



Needing new disguise: Soviet bureaucrats haul down red flag

By GERRY FOLEY

Both the capitalist rulers and the chiefs of the Stalinist bureaucracy had their reasons to sound the death knell for the Soviet Union. For the former, it was a splendid occasion for proclaiming the "end of Communism." For the latter, it was a most resounding way of declaring that they do not really exist—"There's nobody here but us democrats and free enterprisers."

Pravda, which apparently remains the central organ of the old political bureaucracy (now surviving in various disguises and concealments), has been trying to stake out

The bureaucracy is in a hopeless situation. It faces blowups whichever way it turns.



Sifting through a garbage dump in Moscow. In its drive to restore capitalism Soviet bureaucracy impoverishes the people.

a position, not only as the defender of now "persecuted" Communists, but as a moderate opposition to the "radicalism" of Boris Yeltsin. That is, it argues for a slower approach to restoring capitalism.

From this stance, *Pravda* apparently considered it safe to say openly, in its Dec. 17 issue, that the new Commonwealth of Independent States was an attempt by Yeltsin to gain some political credibility to "cushion" the impact of the "social explosion" that might be touched off by the end of price controls at the beginning of the year.

From the standpoint of the old-line Stalinists and Gorbachev, this operation was an extremely risky one—too risky for them. This was so precisely because it meant a formal break with the constitutional and administrative continuity of the state, and would therefore entail at least a temporary disorganization of the bureaucracy and, most importantly, the armed bodies.

The difference on this point was a continuation of the fundamental difference between Gorbachev and Yeltsin from the start. Gorbachev had tried to maintain the formal continuity of the Stalinist institutions, the party and the Union. Yeltsin has tried to get some political credibility by breaking the continuity of these hated institutions.

From the standpoint of the bureaucracy as a whole, both are right. Yeltsin is correct that the bureaucracy can only hold on by maneuvers aimed at appeasing at least the more conservative or fearful sections of the population. But at the same time, Gorbachev is correct that such operations risk fundamentally undermining the bureaucracy's means of control.

In fact, the bureaucracy is in a hopeless situation. It faces blowups whichever way it turns, but following Yeltsin's policy, it can at least hope to delay and scatter the explosions. It is clear that the bureaucracy is heading toward a new stage in the break

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Carey victory in Teamster election reveals anger of American workers

By HAL MERCER

In the most important election facing working people in the United States for decades, the reform movement in the 1.56-million-member International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) has just won a resounding victory.

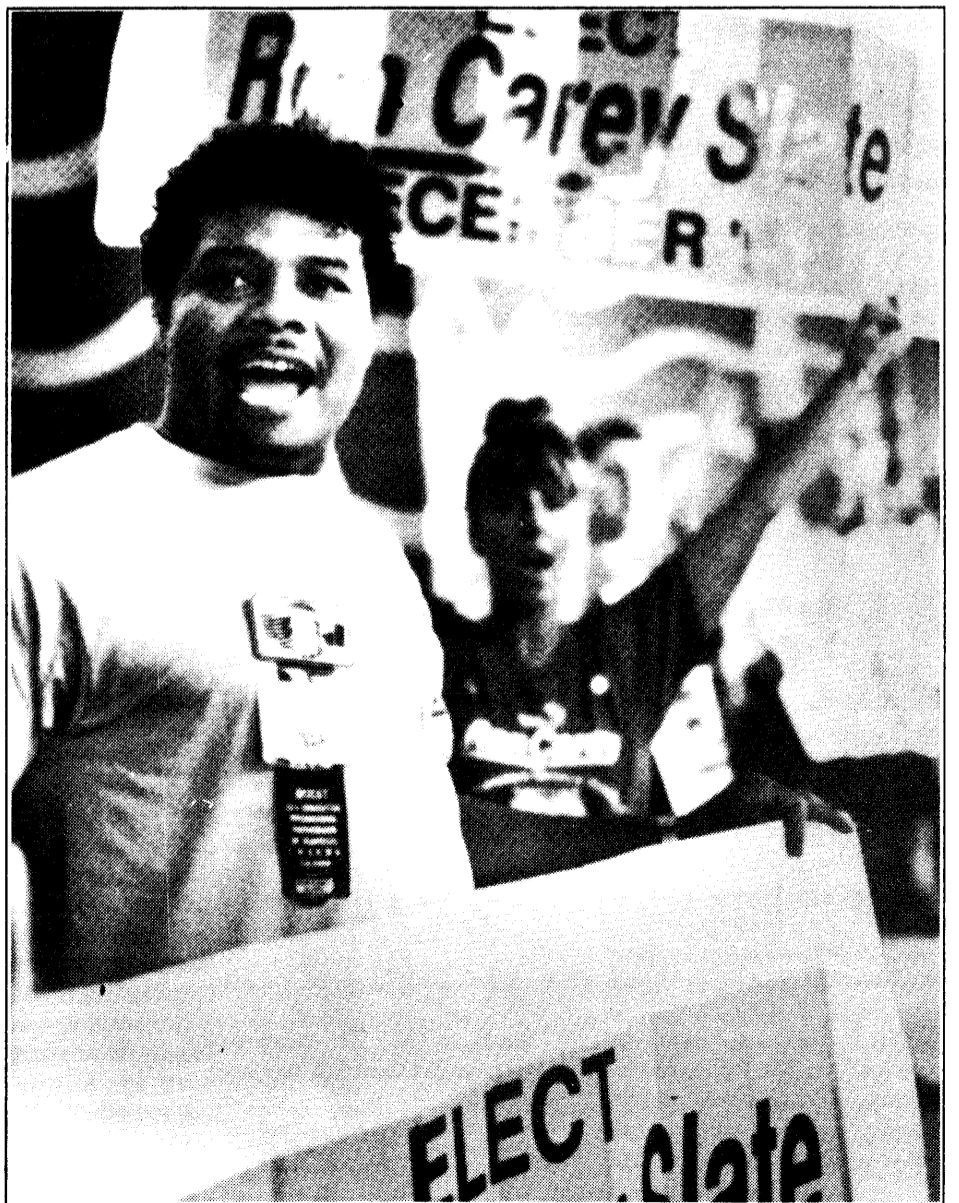
In the first-ever direct election of the union president and General Executive Board (GEB), the dissident Ron Carey slate, backed by Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), soundly beat two slates fielded by divided old-guard officials.

The *Wall Street Journal* of Dec. 12 noted that "many trucking and other employers, whose workers belong to the Teamsters, are worried that if Mr. Carey is elected, he will be an uncertain quantity, unwilling or unable to control increasingly rebellious troops." The victory of the Carey slate is in fact a body blow to the Teamster bureaucracy and to business unionism.

The final count gave Carey 48.5 percent (188,883 valid votes) and the old-guard candidates, R.V. Durham and Walter Shea, about 33 percent and 18 percent respectively. The entire 16-member Carey slate was elected, leaving the incumbent leaders only three seats on the GEB that were uncontested by the Carey forces.

This is significant for all working people. The development of the rank and file's ability to fight back has always been blocked by the union bureaucracy. Its role has been to demoralize, demoralize, and corrupt the union membership. Hardly anywhere was this more so than in the IBT, which has seen a precipitous decline in

(continued on page 3)



A.F.D.C. = Aid for Dependent Capitalists



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

A "depression" has hit the U.S. economy. Although the major economists don't like the "d" word, whatever it may be called, it's bad. And in state after state, the capitalist politicians are playing Robin Hood in reverse—taking from the poor and giving to the corporate rich.

Gov. Wilson of California just announced his plan to place more of the tax burden on the poorest in his state to ease the pain of the pampered rich. Wilson is planning to cut AFDC funds (Aid for Families with Dependent Children).

At the present time in California, a single mother with two children receives \$663 a month plus food stamps and Medi-Cal. Wilson fears that this magnificent stipend will act as a magnet for welfare recipients from other states and motivate them to move to California.

Actually, the welfare rolls have expanded because California has a 7.4 percent unemployment rate, which is 10 percent higher than the national rate of 6.8 percent.

When unemployment insurance runs out, workers have no choice but to apply for welfare. (And when their checks run out, the government claims that they're "discouraged" workers who no longer seek jobs—and they're no longer counted as unemployed.)

Welfare caseloads in California increased 20 percent between 1988 and 1991. Across the nation there has been a 15 percent increase. Between 1980 and 1988, births to unwed mothers nearly doubled, from 83,000 to 152,000, or nearly 30 percent of all births in California. This, too, has added to the welfare caseloads.

But Wilson is determined to make the children pay for the recession, and it is the poor who are going to be forced to carry the burden of the chronic capitalist disease of mass unemployment. In the days of Charles Dickens little children were allowed to beg on the streets. When Wilson cuts AFDC he should, at least, supply each child with an official begging license.

Day after day we are bombarded

with news stories about how lazy welfare recipients just refuse to work. How women will have baby after baby just to get welfare and not have to work. It makes as much sense as President Bush telling us to end the recession by running out and buying a car and a house—and maybe a pair of socks.

But, I have living proof that people want to work and will do anything for a job.

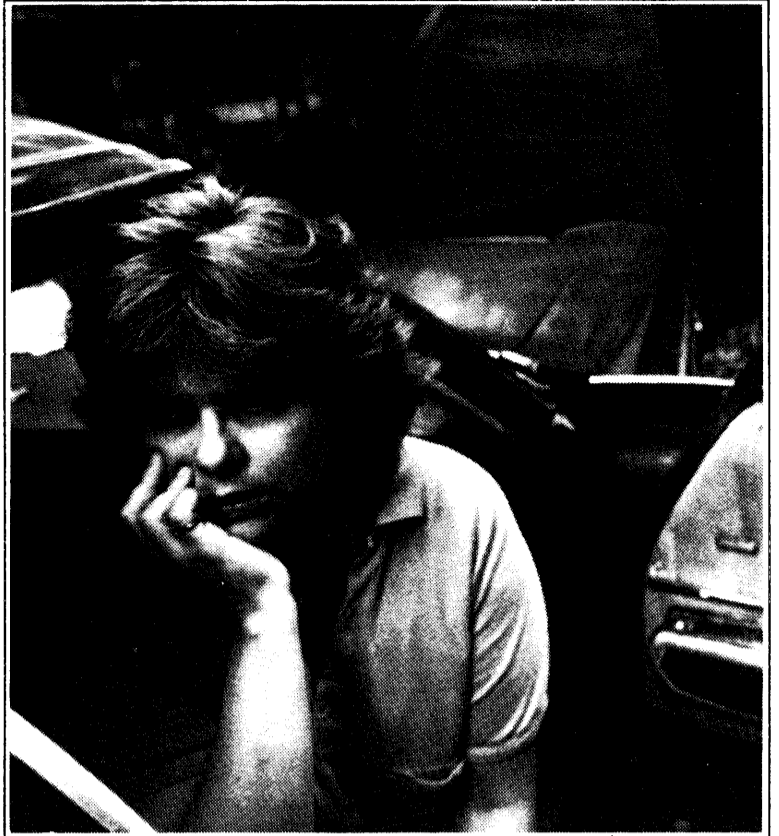
Our new headquarters, at 3425 Army Street, is just across the street from a parking lot where day-laborers gather. At dawn, every day, men begin to line up for work. In the rain, fog, and wind, they wait for any truck that might come by. Then they break and run for the truck, surrounding it, asking to be hired.

They are willing to take the most gut-busting, back-breaking work for the lowest salary possible. They stand in the parking lot until the sun goes down, and then return the next day for a new try.

If I had the power I would force every loudmouth who talks about lazy welfare people to stand outside that store and beg for work.

The real truth is that many people who are on welfare do work. But their wages are so low they need welfare in order to survive.

From 1977 to 1989, the poorest fifth of American families saw their incomes drop by more than 10 percent, to \$8391 annually, while the incomes of the richest fifth grew by more than 25 percent to, \$109,424 annually. In the 1980s, 80 percent of all jobs



created paid less than \$8000 per year.

Taxes on the poor and working class have skyrocketed while taxes on the rich have dropped steadily for the past 20 years. Now the politicians and the capitalist class are demanding even more tax cuts for the corporations, saying this is the way to end the recession.

In a way, they're right. Capitalists are not investing because profits are too low. To raise profits, among other things, it's necessary to mercilessly tax the

working-class poor and cut social services such as education, health, and welfare.

And then, the Democratic and Republican Party state and federal governments simply hand over billions of our taxes to bail out bankrupt banks and corporations.

That's the new AFDC swindle (Aid For Dependent Capitalists) that California's Gov. Wilson and all the other political puppets of the ruling class are pulling off.

I want to wish all of our readers a great, militant, fighting new year!

The meaning of the Carey victory

The electoral victory of the Ron Carey/Teamsters for a Democratic Union slate registers a big change in the relation of forces in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. It is pregnant with new possibilities for breaking up the bureaucratic

ship to honor the picket lines of all unions. This is highly unusual in today's labor movement. The importance of this fact must not be underestimated and augurs well for the future of the union.

The new Teamster leadership has set a course that, if followed through, will bring them into deadly conflict with trucking industry bosses and the old Teamster bureaucracy that fronts for them. The latter still has substantial control over the union apparatus on the local, regional, and national levels. They remain in position for blocking effective class action against the bosses.

Of course, the capitalist government, which for its own reasons gave a massive impetus to the democratization of the Teamsters, can also be counted upon to block the union from

taking the road to effective class struggle policies—and will try to smash it if necessary.

What road ahead?

The Carey/TDU leadership, consequently, will be sharply tested in the period ahead. We can expect that this will take some time to unfold. Which road the Teamsters take, and how fast they go, will be greatly affected in the first place by the deepening economic crisis.

But in the last analysis, the course of these events will be decisively affected by the role of class-conscious workers in the industry. The developing crisis of capitalism will give greater weight to the role of class-struggle militants, who can offer a clear alternative to Teamsters in opposition to the class collaboration strategy of the labor bureaucracy.

The certainty that class-conscious workers will decisively affect the course of the class struggle in the period ahead is solidly based on historical experience. In every period of rising class struggle throughout American history, it was socialist-minded workers who led the class as a whole to make its biggest gains. This is primarily because revolutionary socialists reject restricting workers' needs to what capitalists can afford.

The subordination of workers interests to profitability—"to save jobs by keeping our employer in business"—has been imposed on the working class by the encrusted bureaucracy heading the AFL-CIO and other unions.

The top labor officials see the

unions as a business providing them with a style of living worthy of a corporate executive. They see themselves, literally, in partnership with the bosses. They rationalize their class collaborationism by falsely insisting that workers and bosses have common economic interests.

Almost all workers are infected, to one degree or another, by this misconception. Even radicalizing militants, like many in the new leadership of the Teamsters, cannot help but be affected by the false notion that the interests of workers and bosses are linked by the relationship between exploited and exploiter.

But bitter experiences will multiply in the months and years ahead that will force more and more working people to see through the delusion that the welfare of workers is dependent on, and subordinate to, the good and welfare of the capitalists.

The role of socialists

The role of class-conscious workers becomes most important in periods of capitalist crisis, such as the one now unfolding. Socialists have led every march forward by the working class.

In the 19th century and in most of the first half of the 20th century, socialists led the struggle for an ever-shorter workweek, higher pay, better working conditions, and industrial unionism—which was a giant step toward uniting all workers regardless of skill, race, sex, and creed.

Moreover, socialists from the time of Eugene V. Debs, have been, and are now in the front ranks of those who struggle for a break from the capitalist political parties and advocate building an independent mass revolutionary workers' party. Without such a political instrument, the workers



are doomed to suffer a qualitative disadvantage in the class struggle.

Socialist-minded workers must now focus their attention and efforts on the opening provided by the victory of the vanguard led by Ron Carey in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. In the coming period, the course of the whole labor movement, and history itself, can be decisively affected by union-building intervention in this process by the most class-conscious members of the American working class.

The road to building a mass, revolutionary socialist, working-class party will be paved by economic struggles such as this one opening up in the IBT. It will be led, we can be sure, by the new generation of working-class fighters that will inevitably emerge from these struggles.

Readers and supporters of *Socialist Action* can be counted on to play their part in the coming struggles by IBT and other union militants. —the editors

Editorial

log-jam blocking American workers from a serious fightback in defense of their living standards.

The Carey slate made opposition to concessions contracts a major part of its campaign for the leadership of the IBT. Moreover, Carey has a record as president of his local union of having systematically instructed his member-

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... Teamsters elect new leadership

(continued from page 1)

membership from 2.2 million to 1.5 million over the last decade.

