco City Hall and will be hosted by Nancy Walker, president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Volunteers are needed to help out in every aspect of the coalition's work. Contact the Mobilization at 255 Ninth St., San Francisco CA 94103, or call (415) 626-8053.

Carl Finamore is a member of the staff and of the coordinating committee of the Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice.

Support builds for S.F. April 25 demonstration



Socialist Action/Joe Ryan

...Coalition

(continued from page 1)

Mobilization for Peace, Jobs and Justice will take place in San Francisco on April 25. [See accompanying story.]

The call for the Washington, D.C., demonstration for Justice and Peace in Central America and Southern Africa was issued in late January by 24 international

union presidents and 50 religious leaders.

The breadth of the initial list of sponsors of the April 25 Washington, D.C., march and rally is unprecedented. [See call and sponsors on page 7.]

Never in U.S. history—not even at the height of the Vietnam War—have so many top labor officials come out in opposition to the interventionist policies of the U.S. government. And never have so many top religious leaders—from all denominations—joined in a call with the labor movement

to demand an end to U.S. foreign aggression.

This national call shows the potential for building a powerful mass action on April 25. It also shows the possibility for building new and broader local antiwar coalitions with the direct participation of the labor and religious movements in the coalitions' leadership bodies.

The national coalition can be contacted c/o Coalition for a New Foreign Policy, 712 G St. SE, Washington, D.C. 20003.

CALL FOR APRIL 25 NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

An Appeal to the People of the United States

Our government's policies in Central America and southern Africa are morally wrong and violate our nation's democratic ideals.

In Central America our government is:

- Escalating its terrorism and war against the people and government of Nicaragua through CIA-directed Contra forces.
- Providing massive economic and military aid to a government in El Salvador that is bombing its own people, repressing the church and human rights workers, and protecting those guilty of gross violations of human rights.
- Transforming impoverished Honduras into a gigantic military base for use by U.S., Contra, and other foreign forces.
- Granting military aid to the Guatemalan army that is responsible for widespread massacres, the use of strategic hamlets for population control, and the highest rate of disappearances in the Western Hemisphere.
- Rejecting opportunities to end the conflicts through political settlements providing security for all.
- Implicating us all in the killing of innocent men, women, and children.

In southern Africa, our government is:

- Continuing to support the South African apartheid government through a sanctions policy that contains major loopholes that among other things allow U.S. companies to reinvest their profits and make short-term extensions of credit.
- Persisting in intelligence cooperation with South Africa's military and security forces even as those forces repress and torture people, including church, trade union, United Democratic Front, and student leaders.
- Supporting South Africa's economic strangulation of its neighbors by refusing to provide those neighboring countries major economic support and by cutting off aid to Zimbabwe because of its criticism of U.S. policy.
- Refusing to push South Africa to end its illegal occupation of Namibia.
- Allying itself with South Africa in its war against Angola by providing covert aid to the rebel group UNITA.
- Supporting repression against legitimate representatives of the people of South Africa and Namibia.

These policies are morally wrong. They violate fundamental rights to self-determination, liberty, and justice. They betray our own democratic ideals. They risk deeper U.S. involvement in bloody and costly foreign wars while the needs of our unemployed, homeless, farmers, and children go unmet. They reflect a militarization of our foreign policy that increases the risk of nuclear war.

These policies must be changed! But these policies will be changed only if our policy-makers in Washington know the depth of our opposition to them.

So we must show them. Nonviolently. Forcefully. With passion. Together. In a united witness by tens of thousands of citizens.

Join us in a
Mobilization for Justice & Peace in Central America & Southern Africa
Washington, D.C.

Saturday, April 25, 1987
March and Rally

Sunday, April 26, 1987
Interfaith Workshop Service and
Training in Non-Violence

Monday, April 27, 1987
An Event in Which Some Will Engage
in Non-violent Civil Disobedience

National call sponsors:

Labor leaders: (in alphabetical order)

Morton Bahr, President, Communication Workers of America; Owen Bieber, President, United Auto Workers of America; Bernard Butsavage, President, International Molders and Allied Workers Union; William H. Bywater, President, International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Technical, Salaried and Machine Workers; Kenneth Blaylock, President, American Federation of Government Employees; Cesar Chavez, President, United Farm Workers of America; Mary H. Futrell, President, National Education Association; James Herman, President, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union; Dolores Huerta, Vice President, United Farm Workers; Georgianna Johnson, President, Hospital and Health Care Workers, District 1199; Keith W. Johnson, President, International Woodworkers of America; James M. Kane, President, United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America; David Livingston, President, District 65, UAW; Frank Martino, President, International Chemical Workers Union; Gerald McEntee, President, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Joseph Misbrenner, President, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; Henry Nicholas, President, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees; James J. Norton, President, Graphic Communications International Union; Charles A. Perlik, President, Newspaper Guild; Cleveland Robinson, Secretary Treasurer, District 65, UAW; Jacob Sheinkman, Secretary Treasurer, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; John Sweeney, President, Service Employees International Union; William Wynn, President, United Food and Commercial Workers; William Winpisinger, President, International Association of Machinists.

Religious leaders: (in alphabetical order)

Sr. Louise Ahrens, M.M., President Maryknoll Sisters; Sr. Helen Amos, R.S.M., President, Sisters of Mercy of the Union; The Rev. James E. Andrews, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA); Archbishop Anthony Sablan Apuron, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Agana, Guam; Sr. Kaye Ashe, O.P., Prioress General, Sinsinawa Dominicans; Asia Bennett, Executive Secretary, American Friends Service Committee; Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, N.Y.C.; The Rev. Ari R. Brouwer, General Secretary, the National Council of Churches; The Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop The Episcopal Church; Sister Margaret Cafferty PBVM, Congressional Superior, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Rev. Ben Chavis, Executive Director, Commission for Racial Justice; Bishop C.D. Coleman, Senior Bishop, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; Bishop Philip Cousin, Eleventh District African Methodist Episcopal Church and President, The National Council of Churches; Bishop James R. Crumley, Jr., Lutheran Church in America; Bishop Paul A. Duffey, The United Methodist Church; Bishop Nicholas D'Antonio, Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans; Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, Representative, U.S. Congress; Sr. Helen Flaherty, S.C., President, Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati; Sr. Helen Maher Garvey, BVM, President, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit; Sr. Joyce Hoben, Provincial Moderator, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (Ohio Province); Bishop J. Clinton Hoggard, Fourth Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Bishop William A. Hughes, Catholic Diocese of Covington, Kentucky; The Rev. John O. Humbert, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Bishop Joseph L. Imesch, Catholic Diocese of Joliet, Illinois; Rev. Jesse Jackson, President, The Rainbow Coalition; Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Bishop Raymond A. Lucker, Catholic Diocese of New Ulm, Minnesota; The Rev. C.J. Malloy, Jr., General Secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; Bishop Dale Melczek, Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, Michigan; The Rev. Donald E. Miller, General Secretary, Church of the Brethren; Bishop P. Francis Murphy, Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore; Maureen McCormack, S.L., President, Loretto Community; Bishop James P. Niedergeses, Catholic Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee; Sr. Anne O'Neil, R.S.C.J., Provincial, Society of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province; Sr. Kathleen Popko, S.P., President, Sisters of Providence; The Rev. Avery Post, President, United Church of Christ; Bishop Kenneth J. Povish, Catholic Diocese of Lansing, Michigan; Sr. Carol Quigley, IHM, President, Leadership Conference of Women Religious; The Rev. Graham H. Rights, President, Provincial Elders' Conference, Moravian Church Southern Province; Archbishop Mar Athanasius Y. Samuel, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch; Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of Union of Hebrew Congregations; Sr. Julie Sheatzley, CSJ, President of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medalle; The Rev. J. Shotwell, Executive Director, International Council of Community Churches; The Rev. Gordon L. Sommers, President, Provincial Elders' Conference, Moravian Church Northern Province; Bishop Walter Sullivan, Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Virginia; Rev. C.T. Vivian, Chairman, Center For Democratic Renewal; Dr. Doris Anne Younger, General Director, Church Women United.

(continued from page 1)

to public demands, on Jan. 13, New York Gov. Mario Cuomo announced the appointment of a special prosecutor in the case.

But Howard Beach is not an isolated occurrence. In a nearby community on Dec. 19, two Latino youths, Rafael Gonzalez and George Torres, were beaten by racists and then abused by the police. A coalition of Hispanic groups is demanding a special prosecutor in this case as well.

Ku Klux Klan attacks

Protestors have raised the cry, "Howard Beach is America." Last year, Black and interracial families had their homes vandalized or firebombed in several cities. In North Carolina alone, there were at least 60 marches sponsored by the Ku Klux Klan in 1986.

Last month, a "walk for brotherhood" to commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. was attacked by the Klan and its supporters in Forsyth County, Ga., an all-white county north of Atlanta. The jeering Klan members threw rocks, bottles, and mud at the marchers.

"Go home nigger!" the racists shouted. Meanwhile, white-supremacist attorney J.B. Stoner passed out material describing AIDS as a Black disease plaguing America.

Forsyth County's sheriff, Wesley C. Wallraven Jr., claims that he was "unprepared" for the attack. But Wallraven had disregarded earlier threats of violence that the racists made against the civil-rights marchers.

Ku Klux Klan leaders "want to exercise their rights too," Wallraven blithely assured reporters prior to the attack. "They're discussing having their own little rally."

Atlanta city-council member Hosea Williams, a former aide to the Rev. King, remarked, "It is amazing that this kind of racial violence can happen in this country in 1987. This is as bad as it is in South Africa."

On Jan. 24, over 25,000 people took part in a second Forsyth County Freedom March. "We're going back to set the record straight," Hosea Williams announced. Four thousand other civil-rights marchers were left stranded in Atlanta for lack of buses to the rally site.

Rallies for Rev. King

Outrage against the Forsyth County and the Howard Beach attacks swelled participation last month in numerous events planned to commemorate the work of Martin Luther King Jr. On Jan. 19, over

...protests hit racist attacks



10,000 rallied in San Francisco for MLK Day.

Socialist Action/Joel Ryan

10,000 people joined a rally in San Francisco.

On the same day, 15,000 marched on the

State Capitol in Phoenix, Ariz., demanding the recall of Gov. Evan Meacham—who cancelled the state's Martin Luther King

Day one week after taking office.

President Reagan, for his part, chose to "honor" Dr. King in a televised address from the White House. The president urged an audience of high-school students to be "intolerant of racism anywhere around you."

What hypocrisy for the official who is urging a reduction of funds for schools and student scholarships to lecture students about racism! These policies are forcing many Black high schoolers to drop out of school or forego a college education.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson told a New York City audience gathered for the Rev. King's birthday that the Howard Beach attack reflected a "national malady" caused by the Reagan administration's economic policies. Both Blacks and whites, Jackson pointed out, are forced to share a declining number of jobs and social services.

"It is almost a setup to pit working-class whites against poor Blacks when both are two sides of a devalued economic coin," Jackson said.

Jackson is right, of course, in pointing out that the policies of the current administration have given a field day to the racists. But the government's open attacks on working people—and on Blacks in particular—are bipartisan.

Today, the U.S. capitalists have embarked on an open assault on the standard of living of the American working class. They have done this to regain the competitive edge they have lost on the world market and to shore up their flagging rates of profit.