Unfortunately, the low turnout—only 27 percent of the membership—shows that most members have a wait-and-see attitude. But it also demonstrates the absence of a base for the entrenched officers and business agents to get out the vote.

Although the outcome does not indicate that a broad radicalization is already underway, it does reflect the ability of an organized rank-and-file movement to get a significant minority of the membership to vote for change.

This election victory follows on the heels of the Teamster convention last June, where the membership won some important gains, including increased strike benefits and the right to a separate vote on their contract supplements.

The bureaucracy must wish that, even though faced with a government Racketeering and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) suit, they had not signed the Consent Decree under which this election took place. But they had little choice—being faced with prison terms for their previous corruption.

As of November, 138 officials had been removed for corruption or mob ties by the government's investigations officer. Now they've lost nearly the entire GEB.

On the other hand, the government might be regretting their own intervention, which helped pave the way for this kind of an election. Obviously, they never factored in the impact of a weak economy and increasing unemployment.

For over 10 years, the IBT has been granting givebacks to the employers, while keeping the membership passive and in the dark. The members resent the high-living of the parasitic bureaucrats; 171 officers made over \$100,000 last year, mainly by pyramiding salaries and pension plans.

Top guzzler at the union treasury was Harold Friedman, who pulled down \$1,356,568 in 1989, the year he was removed as head of Local 507 in Cleveland for racketeering. Last year, outgoing Teamsters General President William J. McCarthy had to get by with \$321,257.

Even with the democratic pressure of the election, we have seen weak bargaining in the major national contracts—UPS, freight, and car-haul. In the first two cases, the contacts were grudgingly accepted but not in the third. Now, in the aftermath of Carey's victory, the renegotiated car-haul proposal is expected to be voted down again, with an unprecedented turn-out of car-haulers.

The role of TDU

Despite the current recession—which undercuts workers' confidence while bargaining—the Carey slate succeeded because of the strength of TDU. Initiated by union activists (including socialists), many of

whom were participants in earlier reform efforts, this grouping has been building a base for over 15 years. Its monthly paper, *Convoy Dispatch*, reaches some 60,000—and its circulation has recently grown even more.

Originally seen as a group of isolated dissidents, TDU over the years has come to prominence as a force in the fight to reject poor contracts and win important reforms. Significantly, these reforms include majority-rule voting on contracts and, indeed, the right to vote for top officers. Now the TDU has a majority on the GEB!

Building an organization of some 10,000 organized members, TDU helped to create the political climate for change and trained

members think that crooked leaders will not negotiate decent contracts. Campaign literature emphasized that "the Durham crowd has stolen our money, take kick-backs from employers and sold out our union to organized crime."

Toward a new union

The Carey victory is a barometric example of the discontent that is festering among many union-conscious workers. Although limited strictly to a program of economic demands, the electoral victory of the Teamster dissidents could open the way to transforming the union into a class-struggle instrument.

The dissidents gain an important dynamic by not being part of the bureaucracy. But in order to survive, they will have to go to the ranks to mobilize against the lurking

Carrying through on its promises will bring the GEB and rank-and-file movement into conflict with local, joint-council, and conference officials, as well as the entrenched bureaucracy at the union's D.C. headquarters.

Since about one-third of IBT locals hold elections each year, in nine months another round will begin. By then, the ranks must be won over to support of the reform leadership through tangible changes. Fortunately, a string of local victories has accompanied the international elections. A particularly gratifying example is the two-to-one defeat of incumbent national President McCarthy and Vice-President Hackett inside their own Local 25 in Boston.

The *Boston Globe* of Nov. 24 quoted a McCarthy supporter as saying, "The results reflected the demand for change sweeping both unions and the nation's political scene. People want change, and there's no stopping it."

The rank-and-file victories in the IBT are inspiring reform forces in other unions as well, particularly the New Directions Movement (NDM) in the United Auto Workers (UAW). This group sent observers to TDU's recent convention. NDM orator and co-founder of the UAW, Victor Reuther, optimistically generalized from the Teamster experience, "There is growing in the ranks a wildfire for change. It's going to sweep this nation."

A test for Carey's positions

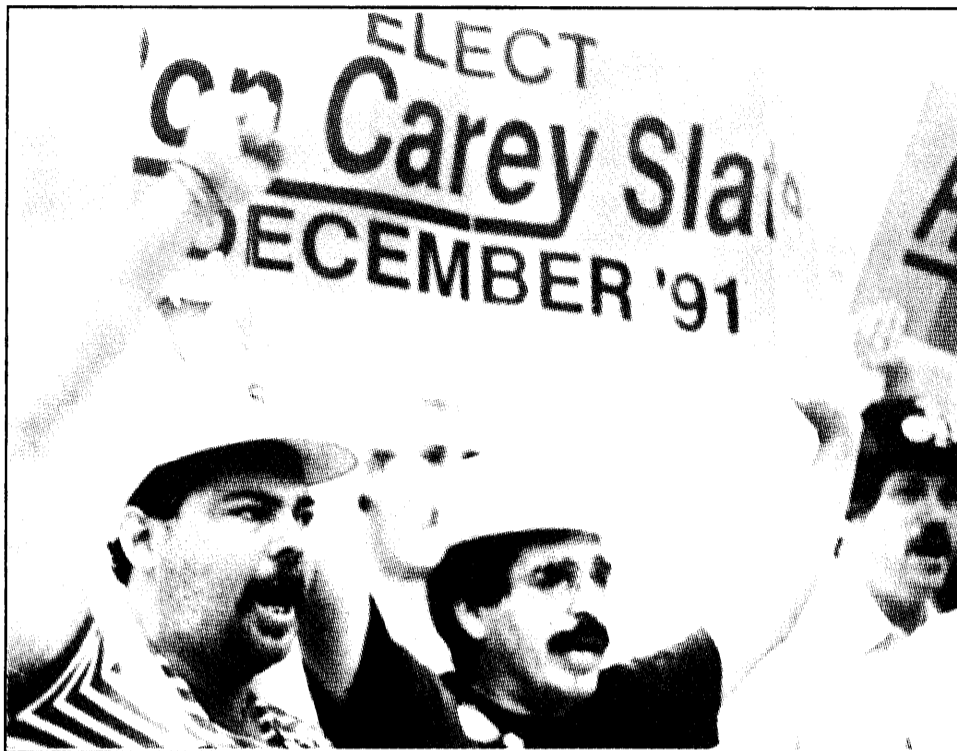
Carey himself is a contradiction. He probably looks to either the Democrats or the Republicans as makeshift political friends. Nevertheless, he has earned his Local 804 members' respect for servicing their needs, supporting strikes by other New York area locals and being willing to defy injunctions when necessary to win strikes.

A big problem has been the perception that the U.S. government was a tactical ally against the mob-backed Teamster bureaucracy. The Consent Decree did give the reform movement an opening. Nevertheless, it provided a dangerous precedent, and the government is not yet out of Teamster affairs.

A small, but nevertheless important, example of the problem of government intervention is the court ruling forcing TDU to disclose the names of its supporters. This opened up TDU supporters to retaliation and intimidation.

Carey's victory will soon be tested in real life. Will this leadership mobilize its members in mass picket lines when necessary to win strikes? This is the real way to stop replacement scabs, not through the election of phony friends of labor in the bosses' parties.

Furthermore, the Carey leadership, which is pledged to take the question of political endorsements to the membership, will have to wrestle with the question of independent political action. At least several members of the GEB support the idea of a labor party.



the troops to win. Although it kept a low profile, it was the backbone of the Carey campaign.

Carey's campaign is significant because it does not represent primarily a split in the bureaucracy. Instead, it expresses a genuine, although small, rank-and-file movement.

Most of the candidates on Carey's slate are working Teamsters, with a majority being TDUs. Over 10,000 members donated to Carey's shoe-string campaign. On the other hand, less than 1 percent of Durham's ample campaign fund came from working Teamsters.

The Carey slate campaigned on a "platform of the rank and file." They stressed demands such as no give-back contracts, abolishing officials' multiple salaries and pensions, no more sellouts on grievances, better pensions, a voice for women members, a fight for national health insurance, and the right to vote for convention delegates.

Increasingly, the campaign focussed on ending corruption, in the belief that the

bureaucracy and the employers.

TDU's perspective on this was articulated in a report at the October Rank-and-File Convention by Joe Fahey, president of Watsonville, Calif., Local 912. Warning that action must be taken immediately to bolster membership confidence and participation, he said, "We need to move quickly ... to change the union and to show the members that something important has happened because of their votes. ... [the old guard] may try to take advantage of any indecision to sabotage Carey's plans."

Fahey concluded, "Ron Carey is our brother, but he is not Moses. ... Our work doesn't end with the election of Ron Carey."

Indeed, Carey's first announcement as president elect was that he would cut his own salary and "get the bums out." A good start. But the future will be difficult. The majority of the new GEB is inexperienced. The crux of the problem is that leaders are forged in the crucible of mass movements, something U.S. labor has not been for a generation.

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Fighting mood surfaces at United during contract vote

By CARL VINCOLISI
and MALIK MIAH

SAN FRANCISCO—Airline workers and passengers alike received a sudden jolt when Pan Am abruptly grounded its aircraft, shut down its ticket booths, and went out of business in early December.

This was closely followed by headlines announcing that General Motors Corporation planned to lay off 74,000 workers and shut down 21 plants over the next four years.

A few days later, and with these job-threatening events undoubtedly still fresh in their minds, United Airlines employees represented by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) voted to approve a negotiated tentative offer before a Dec. 23 strike showdown.

The contract, which covers 27,500 nation-wide employees through 1994, was approved by 71 percent of the voting membership. Top union negotiators cited all-too-familiar dire economic statistics as their excuse for recommending a "yes!" vote.

Nonetheless, 46 percent of IAM members voted "no!" in the massive San Francisco Bay Area station, which includes 11,400 members—most of whom work at the large United Airlines Maintenance Operations Base (MOC 1) as mechanics. Union members include baggage handlers,

Carl Vincolisi and Malik Miah are members of IAM Local Lodge 1781.



food service employees, store keepers, cabin cleaners, and janitors.

Despite differences in voting patterns between San Francisco and the other stations, few denied that management's offer

represented a serious attack on the working conditions and wages of workers. Wages range from almost \$7 to over \$20 per hour.

The new contract froze wages retroactively over the last two years since the old

contract expired in 1989. Instead, the company gave a 4 percent lump-sum payment based on gross pay during the same period. Since all future wage increase percentages are compounded on previous gains, this sleight of hand costs each worker thousands of dollars.

Actual wage increases were 5 percent, effective Dec. 1991, no raise in 1992, 4 percent in Feb. 1993, and 5 percent in May 1994. The company also received a major concession in working conditions by extending the five-day, Monday through Friday, work week at MOC 1 and at MOC 11 (construction begins in 1994 in Indianapolis) to 7 days with weekly rotating days off.

The IAM had long opposed this and other major concessions granted to the company, such as the considerable expansion of part-time workers and the utilization of workers in lower-paid classifications to assume the job duties of workers in higher-paid classifications.

Big Bay Area meetings

These concessions hit hard at the large Bay Area workforce. Sizable numbers of workers spoke to each other about reasons for rejecting the contract and preparing for a strike.

Three meetings of 450, 500, and over 800 took place at the union hall in the space of 10 days. Members at these meetings stated their overwhelming opposition to the contract offer. The opposition sentiment was particularly strong among mechanics.

Just prior to the tentative agreement being announced, a meeting of several hundred workers broke into enthusiastic applause following the remarks of one mechanic. He spoke against the divisive comments made by several other mechanics that they could get more money if the less skilled baggage handlers and kitchen workers were not included in the IAM negotiations.

The mechanic explained that it was the owners of United Airlines that were taking money from the mechanics, and not other workers. He said that "the more members we have, the better prepared we are to bargain more effectively with management. If the customer service agents had voted for the IAM in the last certification election, that would have also been a significant addition to our ranks and to our power."

At other similar meetings, workers chided the union leadership for trying to scare the membership into voting for the contract. A baggage handler pointed out: "United is poised to be first or second among only three remaining airlines. They will have their monopoly and begin raising ticket prices, gouging the public and reaping super profits. They have the money. They paid cash for Air Wisconsin and Pan Am."

He continued, "They gave a 10 percent raise last year to customer service agents to keep the union out. Now is the time to stop the erosion of our living standards. Precisely because the future looks bleak is why we have to fight now."

Militant voices

In response to this pressure, the executive board and grievance committee of the Bay Area IAM Local Lodge 1781 took its distance from the International and District IAM leadership by voting overwhelmingly to recommend a "no!" vote.

A meeting of several hundred union stewards also voted to oppose the contract and to strike.

This dynamic is what accounts for the large "no!" vote. But unfortunately, that mood did not spread to the rest of the country.

Neither the national nor the local union leadership did anything to prepare for a strike. They were content to let their inaction and pessimism be the best argument for a "yes!" vote. The failure of the top IAM leadership to organize a fightback has further eroded the confidence of workers in their union.

Yet, the Bay Area experience demonstrates that a fighting sentiment lies just below the surface. Building a new militant leadership to tap that rank-and-file ferment is a prerequisite for preparing for future battles.

By TINA BEACOCK

CHICAGO—Railroad workers on the Chicago Northwestern (CNW) suffered a serious setback with an agreement cutting crew sizes to one engineer and one conductor on all trains. This is the final act of a process which has reduced operating crews by two-thirds in the last three years.

Every major railroad is seeking similar changes in the train crew size (or "crew consist," as it is called). The settlement that Congress imposed after the national strike in April threw out moratoriums in the 133 crew-consist agreements negotiated with each separate railroad.

On the CNW, official estimates call for the elimination of 630 jobs; that is, elimination of half the switchmen and brakemen currently working.

CNW workers have been under fire since 1988. After an eight-hour strike in 1989, a Presidential Emergency Board settlement (PEB 213) cut 700 jobs and reduced crews from three persons to two persons. PEB 213 played out the scenario on the CNW that was later employed for the railroads nationally.

This time, ironically, United Transportation Union (UTU) members were asked to vote on a contract for the first time in the union's history—and a majority voted for it. UTU general chair Don Markgraf argued at a local meeting that this was basically the best deal that could be expected, given the unfavorable climate for labor in arbitration hearings and Congress.

For most UTU members, this was the \$100,000 buy-out proposal, not the job-cuts proposal. The company offered the money to all those whose jobs will be eliminated, as an inducement to leave the railroad. Those staying with the CNW were offered \$15,000 as a signing bonus, with the promise of guaranteed employment.

Terms of the agreement

The new agreement gives the railroad the unrestricted right to decide crew size.

Tina Beacock is a member of UTU Local 577.

Railworkers suffer setback with crew size changes

A utility brakeman will now have to divide the time worked among an unlimited number of crews, instead of only one, to do the switching work.

It forces all train employees hired after 1988 to transfer anywhere the railroad requires them, instead of in specific seniority districts.

The agreement establishes a reserve board where employees unable to hold a job, or a position on the extra board, will receive 75 percent of their pay. But its size is completely up to the discretion of the carrier, and there are many special provisions to keep the reserve board at a minimum. Many anticipate this will be another paper guarantee that very few will collect on.

The most serious takeback involves a moratorium on making any changes in this agreement until the last employee working in 1988 leaves the railroad. This amounts to an open-ended no-strike pledge, while the railroad is allowed to decide all questions about implementing the agreement.

In the past, the CNW has demonstrated a blithe indifference to contract violations. Claims now take two to 10 years to resolve. Under the company's "progressive discipline system," employees have been dismissed for minor infractions—from not wearing safety glasses to missing a telephone call to go to work on the extra board. This has eliminated scores of employees, especially union officers and activists, at least for the two years a case takes to get to an appeals hearing.

With this setup, the railroad has the means to get rid of protected employees and replace them with new ones, at 75 percent wages with no guarantees.

The best possible agreement?

Many CNW workers, seeing no alternative and no one in the leadership speaking out against the settlement, voted for the

agreement. Some took the buy-out to be done once and for all with the harassment and speedup on the railroad. Others, seeing no options for other union-scale wage-jobs, voted for the agreement, and are holding their breath while waiting for the signing bonus.

The CNW offered the money for several reasons. It sought to avoid arbitration, where it knew already it would not get *carte blanche* to allow one-person crews. In addition, the railroad expects to save millions in wages and benefits after paying for the buy-outs.