The U.S. ruling class counts on the twin parties of capitalism—the Democratic and Republican parties—to pass austerity measures against working people—particularly against Blacks, Latinos, and women. Unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, which result from these bipartisan attacks, have hit the most oppressed sectors of the working class the hardest.

An effective movement against racism must therefore remain independent of the Democratic Party.

Continued mass mobilizations of the Black community and its supporters will demonstrate to the White House and government authorities around the country that "America will *not* be Howard Beach!"

N.Y. media depicts victims as criminals

By CHRIS BUTTERS

NEW YORK—The lynch-mob attack on three Black men in Howard Beach is but the latest racist incident to rock this scandal-laden city.

The big-business New York newspapers have performed their usual division of labor to ease the pains of the crisis. *The New York Times* takes the "high" road, deploring the killing, but reserving its greatest passion for denouncing both white and Black "extremists."

The *Times* trots out its usual call for a blue-ribbon commission to leisurely investigate the situation. The paper desperately seeks to isolate the Howard Beach incident from the racist cutbacks, unemployment, and political reaction fostered by the administration of Mayor Edward Koch.

Why should the *Times* want to connect these issues? It has supported Koch at every turn.

The *New York Post*, on the other hand, does seek to connect the Howard Beach event to the economic problems of its readers—its white readers, that is—by fanning the flames of national chauvinism and race war. Of course, it is not anxious to

reveal the hidden connection between skyrocketing rents, the descent by many into homelessness, and Koch's millions of dollars of handouts to real-estate tycoons like Donald Trump.

How could it, since the *Post* too has

supported Koch? Instead, it identifies the problem as "reverse discrimination" against white workers due to affirmative action and competition from "illegal aliens."

In the long run, *both* roads serve the needs of the ruling class. Both accomplish the mission of dividing Black, Latino, and white workers in their struggle against the capitalist class and its agents. The biggest racists are not found in Howard Beach but in the White House and the board rooms of Wall Street.

The same federal administration that sees Howard Beach as an "isolated act" continues

to offer goods and armaments to the South African racists. The same banks that redline the Black neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant and grind down the white residents of Howard Beach with crushing mortgages profit handsomely from investing in apartheid.

Thousands of people have demonstrated on the streets of New York to protest the Howard Beach murder. These mass actions point the way for all workers—white or Black—in their search for an effective fightback against cutbacks, layoffs, and givebacks. ■

Farmworkers' union calls table grape boycott

By RICH FOLAND

The United Farm Workers Union (UFW) is calling for a boycott of all California table grapes to force the growers to recognize the workers' rights to good-faith bargaining and to not have pesticides sprayed on them, their children, and the food you eat.

The boycott of grapes is not new. The UFW has called for a boycott twice before—in 1965 and again in 1973.

But this time, the boycott is not only for the health and safety of the UFW workers. According to the UFW, pesticides sprayed in the vineyards saturate the grapes and cannot be washed off. This creates a danger

for the consumer.

In the town of McFarland, Calif., the cancer rate is 400 percent above the average expected rate. Health experts claim this is caused by pesticides and nitrate fertilizers that have leaked into the water system. So far, 13 children in McFarland have been diagnosed with cancer and six have died.

To add insult to injury, a recent bill that would have allocated \$125,000 to fund a study of why the cancer rate in McFarland is so high was vetoed by California Gov. George Deukmejian.

If the study had concluded that the growers were responsible for the high cancer rates, they might have been shut down. Deukmejian couldn't have that.

Recent issues of *Food and Justice*, the UFW's paper, have had articles about how children are being affected by the growers' greed. "Children of farmworkers working in the fields are born without legs and arms and suffer similar birth defects," stated an article in the November 1986 issue.

The article pointed out that aircraft have sprayed pesticides on buses filled with children on their way to school.

What can we do to fight this blatant disregard for human health? First, we can join the boycott. Second, we can publicize the terrifying incidents of pesticide poisonings by the growers.

We can also take out a subscription to *Food and Justice* and make sure we circulate it among our friends and families. Finally, we can send in money to the United Farm Workers to help them in their fight. To contribute or to subscribe to the paper, write to *Food and Justice*, P.O. Box 62, La Paz, CA 93570. ■

The following is an interview with Don Rojas, the former press secretary to Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.

Rojas is currently a representative of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement to the 10-party coordinating committee of the Anti-Imperialist Organization of the Caribbean and Central America.

Rojas recently completed a five-city U.S. tour, during which he spoke on "The Freedom Struggle in the Caribbean and Central America Today."

The interview was conducted in San Francisco on Jan. 15, 1987, by Jeff Mackler, national secretary of Socialist Action. Mackler is the former chairperson of the San Francisco Bay Area Grenada Solidarity Committee.

Socialist Action: The purpose of this interview is to explore the lessons of the defeated Grenadian Revolution. I'd like to focus on questions that are seldom discussed by the left press in this country.

The revolution was overthrown by the U.S. imperialist army. But by the time the invading troops landed, the revolution had been delivered a death blow when Maurice Bishop and his comrades were assassinated by the Coard faction in the New Jewel Movement (NJM).

How do you account for the fact that when crucial differences arose within the Central Committee of the NJM over the questions of the leadership of the revolution, there appeared to be no mechanisms within the party itself to resolve these differences? How did the NJM function? What was its membership? How did it make decisions?

Don Rojas: During the years of the revolution, from 1979 to 1983, the membership of the party expanded. But looking at the problems that developed, it did not expand fast enough. So that by the time the crisis in the party came to a head in October 1983, the membership of 320 full, candidate, and applicant members was too small and too narrow in its social and class composition. It did not have among its ranks enough members of the working class or of the patriotic farmers and peasantry. That was one of the major structural weaknesses of the NJM in 1983.

The party was structured along the lines of a typical Marxist-oriented party. It had a Central Committee and a Political Bureau. It attempted to carry out internal party discussions and decision-making based on the principle of democratic centralism.

But what happened was that this principle was distorted in many cases to the point where we did not have the balance of democracy and centralism that should take place for this principle to work.

Mechanisms that were theoretically in place, did not function to facilitate the broadest possible democratic involvement of all party members in discussion and debate.

The truly democratic application of centralism would call for the leading bodies of the party to be elected by the party members. But in our case, the NJM's Central Committee and the Political Bureau were never elected by the rank and file of the party. This is simply because there was never a congress of the party. In hindsight, this was a fundamental error.

The party leaders enjoyed the support and approval of the rank and file by virtue of their authority—but they were not elected. They were not in any way accountable to the party rank and file and to the rest of the people of Grenada.

S.A.: It seems that one of the central problems was that there was no way to resolve differences outside of the smaller group in the party. It also appears that the mass institutions that existed had no real power.

I attended some of the zonal and parish council meetings in Grenada. I understand that over a period of

Don Rojas speaks lessons of defeat Grenadian Revolution

time, the number of people who attended these meetings declined.

These meetings were democratic in the sense that they allowed ample discussion and input. But they didn't make any fundamental decisions. This power was not in the hands of these institutions.

Rojas: That is correct.

S.A.: How did the party see the relationship between the NJM and the mass organizations?

Rojas: The relationship was one where the NJM played—or should have played—a guiding role in the development and direction that the mass organizations were to take.

The ultimate objective was to empower the mass organizations and institutionalize them as organs of people's power that would play not just a participatory role, but a decision-making role, in carrying out policies presented by the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG).

This was the objective behind the establishment of a new constitution—a People's Constitution—that was drafted by the democratic involvement of the masses and the mass organizations. This process, unfortunately, had only just begun at the time the revolution collapsed.

Today I am very heartened by the successful conclusion, in Nicaragua, of the process that has led to the approval of the new constitution. That is exactly how we, in Grenada, had envisioned a truly democratic people's constitution evolving.

S.A.: Maurice Bishop used to joke about how, under the parliamentary democracy of the United States and Great Britain, the people had the right to democratically pull the lever once every four years. He said he envisioned a society where the actual decision-making power rested in the hands of the people and their organizations on a day-to-day basis.

Nicaragua is obviously a popular revolution, like Grenada was. But the Nicaraguan unions and mass organizations are essentially participatory. The FSLN makes the final decisions. The FSLN is as concerned as you are about factionalism. But from everything I saw during my recent visit, and from everything I have read, there does not exist in Nicaragua an institutionalized structure of workers' control whereby the masses can rule through their own organizations.

Rojas: I think the challenge before us is to find a formula that guarantees that the people can participate in national decision-making—either through their popular organizations or through their parliamentary representatives—while at the same time maintaining the important role that the vanguard party has to play in pushing the revolution forward.

There are no schemas or formulas that can or should be followed. You can learn from all the experiences of other

revolutions, but in the final analysis you have to proceed based on the concrete conditions that prevail in your own country.

One of the mistakes that we made in Grenada is that we overlooked the importance of taking into consideration the objective factor at all times. I think too much subjectivism began to creep into the NJM and into the thinking of the leadership of the NJM.

That subjectivism, fueled by individual ambitions, led unfortunately to a series of events and decisions that were catastrophic. Maurice Bishop was arrested. This was a subjective decision taken by a handful of individuals in the leadership of the NJM without the legitimacy or approval of the rank and file of the party, let alone the government, the mass organizations, or the masses.

The government was never consulted in this decision. The party was not the government. But in the reality of Grenada, the party was paramount to the government.

S.A.: Who made the decision to arrest Bishop?

Rojas: The decision was made by the leaders of the Ministry of the Interior with the approval of members of the Central Committee. Leaders of the Ministry of the Interior were also members of the Central Committee. So, basically, we are talking about the same individuals.

S.A.: Returning to the subject of workers' control and democratic decision-making. The model that Marxists traditionally look to is the Russian model, that is, the model of the soviets established in the Soviet Union in 1917. The Bolshevik Party was the vanguard party, but the power of the revolution was vested in the soviets.

The soviets were qualitatively larger and more representative than any other institutions in Russian society. The unions and the Bolshevik Party were relatively small. The Bolsheviks had the political majority in the leading bodies of the soviets because they had won this majority.

But the soviets were multiparty institutions. They allowed for free and open discussion and decision-making. And they—not the Bolshevik Party—were the government, the Soviet government. Later, as the revolution proceeded under Stalin, the power of the soviets disintegrated, and the party took on a bureaucratic role.

Many in the radical movement don't believe that working people—particularly in the underdeveloped countries—can rule society through their own mass organizations. They say that the people aren't yet ready to rule and that they don't have the necessary education. In my view, this kind of thinking is extremely paternalistic...

Rojas: It is paternalistic and arrogant, and borders on racism.

S.A.: The Russian workers and peasants did not read,



"There was never a congress of the party. In hindsight this was a fundamental error."