The CNW proposal is well in line with the railroads' basic strategy—as Chicago Northwestern's CEO Robert Schmeige stated in a letter to Union Pacific's President Walsh—to preserve a "legal framework which makes it difficult for unions to create economic tests of strength."

Without a major rethinking of strategy in the unions, workers cannot expect to obtain a much better deal than this one. In urging a vote for this agreement, unfortunately, the UTU leadership completely accepted the framework the railroads seek to establish—making it impossible for the unions to use their power to strike in defense of their jobs and working conditions.

Some rail workers on the Union Pacific have reportedly begun slowdowns in order to resist the terms of the concessions. The UTU leadership on the CNW has suggested that the railroad cannot implement their crew cuts without the cooperation of crews. The nature of work on the railroad makes this especially true.

Of course, it would be a cynical move indeed to urge individual rail workers to resist without organization. In the long term, rethinking strategy means changing the terms of the fight—not relying on politicians, but on our own democratically-organized, united forces.

Why the economic crisis won't go away

By BARRY SHEPPARD

Even President Bush and the head of the Federal Reserve Bank, Alan Greenspan, now admit what working people have known for some time—the economy is in bad shape, and no one can predict when the turnaround will begin. And when it does, it's not clear if relatively hard times will not be with us for a long while.

The current recession is dragging on longer than other recessions of the past 20 years, even if it hasn't yet plunged as deep. Are we in for another dip, maybe even something that would classify as a depression?

Current economic news is not good for workers: Layoffs are again on the rise, and the announcement by General Motors that it will close many plants and lay off 75,000 workers in the next four years points to longer-range problems.

A key thing to watch is whether the U.S. recession will dovetail with recessions in Germany and Japan, and thus become truly internationalized.

The pundits the capitalists hire to ponder these things show some signs of worry. The *New York Times* reports that the Japanese stock market has been sliding—and more important, that it is not raising capital at the previous high rate. It seems that the capitalists have begun to scale back on the high levels of investment in new plants and productive equipment that have driven the Japanese economy.

The German press is expressing fears of a recession. If the downturn becomes generalized throughout the capitalist world, it will become deeper here, too. But that is still a big "if" at present, and no one has a crystal ball that works.

Long-range economic trends

Nevertheless, longer-range trends are evident. Following the Second World War and the failure of the workers of Europe to take power—as a result of Stalinist betrayal—capitalism was restabilized on the basis of the massive destruction it had wrought in the great bloodletting.

The rebuilding meant that the world market expanded fast enough to absorb investment by the rich on a scale in which there was opportunity for most of them.

But by the 1970s, it became clear that situation had come to an end. While the world market continued an overall expansion, within the ups and downs of the business cycle, it was no longer at the rate required to absorb all the capital the rich had piled up in profitable (for them) investment.

One result has been the growth of "too much" productive capacity. The GM announcement was one indication. There are too many car-producing facilities in the world in relation to the demand for cars in the world market, and plants have to be shut down.

In the 1980s, "too much" capacity for steel-making in the world resulted in massive shutdowns of steel plants.

Increasing international capitalist competition has become more and more the order of the day. Under the lash of this competition, the natural tendency of the rate of profit to fall has again reasserted itself. This in turn intensifies competition and drives the big capitalists to try to squeeze more from the workers and from the "underdeveloped" capitalist countries.

While the billionaire families have investments all over the world, they use control over "their" governments to further their own interests as against their competitors. This includes their competition over who gets to exploit the "Third World" countries.

Twice this century, such competition has grown so intense that the capitalists plunged us into world wars.

We should recall that the United States, Germany, and Japan emerged as the big contestants in the Second World War. The other advanced capitalist countries had to align with one camp or the other. While the United States came out of the war as the dominant capitalist power, that position has been eroded with the rebuilding of Germany and Japan. Now once again, the



three giants increasingly confront each other.

That is the meaning of the "free trade" agreements emerging in Europe, in North America, and around Japan.

The steps taken toward greater economic and political cooperation among the European capitalist powers aims to lower protectionism between those countries, to be sure. But it is mainly an attempt to create a powerful bloc and market to compete against the other two emerging capitalist power centers.

The German capitalists are pushing the hardest for European union because they are the strongest European economy and have everything to gain. Other European powers throw in their lot with Germany as their best bet in securing their own niche. Britain is the most reluctant, trying to maintain a special relation with the United States.

Washington has countered with the "free trade" agreement with Canada, and hopes to include Mexico and the rest of Latin America, to keep the southern continent even more a preserve for exploitation by the North Americans.

Thus the emergence of these three big blocks does not signal the amelioration of world capitalist competition, but its intensification.

The Japan-bashing that took place around the celebrations of the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack reflected this. Bush's refusal to apologize for the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, one of the greatest crimes against humanity in that war, has significance for the future in that it is a threat to use atomic weapons again in certain situations.

The Democrats add their two-cents worth by claiming that the recession is not the result of the workings of the capitalist system, but that it is "made in Japan."

For all the capitalist nations of the "Third World" this increased competition spells greater exploitation and misery. The 1980s saw these countries bearing the brunt of the developing world capitalist crisis with increasing poverty, hunger, and disease as a result.

The crisis at home

In the United States during the 1980s, there was an overall expansion—but it was based in part on speculation and borrowing, and not on new productive investment. The government racked up huge deficits to finance trillions of dollars-worth of military spending. While taxes weren't raised to cover this enormous expense, inflation was avoided by borrowing the difference from the rich of the world.

This debt is not of little consequence, as the neo-Keynesians assert. Paying it back, as well as the new debt that keeps accumulating, means that there is increasing pressure on the capitalist class to cut back on the social wages of working people—including unemployment payments, social security, medical costs, and welfare.

As a result, we see capitalist demagoguery—and not only by the likes of David Duke—seeking to turn working people against each other by blaming Blacks,

women, those on welfare, the unemployed, immigrants, etc.

The 1980s saw an impoverishment of whole sectors of U.S. society, especially among Blacks. Homelessness became a qualitatively more pervasive phenomenon. Diseases once thought to be licked have made a comeback. Indeed, we have had some of this decade's impoverishment of the "Third World" reproduced right here. The same developments have occurred in the European countries.

The stock market crash of 1987 did not lead to a world depression. But it did reveal the underlying shakiness of the world capitalist economy. It showed much speculative investment to be worthless—in particular much of the investment by the savings and loan sector of banking. Now we hear that the regular banking system may be in trouble.

The prospect ahead for the capitalist world is one of intensified strife, both between the capitalist countries and between the capitalist exploiters and the working people of the world. Without presenting any timetable, we are living in an economy that can slip into catastrophe. The apprehensions that most workers are reported to have about not only the immediate future but the future for their children

is well founded.

What does this mean for the countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR?

The bureaucrats in those countries have charted a course towards the restoration of capitalism. But this has proven to be far harder than anyone predicted. The foremost obstacle has been the resistance of the workers to give up the social gains they had won even under the hated Stalinist regimes.

Can't blame socialism

While these economies spiral downward as a result the bureaucracy's "market reforms," it becomes harder and harder to blame "socialism" for the collapse and to claim that the hardships are just a temporary phenomena. What capitalist restoration would mean for the working people of factory and field is beginning to become apparent.

In addition, the world's capitalists have resisted investing very much in these countries. First of all, they feel uneasy about investing when the workers haven't been beaten back enough yet to accept the conditions the capitalists demand. And they fear the potential for the workers to once again appropriate any investments they might make.

Moreover, with already existing overcapacity in many branches of the world capitalist economy, capitalists aren't going to rush to invest in new productive capacity in Russia or Poland.

World capitalism has proven that it cannot lift the capitalist "Third World" out of its misery to the level of the advanced capitalist countries, due to the very need of these advanced countries to continue to exploit the "Third World." What then would be in store for Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics if capitalism was restored there? They would be more like the "Third World" than like the better-off parts of Sweden or the United States.

But worker resistance to capitalist restoration is proving to be deep. There is still time for the organization of the working class to throw off the bureaucracy and its restorationist plans and resume the march toward socialism.

In a nutshell, the crises of capitalism are growing sharper everywhere. The struggle between the capitalists and the workers, between capitalism and socialism, is not only not over, but is becoming ever more relevant. ■

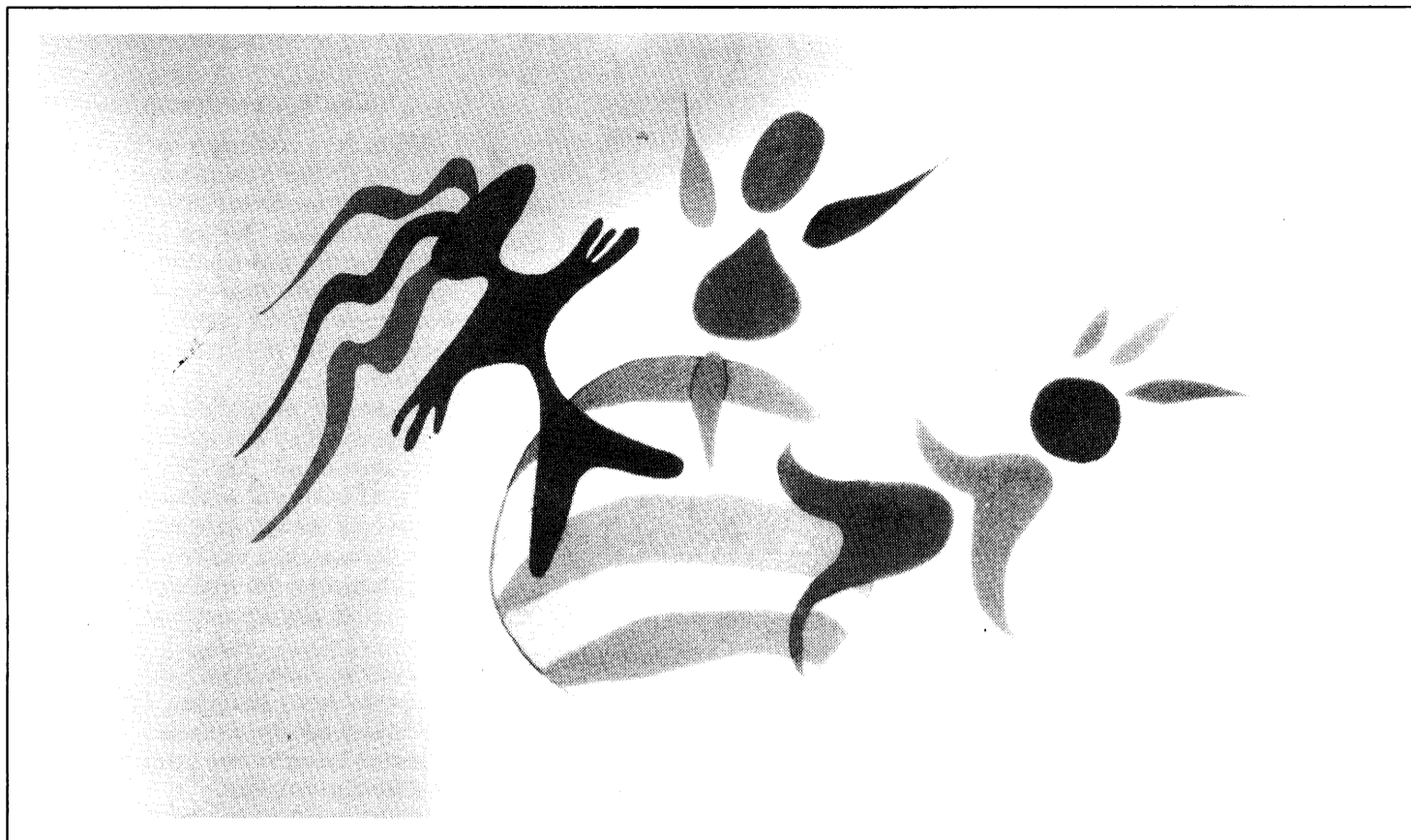
Sign of the times?



Fifty thousand angry union construction workers took to the streets in New York City on Dec. 19, to demand jobs. In a spirited rally on the steps of City Hall, union leaders demanded the city increase spending on construction projects—some of which have already been approved but are stalled in the city's bureaucratic pipeline. It is estimated that over half of New York City construction workers are unemployed.

Although the demonstration was sponsored jointly by contractors and the union (employers and employees), the marching hard hats stamped the demonstration with a militant spirit. Organized on short notice, the action showed how quickly workers can organize a mass action.

Women unite to save the planet — and their rights



By LINDA THOMPSON

MIAMI, Fla.—Two global issues for the 1990s—the environment and full equality for women—converged here on Nov. 9-12 in a massive gathering of women from 83 different nations. Fifteen hundred women attended.

Bella Abzug, the welcoming speaker for the first World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, said the congress was organized because "women have been almost invisible in policy-making on environment and development issues. That's why women, who are more than 50 percent of the world's population, must participate—and be heard—when decisions are made that affect all our lives and the health of Mother Earth."

The congress was organized by The Women's Environment and Development Organization and spearheaded by Abzug, the former New York congresswoman. One of its main goals was to gain equal representation for women's viewpoints at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which will be held in Brazil next June.

The June 1-12 UN conference will draw heads of state from 159 nations, making it the largest summit ever held. A parallel People's Congress of thousands of citizen activists will occur simultaneously in

Brazil, underscoring rank-and-file activist distrust of the summit's general environmental agenda.

A tribunal

At the Miami congress, experienced women, who have been leading mass grassroots environmental campaigns from the Philippines to Kenya, or researching environmental problems and questions such as population growth, biogenetics, and ecological degradation presented reports of their activities.

The congress was organized in the form of a tribunal. Judges from Guyana, Kenya, Australia, Sweden, and India took testimony from witnesses from every region of the world, who documented evidence of their battles against economic and ecological devastation.

The participants also acted as jurors, taking testimony from the tribunal's morning sessions, along with their own experiences, to a series of workshops, where they developed recommendations and action proposals for a healthy planet. These proposals were then incorporated into an action agenda, which was presented to Maurice Strong, leader of the UN conference, on the final day of the five-day conference.

There were 230 women from Africa, nearly 200 from Latin America, and sizable delegations from Asia, the Middle East, and

the South Pacific. The conference committee was criticized from the floor by Native-American women who had not been included as either judges or witnesses.

The fact that many of the sessions and workshops dealt with economic and development issues and were chaired by Third World women put the conference agenda on a collision course with Bush's proposed New World Order.

For example, Leonor Briones, president of the mass Philippine Freedom from Debt Coalition, pointed out the relationship between the environmental degradation in neocolonial areas and the foreign debt. She called for the cancellation of the debt.

The most radical speeches received standing ovations. Speaker after speaker attacked the "private enterprise system" and spoke of the need for a new collectivist economic model, which would include no less than 40 percent and no more than 60 percent female leadership to solve environmental problems.

The Action Agenda

The congress came out with a comprehensive economic and political agenda for action, which states in part: "We come together to speak ... for the millions of women who experience the violence of poverty, environmental degradation and exploitation of their work and bodies due to

an international economic order that places capital before human need and ecological well-being. ... In a world in which nature and women are systematically exploited by a so-called 'free-market' ideology, there can be no environmental security."

On the debt and trade, the program acknowledged the disastrous social, environmental, and economic consequences of international lending practices and current terms of trade between industrialized and non-industrialized nations. It called for immediate debt forgiveness and the cancellation of commercial debt for the Third World debtor nations.

It called for the recognition of women's access to food and land tenure as a basic human right. And it demanded restrictions on and regulation of research and development in biotechnology and the commodification of "free gifts of nature," such as the patenting of life forms and genetic resources.

On militarism and the environment, the program calls for an immediate 50 percent reduction in military spending, the dismantling of all nuclear weapons, and the creation of civilian review commissions made up of 50 percent women, which would open to public scrutiny all military activities, expenditures, and research. It demanded that all national armies be converted into environmental protection corps to monitor and repair damaged ecosystems:

It called for science and technology to be placed at the service of the many rather than for the profit of the few. The Action Agenda called for boycotts of industries and products that are harmful to the environment and health, and funding for safe alternative energy sources.

On population control, women's rights, and health, the conference condemned the suggestion that women's fertility rates are the cause of environmental degradation and squarely blamed economic systems which exploit and misuse nature and people and industrial pollution and military technology. It rejected top-down, demographically driven population policies and programs that disrespect the human rights of women.