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Socialist Action/Joey Ryan

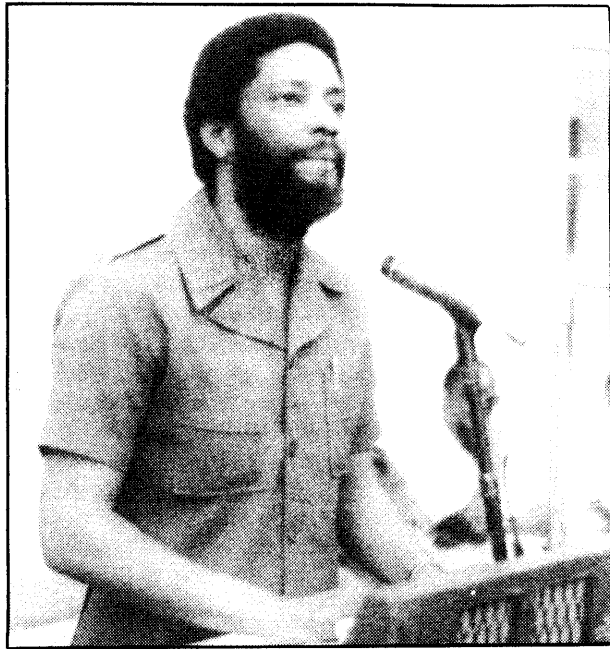
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In Grenada, was there discussion within the NJM on whether or not the people should rule through their own institutions—like the Russian workers and peasants ruled through the early soviets?

Rojas: There were basically two schools of thought on this question. One of them, the Bishop school, favored rule by the people as soon as it was possible. But it understood that rule by the people could not be separated from mass education—political mass education—as well as formal mass education. I share that view.

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but that this would take a long time, and it could not happen without a party to guide this process. This school of thought believed that the party would have to be paramount in this process for quite some time. Bernard Coard was in that school of thought.

What happened in Grenada in October 1983 is that Coard's current degenerated to the point where it confused the vanguard role of the party with the revolution itself. A lot of Coard's supporters began to substitute the party for the revolution.

Once you do that, once you think that the party is superior to the revolution or that the party is the revolution, you will almost inevitably develop an anti-people arrogance.

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S.A.: It seems, therefore, that Bishop's arrest was the decisive turning point in the revolution.

Rojas: Absolutely.

S.A.: Unison Whiteman led a demonstration to free Bishop from his house arrest. Ten thousand people, led by Bishop, proceeded to Fort Rupert. Wasn't the power of the revolution re-vested, so to speak, in the people at that point?

Rojas: Exactly. The most important mass movement in the modern history of the Grenadian people took place on October 19, 1983, when the people, on their own initiative, took things into their own hands. Through their actions they expressed their determination to win back the power that had been stolen from them—that had been usurped by Coard and the others.

S.A.: At that moment there was a confrontation between the will of a revolutionary people who supported the programs of the government, and the party, which was out of step, to say the least.

Rojas: Correct. At that moment the party became the number one contradiction in the eyes of the people. And objectively they were correct.



"The people received their arms from armories under the control of the army...and only in periods of high mobilization or periods of crisis."

S.A.: Coard then called out the troops, and the people became subordinate to the power of the army. At that point the revolution was defeated. The Reagan administration had an open door to walk in...

Rojas: Exactly.

S.A.: Concerning the question of arms. To what extent did the Grenadian people, outside of the army, have arms? To what extent were the militias armed? What was the view of the NJM concerning the daily arming of people in their work places, the fields, and the factories?

Rojas: The people were not armed independent of the army. The people received their arms from armories under the control of the army. And the people received the arms only in periods of high mobilization and periods of crisis.

Again, looking at things in hindsight, I would say that this probably was an error. At any rate, the NJM felt at the time that it was somewhat dangerous to make arms freely available—even to the militia, which was without question fully in support of the revolutionary process.

The fear, I suppose, rested on the possibility that imperialism would provoke counterrevolutionary elements who would have access to arms in an open situation like that. These elements could carry out counterrevolutionary activity of a violent nature.

S.A.: Following the U.S. invasion of Grenada, *The New York Times* reported on a hotel owner in Grenada who spoke joyfully about how he, with his two-way radio, had contacted the American warships and directed them to fire against strategic targets on the island.

I had this vision of a man who was relatively rich and powerful directly collaborating with the United States.

What was the attitude of the NJM, under Bishop, toward those merchants, hotel owners, and other wealthy sectors? How did you view the process of social transformation—of class transformation? How did you view your relationship to the hotel owners and the merchant class in the course of the revolution.

Rojas: From the very outset we made it clear to the merchant class, to the hoteliers, to the propertied bourgeoisie as a whole, that this revolution was made for the poor and working people of the country.

We stated that this revolution placed, as its most central priority, the concerns and the interests of the majority of the population, i.e., the popular masses. We made it very clear to them that this revolution was not going to allow them to exercise political power for the benefit of their narrow class interests. And that is what happened during the revolution.

However, the revolution also understood that there had to be a period of time during which to transfer the economic power of this propertied minority to the majority. But this is not something that can be done effectively overnight. Maurice said that the economic transformations are not like Nescafé—instant coffee.

The first step was to put political power into the hands

of the dispossessed and powerless masses of the country. The next step was to prepare the masses to accept the transference of economic power. That process would have taken a little longer.

It is necessary to encourage the private sector because they have the entrepreneurial and managerial skills to invest their capital in development projects. But if they do not respond positively to that encouragement, then it is possible to explain to the masses that these private producers cannot be considered patriotic elements. At that point, it is permissible to take whatever measures are considered necessary to protect the interests of the masses.

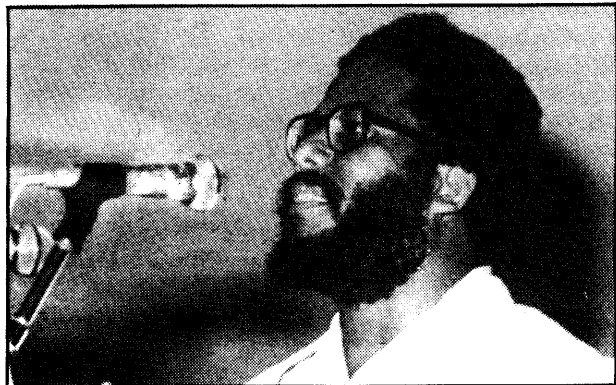
S.A.: Concerning the interventionist policy of the U.S. government. Following the latest U.S. elections, the pro-Sandinista press in Nicaragua extensively quoted leading Democratic Party representatives, who stated that there would be no fundamental change in U.S. policy toward Central America even though the Democrats had gained control of the Senate.

The Nicaraguan FSLN seems to be moving to the conclusion that replacing Republicans with Democrats in the elections will not lessen the U.S. war against the Nicaraguan Revolution. They seem to be more interested in seeing the development of an independent mass anti-intervention movement everywhere in the world—and in the United States in particular.

I know that the leadership of the Grenadian Revolution, watched the U.S. internal political scene closely and expressed the view that Carter would be preferable to Reagan, and that the Democrats were preferable to the Republicans.

Today, though, it is clear that there exists total bipartisan support for funding the contras and aid to the Duarte regime in El Salvador. Democrats and Republicans virtually unanimously supported the invasion of Grenada.

What discussions, if any, take place in the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement concerning the Democratic



Bernard Coard

and Republican parties, and more generally concerning the process of social change in the United States?

Rojas: We don't labor under the illusion that if a Democratic president is elected, or a Democratic Congress is elected, this would necessarily result in a qualitative change in the policy of U.S. intervention in our part of the world.

We have looked at the bipartisan support for the Grenadian invasion very closely. We are alarmed at the continued bipartisan support for aggression against Nicaragua, for support to El Salvador.

We hope, of course, that more progressive elements within the Democratic Party would be elected and would eventually contribute to a lessening of Democratic support for such policies, but we are not terribly optimistic that this will happen in the near future.

We recognize that the policy of intervention is a policy of imperialism and we recognize that both the Democratic and Republican Parties are imperialist parties.

We do not forget that when our revolution came to power in 1979—the Carter administration was in power at the time—the Pentagon was authorized to draw up a plan for a naval blockade of Grenada within weeks after the triumph of the revolution. That plan was deferred, if not aborted, by the Carter government after it was clear that we enjoyed international recognition from even the United States' closest NATO allies. But an invasion of Grenada was contemplated during the Carter years.

We do not forget that it was under the liberal administration of John F. Kennedy that the Bay of Pigs invasion was conducted. We do not forget that it was under the so-called liberal administration of Johnson that the Dominican Republic was invaded in 1965.

We would hope that the present Democratic majority in the Senate and the House would put a little brake on the headlong rush towards intervention in Central America. But we have no illusions that replacing Mr. Reagan with a Democratic president is going to, overnight, put an end to what is essentially a policy of an imperialist form of government.

This form of government, unfortunately, will continue to exist in the United States until the American people, by their united resolve, are able to do something about that.

Don Rojas speaks on lessons of defeated Grenadian Revolution

time, the number of people who attended these meetings declined.

These meetings were democratic in the sense that they allowed ample discussion and input. But they didn't make any fundamental decisions. This power was not in the hands of these institutions.

Rojas: That is correct.

S.A.: How did the party see the relationship between the NJM and the mass organizations?

Rojas: The relationship was one where the NJM played—or should have played—a guiding role in the development and direction that the mass organizations were to take.

The ultimate objective was to empower the mass organizations and institutionalize them as organs of people's power that would play not just a participatory role, but a decision-making role, in carrying out policies presented by the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG).

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Socialist Action/Joey Ryan

Student protests spark crisis in Chinese party

By ALAN BENJAMIN and RALPH FORSYTH

The late December and early January wave of student protests for democratic rights in as many as 11 Chinese cities has touched off a major political crisis in the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

In mid-January, in a dramatic leadership shake-up, Hu Yaobang was ousted from his post as general secretary of the CCP. He was replaced by Zhao Ziyang, prime minister of the Chinese government.

Hu, a close protégé of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, was accused of encouraging the intellectuals, students, and party reformers who have demanded greater political freedoms. He was also accused of being too "lenient" in his handling of the student protests.

Last spring, the so-called reform faction in the CCP leadership launched a broad campaign of "political reform" that was aimed at mobilizing support from intellectuals and students for Deng's liberalization policies.

For many months, Chinese newspapers carried articles on the importance of the right to dissent and the need for a more democratic style of government. A cautious amount of open debate in limited channels was allowed.

Fang Lizhi, the vice president of the National Science and Technology University in Hefei, was praised for his criticisms of government bureaucracy in the December 1986 issue of *Beijing Review*, an official government-sponsored magazine.

In addition, a number of previously banned Marxist authors, including Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky, were allowed to be published. [See Ernest Mandel's "Chinese Writers Partially Rehabilitate Trotsky" in the May 19, 1986, issue of *International Viewpoint*.]

But when tens of thousands of students marched in the streets of China demanding an end to bureaucratic rule, they had crossed the line of what was permissible.

On Jan. 7, just one week after the student marches, the crackdown began. Fang, the once acclaimed intellectual, was now vehemently denounced for advocating "bourgeois liberalization." Soon after, he was expelled from the party.

A major campaign was underway to put an end to all forms of political dissent.

Not first time

Since the revolution in 1949, popular unrest, mostly in the form of demonstrations and wall posters, has occurred periodically. But it has been quickly crushed.

In the late 1950s, after the failure of Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward, the CCP instituted the slogans "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend." This declaration produced an avalanche of criticisms, denunciation, and protest.

The CCP panicked at the outpouring of criticism, and the lid was hurriedly put back on. Mao ordered the arrest of 1000 protesting middle-school students. As one Chinese joke noted, the "hundred flowers" all turned out to be sunflowers and the "hundred schools" were all Maoist schools.