At the same time, it recognized the right to reproductive health and choice as a basic human right and noted that 500 million couples wish to plan their families and have no access to the means to do so. It condemned any attempt to deprive women of their right to reproductive freedom, and demanded women-centered, women-managed, comprehensive reproductive health-care and family planning—including the right to legal, voluntary contraception and abortion.

The most obvious failure of the congress was its lack of a call for internationally coordinated environmental actions, and many women expressed their frustration with this fact in the workshop sessions. But in spite of the conference framework—which focused on the UNCED summit in Brazil—considerable networking went on among the 1500 participants, and many women were able to plan coordinated future activities. ■

Panel discusses hazards of environmental illnesses

The Connecticut Chemical Sensitivities Disorders Association organized a panel on chemically-induced environmental illness at the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet.

The panel had three times as many women in attendance as most of the other workshops, indicating widespread interest

The panel had three times as many women in attendance as most of the other workshops, indicating widespread interest in the topic.

in the topic. It was also one of the panels chosen by the conference committee to be taped. A tape of the panel is now available for sale worldwide, increasing the impact tremendously.

The workshop included the participation of Dr. Rosa Lee Bertel, an internationally

known researcher in the field of environmental illness. Bertel blasted the military and laid the responsibility on it for a whole range of diseases. Bertel stated that the generations most directly affected by nuclear testing as children are now experiencing many bizarre disease phenomena.

Denise Bland Bowles, an African American industrial-hygienist from the national office of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union (AFSCME) spoke of the effects of indoor air pollution on a predominantly female office workforce. She reported that many employees are becoming ill from routine pesticide spraying in office buildings.

Rose Marie Augustine, a Chicana activist from Tucson, Ariz., who has led a community campaign there against toxic contamination of the water supply, gave an impassioned description of the health problems that the Mexican American community is experiencing, ranging from increased cancer rates to lupus. Chicanos have built a powerful community organization, The Coordinating Council of the Southwest Network for Environmental and

Economic Justice, to fight for clean water.

Linda Thompson spoke for the Connecticut Chemical Sensitivities Disorders Association. She reported on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity and Environmental Illness, as one who has been disabled by this disease.

Thompson said that this new epidemic is a worldwide phenomenon. It is caused by exposures to a wide range of chemicals and chemical products found in offices, factories, and homes. She placed the blame for this public health disaster on the greed of the chemical corporations, who have flooded the market with untested and unsafe products. Thompson said that there are over 1000 new and untested chemicals put on the market each year, and over 70,000 are produced that find their way into air, land, and water systems. She called for mass action and a return to the activism of the 1960s in the environmental movement and the elimination of a worldwide economic system built on profit rather than human needs.

Becky Barclay, an employee at the EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C., who was one of the hundreds of employees who

became ill when exposed to toxic carpeting at work, chaired the session.

It was evident that even though a number of participants at the conference were from the world environmental leadership, many were unaware of the extent and severity of environmental illness. This is because there is no major environmental organization that is educating the public on environmental illness and the threat it poses to public health.

Many conference participants were shocked at the information presented by the panelists and are turning their attention to action on this issue. The German Green Party is interested in environmental illness (EI) legislation. Women from the Soviet Union attended the panel and reported they are experiencing the same disease phenomena in their country.

The Connecticut group that sponsored the panel is currently mapping an ambitious program for 1992 in the state, which will include a conference on environmental illness and public health, media work, support to people with EI, a speakers bureau, and action for legislative reform. —L.T.

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

San Francisco will be the site of a major Northern California pro-choice demonstration on Sunday, March 29. Sponsored by the San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition, the action has already won the support of a wide array of pro-choice organizations, including several chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW), Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union, Socialist Action, and many others.

This support for the March 29 mobilization, called a "March for Women's Lives," represents a step forward for the pro-choice movement. The divisions in the movement

S.F. women plan March 29 pro-choice demonstration

that kept the Oct. 5, 1991, demonstration from realizing its potential have been overcome. The organizations that declined to support that action have joined in the call for this one.

Since more than 7000 people marched for abortion rights on Oct. 5, the expecta-

tions for the size of this demonstration are significantly higher.

The Pro-Choice Coalition has adopted two major demands around which the March 29 march and rally will be organized: "For safe, legal, accessible abortion!" and "Defend all Reproductive Rights!"

The stated intention of California's Gov. Wilson to put the brunt of the state's recession economy upon its poorest residents, those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), is provoking great anger among women's rights activists.

Wilson actually intends to penalize women by denying any additional funds for new children born to families receiving AFDC funds. Who will suffer most from such cruel measures? The children, of course!

The Pro-Choice Coalition meeting held Dec. 16 voted to oppose all attacks on women's right to bear children with the same vigor as it opposes government

attacks on the right to abortion.

The March 29 action is seen as a major means of building West Coast support for the April 5 National March on Washington called by the NOW. In the process of building the Northern California march, it is hoped by activists here that thousands will be mobilized to go to Washington, D.C., for the March for Women's Lives there.

The countdown for the spring mobilizations will begin on Sunday, Jan. 19, with a teach-in and organizing meeting to be held at Mission High School in San Francisco. Other Bay Area pro-choice groups will be organizing events as well.

The 19th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* on Wednesday, Jan. 22, will be celebrated with human billboards on major commuter routes, a lunch-hour rally in downtown San Francisco, and a motorized cable car—which will travel to heavily trafficked districts of the city to publicize the March 29 mobilization. To get more information and to help build these events, call the coalition at (415) 255-1989. ■

April 5 march predicted to be largest march ever

By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

Outraged by the ruling-class drive to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the National Organization for Women (NOW) is gearing up for a giant march in Washington, D.C., on April 5. NOW activists have vowed to make the event, "the largest march and rally on Washington in our nation's history for reproductive freedom."

This month, most NOW chapters are initiating activities to build the march. Cleveland NOW has already reserved eight buses for April 5. San Francisco NOW plans to charter a plane.

Rosemary Dempsey, editor of the *National NOW Times*, has begun a speaking tour of college campuses in order to meet young activists and get them involved in building the march. In January, she will visit Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

NOW members are also participating in activities on Jan. 22, the anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Actions across the country will include vigils, pickets, rallies, petitions, and human billboards directed at the leaders of anti-abortion groups, such as Operation Rescue.

There is hardly a clinic in this country that has not undergone some sort of attack by the anti-choice zealots. For instance, on Dec. 28, an man in a ski mask invaded the Central Health Center for Women in Springfield, Mo. and started shooting. He wounded two people before making his escape.

Plans to celebrate *Roe v. Wade* are even more important this year. There is a real possibility that this may be our last celebration, if the Supreme Court overturns this very important decision.

"Let's send a clear message to the President, Congress, state legislatures, and the Supreme Court that we will not be terrorized or governed by right-wing religious fundamentalists," says Alice Cohan, who is NOW's coordinator for the march. "Activists can take part in making history by planning to be in Washington on April 5."

For more information on April 5, call the NOW National Headquarters at (202) 331-0066. ■



French gov't backs away from defending women's rights

By SOPHIE MASSOURI

Since 1974, reimbursement for French women using contraception has been a right recognized by law, as has the possibility of abortion up to the 10th week of pregnancy. (Under the French scheme of socialized medicine, the cost of specific medicines and medical services is reimbursed to users by the Social Security office.)

Seventeen years later, however, it is not clear that this law is being applied. Nearly 4 million women take the pill, but 2 million do so in a form that is not—or is no longer—reimbursed.

At the end of November, Premier Edith Cresson promised that the two new pills would soon be reimbursed, and there were similar statements by Secretary of State for Women's Rights Veronique Neiertz. However, the government's negligence in this area—and the upsurge of fundamentalist and reactionary activists of every stripe—present grave threats to women's right to choose and to women's health in general.

Since 1984, a growing number of new contraceptive pills have not been covered by Social Security, whereas the cost of some of the older brands is no longer reimbursed. Why?

The drug companies are playing upon the ambiguity of the law, which says that "contraception must be reimbursed" but doesn't give the state the means of paying for it. They do not want the new pills included on the Social Security reimbursement list.

Thus, there is no reimbursement of the new-generation pills. The latter have smaller dosages of estrogen, which is responsible for secondary effects on women

(notably cardiovascular illnesses). They utilize new progestationals, which are claimed to be less harmful to women's health.

The argument put forward by the drug companies is controversial. Some specialists maintain that it has not been shown that the new pills significantly reduce these "secondary effects."

Drug companies' profit drive

Why are the drug companies pursuing this policy? In France, the prices of drugs that are not reimbursed are not subject to control. But medicines that are reimbursed are fixed and controlled by the authorities. It has been clear for a decade that the manufacturers prefer non-reimbursement to a price they consider too low.

According to several studies, the consumption of contraceptives does not seem to depend on whether they are covered by Social Security.

How could it be otherwise? The pill is the primary means of contraception used by women (one woman in three takes the pill). Given the profusion of pills available, they only very rarely are in a position to insist that their doctors prescribe a specific pill to suit their needs—or their pocketbooks.

Obviously, the drug companies will always seek to maximize their profits. There is no reason why they should behave differently for contraceptives. What is more serious is the failure of the government to apply a law that in practice is being mocked.

However, this reflects the line being followed by the Socialist Party government. For example, under the decentralization policy initiated in 1983, management of information and planning centers—often

the sole sources of information for young people and for a majority of women—have been transferred to regional councils. This has accentuated social inequalities in the provision of these services, and even threatened the survival of the centers.

The government's gradual disengagement from supporting contraception, along with its cutbacks in healthcare—both in reducing the provision of medicines and in eliminating hospital beds and personnel—is an insidious challenge to women's right to freely choose maternity. In this area, as in healthcare in general, a two-track system is being instituted—one system for women who can pay, and another for those who cannot.

Inspired by Operation Rescue

This policy is being applied in a context of social and economic rundown, in which the influence of fundamentalist and far-right groups is growing. (For example, the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen is expected to take 25 to 30 percent of the vote in the regional elections scheduled for March 1992.)

Taking the offensive, these far-right groups (the most important are the *Truce of God* and the *SOS-Little Ones*), even if they have few members, are gradually extending their influence through media coverage, manipulation, and infiltration into broad sectors of society.

For example, during its May 1, 1991, demonstration, Jean-Marie Le Pen called for a minute of silence "in memory of the millions of French children murdered by the Veil-Chirac abortion law."

Taking their inspiration from Operation Rescue in the United States, some of these groups have been attacking abortion centers

for nearly two years now. Some prefer to sing hymns outside the centers and hospitals or to distribute leaflets denouncing the "crime" that abortion represents in their eyes. Others enter the operating theaters, contaminate the materials, and chain themselves to the operating tables.

They all have the same goal—to create a feeling of terror among women who come for an abortion, and above all a feeling of guilt.

The government has remained silent about all this. Despite the complaints registered by hospital directors and the testimony of nurses, the attackers have not been brought to justice.

It is perhaps not by chance that the government seems still less anxious to denounce these commando raids than it is to begin a policy of reimbursing the cost of the two new pills. Its health policy, which involves a hospital reform introducing a logic of profitability and decentralization, will lead to reducing the operating capacity of the abortion centers—if it does not lead to closing them outright.

The government's condemnation of the drug companies is, in fact, a way of avoiding having to defend its own policy.

At the end of 1990, a united-front coordinating committee, bringing together women's groups, trade unions, political parties and associations—including the French Family Planning Movement (MFPF)—was set up to mobilize public opinion on the question and make the government accept its responsibilities. A national petition was launched in June 1991, with committees being set up in various cities.

A national day of action was called for Nov. 30, 1991, to prepare general assemblies on the right to choose on Jan. 18-19. Of course, there will be a mobilization on March 8, International Women's Day. ■

(This article is taken from the Dec. 9 issue of *International Viewpoint*, bi-weekly English-language journal of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.)

What makes the dialectical materialist method superior? It explains more.



The beginning of the 1848 revolution in France. An example of class contradictions exploding.

By CLIFF CONNOR

This is the fifth and final chapter in a series of articles on dialectical materialism—the philosophical foundation of Marxism. The articles are based on classes given by Cliff Connor at a Socialist Action national educational conference in August 1989.

In previous articles, the author traced the history of philosophy from the time of the ancient Greeks, contrasting the outlook of materialism to that of idealism.

Last month, Connor described how Aristotle, in attempting to formulate the laws of thinking, devised the basic laws of formal logic. In the early 19th century, the German philosopher George Hegel came up with a new system of logic, “dialectics,” in order to better explain the constant process of change. He found a precedent for dialectical thinking among the first Greek philosophers, such as Heraclitus.

So far, we have not progressed beyond Heraclitus’s contention that everything is in flux. Hegel went further, going beyond the mere assertion of change, by investigating and describing, in a general way, how things change.

According to the mechanical way of looking at the world, the fundamental mechanism of change is impact—the interaction of one body bumping into another. Change, in this view, is something that is caused by forces external to a body.

Hegel had a very different view of the world. If he had a model of reality, it was not the machine but the organism. The kind of change he was interested in was organic development—processes of birth, growth, and death.

To a dialectical thinker, an entity is not a homogeneous clump of inert matter but a dynamic unity of opposites containing opposing forces within itself that are in continuous struggle against each other. Change occurs as a result of the interaction of these forces; for example, when they become unbalanced and one overpowers the other.

All this may seem highly metaphysical, perhaps even mystical. Hegel, after all, was an idealist. To see how all of this applies to the material world, let us consider some specific examples.

You might think that if these abstractions about inner forces applied to anything, it would be to biological or

“Human societies, like stars, are characterized by revolutionary explosions separated by periods of apparent stability. During the stable periods the opposing forces continue to develop until the balance shifts, a revolution erupts, and a qualitatively new kind of social order emerges, based on a more advanced system of production.”

social organisms rather than to stable physical objects like tables or chairs. But how stable are tables and chairs? Most of them only last a few years, or a few hundred years at most.

Stars and nations as models

Let’s consider a much more stable class of objects: the stars of the firmament, which are apparently stable over billions of years. The story of stellar evolution is another addition that Frederick Engels, the close collaborator of Karl Marx, would surely want to make if he could put out a new addition of his book, “Dialectics of Nature.”

The typical history of stars has been found to consist of a series of extremely violent explosions separated by long periods of stability. During a stable period, the star consists of a massive globe of material producing energy by nuclear fusion. The energy of the nuclear fusion process creates an outward pressure on the star’s material. But the gravitational force of the star’s material creates an inward pressure. These two forces balance each other and the star remains stable for a few billion years until the nuclear fuel begins to give out and the fusion process slows down.

Then the gravitational forces get the upper hand, the star implodes with tremendous violence, the energy of the implosion ignites a higher-level type of fusion reaction, and the process begins again on a higher level.

When stars appear stable, then, they are essentially a unity of two opposed forces, a unity of opposites; and when stars change, it is due to an interaction between those two forces that combine to create a new and qualitatively different kind of

star.

Now let’s consider another kind of object—a social organism. These days the most typical form of organization of human society is the nation state. Nation states have traditionally been perceived as homogeneous entities. This is where patriotic ideology comes from—the idea that all French people, for example, have essentially the same interests and that any threat to those interests comes from outside.

A country like France, however, is better understood not as a homogeneous entity, but as a dialectical entity—a unity of opposites. The opposites are the capitalist class and the working class. These two classes are tied together into a single productive system by bonds of mutual dependence—they need each other—and at the same time they are locked in struggle against each other because in the final analysis their class interests are irreconcilable. The whole thing is a living contradiction.

What makes this *dialectical* model better than the *patriotic* one is that it explains more. Above all, it can account for social change. Human societies, like stars, are characterized by revolutionary explosions separated by periods of apparent stability. During the stable periods the opposing forces continue to develop until the balance shifts, a revolution erupts, and a qualitatively new kind of social order emerges, based on a more advanced system of production.

Quantity into quality

Another of Hegel’s insights into the process of change is usually summed up in the ponderous phrase: “The transformation of quantity into quality.”

The classic example is the transformation of water into steam. If water is heated, its temperature changes by numerically measurable increments. If its temperature rises degree by degree from 97 degrees Centigrade, to 98, to 99, the water has changed in that it has gotten hotter, but it is still water. Add one degree, however, to 100 degree Centigrade, and it ceases to be water. It becomes steam; it is transformed into something qualitatively different. A qualitative leap has occurred, a revolutionary transformation.

Atomic bombs and nuclear reactors have given us an unsurpassable illustration of this law, and Engels would surely have appreciated this one, too. When the nuclear fuel is brought together, if there is less than a certain exact amount, which is called the “critical mass,” nothing will happen. But if a little more fuel is added, and a little more, and a little more, eventually the “critical mass” will be reached and the nuclear chain reaction will be initiated.

I was reminded of the transformation of quantity into quality by an article I read in the newspaper about resort beaches in New Jersey. Health inspectors periodically check the ocean water for fecal coliform bacteria. They measure it in parts per milliliters of water. If it is below 200 parts, they allow the beaches to remain open, above that number, they close them down. Some resort owners were caught throwing chlorine tablets into the ocean just before the inspectors were due to arrive.

It was a futile attempt, as it turned out, to prevent a transformation of quantity into quality, but it was rather remarkable to see capitalists sneaking around trying to “unpollute” the environment.

“Which side are you on?”

In previous articles in this series I have been focussing on contradictions and showing the positive benefits of fuzzy logic and so forth. But the point is not that we should throw up our hands and say, “Oh, what the hell—if everything is in flux, we’ll never get a handle on it, so why bother?” The point is to recognize the existence of contradictions and change so as to be able to take them into account. It is also important to remember that the laws of formal logic are still of great value, as long as we don’t treat them as absolutes.

Earlier I used a line often used in arguments: “Well, which is it? You can’t have it both ways.” And I said that this is an appeal to the formal-logic law of the excluded middle. I didn’t mean to imply that it is always a false statement. In some cases it can support a valid position; in others a false one. The difference lies in the specific cases at hand.

For example:

“Way down in Harlan County
There are no neutrals there
You’ll either be a union miner
Or a scab for J.H. Blair.
Which side are you on, boys,
Which side are you on?”

The song says there are only two sides—there is nothing in-between. Which side are you on? It’s a classic application of the law of the excluded middle, and one that all Marxists would defend as valid.

Although lines between categories are never absolute, it is often possible to recognize categories that are sharply enough bounded for all practical purposes. It is usually possible to distinguish clearly between existing species of animals, for example, while recognizing that in their evolutionary history the dividing lines were not absolute.

Likewise, in the class struggle it is possible to recognize the class line—the boundary separating the capitalist class from the working class—to avoid crossing it. In general, to cross a picketline of striking workers is to cross the class line and be on the wrong side of the struggle.

But even this general rule is not absolute. In 1968, the teachers’ union in New York City called a reactionary strike, a racist strike against the Black and Puerto Rican communities; in that situation class-conscious workers were duty-bound

(continued on next page)

...Dialectics

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to cross the picketlines. Fortunately, such exception to the general rule are rare

In electoral politics, we recognize a class line separating the interests of the working class from those of both the Democratic and Republican parties. For us, it is matter of principle not to support any Democratic or Republican politician. This is not an *a priori* moral absolute; it is a practical conclusion based on historical analysis of the role of those parties as organ of capitalist-class rule.

But in some political situations the class line is more complex than a simple boundary between capitalists and workers. When the Kremlin intervened in Eastern Europe and the Stalinists said: "Which side are you on?" we said, "We're on the side of the workers who are fighting against you."

This would seem to be a simple enough matter of class solidarity, but it must be remembered that Stalinists are not the only ones who have taken a reactionary position on that question. The leaders of the Cuban Revolution have also gone wrong in this regard, as has the Socialist Workers Party.

These few rather familiar examples should be enough to illustrate the point that the logic of political strategy and tactics cannot be reduced to formulas. An understanding of dialectical logic won't provide a ready-made procedure for cranking out answers to tactical questions, but it can help to avoid the pitfall of over-formalism.

The most common manifestations of formalistic thinking are sectarianism and ultra-leftism. A group like the Spartacist League, for example, certainly doesn't have a monopoly on sectarianism, but it is probably the most familiar practitioner of what Lenin called the "infantile sickness" of ultra-leftism.

The Spartacists are famous for their ultimatic slogans and their inability to collaborate with any other political forces. Who can forget their slogan for the anti-Vietnam War movement: "All Indochina Must Go Communist Now!" The all-or-nothing character of their demands reflects an unwavering attachment to the law of the excluded middle.

The Spartacists are also known for insisting upon a full revolutionary socialist program as a condition for their participation in political action coalitions. This is the hallmark of sectarianism, and it, too, flows from a formalistic, all-or-nothing approach to politics. To their way of thinking, you either wave the banner of socialist revolution in every demonstration or you are a betrayer. There is no middle ground.

This approach to politics is characterized by its invariant nature. It essentially puts forward the same answers at all times and all places: "Socialism Now!"—"Revolution Now!" It doesn't take changing situations into account.

The possum syndrome

When I first came across this kind of political behavior it reminded me of something I'd seen when I was growing up in Tennessee. One day I came across a possum, and somebody had tied its back leg to a tree with a rope about 20 feet long. I watched this possum for a while. It walked slowly straight ahead until the rope stopped it and it couldn't go any further. Then it would turn back in the opposite direction and go until the rope stopped it again. Then it would turn back again and do the same thing. And it kept doing this over and over again until I cut the rope, and then it just kept slowly walking away into the distance in a straight line.

Now, we see political groups acting like that possum quite often. The Workers World Party (WWP), for example, deserves the credit for calling the very first demonstration against the Vietnam War. But it was an explicitly left-wing demonstration called under explicitly anti-imperialist slogans. A few hundred left-wingers showed up, and for that period—1963—that was rather impressive.



"Lenin and the Bolshevik Party used Marxist ideology as a guide—as a means of trying to figure out what to do next at every step along the way. Stalin's use of Marxist ideology turned it upside down. To Stalin it was not a guide to policy, but a method of generating phony excuses to justify, after the fact, any policy he wanted to implement."

But they called essentially the same demonstration over and over again throughout the course of the war.

In 1969 and 1970, when the Socialist Workers Party was mobilizing millions of people against the war, the Workers World Party was still organizing the same narrow "anti-imperialist" demonstrations. They were against imperialism, so they went in a straight line toward their goal—and although it was completely ineffective, they kept doing it again and again. I called that the "possum syndrome."

In politics, the shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line. We can express this "possum syndrome" in formal logic terms. As the possum sees it, there are only two alternatives. Either you are going straight toward your goal, or you're not going toward your goal at all. Nothing else is possible; the middle is excluded.

But of course, in politics, there are always other alternatives. Sometimes a tactical retreat is necessary. Sometimes an indirect route is the best way to reach a goal.

Stalin and Lysenko

While it is necessary to guard against falling into the sterility of formalism, it is also necessary to beware of those who abuse the dialectical method. Since dialectical logic can comprehend contradiction, it lends itself to being misused as a phony method for turning an argument inside out.

After all, Marxist ideology, or any kind of ideology, can be used in two different ways. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party used Marxist ideology as a guide—as a means of trying to figure out what to do next at

every step along the way. Stalin's use of Marxist ideology turned it upside down. To Stalin it was not a guide to policy, but a method of generating phony excuses to justify, after the fact, any policy he wanted to implement.

One of Stalin's protégés, Trofim Lysenko, appealed to dialectics against the science of genetics. He said that if nature is dialectical, then genetics must be false. In the abstract, Lysenko's point was at least plausible. According to dialectics, there are no absolute categories, no rigid boundaries in nature. But the guiding principle of genetics is that there is an impassable barrier separating living organisms from the genetic material they carry, their DNA.

This means that if you "pump iron" and build up huge muscles, that won't have any effect at all on the genes you pass on to your children. They won't be born more muscular; if they want big muscles, they'll have to "pump iron" themselves.

Lysenko violently disagreed with this

proposition. He claimed that he could improve Soviet agriculture rapidly. He said he could create new, superior species of wheat by subjecting seeds of wheat to environmental stresses. The biologists who understood genetics—and there were some good Marxists among them—told him it was nonsense. Lysenko responded that the laws of dialectics insured that he could not be mistaken. But, of course, he was. And since he had Stalin on his side, his policies were adopted and the geneticists were harshly repressed.

Lysenko treated the laws of dialectics as *a priori* truths to be imposed on nature. This is the method of idealism, and Lysenko proved once again that it doesn't give worthwhile results.

Setting Hegel right-side up

I have alluded a number of times to some of the conclusions of modern physics. Ever since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a strong current of opinion to the effect that these findings constitute a refutation of materialism. The discovery that atoms are not hard particles like tiny little billiard balls was cheered by idealist philosophers as a vindication of their idealism.

The peculiarity of matter at the subatomic level, however, only refutes mechanical materialism—and the viable alternative to mechanical materialism is not idealism but dialectical materialism.

In conclusion, dialectics was originally developed by Hegel in the framework of an idealist philosophy. Marx and Engels took Hegel's abstractions and put them right-side up, on their feet, as they said, by incorporating dialectical logic into a materialist view of the world. This was a philosophy well-suited to Marx's purpose of interpreting the world as a prerequisite to changing it.

Dialectical materialism conceives of capitalist society not as a perpetual-motion machine in mechanical equilibrium, but as an organism with a finite lifespan. Bourgeois ideologists consider revolutions to be aberrations, unnatural disturbers of the natural order. But in fact, nothing is more natural than the qualitative leap that we call a revolution.

The bourgeois ideologist denies the contradictions of capitalist society. We not only recognize contradictions, we also anticipate that they will deepen to the point of crisis, bringing about the opportunity for a revolutionary reconstruction of society.

When that opportunity arrives, we want to be prepared for it. Those who are locked into formal logic will assume that a small socialist organization will not have a large role to play in a revolutionary situation. But dialectical thinkers know that acorns grow into oak trees and that in revolutionary situations it is possible for small organizations, if they know what they're doing, to grow rapidly in size and influence. Therein lies the dialectical source of our revolutionary optimism.

In last month's issue, I began this discussion on dialectics with a dramatic quotation from Charles Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities:" "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..."

I'll end this series with a quotation from the "Communist Manifesto" by Marx and Engels: "...everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air..."

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Cuba '91: One is the loneliest number



Joyce Stoller

By JOYCE STOLLER

Returning to Cuba after a six-year absence, one is transfixed by a country caught in the grip of a "special period in time of peace," as Fidel Castro has called the present. Cuba, still an inspiration to revolutionaries the world over, and especially the Third World, is slowly being strangled by the 30-year old U.S. economic embargo and the recent cut-off of Soviet and Eastern European trade. Until two years ago, this trade accounted for 85 percent of Cuba's foreign exchange.

Cuba is first and foremost a revolutionary, socialist country, and walking down any Cuban street one sees billboards saying "Revolución Si!, Venceremos!" ("We Will Overcome!"), "Yo Me Quedo!" ("I'm Staying!"). And taped to people's windows all over the island is the slogan of the recently completed 4th Communist Party Congress: "To Save the Country, the Revolution, and Socialism."

But change is also evident. Cuba is set to import one-half million bicycles from China this year to make up for the shortfall in oil that they are supposed to receive from the Soviet Union. The Malecón, Havana's beautiful bayfront boulevard that used to have six traffic lanes, now has two reserved for bicycles.

Instead of cars, exemplary workers are awarded bicycles, and of the cars one sees on the streets, many are 40, 50, even 60-years old.

Bus service has been cut from 32,000 to 20,000 trips per day, and 10 percent water is being added to diesel fuel as an experiment. According to Cubans I talked to who didn't own bicycles, three hour waits for a bus are not uncommon.

In the countryside, 100,000 oxen have replaced tractors, and horse-drawn buses are being used to augment motorized ones.

As of Sept. 30, Cuba had received only 38 percent of the goods contracted for from the Soviet Union this year, and 76 percent of that was in oil. Everything, from soap and cigarettes to gasoline and food, is now rationed. The parallel market, where Cubans could formerly buy things not rationed, is shut down.

Even in Havana's El Presidente Hotel, where conditions were no doubt better than in most of the country, there were times when there was no electricity, no telephones, no water, and no elevators.

"Food is difficult. Transportation is difficult. People are having a hard time," said Miguel Alfonso, of the Institute of International Relations. "People are complaining, but not about the system."

Despite these setbacks, Cuba remains head and shoulders above any other Third World country in terms of standard of living, which is measured by the UN Commission on Human Rights, not in terms of cars, but in terms of life expectan-

cy, infant mortality, and literacy. Cuba's life expectancy is now 76 years, compared to 50 in the rest of the Third World.

Infant mortality is 10.7 per 1000 live births, compared to 21 in Washington, D.C., U.S.A.! Literacy is 98 percent.

There are no homeless, no unemployed, and in spite of rationing, everyone is guaranteed 2950 calories and 89 grams of protein per day.

Education is free through college, medical care is free your whole life, and children are eligible for childcare from the time they are 45 days old. "We feel that social, political, and economic rights are all interconnected," said Alfonso.

Self-sufficiency in food

One of the things Cuba is desperately trying to do in the face of the economic crisis is to become self-sufficient in food. "In the past we were 60 percent self-sufficient in food," said Dr. Eugenio Balari of the Institute of Internal Demand. "We're trying to raise that to 80 percent."

The job of the Institute is to forecast demand and to plan accordingly, as there are no market mechanisms at work in Cuba. "We have a centralized, planned economy," said Dr. Balari. "If one product is in short supply, we try to increase production of another, similar product. The goal is to maintain the same level of caloric consumption."

So far, 200,000 people from Havana alone have volunteered to work in the countryside this year to increase food production. Camp Paradiso, outside of Havana, is where members of the Young Communist League work during their school vacations.

"What do you think about having to work instead of being on vacation?" I asked.

"It's fun," said Marisol Delgado, 15, of Havana. "And besides, we're helping to feed our people."

The biggest challenge Cuba faces in the immediate future is its energy crisis. Cuba has no coal, almost no oil, and its few rivers are barely big enough for navigation and irrigation, let alone power. All of its transportation, electricity, and industry are dependent on imported oil, which Cuba now has to buy with dollars on the world market instead of bartering for sugar with the Soviet Union.

According to Dr. Balari, plans are afoot to develop hydro, solar, and wind power, and Cuba has embarked on a joint venture with France to search for off-shore oil. The United States is pressuring France to pull out of that project.

Perhaps most controversial is Cuba's plan to open a nuclear power plant next year, just nine miles from Cienfuegos, one of Cuba's largest cities. One could say that the Cubans are wrong in thinking that the problem with nuclear power lies in the cap-

italist mode of production, and that under socialism a nuke is not inherently dangerous. But Cuba, more than any other country in the world, is treating 10,000 children from the Chernobyl disaster, so they are obviously aware of the danger. They just don't see that they have any choice.

In its scramble for dollars, Cuba is, for the first time, promoting foreign invest-

Two perspectives from r

ment, according to Olimpia Sigarrea of the International Relations Dept. of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce. "Tourism is the one field where we now have mixed enterprises, but we're considering 1000 joint ventures with Western Europe, Latin America, and Mexico," Ms Sigarrea said.

Cuba now maintains diplomatic and economic ties with 136 countries, including Canada, Japan, all NATO except the United States, and most of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is only the United States that maintains an economic blockade against Cuba, which has cost that country \$15 billion so far, and costs U.S. businesses an estimated \$750 million a year.

Cuba has also made great strides in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, which is all the more amazing when you realize that it is still a small, underdeveloped, Third World country. It is now exporting the world's first effective vaccine against the child-killer meningitis B, another vaccine against hepatitis B, an epidermal growth factor which speeds up the recovery of burn victims, and TPG, which significantly reduces cholesterol with no harmful side effects. Cuba invented and is also exporting Melagenin, a drug used to treat vitiligo, the progressive loss of skin pigmentation, from which 40 million people in the world suffer.

Dollars from tourism

The other field that Cuba is hoping to develop, in order to obtain dollars to buy things on the world market, is tourism. Last year 340,000 tourists from Canada, Europe, the Soviet Union, and Latin America, visited Cuba to take advantage of its sultry climate and relatively cheap prices compared to other countries in the Caribbean. The only tourists who can't go to Cuba are Americans, who would be violating the Trading With the Enemy Act if they spent any money there. (The only exceptions are journalists and professional researchers.)

Every dollar that Cuba takes in through tourism is earmarked for foreign exchange, and so a two-tiered economy is developing.

There are tourist hotels, tourist restaurants, tourist stores, tourist discos, even tourist taxis that only take dollars, and which Cubans cannot use. And then there is the peso economy marked by long lines, empty shelves, and overwhelming scarcity.