Another example of a rapidly sealed political opening was that of the "Democracy Wall" movement in the late 1970s. [See accompanying article by Li Si.]

After Mao's death in 1976 Deng Xiaoping, whom Mao had deposed during the Cultural Revolution, consolidated control of the CCP leadership by arresting Mao's heirs—the "Gang of Four." Deng initially encouraged the 1978-79 "Democracy Wall" campaign. But when it got out of hand, he brutally suppressed it.

Since March 1979, wall posters and



"New contract labor law abolishes guaranteed lifetime job and fuels growing unemployment. This is a major attack on the gains of the Chinese Revolution."

demonstrations have been banned, the right to strike has been deleted from the constitution, and organizers of unofficial publications and organizations have been jailed.

Companion to economic reforms

Deng and his faction in the CCP leadership promoted the tightly controlled political liberalization in the spring of 1986 as a companion to their program of economic liberalization. They believed that the country's economic reforms would not succeed unless they went hand in hand with some opening in the political field.

Wang Feixin, a director of the Research Institute for the Reform of the Economic Structure, explained that the economic reforms had led to periodic clashes over the

control of offices and factories between the ruling party bureaucracy and the relatively independent new managerial class. "Politically, you must have a means of expressing those conflicting interests," Wang said.

In addition, the modernization of the economy has required an increased emphasis on scientific education and skilled training for the working class. The emphasis on education has fostered demands for freer expression of ideas—which is what the student movement was fighting for.

But the reform faction was careful not to let popular aspirations rise too high. Like the so-called conservative faction of the CCP, the "reformers" feared the development of a social protest movement that would challenge the CCP's monopoly of

political power and their economic privileges.

"When necessary," Deng said in a Jan. 2, 1987, directive to suppress further student demonstrations, "we must deal severely with those who defy orders. We can afford to shed some blood."

In a reference to a militant from the Democracy Wall movement who was sentenced to jail in 1981, Deng said: "Look at Wei Jingsheng. We put him behind bars and the Democracy Movement died. We haven't released him, but that did not raise much of an international uproar."

Anger over unemployment

Another reason for the political liberalization of last spring and summer was the concern by Deng and the CCP leadership that the economic reform policies instituted in China since 1979 were fueling growing popular discontent.

"A year ago," wrote Jim Mann in the *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 5, 1987), "the reform group seemed on the defensive, largely because the lifting of some price controls had led to a serious bout of inflation. The reform group feared that price increases and new factory changes could cause urban workers to join the mounting unrest."

Indeed, as Mann points out, there has been a deepening concern among China's workers and youth about the rising cost of living, unemployment, and the growing disparities in wages. In September 1986, for example, 2000 youths spontaneously marched on the CCP headquarters in Nanjing to demand an end to inflation and unemployment.

In Beijing, according to official Chinese sources, the price of food alone increased by 50 percent during the first six months of 1986; far surpassing the minimal wage increases. It is estimated that 40 percent of a worker's wage goes for food. This comes after three decades of stability in prices.

The new economic measures have also created wage disparities unknown since 1949. Profits of the new Chinese businessmen approach 10 times the level of the average industrial worker's wage. "We must recognize that economic efficiency is often contradictory with social equality," said Su Shaozhi, director of the Marxist Leninist Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences.

A *Wall Street Journal* editorial (Aug. 1, 1986) explained the need for political liberalization this way: "Chinese reform officials are moving cautiously to allow some dissent because they say that the resulting joblessness from the [newly legalized] bankruptcies could 'risk social unrest.'" And the editorial continued, "Political instability is the last thing Beijing wants from its economic reform programs."

Gains under assault

The economic liberalization policies initiated by Deng have indeed represented a frontal assault on the gains of the Chinese Revolution.

Over the last few years, in an attempt to invigorate the slumping economy, the Chinese government has carried out the following measures:

- the dismantling of the agricultural communes and cooperatives;
- the introduction of material incentives for production ("To get rich is glorious," is the new party slogan);
- the abolition of a guaranteed lifetime job (ending China's "iron rice bowl" system);
- the introduction of contract labor which ties a worker's wage to his or her productivity and allows workers to be fired;
- a scaling back in the role of central state planning;
- the introduction of capitalist sweat-shop enclaves known as the Special Economic Zones;
- the introduction of private enterprise, capital markets, and stock exchanges.

Bankruptcies, which are commonplace under capitalism, are now being authorized in a number of China's state-owned factories in order to "increase efficiency and productivity." Bankruptcies mean layoffs, as numerous factories are allowed to go under.

Under the new contract labor law,

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managers now have the right to fire workers who do not respect discipline and work rules.

As of Oct. 1, 1986, a worker looking for a job will have to take an aptitude test, and then, after a three to six-month probation period, a contract with a determined life-span can be negotiated. If the worker's work is not satisfactory, he or she can be fired.

"The disadvantages of the iron rice bowl system have become more and more

evident," said Zhao Dongwan, China's minister of labor, who sees the introduction of capitalist management methods as the only way to remedy the distortions in the Chinese economy.

With the threat of dismissal hanging over the heads of 100 million wage earners, unemployment is becoming an explosive political issue.

Contradictions of CCP's policies

The twists and turns in the policy of the CCP flow from the basic contradiction of

trying to transform an entire society while excluding the mass of the population from the political process.

In China, the major decisions are all made at the highest levels of the state bureaucracy. The workers and the general population are precluded from making any decisions that affect government policy.

Chinese economic underdevelopment is the result of the isolation of the revolution. But instead of embarking on an internationalist revolutionary course—a course seeking to advance the world revolution in

order to integrate the Chinese economy into a more developed international socialist economy—China has turned to the capitalist world.

The capitalist world, of course, seeks to embroil China in precisely the same condition which gave rise to the revolution in the first place.

The Wall Street Journal, a mouthpiece for the capitalist class, has consistently applauded the economic reforms of the Chinese leadership. "China's announcement on Oct. 1 [1986], that it will begin to phase out its system of lifetime job tenure is another small and necessary step in the long trek toward...a flexible labor market as exists in Taiwan," the *Journal* states approvingly.

For the Chinese leadership to base economic expansion and the accumulation of capital upon tying Chinese development to the world capitalist economy is a recipe for disaster.

As Ralph Schoenman pointed out in a recent article in *Critique* magazine:

"The current effort [of the Chinese government] to emulate the Yugoslav use of the market mechanism will run against

1978-81 Democracy Movement: A precursor to today's protests



By LI SI

Over six years ago, *Solidarnosc* announced its formation in Poland. At the same time, in the People's Republic of China, the National Association of Unofficial Publications of China (NAUPC), a coalition of 21 unofficial publications, announced its formation.

The following article traces the development of the Chinese Democracy Movement, which lasted from 1978 to 1981. The article was first published in the August 1985 edition of *October Review*, a revolutionary Marxist journal published in Hong Kong. It has been abridged and edited for space.

The Democracy Movement of 1978-81, usually referred to as the Beijing Spring Movement, developed from the 1976 Tien An Men Square Riot in which over 100,000 people spontaneously gathered at the square in the capital to express their indignation at the ruling regime. Similar riots took place in other cities such as Nanjing and Zhengzhou.

The historical significance of the 1976 riots is that they were spontaneous mass mobilizations directed against the entire structure of bureaucratic rule, unlike the mass mobilizations during the Cultural Revolution, which were controlled by different factions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

By the end of 1978, the Deng Xiaoping faction of the CCP had gained control of the top party leadership.

The Deng Xiaoping faction attempted to garner a certain amount of mass support to consolidate its power in the top party leadership. A series of rehabilitations took place. The Tien An Men Square Riot was officially recognized as a revolutionary, spontaneous mass action.

Meanwhile, the people made use of this opportunity to voice their grievances and put forward their demands.

Wall posters began to appear on the Xidan Wall in Beijing. Mass political-discussion meetings took place (some with thousands of people participating), and unofficial publications began to appear.

By the beginning of 1979, tens of

unofficial publications had surfaced all over China. By April 1981, the number was over 120. These publications survived until April 1981, when a national wave of arrests of the editors and chief contributors put an end to their semi-legal existence. The movement was forced to go underground from then onwards.

Beijing Spring

The Beijing Spring Democracy Movement was in the beginning rather atomized. The organizational division stemmed mainly from the different ideological trends of the publications.

In Beijing, *Exploration*, with its chief editor Wei Jingsheng, was the most radical of all for it advocated democratic election of all leaders and democratic self-management by the producers.

[Another publication, *People's Voice*, edited by Wang Xizhe, asserted that "only the dictatorship of the proletariat could present an alternative to the ruling party bureaucracy."—The Editors]

Exploration was very critical of the "liberal" stance of Deng Xiaoping, while other publications saw his faction to be reformist and an advance over Mao Zedong's faction.

The differences in assessment of the Deng faction led to organizational divisions and a lack of cooperation among the various opposition currents.

In March 1979, Deng Xiaoping changed his stance on the Democracy Wall. A few months before, he had said that the Democracy Wall was useful and that it could let the people voice their grievances. However, in March, he said that the Democracy Wall was a source of instability.

Wei Jingsheng at once reacted by posting up a wall poster titled "Democracy or New Dictatorship" in which he called for the people to beware of Deng becoming a new dictator. Wei was promptly arrested. Before Wei, several others had been arrested, including two members of the Human Rights Alliance. Wang Xizhe was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment.

In December 1979, the trial of Wei Jingsheng took place. Though his radical

ideas were not popular, his right to freedom of thought and expression was supported by the activists. Wei Jingsheng, for his dissidence, was given a sentence of 15 years in jail.

Liu Qing, editor of *April 5 Forum*, was arrested for distributing a transcript of the "open" trial. His arrest helped bring more activists together. In August 1980, 16 publications joined together to form a National Committee to Rescue Liu Qing. This then grew into the National Association of Unofficial Publications of China (NAUPC).

Illusions break down

The formation of the NAUPC was a significant breakthrough. It took less than two years from the emergence of unofficial publications to arrive at their nationwide coalition. When the Deng Xiaoping faction began repressing the people's democratic rights, discontent quickly grew.

Certain illusions in the reforming faction broke down. Repression of the Democracy Movement forced the divided publications to draw together for more support and strength in order to counter pressure from the regime.

The Polish example was another source of stimulus. The Democracy Movement greeted *Solidarnosc* with enthusiasm, reprinting the 21 demands and the Charter of Workers' Rights. It assessed that the Polish workers' movement had tolled the death knell for bureaucratic rule. The need for international links was also emphasized.

In early 1981, the CCP issued several circulars preparing for a clampdown of the "illegal publications" and "illegal organizations." Beginning April 10, arrests took place on a nationwide scale.

Over 30 Democracy Movement activists were detained without trial for about a year. Later it was learned that many of these activists were sentenced to jail terms ranging from five to 14 years.

The Beijing Spring Democracy Movement was suppressed with naked force. Yet, it was a significant development in the on-going movement for socialist democracy in China. ■

"For China, socialist democracy is a prerequisite of economic survival."

the same problems faced by the Yugoslav economy, but on a vaster scale.

"The removal of the social net and the ability of factories to hire and fire on the basis of profitability, led to a significant portion of the Yugoslav work force being coerced to work as subsistence laborers in the sweatshops of Western Europe...Only in the case of China there will be far less likelihood of absorption into the labor markets of capitalist Asia, a pauperized sub-proletariat."

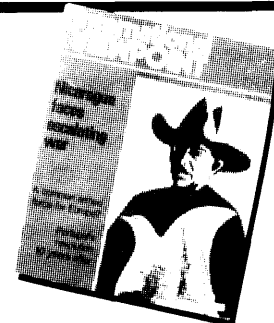
Neither bureaucratic arbitrariness nor capitalist market mechanisms can begin to solve the basic problems facing China.

For China, socialist democracy is a minimum prerequisite of economic survival.

The courageous fight of the Chinese students for political freedoms, and the stiff resistance by the workers and youth to the bureaucracy's attacks on the gains of the revolution, are signs that important sectors of the population want to push forward on the path to a truly socialist society. ■

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Does democracy really exist in capitalist America?



By PAUL SIEGEL

Celebrations will be held this year to mark the 200th anniversary of the Constitution of the United States. Much is certain to be written in the press about the "virtues" of American democracy. But does democracy really exist in capitalist America?

Professor Paul Siegel puts forward the socialist view on the question in a four-part series of articles beginning on this page. Future issues of Socialist Action will take up the following topics—"The U.S. Plutocracy," "The Role of the Mass Media," and "The Police State."

Paul Siegel is Professor Emeritus at Long Island University. He has written several books on political and literary themes, including "Revolution and the 20th-Century Novel" (Pathfinder Press, 1979) and "The Meek and the Militant: Religion and Power Across the World." (Zed Press, 1986)

Socialism, according to newspapers and television in the United States, is a bad thing. It means that you don't have the chance to choose what to buy or how to enjoy yourself or what to think. It is the opposite of "democracy"—which is what we have in the United States.

Socialism, so the argument goes, leads at best to regimentation and at worst to the concentration camps of Stalin. If throughout the world people are fighting to get socialism, that is because they don't know any better. The idea of socialism, it is alleged, cannot become popular in the United States, for it is a foreign idea that goes counter to our history and our way of life.

The truth, however, as this series of articles will try to show, is that the democratic rights we have in this country were won only through struggle; they are not the automatic results of our form of government. These democratic rights are precious and must be protected at all costs, but it is not socialism that threatens them.

It is capitalism that threatens our rights. In its early period, capitalism was progressive. But it has now become reactionary. What we call democracy under capitalism is extremely limited and superficial. The aim of socialism is the extension and deepening of this democracy. This aim is in the tradition of earlier American struggles.

Socialism betrayed by Stalinists

What has made it easier to portray socialism as evil are the immense crimes of Stalin and the nature of the society constructed under him; a society that,

although less terror-ridden under his successors, has remained essentially totalitarian.

But the rulers of this society have betrayed the socialist ideals of the Russian Revolution. It is often said that the present-day Soviet Union is the inevitable development of that revolution. This is the kind of deterministic reading of history (it happened that way, therefore it had to happen that way) of which Marxists are falsely accused.

If Stalinism is merely the continuation of Leninism, as both Stalinists and the defenders of capitalism claim, then it is very strange that in order to construct his regime, Stalin had to kill virtually the entire leadership that had survived from the time of Lenin and to reshape the Communist Party completely.

As Khrushchev revealed in his secret speech in 1956, 70 percent of the Central Committee of the Communist Party were put to death by Stalin in his great purge of the 1930s. Of these, 80 percent had joined the party before 1921.

Socialist roots in America

The point that the idea of socialism goes counter to historic Americanism is itself unhistorical. Ideas cannot be kept out by national boundaries.

The historians Bernard Bailyn and Bernard Fay have shown how the ideas of the American Revolution originated in the English Puritan revolution of the 17th century and in the so-called Glorious Revolution that followed it. The ideas of the American Revolution in turn contributed to the French Revolution.

But, of course, in order for the seed to grow in a new national soil the social conditions have to be suitable. Revolutionists can't "export revolution" if people won't buy the idea.

Although the socialist movement in the United States is at present weak and fragmented, its past shows its potential. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Socialist Party was a significant political force. In 1918, it had 79 mayors in 24

states, 32 state legislators, and a member of congress.

In 1920, the Socialist Party candidate, Eugene Victor Debs, ran for president from jail, to which he was confined for his opposition to World War I. He received a million votes at a time when the electorate was much smaller than it is today.

The socialist movement was undermined after the war by the post-war prosperity of the 1920s and crushed by the Palmer raids and other measures of undemocratic thought-control. But it revived during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Socialists of different parties, following the tradition of industrial unionism of Debs, played an important role in building the CIO, the union organization that enabled American workers to fight back against the employers' onslaught.

In the "Red Decade" the ideas of socialism gained a new popularity. Then, at the end of World War II—just as after World War I—a post-war boom and repression took place. The Cold War and McCarthyism weakened and broke up the socialist movement.

We can expect, however, the tradition of Debs to be revived once more as American capitalism, despite temporary upturns, continues to be unable to emerge from the long-term economic crisis it entered in the mid-1970s. The idea of socialism will flourish on American soil because, despite all the attempts to stamp it out, it has roots here and the conditions are propitious for its growth.

Tyranny of the workplace

Why do socialists say that democracy under capitalism is limited and superficial? For one thing, because most people spend a major part of their lives working for a living, and there is precious little democracy in the workplace.

Workers in factories are like soldiers in an army with non-coms and officers over them—and we all know how much democracy there is in most armies. On production lines, efficiency experts dictate just about every movement workers make

every second of their time.

This is the tyranny of the workplace that underlies widespread job dissatisfaction, according to a 1973 report issued by a task force chosen by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. The task force was commissioned in response to a plethora of articles about "blue-collar blues" and "white-collar woes."

"Young workers," concluded the report, "appear to be as committed to the institution of work as their elders have been, but many are rebelling against the anachronistic authoritarianism of the workplace."

The authoritarianism of the workplace is indeed anachronistic, but it is inseparable from capitalism. Factory owners are concerned about maximizing profits, not about democracy on the shop floor.

The reforms recommended by the task force amounted to making insignificant matters optional—allowing workers to replace light bulbs or to move from one job to another one that was much the same. However, absenteeism, sabotage, and wildcat strikes were lowered not by these measures but by the whip of the mass unemployment that came in the late 1970s and has remained a constant threat.

Workers are like the little tramp in Charlie Chaplin's "Modern Times" who preferred the security of a prison cell to the "freedom" of the bleak world of unemployment. But the prison cell remains a prison cell.

"Management prerogatives"

Through labor unions, to some degree, workers have been able to gain a say about



Eugene V. Debs

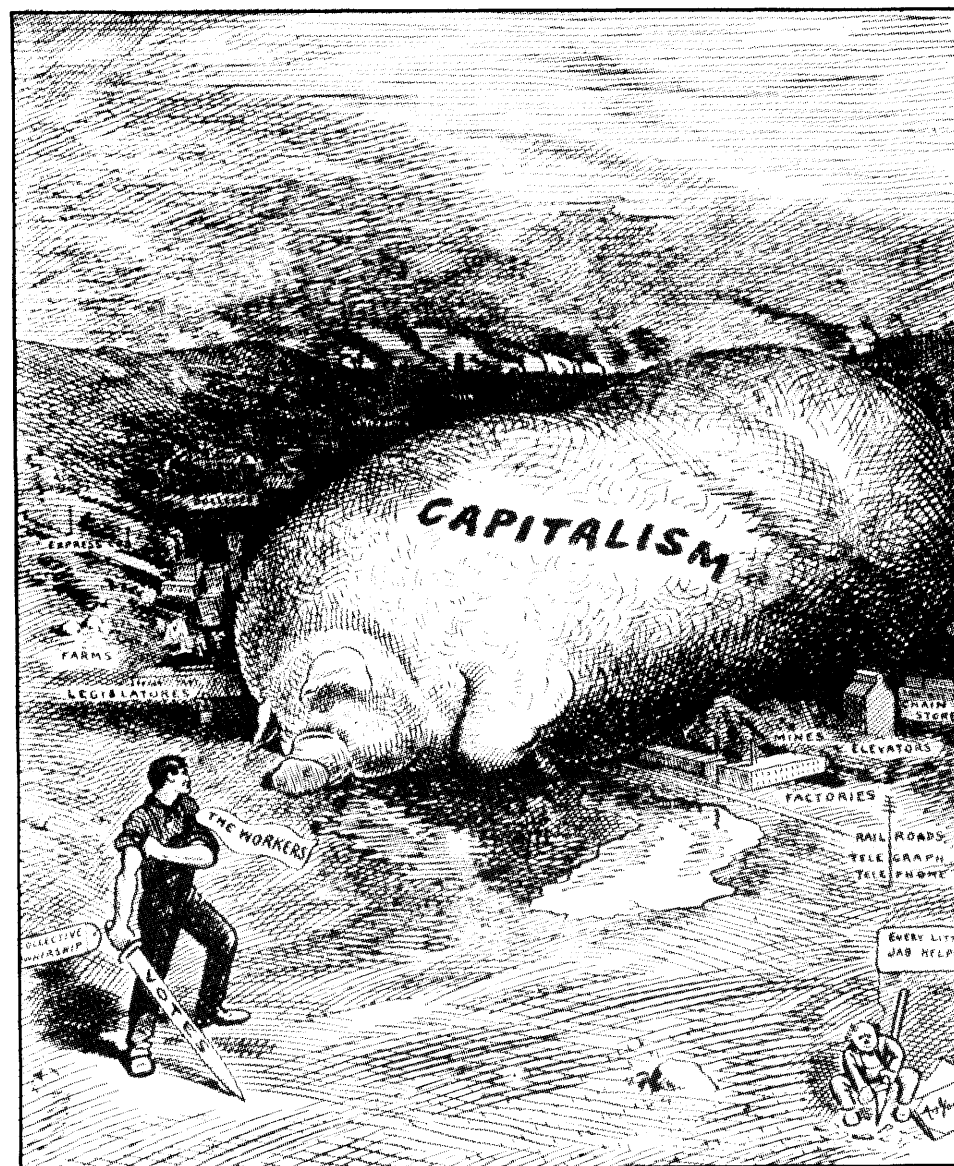
their conditions at work. But what owners of factories call "management prerogatives" fundamentally prevail. What workers have been able to gain through unions has only come about through their fighting for it.