Walking down any Cuban street, it is impossible not to be accosted by Cubans wanting to change pesos into dollars at the rate of 20 pesos for 1 dollar. (The official exchange rate is 1:1.)

Gino Jansson, 22, who speaks five languages and works as a travel guide, told me, "When I'm a translator with a tour, I can't go into the same restaurants the tourists can go in because I don't have dollars."

Malcolm Ahmed, 20, a student in computers added, "We very much like the fashions from the United States. But we can't go into tourist stores to buy it." (U.S. products sold in tourist stores are brought into Cuba through other countries.)

I will never forget the stabbing I felt in my stomach when I excused myself to have dinner in my hotel, knowing that my friends couldn't come with me. "We're hungry," said Malcolm. "Could you buy us some crackers?" He was referring to the tourist store in the hotel where they only take dollars.

Both Malcolm and Gino consider themselves revolutionaries and take for granted the free healthcare, education, and low-cost housing with which they have grown up. As Malcolm said, "I want capital, not capitalism in Cuba."

Fifty-three percent of Cuba's population is under 25 years old, and this generation, raised with egalitarian principles, now feels a keen sense of resentment against "tourist apartheid." They see foreigners buying things they can't buy, and feel, consequent-

ly, like second-class citizens in their own country.

A more farsighted, but less typical view was expressed by Juan Carlos, 25, in the Young Communist League: "The dollars we get from tourism are needed to raise the standard of living of everyone in the country," he said. True enough, but not necessarily self-evident to a layer of Cuba's youth.

Controversial AIDS policy

One policy that Cuba has implemented, which is perhaps more controversial in the United States than in Cuba, is their strategy of sending everyone who is HIV positive for AIDS to a sanatorium. The Cubans are adamant: This policy, they say, is in no way designed to discriminate against homosexuals (only 37 percent of the people who are HIV positive in Cuba are gay), it is to break the chain of transmission and prevent an epidemic.

Cuba has so far administered 10 million AIDS tests out of a population of 10.7 million, and as of Oct. 16, there were 670 HIV positive, of which 54 people have died. (Compare this to the U.S. where two-thirds of everyone known to be HIV positive is already dead.)

I talked to four people, two of them doctors, who were HIV positive and lived in the sanatorium. I asked if they were unhappy having to be there.

All were indignant. They work the same jobs they had worked previously, make the same salary, and have 24-hour a day medical care.

"You ask if the revolution violates my rights by sending me to the sanatorium?," Chino demanded. "I'm alive because of the revolution!"

Cuba tests all pregnant women, everyone who has been out of the country (in the last few years Cuba has had 600,000 internationalists working abroad, including 300,000 in Africa), the sex partners of those who are HIV positive, and all those admitted to hospitals. It imports AZT and Interferon from France, and provides a

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Joyce Stoller

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Social pressures rise in isol

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

Can the Cuban Revolution survive now that the Soviet Union has backed off on trade relations and joined George Bush's New World Order? This question is being asked by both enemies and friends of the Cuban Revolution. It is a question I've wrestled with since returning from Cuba after a month-long stay in October 1991.

The U.S. blockade against Cuba has been strengthened now that the Soviet Union has capitulated to the "New World Order." If Cuba remains isolated, the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) could be crushed by counter-revolutionary forces.

The effects of the U.S. blockade—both socially and economically—are taking their toll. The dramatically increased scarcity of all goods is generating social forces that are hostile to the revolution and the Castro leadership.

In Havana there is a five-mile stretch of road along the ocean called the Malecón. It is on this stretch of road that Cuba's problems lay exposed in plain view of everyone.

Cubans will approach foreigners, calling out to them, "Hey friend, where are you from? You want to change?" Cubans are eager to trade pesos for dollars. Everyone seems to be hustling for dollars these days. It is not just the troublemakers who are changing dollars. Everyone shops the black market for items not found in the state stores.

The Malecón is a sad place at night. Thousands of hungry and bored Cubans sit atop the tide-breakers looking out to sea.



Two perspectives from recent visitors to Cuba

The Soviet ships no longer steam into Havana Harbor laden with petroleum and food. The cops are legion. Armed with clubs and guns, they stand sullenly on street corners. The popular militias still muster, but no longer do they keep their arms.

A Malecón street dance is monitored strictly. Cops drag out many disorderly young men from the crowd and shove them into Ministry of Interior paddy wagons. A youth says something smart and within a second he's rubbing his jaw and the cop is holstering his club.

A Black youth sits next to me at a bus stop. He says, "I'm not afraid to talk to you. Many people are. They (plainclothes cops) watch our moves. We must be careful. It's bad here. I want to leave."

The youth and I stare at the overcrowded buses sputtering black clouds of smoke as they roar by. The Cubans call the buses "wahs-wahs" because they sound like crying babies. Many of the Cubans I saw in Havana never smiled; their faces were gaunt, as if they were enduring some kind of never-ending irritation—long lines and hunger.

The Cubans resent tourists eating their food and buying their commodities. Cuban homes are going to hell. The bureaucracy involved in obtaining even a nail is aggravating. Consequently, many Cubans are blaming both the blockade and Castro for their misery.

Can Cuba survive alone?

The Cuban Communist Party (CCP) theoreticians are trying to sell the line that the Cuban Revolution, in and of itself, can solve Cuba's problems. But cold reality is pushing a counter-line that says otherwise.

Let us examine the conditions that make Cuba so vulnerable to the U.S. blockade. First of all, Cuba lacks a domestic source of oil—this poses the greatest threat to Cuba's independence and its socialist revolution. Cuba is forced to barter on the world market for this essential commodity. The world's capitalists demand U.S. dollars for their oil.

And now, so does the Soviet Union.

The capitalist press leaves this important fact out of their articles condemning the Cuban revolution, just as they omit mentioning the 30-year U.S. economic embargo. The United States government is directly responsible for the shortages plaguing Cuba.

Most of the commodities produced by Cuban industry and agriculture are shipped abroad for U.S. dollars. Commodities not exported abroad are placed in tourist and technicians' stores. These stores accept only U.S. dollars.

Cuba needs oil. Without it, there would be no industrial civilization. Without fueled trucks, agricultural products would never reach the cities from the countryside. If there is hunger in Cuba today, then without oil, there would be starvation.

Communist Party Congress

The Cuban Communist Party held its 4th Congress in mid-October. The slogan and political line of the congress was: "Our most sacred duty is to save the country, the revolution, and socialism." The slogan and political line is anti-Stalinist and revolutionary. A Stalinist communist party, at this historical juncture, would place their industries and working class in the clutches of the New World Order. The Cuban CP wants to protect the gains of the revolution and safeguard Cuba's independence.

But there were some grim aspects to this congress, which took place while I was there. All journalists and foreign socialists were barred from attending. Reports coming out of the congress were censored. We couldn't discern whether or not there was a debate. Socialists the world over have speculated about the emergence of a Gorbachevite wing in the CCP. Whether or not this is so remains to be seen.

Castro's inability to identify positively with working class struggles in the degenerated workers' states was demonstrated again at the 4th Congress. Castro called the mass movement—like the one that successfully foiled the Soviet Communist Party's coup in August—an example of the

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Social pressures rise in isolated Cuba

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

Can the Cuban Revolution survive now that the Soviet Union has backed off on trade relations and joined George Bush's New World Order? This question is being asked by both enemies and friends of the Cuban Revolution. It is a question I've wrestled with since returning from Cuba after a month-long stay in October 1991.

The U.S. blockade against Cuba has been strengthened now that the Soviet Union has capitulated to the "New World Order." If Cuba remains isolated, the Cuban Communist Party (CCP) could be crushed by counter-revolutionary forces.

The effects of the U.S. blockade—both socially and economically—are taking their toll. The dramatically increased scarcity of all goods is generating social forces that are hostile to the revolution and the Castro leadership.

In Havana there is a five-mile stretch of road along the ocean called the Malecón. It is on this stretch of road that Cuba's problems lay exposed in plain view of everyone.

Cubans will approach foreigners, calling out to them, "Hey friend, where are you from? You want to change?" Cubans are eager to trade pesos for dollars. Everyone seems to be hustling for dollars these days. It is not just the troublemakers who are changing dollars. Everyone shops the black market for items not found in the state stores.

The Malecón is a sad place at night. Thousands of hungry and bored Cubans sit atop the tide-breakers looking out to sea.



Joyce Stoller

Recent visitors to Cuba

The Soviet ships no longer steam into Havana Harbor laden with petroleum and food. The cops are legion. Armed with clubs and guns, they stand sullenly on street corners. The popular militias still muster, but no longer do they keep their arms.

A Malecón street dance is monitored strictly. Cops drag out many disorderly young men from the crowd and shove them into Ministry of Interior paddy wagons. A youth says something smart and within a second he's rubbing his jaw and the cop is holstering his club.

A Black youth sits next to me at a bus stop. He says, "I'm not afraid to talk to you. Many people are. They (plainclothes cops) watch our moves. We must be careful. It's bad here. I want to leave."

The youth and I stare at the overcrowded buses sputtering black clouds of smoke as they roar by. The Cubans call the buses "wahs-wahs" because they sound like crying babies. Many of the Cubans I saw in Havana never smiled; their faces were gaunt, as if they were enduring some kind of never-ending irritation—long lines and hunger.

The Cubans resent tourists eating their food and buying their commodities. Cuban homes are going to hell. The bureaucracy involved in obtaining even a nail is aggravating. Consequently, many Cubans are blaming both the blockade and Castro for their misery.

Can Cuba survive alone?

The Cuban Communist Party (CCP) theoreticians are trying to sell the line that the Cuban Revolution, in and of itself, can solve Cuba's problems. But cold reality is pushing a counter-line that says otherwise.

Let us examine the conditions that make Cuba so vulnerable to the U.S. blockade. First of all, Cuba lacks a domestic source of oil—this poses the greatest threat to Cuba's independence and its socialist revolution. Cuba is forced to barter on the world market for this essential commodity. The world's capitalists demand U.S. dollars for their oil.

And now, so does the Soviet Union.

The capitalist press leaves this important fact out of their articles condemning the Cuban revolution, just as they omit mentioning the 30-year U.S. economic embargo. The United States government is directly responsible for the shortages plaguing Cuba.

Most of the commodities produced by Cuban industry and agriculture are shipped abroad for U.S. dollars. Commodities not exported abroad are placed in tourist and technicians' stores. These stores accept only U.S. dollars.

Cuba needs oil. Without it, there would be no industrial civilization. Without fueled trucks, agricultural products would never reach the cities from the countryside. If there is hunger in Cuba today, then without oil, there would be starvation.

Communist Party Congress

The Cuban Communist Party held its 4th Congress in mid-October. The slogan and political line of the congress was: "Our most sacred duty is to save the country, the revolution, and socialism." The slogan and political line is anti-Stalinist and revolutionary. A Stalinist communist party, at this historical juncture, would place their industries and working class in the clutches of the New World Order. The Cuban CP wants to protect the gains of the revolution and safeguard Cuba's independence.

But there were some grim aspects to this congress, which took place while I was there. All journalists and foreign socialists were barred from attending. Reports coming out of the congress were censored. We couldn't discern whether or not there was a debate. Socialists the world over have speculated about the emergence of a Gorbachevite wing in the CCP. Whether or not this is so remains to be seen.

Castro's inability to identify positively with working class struggles in the degenerated workers' states was demonstrated again at the 4th Congress. Castro called the mass movement—like the one that successfully foiled the Soviet Communist Party's coup in August—an example of the

Soviet working class losing power. Castro said that the collapse of the former socialist camp hadn't been fully analyzed and that its collapse couldn't be discussed at the congress.

The Castro leadership is desperate to fill the hole left behind by the collapse of the Soviet Union. They hope to convince oil-rich countries like Mexico and Venezuela to defy U.S. imperialism and trade with Cuba.

But any serious breaching of the blockade by these countries could be thwarted by the United States raising the interest rates on loans owed by these comprador states. The United States, using its leverage in international finance institutions (like the IMF), could cripple the ability of these countries to do business in the world markets.

Castro and the CCP are forced to take a pragmatic approach to Cuba's isolated situation for a number of reasons—the main reason being that for over 40 years the U.S. working class has been quiescent. Furthermore, out of the seething chaos in today's Soviet Union, a conscious working class leadership hasn't emerged as a contender for state power. The international struggle for socialism is weakened tremendously without the powerful American and Soviet working class in motion.

In the past the Castro leadership heroically embraced the concept of international assistance to other countries. Cuba was the only workers' state to call for a united front defense of Vietnam when it was fighting against U.S. aggression. The Cubans have unselfishly donated their scant resources to Third World countries. Thousands of Cubans gave their lives in Angola fighting South African imperialism. But today, Cuba is standing alone.

Discomfort can breed cynicism

It was awkward to sit with some Cubans around the TV set listening to Castro's lengthy 4th Congress speeches—especially when Castro warned that prostitution and other social ills would return if capitalism was restored in Cuba. The Cubans I was with heckled him and shifted uneasily in their seats.

Unfortunately, prostitution has returned to Cuba. These women are called "jineteras," deriving from the Spanish word "jinete," meaning rider. "Jineteras" work Havana's 5th Ave., flagging down tourist cars. The novice "jineteras," under 20

years-old, work the Malecón.

Castro praised the democratic nature of the 4th Congress. Religious people can now join the CCP. But a youth who was watching the TV broke in saying, "We don't even know what went on there."

Democracy in Cuba? This is a ticklish question. When in the history of humanity has there been democracy in a besieged fortress? The U.S. blockade has kept Cuba in a state of war. Cuba has never known peace and prosperity, which are prime requisites for democracy. All political activity is conducted through the Cuban Communist Party. There are no vibrant debates in the streets or diverse political journals published in Cuba. As in a military fort, decisions are made at the top and then enforced through a chain of command.

Cubans, like soldiers in a fort, are obliged to work responsibly for the good of the country. People caught by the Coast Guard escaping on rafts are treated as deserters and receive an automatic year and a half in prison for the first attempt. I met quite a few people with prison time hanging over their heads.

It is difficult for a foreigner to become intimately acquainted with Cubans. But luck would have it that an English teacher by the name of Alfredo came to my aid at a bus terminal. He offered me his services as an interpreter. I was trying to catch a bus to Santiago and eavesdrop for news in the street about the 4th Congress.

But the buses were going nowhere. Families had been waiting for three days to leave Havana. "Forget Santiago," Alfredo said. "Come to my house."

Problems of everyday life

Alfredo lived with his father, maternal aunt, brother and sister in a tumbledown home in an Havana suburb. Alfredo told me that it was normal for three to four generations to live under one roof. All the homes I visited in Cuba had three to four generations living in each apartment and home. Cubans are plagued by housing shortages.

The people of this Havana suburb were professionals, musicians, independent tradesmen, and even black marketeers. They worked at professions and trades that didn't foster a spirit of discipline and cooperation.

Historically, when rations and material conditions are deteriorating, these people inadvertently become pawns of counter-revolution in an isolated workers' state.

One of Alfredo's neighbors, a musician, came running upstairs while I was taking a nap. His first words to me were: "Alfredo tells me you are a socialist! You like what you see here? Well, I don't. I want to leave Cuba. There is no freedom here."

I rose from the bed and told him that socialism can't function without an abundance of wealth and democracy. I could have just as well said these words in Chinese. To many Cubans, "socialism" has always been ration cards and shoddy Soviet goods. Many young Cubans have no idea what it was like before the revolution: They don't remember the rampant poverty, racism, illiteracy, and secret-police terror that were the norms under all the previous U.S.-backed regimes.

The queues in Cuba are called "colas." There are colas for many things in Cuba: Dance halls, newspapers, Zás burgers, and pizza squares. The only thing more depressing than the cola is when these places are closed down. A hamburger stand open one day will be closed the next. At least standing in a cola means you have a chance to get something.

The food rations distributed by the state apparatus keep starvation at bay. But hunger is an annoying guest at the Cuban dinner table. Coffee, rice, eggs, and an occasional chicken is standard fare for Cubans.

Alfredo's family foraged for food in the black market. During my 8-day stay with Alfredo's family we had chicken three times and—sorry I asked—pig entrails with rice. Alfredo's brother was a diver, so we ate a turtle he had harpooned. Bananas grew in Alfredo's yard; his aunt made sure we had fried bananas every day.

For breakfast we had a palm-sized bread ration with a coffee-milk beverage. There

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... Cuba '91

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high-protein 5400-calorie-a-day diet to those in the sanatorium. And, in a country that is desperately poor, Cuba has allocated \$40,000 a year to everyone who is HIV positive.