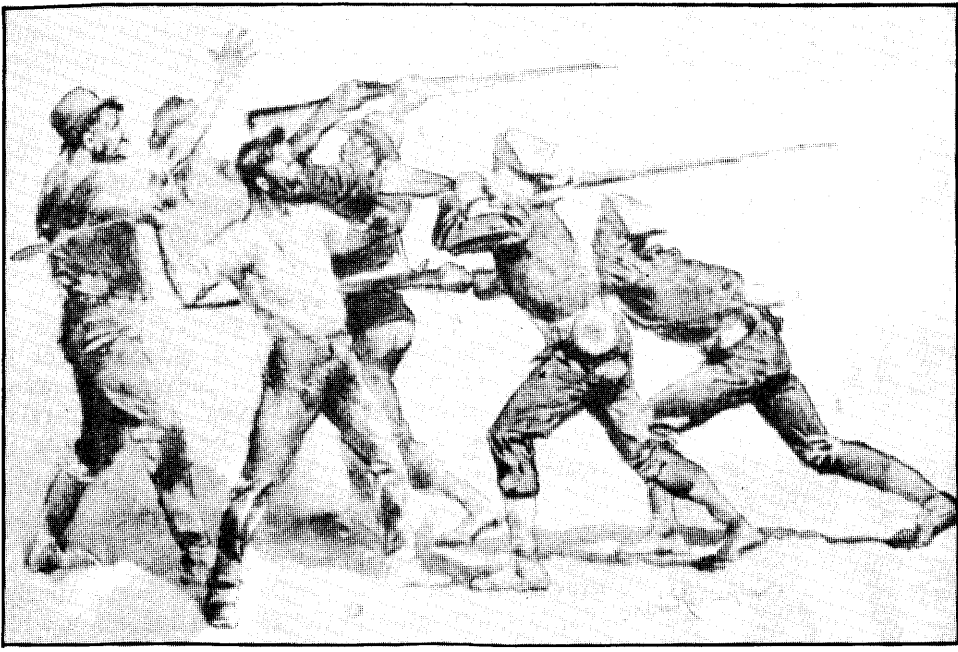
In the early 19th century, the established doctrine held by all respectable people was that labor unions, which "artificially" raised wages, violated the "laws" of economics, which were, as one popular textbook put it, "nothing less than laws of God."

The unions that were formed at the time of the rapid growth of industrialism following the Civil War had to buck this continuing sentiment. During the great railroad strike of 1877, *The Independent*, a church newspaper, said, "Compromises are not in order when men are fighting for higher wages...Napoleon was right when he said that the way to deal with a mob was to exterminate it."

Today, unions are an established part of the social structure. But they have become conservatized. The heads of unions for the most part no longer think of themselves as participants in a social movement of the dispossessed but as "business unionists" who sell the labor of "their" members just

(continued next page)





U.S. cavalrymen attack striking railworkers during great strike of 1877.

(continued from previous page)

as businessmen sell the commodities produced by "their" workers.

Although they must seek to justify the deals they make, the labor bureaucrats are concerned above all with maintaining their comfortable positions and high salaries. They are not inclined to challenge "management prerogatives."

The idea that places of work can be owned and run democratically and collectively by those working there and that the entire industrial structure can be owned and administered in accordance with a rational plan by the working class at large is regarded as preposterous and, even worse, un-American.

"Of the people, by the people, for the people" does not apply to the workplace. Workers may have worked in a place for 20 or 30 years, but who are they to say that they should not be laid off or fired? That's a "management prerogative."

Small businesses decline

Of course, there are many small owners who work in their own businesses. These like to think of themselves as being their own bosses. In the first place, however, their number has much diminished. The United States today is far different from the 19th-century country of independent craftsmen and self-employed businessmen, a country in which 37 percent of those working for a living were engaged in business.

Small business now lives only on the margins of the economy. Its rate of bankruptcy is very high, and more than 90 percent of new businesses do not last 10 years.

In the second place, the idea that small owners are their own bosses is largely illusory. At the mercy of the vagaries of a market influenced by factors beyond their control, they are like small boats tossed



James Madison

about in the churning wake of powerful ships.

The situation of the family farmers is typical. There were 32 million of them in 1910 when the population was considerably less than it is now; today there are only about 7 million left. Agriculture is dominated by agribusiness, with 19 percent of the farmers raising more than 75 percent of the products. Foreclosures of mortgages and losses of land are greater than ever.

David Stockman, when he was Reagan's

budget director, dismissed the plight of family farmers, traditionally the symbol of the independent American, as the normal shaking out from the economy of those who are inefficient. After all, he said, the farmers who went into debt were "consenting adults."

But the federal government in 1971-1976 encouraged farmers to go into debt to extend production for a speculative market, and its tax code and system of subsidies has favored large farm operators. The farmers, moreover, could not have reckoned on the high interest rates consequent upon the enormous armaments expenditures and huge national deficits under Reagan.

The small farmers as a class have been tricked, manhandled, and raped by the



Shay's Rebellion: Furloughed revolutionary army soldiers attack banks that were foreclosing their farms.

government and by agri-business. To call them "consenting adults" is to jeer at their desperate struggle. No more than workers are they able to determine their own destiny.

"Trust-busting" is dead

It is big business that dominates the economy and our lives. This domination has become so great that we have come to take it for granted. The early 20th-century struggle by the middle class for "trust busting" is dead, not because it won but because the victory of the great corporations forecast by socialists as inherent in capitalism is so complete.

Today the 20 biggest manufacturing corporations hold 25 percent of all assets—the same as the 419,000 smallest companies—and the 200 biggest corporations hold 56 percent of all assets. A few giant corporations employ 75 percent of the workers.

With big business triumphant, we are told that we cannot do without it. It gives us jobs and all the blessings of our lives. Capitalism is the natural order of things while socialism is contrary to human nature. It cannot long endure and any attempt to institute it must bring tyranny.

"God's order"

But these very arguments were made against parliamentary democracy in the days when it was coming into being. A hereditary nobility that ruled society, the

We the People

of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby constitute and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

members of which were the "natural superiors" of other classes, was regarded as part of God's order.

The inherited prerogatives of this nobility—in France, they included the "right of the first night," the right of the feudal lord to enjoy the brides of his peasants—seemed as natural then as the "management prerogative" to throw workers out of work seems today.

Any attempt to do away with these "rights" or with what was called "the royal prerogative" of the absolute monarchy must result, it was alleged, in social chaos. Thus, said the 16th-century English theorist Sir Thomas Elyot, the democracy of the ancient Greek states led either to anarchy or to tyranny.

The 17th-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, living at the time of the English Civil War, insisted just as much on the enduring selfishness of human nature as do those who claim today that this makes socialism impossible.

But for Hobbes, this belief was the justification for an unlimited absolutism that was not to be divided between king and parliament. To question this unlimited and indivisible power was the first step in a return to a "state of nature," a time in history when the lack of order made life "nasty, brutish, and short."

"Anarchy and despotism"

The Loyalists at the time of the American Revolution also argued that democracy is inherently unstable, repressive, and expansionist, just as today the

country had ever had—but they had to fight for it.

The delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 met under the shadow of Shay's Rebellion. General Henry Knox wrote fearfully to George Washington that the "creed" of "the people who are the insurgents" is "that the property of the United States has been protected from the confiscations of Britain by the joint exertions of all, and therefore ought to be the common property of all."

James Madison warned of "the leveling spirit" of "the majority faction," that is, of the great masses of people who were not well off, and said that the Constitution should "secure the public good and private rights against the danger of such a faction." Nevertheless, he said, it was necessary to "leave something for the people."

Alexander Hamilton stated that "the mass of the people...seldom judge or determine right" and that therefore "a permanent body" composed of "the rich and well-born" should "check the imprudence of democracy."

Constitution for the wealthy

In accordance with this thinking, the Constitution provided for a senate whose members were elected not by the people but by the state legislatures, for a president elected by an electoral college whose members were selected by the state legislatures, and for a supreme court appointed by the president.

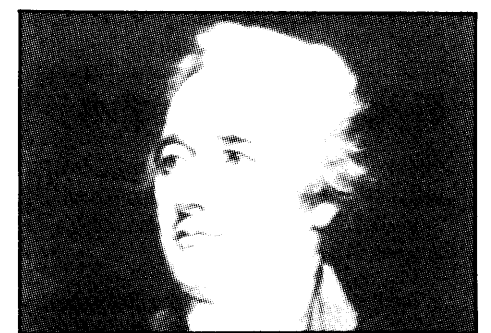
The only national popular elections were for the House of Representatives, and the qualifications for voting in these elections, set by the states, included property holding. One-fourth of the adult population could not vote because they were slaves.

One-half of the white, adult population could not vote because they were women. One-third of the white, male, adult population could not vote because they did not meet property qualifications. Most of the voters could not be candidates because they did not satisfy property requirements for holding office.

The Constitution was adopted only after, in order to get popular support, the Bill of Rights was added. If "the mass of the People," according to Madison and Hamilton, did not sufficiently appreciate "private rights," they had a very keen understanding of their own rights.

In the early part of the 19th century, an extension of suffrage and other democratic gains was won through such militant means as Dorr's Rebellion of 1841-1842, in which thousands of working people in Rhode Island organized a "people's convention" that wrote a constitution without property requirements for voting.

Martial law was declared, and the leader of the illegally elected People's Legislature,



Alexander Hamilton

Thomas Dorr, was convicted of treason. But under the pressure of the rebellion, reforms were grudgingly conceded.

This period of an extension of democracy lasted until the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s. The Civil War, which was essentially a second American Revolution, marked the last time in world politics that capitalists were able to lead a democratic revolution.

Following the Civil War, the enormous increase of wealth of the industrial capitalists more and more made the United States a plutocracy that was democratic only in form. We will explore this topic further in next month's issue of *Socialist Action*. ■



Medicine for profit pushes drugs on women at childbirth

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

The medical system is intimately involved in women's lives, influencing such crucial areas of their self-determination as birth, birth control, and abortion.

In the United States, administering drugs to a woman during labor is standard procedure. But how many women are informed of the risks these drugs pose to the infant? Or how they interfere with the birth, making even more medical intervention necessary?

Only one in 10 women are *allowed* to refuse medications, according to author Suzanne Arms in "Immaculate Conception," a book about birthing practices.

In general, American obstetricians pattern their practice in normal birth after their practice in abnormal birth, forcing the majority of women to undergo procedures that are often unnecessary.

The result is that women give up their control during birth to the obstetricians, who treat the normal as if it were a medical emergency for the sake of "prevention." Risks may result that are greater *but more predictable* than the original problem the practice was intended to solve.

Contrary to what many women are led to believe, all narcotics and inhaled and regional anesthetics "readily cross the placenta and many produce clinical depression in the newborn." (Drs. Jeffrey Gould and Louise Gluck, "Maternal and Child Health Practices")

In his book, "The Safety of the Unborn Child," Dr. Geoffrey Chamberlain writes: "No drug can be completely cleared of a low incidence or association with



abnormalities in the unborn. We do not know the cause of most malformations, and until we do, every alteration of the mother's body must be suspect."

"A major obstetric danger"

Dr. Yvonne Brackbill, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Georgetown University School of Medicine, studied the effects of demerol on newborns. Demerol is the drug most often given to women for pain during labor.

Her study found that there is "clear-cut evidence that demerol produces outstanding neonatal differences in ability to process information...a major obstetric danger may now be medication itself." Thus, the use of painkilling drugs during birth also makes necessary a series of interventions; all with their own added risks.

Induction of labor by artificial hormones is another routine practice in American hospitals. A common method is the use of pitocin, an artificial labor-inducing hormone.

Dr. Roberto Caldeyro-Barcia, president of the International Federation of Gynecologists and Obstetricians, believes that induction of labor is unnecessary in 90 percent of cases. With the use of pitocin, labor contractions can cut off oxygen to the fetus, which can be seen on a fetal heart monitor in as many as 75 percent of the cases.

In 1978 the FDA came out against the practice of elective induction by pitocin. If induced labor is medically unnecessary in at least 90 percent of the cases, and is basically for the doctors' and hospitals' convenience, its routine use in the United States is unjustifiable.