In Cuba, whether you have dark skin or light skin makes about as much difference as having dark hair or light hair in the U.S. Fifty-eight percent of the doctors are women, as are 60 percent of the technicians. So obviously, great strides have been made in overcoming racism and sexism.

But homophobia is deeply ingrained, and Cubans regard it as a cultural, not a political problem.

The Cuban Communist Party just opened its doors to religious believers, no doubt influenced by liberation theology in Latin America. Why, I asked, are homosexuals still not allowed in the Communist Party?

Fernando Garcia, who works for the Central Committee of the Communist Party, answered: "People being considered for the Communist Party have to be seen as an example, and people wouldn't perceive a homosexual as being a good example. In this society most people have a bias against homosexuality."

The Communist Party of Cuba may be the leading body of that country, but there are a number of other democratic institutions, including Peoples' Power and Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR).

There are 7 million CDR members in Cuba, almost everyone over 14 years old.

At CDR meetings everyone within a two-block area gets together to discuss how things are going, what needs to be done, and what they're going to do.

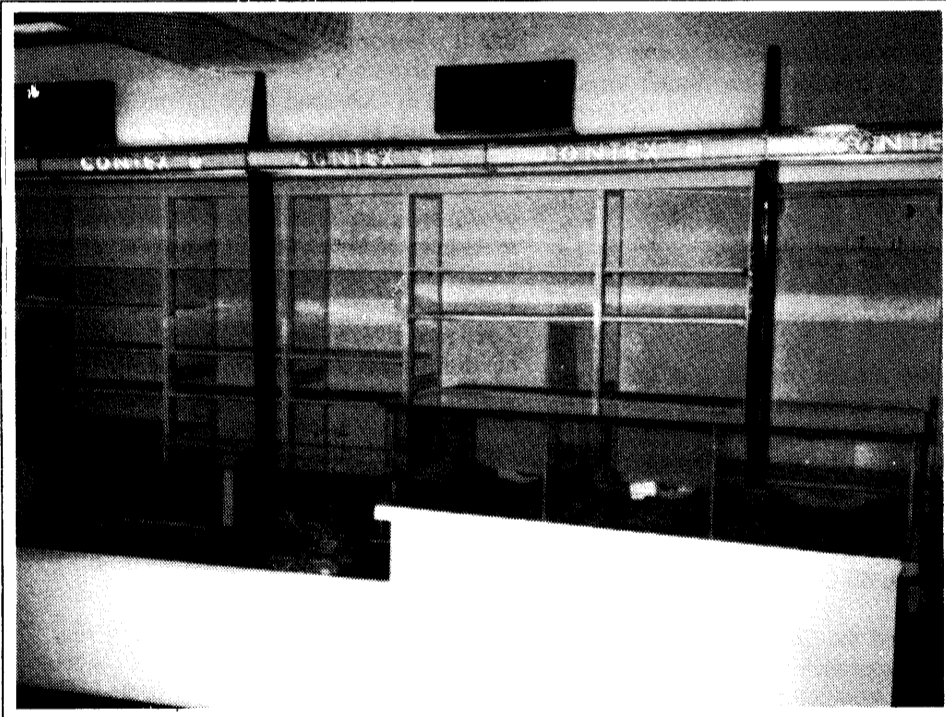
At one CDR meeting we attended in Sancti Spiritus, we pestered the Cubans for 30 minutes about how democracy really works in Cuba. Finally, we asked them if there was anything they wanted to say to us. One old woman made her way to the front, and she said forthrightly, "Get your government to lift the blockade!"

The U.S. government is using a policy of slow strangulation on Cuba, like it did in Nicaragua. Through the economic embargo, they are forcing down the standard of living of everyone, hoping it will lead to dissatisfaction with the government.

After Panama and Nicaragua, State Dept. spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler said, "Two down; one to go." She was referring to Cuba.

There are a number of upcoming bills in Congress designed to tighten the screws even further. The most encompassing is the Cuban Democracy Act (the Toricelli Bill) which would punish foreign firms, ships and countries (!) that trade with Cuba. The Mack amendment would prohibit U.S. subsidiaries in Third World countries from trading with Cuba. Seventy percent of this trade is food and medicine. And \$40 million a year is being spent on TV Marti, which urges Cubans to overthrow their government. The Cubans have successfully jammed TV Marti and it isn't even picked up here. No revolution is hated more by the U.S. rulers than the Cuban Revolution.

People interested in visiting Cuba should contact Global Exchange, 2142 Mission St., Rm. 202, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415) 255-7296. ■



... Pressures

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were two mornings when the bread hadn't arrived from the central bakery. I heard that on mornings when there was no bread, Cuban mothers sent their children off to school with sugar water to tide them over until school lunch. The evening supper was generally what was left over after the 3 p.m. dinner.

Alfredo and I visited the language institute he'll be attending. We met Perfecto, Alfredo's future professor. Alfredo needs to earn his four year degree in English so that he can continue to teach high school. In Cuba, upward mobility in careers is accessible to everyone. If a Cuban is good at a skill, the government will hire that person and certify them later.

Perfecto is a member of the language institute's CCP unit. He listened patiently as I told him about some of the negative things I had seen in Cuba.

"By the way," I asked, "these computers? Are they all for the English department?"

"Yes, they are," replied Perfecto.

"In my country language students do not have such equipment. Nor are foreign languages given such space in the schools. You have a whole building here," I marveled.

"Why do you think my country has these things for the students and yours doesn't," Perfecto asked. "Because yours is revolutionary and mine is capitalist," I answered.

Later, at a snack bar, I talked some more with him and some of his comrades. I tried laying out some basic Marxist concepts on the need for socialism to triumph in an advanced capitalist country, like the United States, or Germany, or France, etc.

Perfecto and his comrades could not respond. One of them said: "Yes, but your working class is not fighting the government. We are alone. Every time our country wants to deal with another country, the United States is right there behind the scenes messing it up for us."

In November, CNN showed some Cubans in Miami picketing against the U.S. blockade. They know their loved ones are facing starvation and lacking essential medical supplies. They realize that the United States government wants to starve a people in order to overthrow a government it can't tolerate because of the shining example of the Cuban Revolution.

We can only extend unconditional solidarity to the Cuban Revolution. An international united front campaign organized around the demand that the United States end its undeclared war against Cuba is desperately needed. End the Blockade! Lift the Travel Restrictions! Close the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo! ■

This is a critical moment for Cuba. On Sept. 22, President Bush signaled his aggressive intentions against Cuba in a UN speech. Invasion exercises have been conducted at Ft. Chafee, Ark. Over 45 illegal overflights were carried out recently in Cuban airspace. More Marines have been sent to Guantanamo Naval Base, despite the departure of the Soviet Union's training brigade. New legislation to tighten the 30-year economic blockade of Cuba has been introduced that will inflict severe suffering on the Cuban people.

Whatever your view of Cuba's social system, their progress in health[care], education, literacy, nutrition, arts, equality for African-Cubans and women is respected throughout the world. The destruction of these benefits is viewed by many as inevitable if the U.S. invades or starves Cuba... The Bush administration must see significant opposition in the U.S. to its hostile policies against Cuba now, before there is an escalation.

We have initiated a worldwide Peace for Cuba International Appeal. On Jan. 25, 1992, thousands of people will attend an international rally at the Javits Convention Center in New York. On Feb. 1, 1992, a similar event will take place in San Francisco, Calif. (See ads below.)

Peace for Cuba An International Appeal

To secure peace and halt militarism, to assure respect for the rights of all countries and peoples, to fulfill economic and social justice for all, we declare:

- **There must be no military action by the United States, or its agents, against Cuba.**
- **Covert military and economic actions must cease.**
- **Economic sanctions against Cuba must be removed.**
- **There must be no reprisals of threats against countries trading or having diplomatic relations with Cuba.**
- **Travel restrictions must be lifted.**
- **The U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay must be closed.**
- **Cuba's sovereignty must be respected.**
- **Relations between Cuba and the United States must be normalized.**

Partial list of Initiators and Endorsers:

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France in crisis as strike wave shakes regime

By ALAIN MATHIEU

PARIS—Since last fall, the political and social crisis in France has deepened at a stunning rate.

The popularity of Premier Edith Cresson's government has fallen to 25 percent in the polls. And for the first time, President Mitterrand has been dragged down also by the government's unpopular policies.

Repeatedly, the government has had to confront the anger of the farmers and many sections of the working class without being able to offer even the beginning of a solution to the problems raised.

First of all, in September, there was a big demonstration of farmers in Paris, followed by protests in the agricultural areas that prevented government ministers and representatives from visiting the countryside. The target of the protests was the entire agricultural policy of the European Economic Community. And the French government cannot detach itself from that without threatening the whole structure of Western European capitalist integration.

Then it was the turn of the wage workers. They are no longer accepting austerity and losses in their buying power while the profits of the companies are increasing.

Nurses and hospital workers went on strike, holding demonstrations of tens of thousands over a period of several weeks. Social workers struck. Workers at the big Renault car plants went out, demanding higher wages. They organized strike pickets and got support from the population, but these strikes could not succeed because they lacked the backing of the big trade-union confederations.

There have been strikes on the docks, where workers mobilized against the government's attempts to change their status and take back their previous gains. Regular mobilizations have continued.

There have been strikes in steel, supported by the populations of entire regions that are suffering from the rundown of the industry. Often these strikes have taken a radical character, involving clashes with the police.

There have been strikes of public workers. In October, a day of action held by the

Confédération Générale du Travail, and Force Ouvrière public workers' unions brought out tens of thousands of demonstrators in dozens of cities.

On all the other social fronts, pressure is building up. In the working-class suburbs of the big cities and in the Paris region, young people of immigrant parents are sporadically exploding in rebellion—spurred by unemployment, hand-to-mouth jobs, and threats to social welfare and to the health and education systems.

Disaffected voters

These problems are being aggravated as well by a moral, political, and constitutional crisis. It involves financial scandals implicating the politicians (especially the ruling Socialist Party) and the discrediting and disarray of the Communist Party, which is hard hit by the collapse of the Stalinist regimes that it always supported.

The result is that left-wing voters are becoming disaffected from the parties to which they gave a majority in the national legislative elections of 1988.

Mitterrand, Cresson, and all the "Socialist" politicians have become discredited and have been rejected by public opinion—most of all by those who put them in power.

The Socialist Party is looking for any expedient to avoid getting thrown out by a popular stayaway from the polls in the regional elections on March 2. The party is being shaken by a deep crisis, and Socialist members of parliament are beginning to abandon the ship.

France is heading inexorably toward social and political upsets that will mark a sharp break with the relative stability of the 1980s.

The ultrarightist National Front is continuing to gain ground on the basis of its racist and antiforeign propaganda, making immigrants the scapegoats for society's evils.

By repeating the same tune, the "respectable" right is fanning the flames of the National Front rather than containing them. Meanwhile, these parliamentary rightists are divided about the advisability of allying themselves with the National

Front in the elections.

In any case, with respect to the economic and social questions, the right and the ultraright have no solutions to offer other than stiffening the present government's anti-working-class policy.

Mitterrand has tried to regain the offensive with proposals for constitutional reforms—shortening the presidential term from seven to five years and establishing some degree of proportionality in elections. But public opinion has not been taken in by this, and such propositions have only highlighted the crisis of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, which came out of De Gaulle's coup d'état in 1958.

The consequences of Mitterrand's domestic policy have not been counterbalanced at all by his foreign policy.

The idea that the 1992 united Europe plan holds out little hope for renewed stability was reinforced by his hesitations during the August putsch in Moscow. He, like the other European imperialist leaders, has found himself a spectator to the events that have thrown East Europe into turmoil, without being able to get any handle on them.

New opportunities

This situation offers new opportunities for internationalist revolutionaries. In the recent strikes, the workers have had to face the divisiveness that characterizes the French trade-union movement. The four or five union confederations are unable to act together, and they do everything possible to block any united mobilization of the working class.

The workers' disaffection from the union leaderships is growing, and they are experiencing in action the need for trade-union unity, for coordination of their cross-trade and action committees, and the need for a general mobilization.

Facing the rise of the ultraright and the discrediting of the big working-class parties, revolutionaries have to make fundamental criticisms of the existing government, which was elected by the left but is carrying out a right-wing policy.

By mounting a large-scale campaign for working-class unity—for a national march



on Paris by wage earners and the unemployed against the government's policies—they can offer a real alternative to the wave of racism stirred up by the right and the ultraright and encouraged by the government's anti-immigration moves.

Two important tests are due in January. On the 17th of the month, pro-choice groups that have been formed recently will hold a national assembly to demand state financing of all forms of contraception and a guarantee of the right to abortion.

On Jan. 25, there will be a national demonstration of all the organizations of the immigrants and of SOS-Racisme [a national anti-racist organization]. It is being supported by 70 organizations, and has been called to oppose racism, discrimination, and the ultraright, and to support the right of immigrants to vote and to gain asylum.

The organizations of the far left, most of which claim to be Trotskyist, have to be able to unite in action and link up with the left oppositions in the Socialist and Communist parties.

This is a necessary step in order to put forward a working-class alternative that can represent the interests of the workers and youth who have become alienated from the policies of the Communist and Socialist parties but do not want to see the right get back into the government. ■

By GERRY FOLEY

The showcase for the return to a "market economy" in Eastern Europe is supposed to be Poland. This is where capitalist restorationist policies were first initiated and where they have gone the deepest. It is where market reforms led to previously empty shops filling up with desirable goods.

The problem is that few people can afford to buy them. In fact, the sales of essential food products shrank so dramatically that Polish peasants, traditionally the most enthusiastic free marketeers, have been stirred to desperate protests.

The Polish Fourth Internationalist paper *Dalej!* has chronicled the disaster produced by the market reforms.

In its November 1991 issue, *Dalej!* took up one of the cruelest effects. At the beginning of October, Poland was visited by a delegation from the United Nations children's agency, UNICEF. The agency has to deal with the problems of starvation of masses of children in the so-called Third World. The problems in Poland are, of course, not so severe, but they were enough to arouse the agency's concern.

Children have begun to go hungry in Poland. "All the statistics show that despite easy access to citrus fruits [one of the worst shortages under the old Stalinist economy], the diet of the average Pole has become poorer since the introduction of the Balcerowicz [austerity] plan. Here the children are the biggest losers..."

"It is well known that there has been a dramatic drop in the consumption of milk. But more and more children are not only going without specific foods but without food in general. According to national studies, about 40 percent of pupils do not bring lunches, and between 10 and 20 percent eat either breakfast or lunch. In those regions where the recession is worse, the percentage must be higher."

The health of children is being threatened also by the disappearance of healthcare.

Dalej! continued: "You only have to think of the wild plans for privatizing children's hospitals to realize how much the health of the youngest generation is going to depend on the money their parents have. Equal access for all children to appropriate, free healthcare today is only a dream."

What 'free enterprise' offers children in Poland



Street peddler in Warsaw: "There is no future for us."

Even free elementary and high-school education is already a thing of the past in Poland. "The catastrophic situation of the schools," *Dalej!* pointed out, "is no secret any more. The drastic cuts in funds for education have led to cutting the weekly hours of instruction, the elimination of after-school activities, layoffs of school workers, a reduction in the number of teachers, delay of repairs, etc. Many schools used up their yearly budgets before the summer vacation and are months behind in paying their electric bills..."

"Of course, there is a difference between the public schools and the 'social schools,' where the children of the Polish elite go. But let us remember that even in the state schools, the press has revealed that a place in first grade cost 1.5 million *zlotys* this year [slightly more than an average monthly wage]. The result of the state policy is thus a silent, progressive privatization of all education.

"The schools are bankrupt for all practical purposes,

with the result that the parents have to pay. They have to pay, depending on the school, from 50,000 to 200,000 *zlotys* a month. Without this money, the schools would have to close their doors. The situation is the same for kindergartens.

"More and more state kindergartens are being liquidated. They have been turned over to the municipalities, which in many cases cannot maintain them, especially in those regions (especially hard hit by unemployment) where the parents cannot contribute. In Lodz, for example, from May to August, the percentage of children in preschool institutions dropped from 55 percent to 34 percent."