AMA counters drug standards

Although many drugs have been *proven* harmful to pregnant women, doctors continue to use them routinely. The American Medical Association lobbies against stricter FDA drug-testing standards.

After the scandal surrounding the use of Thalidomide, a sleep-inducing drug found to produce skeletal deformities in fetuses, the Kefauver-Harris Amendment, passed in 1962, provided for stricter testing of drugs for their effects on pregnant women.

The giant loophole was that all drugs approved before 1962 were exempt—some 90 percent, Suzanne Arms states in "Immaculate Conception." And despite the loophole, the AMA wants the amendment repealed.

Why? The AMA's income in 1967 from drug advertising alone was \$14 million, or 43 percent of its budget. Today the AMA is reaping about \$9 million a year from the drug companies—which amounts to 27.7 percent of its income.

The collaboration between the AMA and drug companies to further their profit-oriented interests underscores the reason health services and the drug industry should be nationalized and run as non-profit public services.

The United States and South Africa are the only major industrialized countries without a national healthcare system. The need for good, affordable healthcare and safe, effective drugs cannot be met when healthcare is provided for profit. Institutions run for profit *always* put money first and human needs last.

By N. BLACKWELL

The 1985-1986 Hormel Meat-Packers Strike in Austin, Minnesota, by Fred Halstead, Pathfinder Press, New York, 44 pp. \$1.00.

This brief account of the Hormel strike, published under the auspices of the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party, consists almost entirely of the factual record up to the time of writing.

The pamphlet by Fred Halstead, a long-time SWP member, is a barebones account of the events, strung together in chronological order.

It includes the union's demands for safety on the job and for the restoration of wages and benefits taken away the previous year. It also documents how the 3000 workers at the old Austin, Minn., Hormel plant were reduced to half that number in the new plant, which was built in part with a \$20-million loan from the workers.

A brief, but valuable history of the class-

New pamphlet misses lessons of Hormel strike

struggle traditions of this union, starting in 1933, is also included.

The pamphlet serves a useful purpose in assembling the record of betrayal by the United Food and Commercial Workers top officialdom and in documenting Local P-9 leadership's fight for union democracy in the course of its valiant battle against Hormel.

But there is no analysis of the conduct of this strike. No proposals relating to what the strikers and their supporters should have done—or should do—are even suggested. And there is no explanation of the main lessons of so important a strike.

It is certainly a political pre-requisite of a revolutionary workers' party to stand unambiguously on the side of the Local P-9 strikers and leaders, who did the best they knew to defend their union. This, the SWP pamphlet clearly does. But this is not enough for a party which considers itself socialist and hopes to offer political leadership to the working class.

Important shortcoming

The most important shortcoming of this pamphlet is that it presents the P-9 (now North American Meat Packers Union) leadership's strike strategy and tactics as a model for others to follow. Reflecting this conclusion, none of the facts pointing to mistaken strike policy at the Austin plant are even mentioned.

For example: No mention is made of P-9's picketing policy which made no serious effort to organize an effective defiance of court injunctions that limited picketing and therefore crippled the strikers' attempts to close down the plant. Serious efforts to do this, unfortunately, were made mainly by rank-and-file P-9 members and by a few individual union leaders and supporters from the surrounding area.

Even the national mobilizations of supporters held in Austin on several occasions were not utilized to attempt to

mobilize sufficient picketline reinforcements that could have closed the Austin plant and brought the company to terms.

The pamphlet reports the first, very significant, mobilization in less than one paragraph:

"On Feb. 4, a P-9 support group was formed in New York; it issued a statement signed by 48 union officials and promised to send a delegation to Austin. On Feb. 15, a rally of 3000 took place in Austin attended by 30 New York labor officials and 300 union representatives from around the country."

Completely left out are the politically significant statements made at the rally by Jan Pierce, international vice president of the Communications Workers of America, and other union heads, who pledged to join P-9 and go to jail with them—if necessary—should they decide to defy the picketing injunctions.

These pledges in support of the constitutionally guaranteed right to mass picketing could have been utilized to mobilize a sufficient number of reinforcements leading to a plant closure and ultimate victory.

But this opportunity to muster the forces capable of closing the plant was missed. Similarly, the P-9 leadership failed to appeal to the 5000-strong supporters at another mass mobilization on April 12 to march on the struck Austin plant or to help in a long-term campaign to beef up the picketlines.

Such an appeal would have helped focus attention on the elementary principle of working-class solidarity upon which the labor movement is based.

Another important omission of Halstead's pamphlet is an explanation of why American workers need their own party—a labor party. The Hormel strike gives many examples of why this is necessary. It was, in fact, "friend of labor" Democratic Party Gov. Rudy Perpich who called in the National Guard to crush the strikers.

The best efforts of any working-class leadership can include serious errors. In the case of the P-9 leadership, their key error was their inability to see through the myth invented and circulated by the labor bureaucracy that "the old tactics don't work anymore." For the SWP to be silent on this is false loyalty and a disservice to the Austin fighters and to workers everywhere.

The balance sheet of the Hormel strike presented in Halstead's pamphlet would be excusable if presented by the former P-9 leadership. But it is inexcusable when presented in this manner by the leadership of the SWP.

Radical memoirs

Memoirs of a Radical Rank and Filer, by Ben Stone. Prometheus Press, Box 318, Gracie Station, N.Y., 188 pages, \$7.95.

A long-time member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has published memoirs covering the decade of the 1940s and 1950s in the history of the Trotskyist movement in the United States.

The book helps to fill a gap by giving a personal account of part of the all-too-thin generation that maintained the continuity of the American radical movement between the upsurge of the 1930s and the new waves of radicalization that began in the 1960s.

The book offers a number of personal portraits of rank-and-file activists, as well as of the leaders that inspired them. Stone also gives some interesting vignettes of circumstances of Jews on New York's Lower East Side.—Gerry Foley (from *International Viewpoint* magazine)

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"You wish you weren't there"

By JOE RYAN

Platoon, a film written and directed by Oliver Stone. Cast: Charlie Sheen, Tom Berenger, Willem Defoe, Keith David.

The movie "Platoon" has gotten favorable reviews from virtually every sector of the press. From the Communist Party-published *People's Daily World* to the Hearst-owned *San Francisco Examiner*, all reviewers have given "Platoon" a "thumbs up."

Their reasons may be different, but all reviewers agree that the realism, brutality, and intensity that director Oliver Stone (a Vietnam vet) portrays as the Vietnam experience is long overdue. After seeing the movie twice, I have to agree.

As a counterpoint to propaganda "cartoons" like "Rambo" and "Missing in Action," this film is brilliantly effective in its accurate depiction of the day-to-day horror of the Vietnam War. Whether it leaves you numb or in tears, you'll be thinking about it for days afterward.

"Platoon" is a great war movie. And because it's about the Vietnam War, "Platoon" is a great *antiwar* movie.

From the opening scene, when Chris Taylor (played by Charlie Sheen) and other replacements arrive into the swirling dust and blinding heat of Vietnam, to the next scene of the 2nd Platoon of Bravo Company walking through the triple-canopied jungle of the Central Highlands, the viewer is made to feel just like the soldiers do: You wish you weren't there. As the film grinds on to its explosive climax, this dreadful feeling only deepens.

The central protagonist in the movie, Chris Taylor is a rich boy who has dropped out of college, joined the Army, and volunteered for combat in Vietnam. He's an

Two viewpoints on the movie "Platoon"



Ricky Francisco

idealist who's looking to "make something of himself."

Chris tells his new-found buddies, who are all poor, working-class whites and Blacks, that he thought poor people shouldn't be the only ones going to Vietnam.

A Black GI responds to this altruism by saying, "You have to be rich to even think that way, man. Don't you know that rich

people have been fucking over poor people since the beginning of time?" In its rare quiet moments, vignettes such as this punctuate the movie.

Through the medium of letters to his grandmother, Chris Taylor narrates the battles that not only take place in the jungle but also within 2nd Platoon.

Like a microcosm of American society in the 1960s, the platoon is divided into factions: "heads" vs. "straights," "doves" vs. "hawks," "good" sergeant (liberal) vs. "bad" sergeant (right-winger).

In addition, the platoon's battle experiences graphically illustrate the frustration and violence inherent in a war that was fought against the Vietnamese people—a people who were fighting for their national liberation.

The omnipresent fear—and effect—of ambushes and booby traps, and the thirst for revenge engendered by the deaths of their buddies, leads the platoon—and the audience—to the most gut-wrenching and emotionally charged scene in the film.

After a couple of the GIs are maimed and killed by a booby trap at a stumbled-upon North Vietnamese Army (NVA) base camp in the jungle, the platoon finds the trussed-up body of one of their members outside a village they've been ordered to "check-out."

This episode sets the scene for a series of atrocities that the GIs commit against the helpless villagers. Only the intervention of the "good" sergeant prevents the platoon from wiping out the whole village.

For those who don't know, such atrocities were an everyday occurrence in Vietnam.

Director Oliver Stone—to his credit—involves the audience (makes them complicit) in this scene. The Vietnamese villagers see some of their loved ones murdered. Their village is completely burned down by working-class youth who have been turned into animals and are following orders passed down from above. ("Don't you know rich people have been

fucking over poor people since the beginning of time?") Many in the audience—a lot of them, undoubtedly, Vietnam vets—were crying during this scene.

In a sense, the rest of the movie is anti-climatic. A sub-plot of murder and revenge is the legacy of the village atrocities. The climactic battle scene becomes a symbol for the dispensation of justice, and Chris Taylor (who is a little too gallant to be credible) leaves Vietnam almost as confused as he was naive when he first arrived. But nobody in the audience leaves this movie unmoved and unthinking.

"Platoon" is a powerful movie that stands on its own as a work of art. Of course, many political statements can be derived from "Platoon." That's its strength—and to some—its weakness. Some people may feel that the film doesn't have an explicit enough political line. Moviegoers will have to draw their own conclusions.

Director Stone's symbols, however, are strikingly unambiguous. Multiply the experiences and scenes in this brutal movie *thousands* of times and you'll have a feel for what was the conscious policy of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam.

What the director depicts as *his* personal experience in Vietnam was, in fact, a general policy of genocide and terrorism ("search and destroy") inflicted on the Vietnamese people.

The only real humans in this movie are the Vietnamese—whom we catch only glimpses of as victims and avengers, and the Black GIs, who seem sympathetic to the victims (the Vietnamese), and become victims themselves. The North Vietnamese soldiers are portrayed as shadowy adversaries, but they leave a truthful and indelible impression: They are brave, dedicated and tough.

If you know any youth out there who might be budding "Rambo's" who are dying to go to Central America, take them to see "Platoon." No More Vietnams!

War is hell, what the hell

By BOB DAVIS

"Platoon's" immediate impact is powerful. Hollywood is here at its technical best showing how war is hell. Seen from the point of view of the foot soldier, details are so graphic that an audience's critical faculties are almost overwhelmed.

But after leaving the theater, I began to wonder why the producers had consciously highlighted the ambiguities of the Vietnam combat soldier's experience.

The "grunt" didn't know exactly what he was fighting for, yet his buddies were dying all around him. Most importantly, in order to survive he had to become inhuman. It is this last idea, how war turns young men into beasts, that the movies "Apocalypse Now" and "The Deer Hunter" used to justify the atrocities committed by Americans against the Vietnamese.

In "The Deer Hunter" there was a scene of the Viet Cong torturing American soldiers with a game of Russian Roulette. In "Platoon" the Americans find their slain point man tied to a stake. Immediately afterwards they go into a village and murder several villagers.

This village scene, although undeniably powerful, reveals the movie's standpoint. There are indeed weapons hidden in the village—although the villagers say they were forced to store them. Some of the villagers may be Viet Cong—who knows? The Americans are under terrific pressure, thus perhaps not fully responsible for what they do. Only a few of the soldiers commit "atrocities"—some oppose the murders, some stand by and watch.

So, the film is telling us, this is how it really was—from the point of view of the grunt. The Vietnam War, including episodes like My Lai, was confused, ambiguous, horrible. There was no solution except to fight or die or, hopefully, get home.

This confusion is underlined throughout.

Even the hero's, Taylor's, murder of the "bad" Sergeant Barnes is ambiguous. Is the shooting retribution for Barnes' murders, or a symbolic rejection of the war, or has Taylor become just as bestial as the sergeant, and this is merely an act of personal revenge?

At the end the hero makes a vague statement about Americans being their own enemy, and about how the two sergeants who represented opposing views will go on contending within his own soul. In other words, according to this movie, there is no definite right and wrong about the Vietnam War.

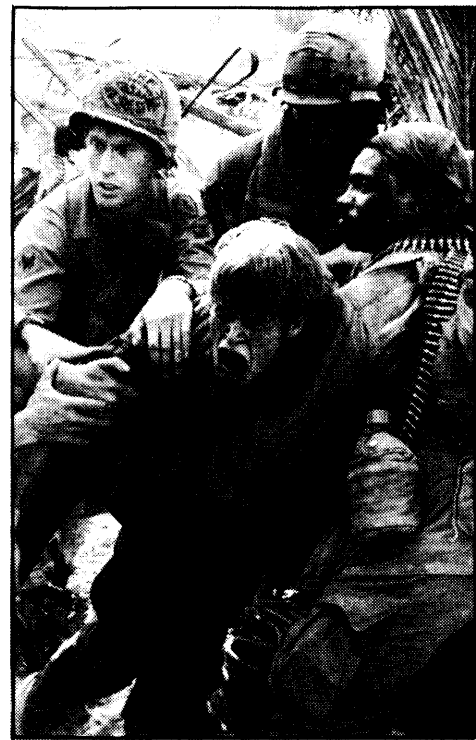
"Platoon" is being touted as the answer to "Rambo," as a film which deals truthfully with Vietnam. It isn't, and it doesn't. Not quite.

Indeed, in the climactic scene Taylor even performs Rambo-type heroics, single-handedly killing scores of "gooks." No doubt the movie's defenders will say it is only realism to portray the individual combat soldier's lack of answers. To be sure.

Or...was it a sophisticated cop-out to so restrict the point of view? After all, we have had Jon Voigt's speech at the high school in "Coming Home." The Vietnam War was wrong, Voigt's character said. America was morally wrong. In "Platoon" there is only the briefest expression of doubt.

The truth about Vietnam is not ambiguous and confused. The way to clear up the bad aftertaste of that war is not to try to justify our country's criminal aggression, but to make reparations to the victims of the aggression—the Vietnamese people and the American veterans who were cynically used.

But most importantly, if we won't face the truth about the past, we condemn ourselves in the future. In this respect "Platoon" fails us.



Ricky Francisco

San Francisco:

Socialist Action Forums

- "The Middle East Today: The Struggle of the Palestinian People." Speaker: Ralph Schoenman, Director, Council on Human Needs, Former Director Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Friday, Feb. 6, 8 p.m.
- "Students Speak-Out: America's Youth and the Fight Against War." Speakers: Miko Small, co-founder, B.A.S.I.C. Peace, A Bay Area Network of student activists; Matt Thompson, co-editor, The Declaration, an independent newspaper at Washington H.S.; Suzanne Forsyth, Students for Socialist Action., Feb. 20, 8 p.m.

Address: 3435 Army St., Rm. 308, S.F. Tel . 821-0458

Malcolm X: Fighter for Black liberation

By JOE RYAN

On Feb. 21, 1965, Malcolm X was gunned down by assassins as he was about to give a speech at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, N.Y. His assassination was a stunning blow to the Black liberation movement.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Malcolm X remain unresolved. Many people believe—and rightfully so—that the real perpetrators and killers were never caught. Undoubtedly, the greatest beneficiary of Malcolm's death was the U.S. government.

The American ruling class will discover, however, that the ideas and solutions that Malcolm X popularized cannot be buried as easily as the man.

Malcolm X was an uncompromising opponent of the U.S. government. In the early 1960s, his ideas for what road to take for Black freedom and equality represented the most militant wing of the fight against racism.

Nation of Islam days

Malcolm X first came into public prominence as a dynamic spokesperson and organizer for the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims). The Nation of Islam advocated a religious and separatist solution to the scourge of white racism. It was an attractive organization to many Black people because it encouraged Black pride and independence. In addition, they were unalterably opposed to integration with the "white man" and instead advocated Black self-reliance and a Black "homeland."

Malcolm X was the Nation of Islam's most eloquent and powerful speaker. He was their best recruiter and was responsible for their tremendous growth in membership.

In early 1964, however, Malcolm X broke with the Nation of Islam. There were many reasons for this, but the most important was their abstention from the Black struggle for civil rights.

Need for political action

Malcolm X believed that political organization and action was the most effective means to win Black liberation. Although his painful break with the Nation of Islam forced him to re-examine many of the solutions and tactics he had previously advocated, he never changed his basic analysis of what was needed to win the fight for justice and equality.

Malcolm X was a consistent Black nationalist and a revolutionist of action.

He constantly argued that:

- Black people will get their freedom only by fighting for it;
- that the U.S. government is a racist government and is not going to grant freedom;
- that gradualism (slow reform), the program of the liberals—Black and white, Democrat and Republican—is not the road to equality;
- that traitors within the Black movement ("Uncle Toms") must be exposed and opposed;
- that Black people must rely on themselves and control their own struggle;
- and that Blacks must determine their own strategy and tactics, select their own leaders, and have the right to self-defense in the face of racist attacks.

Educate and organize

Hounded, harassed, and faced with the constant threat of sudden death, Malcolm X sought to build an organization. (When he was killed he was about to give a speech to open discussion on the program of the



Robert Parent

Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the group he founded to politically organize the Black community.)

Malcolm X was vilified and slandered because he called American society by its right name—racist. He was against "non-violence" when Blacks were physically attacked by racists and he advocated Black self-defense. He was called a "Black racist," an "extremist," and a "hate monger" by so-called liberals because he could not see the efficacy of "turning the other cheek."

Malcolm X said, "If we react to white racism with a violent reaction, to me that's not Black racism. If you come to put a rope around my neck, and I hang you for it, to me that's not racism. Yours is racism.... My reaction is the reaction of a human being reacting to defend and protect himself."

When Malcolm X spoke, Black people listened. A brilliant speaker, who stripped American racist society to the bare bones, Malcolm X smashed illusions in gradual reform: "You've been waiting over 400 years for your freedom."

He exposed the hypocrisy of the liberals, who cautioned Blacks to go slow and be "non-violent." "They want you to be non-violent here," he said, "but they want you to be very violent in South Vietnam."

Malcolm X connected the struggle of Blacks in America to the struggles of the oppressed all over the world.

"We are living in an era of revolution," he told students at Columbia University, "and the revolt of the American Negro is part of the rebellion against the oppression and colonialism which has characterized this era...It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of Black against white, or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the

oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter."

The logic of Malcolm X's fight against U.S. racism and injustice led him to take anti-capitalist positions. "You can't have capitalism without racism," he said.

"It is impossible for capitalism to survive, primarily because the system of capitalism needs some blood to suck," Malcolm X said. "Capitalism used to be more like an eagle, but now it's more like a vulture. It used to be strong enough to go and suck anybody's blood. But now it has become more cowardly, like the vulture, and it can only suck the blood of the helpless."

Asked what he thought was responsible for race prejudice in America, he responded: "Ignorance and greed. And a skillfully designed program of miseducation that goes right along with the American system of exploitation and oppression."

Malcolm X's political evolution in his last year was the reason he was killed.

"By any means necessary"

Malcolm X believed that the fight for Black freedom should be won "by any means necessary." He had become an implacable opponent of the Democratic and Republican parties. "Any Negro who registers as a Democrat or a Republican," he said, "is a traitor to his own people."

"Our people need to get registered," he stated. "[They] need to pile up political power, but they need to hold it in abeyance and throw it in...when they know it will get results. Don't just throw it because you've got it."

When he was asked by the Freedom Now Party in Michigan (an independent Black party) to be their candidate in the 1964 elections, he gave it serious consideration. He declined only because he would have had

to shorten his trip to Africa.

Malcolm X had no illusions in the so-called differences between the Democrats and Republicans. "One is the wolf, the other is a fox. No matter what, they'll both eat you." In the 1964 presidential elections, when the candidates were Johnson (the "peace" candidate) vs. Goldwater (the "war" candidate), Malcolm X exposed the deceit of this phony distinction.

"The shrewd capitalists, the shrewd imperialists," he said, "knew that the only way people would run towards the fox (Johnson) would be if you showed them the wolf (Goldwater). So they created a ghastly alternative... And at that moment he (Johnson) had troops invading the Congo and South Vietnam."

Revolutionist of action

Malcolm X was much more than just a "shrewd" observer. He was a principled political leader in the fight for Black rights. Despite his tactical disagreements with the predominant "non-violent" wing of the civil rights movement, Malcolm X stressed the need for all tendencies and organizations in the Black movement to come together—in action.

He advocated and promoted a united front of all Black organizations independent of the "white power structure." He stated repeatedly: "There must be Black unity before there can be Black-white unity." Once that was accomplished, Malcolm X was willing to work with any person or group who wanted to help.

He considered himself a Muslim, a Black nationalist, and a revolutionary.

But Malcolm X was also a revolutionist of action. And although he did not consider himself a Marxist, he observed in favorable terms that most of the former colonial countries of Africa and Asia were opting for socialism.

The tragedy of Malcolm X's death was that he was cut down while he was still evolving; still searching for a method and program that would be the most effective tool for Black liberation. Only 39 years old when he died, he wasn't allowed to reach his full political stature. Consequently, the Black liberation movement was deprived of one of its best fighters and leaders.

Unfortunately, there are no national birthday celebrations for Malcolm X (he was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925). No boulevards or streets—and with the exception of some alternative schools in the Black community—virtually no buildings bear his name.

But his ideas and his example will inspire a new generation to correct this glaring omission—in action, like Malcolm X would have done. It will be called the American socialist revolution.

Even in death, Malcolm X is still a very "dangerous" man. ■

Books to read on Malcolm X:

"The Autobiography of Malcolm X"—Ballantine Books.

"Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary"—Speeches, Pathfinder Press.

"The Assassination of Malcolm X"—Anthology, Pathfinder Press.

"The Last Year of Malcolm X," by George Breitman, Merit Press.

"Malcolm X Speaks"—Grove Press.