The most insidious effect of the de facto privatization of education, *Dalej!* pointed out, was that it is rapidly widening the gap in the opportunities for the children of the poor and of the well-to-do, eliminating the social mobility that was one of the main attractions of the former system. ■

Party boss's victory in Ukraine cornerstone of Commonwealth

By GERRY FOLEY

The formation of the new "Commonwealth of Independent States" represents a relative victory for the bureaucracy. It was made possible by the victory of the Communist party boss in Ukraine, Leonid Makarovich Kravchuk, in the Dec. 1 presidential elections in the republic.

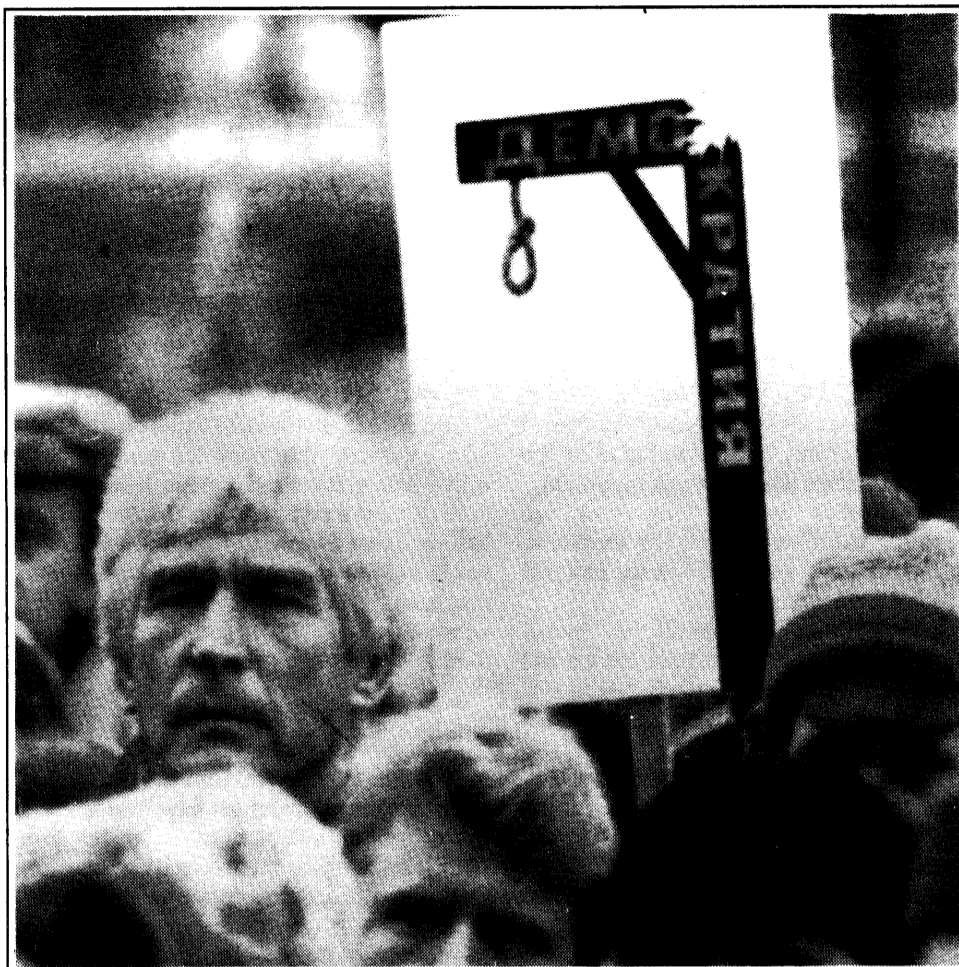
Like all the top bureaucrats in Ukraine, Kravchuk spent his entire career as a grand inquisitor and persecutor of "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists." Right up to the August putsch, his regime subjected leading national democrats, such as Stepan Khmara, to political victimization. It was only after the failure of the old-line Stalinist coup that Khmara and other political prisoners were released, and Kravchuk suddenly put on the clothes of a Ukrainian patriot.

Despite Kravchuk's last-minute turning of his coat and his obvious maneuvering on the question of Gorbachev's project for a "renewed Union" (his position on signing the new Union treaty changed every couple of days, clearly depending on which way he thought the wind was blowing), he managed to get himself elected president by over 60 percent of the vote.

Vyacheslav Chornovil, the major candidate of the national democratic movement, Rukh, got only about a quarter of the vote. Another national democratic leader, Levko Lukyanenko, got about 5 percent.

In the referendum on independence that was held at the same time as the presidential vote, over 90 percent cast their ballots for independence. But the vote was very uneven.

In the western Ukraine, or Galicia—the bastion of the Ukrainian national opposition to the Stalinist state and lately of Rukh—the vote for independence was virtually unanimous. Thus, in the Lviv district, 97.5 percent voted for indepen-



Demonstration in Moscow. Sign depicts democracy being made into a gallows

dence; in Ternopol, it was 98.9 percent; in Volynia, 96.3 percent.

In the capital, Kiev, in central Ukraine, 95.5 percent voted for independence. At the time of the referendum on preserving the Union in March, about 45 percent in Kiev voted for maintaining the USSR.

In the republic as a whole, about 70 percent voted for maintaining the union, with an overwhelming pro-Union vote in the eastern part of the republic, where Rukh was only beginning to make inroads.

On Dec. 1, there were majorities for

independence in all regions of the republic, but large minorities opposed it in the russified industrial area of the Donbass (about 30 percent) and in the Crimea (about 45 percent). The latter area is not historically part of Ukraine, but was assigned to the republic only in the 1950s.

Crimea was conquered by the Russian empire from the Ottomans. And the older, historically Muslim, Tatar population was progressively driven out. The surviving Tatar community was expelled en masse by Stalin during the second world war.

(Rukh's program, by the way, calls for restoring the Crimean Tatar Autonomous Republic, a position far from popular with the Russian settlers who came in to take their place.)

Kravchuk got his highest vote precisely in those areas where an appreciable minority opposed independence. This makes it clear that his support was essentially conservative, reflecting the fact that the radical antibureaucratic political movement has not yet made a breakthrough in the eastern part of the republic.

The Donbass has been one of the centers of the movement of the coal miners, the first section of the working class to rebel against the bureaucracy. The Stalinist press has complained bitterly and constantly about establishment of "dual power" in the area by the miners' strike committees. Rukh managed to bring the strike committees into its first congress, even though it had to moderate its national demands to accomplish this.

The population of the Donbass is largely of Russian origin, and those of Ukrainian origin have long been russified. Identification with Ukraine tends to be weak and ambiguous. For example, during the Russian civil war, the Bolshevik leadership in this region at one point tried to create a distinct workers' republic of the Donbass and Krivoi Rog. Nonetheless, Rukh has remained the only political alternative to the representatives of the bureaucracy.

Growth of national consciousness

National consciousness is determined by great social and political movements as much or more than by ethnic and cultural factors. The development of the Ukrainian nation in the first place is rooted in a peasant rebellion against the Polish feudalists in the 17th century.

The peasant and worker upsurge in the period of the Bolshevik revolution and the first years of Soviet power led to a rapid growth of Ukrainian national consciousness, including in the eastern part of the country and russified cities, which were overwhelmed by Stalin's terror in the 1930s.

It seems clear by now that the rebellion against the Stalinist bureaucracy will lead to the masses throughout the republic identifying with Ukrainian aspirations, regardless of the language they speak. But because of the ambiguities of national consciousness in the eastern part of Ukraine, this process may be prolonged and difficult. In any case, the delay has given precious time to the bureaucracy throughout the old Union.

Kravchuk's victory was the decisive element for giving minimal legitimacy to the Commonwealth. Gorbachev had made it clear several times that no new Union was possible without Ukraine. But his new Treaty of Union had obviously become untenable in the political conditions after the failure of the putsch.

It still contained three provisions fundamentally unacceptable to the national movements—one Soviet citizenship (making it impossible for the smaller peoples to defend themselves against being flooded by Russians), a Union Supreme Court that could preside over a continuation de facto of the Union constitution, and central control of the armed forces.

Kravchuk was evidently finding it too hazardous an undertaking to sign such a treaty, which involved a direct continuation of the Stalinist state, in however attenuated a form. However, once the Ukrainian boss got through his electoral hurdle, he could hope to maintain the Stalinist state in a new form, ostensibly based on an initiative from below by the republics themselves.

The key role played in the founding of the Commonwealth by the Byelorussian leadership is another indication of its basically Stalinist-continuationist character. The unevenness and ambiguities of national consciousness from which Ukraine suffers are even more pronounced in Byelorussia (now Belarus).

The national democratic movement has made a breakthrough in the capital, Minsk, but in the rest of the republic the old Stalinist bosses have remained firmly in control—despite even the formal dissolution of the Communist Party. This republic is a notorious redoubt of unreconstructed Stalinism. ■

... Bureaucrats

(continued from page 1)

down of its power.

The locomotive of the process of capitalist restoration is clearly the government of Russia, where the antibureaucratic movement, overall, has lagged far behind those in a number of the republics.

Before the August putsch, the Communist Party had been ousted from direct political control only in a few centers. Furthermore, even in those areas, the leaders of the "democratic movement" tended to be only slightly reconstructed Stalinist bureaucrats—such as Popov, the mayor of Moscow; Sobchak, mayor of St. Petersburg; and Yeltsin himself.

In many of the republics, mass movements have arisen that, while formally committed to market reforms, are also more deeply influenced by democratic ideas and more directly vulnerable to mass pressure.

Thus with a regard to the first big problem facing the new Commonwealth, the projected price rise, correspondent Serge Schemann wrote in the Dec. 27 *New York Times*, "The economic debate was being argued primarily by the finance ministers of Ukraine and other republics, who were reportedly opposed to Russia's intention to free prices at the start of the new year and were planning to ask Moscow for a postponement."

This situation will pose a new test for the national democratic movements, whose clothes have been stolen to some extent by wriggling chiefs of the bureaucracy. In order to continue their advance, they will have to differentiate themselves more on social and economic questions from the core Stalinist bureaucracy.

In general, as the grip of the bureaucracy continues to weaken, politics will become more complex throughout the old Soviet Union, regardless of what its rulers call it.

Soviet gay rights activist holds press conference in S.F.

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Gays and lesbians were known as "sexual dissidents" in the Soviet Union. They lived in constant fear of exposure and imprisonment.

When hard-liners pronounced their coup last August, gay and lesbian activists feared for their lives. In an ominous development, on Aug. 20, the new government demanded that the Moscow AIDS clinic supply them with a list of people with AIDS and HIV.

"I was not terrified—I was hysterical," Roman Kalinin, Russia's best-known gay activist, told reporters in San Francisco last month. Kalinin, 24 years old, is the editor of *TEMA*, the Soviet Union's first gay newspaper. *TEMA* means "theme" and is slang for "gay" in Russian.

In spite of the danger, gay and lesbian activists from *TEMA* played a courageous role in resisting the coup. Around the clock, *TEMA*'s copy machines printed the decrees of Boris Yeltsin—with the *TEMA* logo at the bottom. The activists then distributed the flyers to people throughout Moscow. The decrees were even handed to soldiers in tanks who were threatening the Russian parliament building.

Roman Kalinin was one of a dozen people who started the Moscow Union of Lesbians and Gay Men in February 1990. Last May, he ran for the presiden-

cy of Russia. He was ruled off the ballot, but received a great deal of press coverage for the cause of gay rights.

I asked Kalinin if his presidential campaign platform took up any political questions in addition to that of gay and lesbian rights. "Of course," he replied. "My program was not just about gay rights and sexual freedom but about making life free for everyone." Gay and lesbian activists, he said, came out of the general movement for democracy, and thus were "highly politicized."

Kalinin emphasized that the fight is still not over. He and his associates plan to challenge the country's anti-gay laws, such as Article 121 of the Soviet Constitution, which outlaws homosexuality.

Kalinin, however, has illusions in capitalism. He has ambitious plans for a network of gay and lesbian-run businesses—including bars, gymnasiums, a travel agency, and other American-style enterprises. He plans to "support privatization of the economy and the free market," he said, "and use it for everyone's benefit."

In a situation of disastrous impoverishment driven by market reforms, such plans do not seem to offer much hope for solving the evils fostered by Stalinism and the backwardness on which it was based. But the gay and lesbian movement is only beginning to organize, and will certainly learn from its experience. ■

By PAUL LE BLANC
and EVELYN SELL

This is a response to Barry Sheppard's article, "How the American 'Left' analyzed attempted coup in Soviet Union," published in October 1991 issue of *Socialist Action*. The authors represent the views here of the National Coordinators of the Fourth International Tendency (FIT).

We appreciate the invitation from Socialist Action to correct a misunderstanding of the FIT National Coordinators' position regarding recent events in the USSR, presented in the October issue of your newspaper.

Your introduction notes, "A statement by the FIT leadership scheduled for the October issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* was furnished to *Socialist Action*."

The actual theses of the FIT National Coordinators does not contain the sentence you emphatically criticized: "Glasnost has created important incipient groupings—socialist vanguard formations, attempts at organizing independent unions, nationalist, women's and environmental movements."

Far from believing that glasnost (i.e., political openness—freedom of speech and press) "created" the independent groups and

movements of Soviet working people, oppressed nationalities, etc., we believe that these elementary civil liberties have been extremely important in enabling those organizing independent political activity to make their voices heard and to build a struggle in which democracy increasingly will become counterposed to efforts to impose capitalism.

This view agrees substantially with your statement that glasnost did not create the independent groups but that "the people did this, utilizing the greater political freedom wrested from the bureaucracy." The actual published passage in our theses states:

"The outcome of this struggle is yet to be determined. While the fighting capacity of the Soviet masses cannot be doubted, they so far lack mass organizations, such as socialist workers' parties and effective unions, needed to organize a successful defense against the counterrevolution."

"In the more open conditions of glasnost, important groupings have been

created—not only mass nationalist movements and the powerful independent Miners Union, but also incipient socialist vanguard formations, attempts at organizing other independent unions, as well as women's and environmental movements. These vanguards are now challenged to quickly find a way to win genuine mass influence." ("Defend and Renew the Gains of the Russian Revolution," *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, October 1991, p. 36.)

As this passage indicates, our organization shares the view of Leon Trotsky—held in common today by the international revolutionary socialist movement he helped to found, the Fourth International—that no wing of the Soviet bureaucracy represents the interests of genuine democracy, that only the masses of the workers and oppressed will fight consistently for that.

Contrary to the characterization of our position in *Socialist Action*, we feel no confusion over any current in the bureaucracy—neither the so-called hardliners who

staged the August coup, nor those around Gorbachev, nor those around Yeltsin. While perceiving greater differences within the bureaucracy than allowed for in the SA [*Socialist Action*] analysis, we insist—as does the Fourth International worldwide—that only the independent struggles of the workers and the oppressed can establish democracy and socialism in the USSR.

This is "the bottom line," and we are pleased to see that the comrades of Socialist Action stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us on this fundamental question.

It is important that all socialists and radical activists give serious attention to the complex and momentous events in the USSR, critically discussing their different perceptions of what is unfolding, listening to each other without distortion—being just as open to learning from each other as to teaching each other, and being prepared to acknowledge common ground when there is agreement.

Socialist Action readers are urged to send for our \$1 pamphlet that includes the resolution referred to above, *Where Is the Soviet Union Heading?* and also to read the extensive coverage in our magazine, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (\$3 per copy), which can be obtained from F.I.T., P.O. Box 1947, New York, NY 10009. ■

The struggle for socialist democracy in the USSR

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"Theatre in Revolution—Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design, 1913-1935." An exhibit at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, through Feb. 16, 1992.

"Today, for the artist in the theatre," the American director Lee Simonson wrote in 1934, "the road leads to Moscow and the theatres of the USSR." The Russian Revolution, the most momentous social overturn in history, had been accompanied by a revolution in the arts. Moscow was indeed the Mecca of artists worldwide.

The young Soviet artists used the theatres (which were subsidized by the revolutionary government and free to the public) as a laboratory to try out their innovations. During the early 1920s—the harsh years of the Civil War—over 3000 theatre groups flourished in the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, by the time Simonson was writing, the artistic avant garde already had been considerably housebroken by the Stalinist bureaucracy. In 1934, the government announced that "socialist realism" was to be the only acceptable form for artists and writers.

Now, in the current San Francisco exhibit, "Theatre in Revolution," it is possible once again to visualize many of the artistic creations of the Soviet Union's revolutionary years. The hundreds of drawings, paintings, photographs, and scale models in the exhibit were taken from the collection of the Bakhrushin State Central Theatrical Museum in Moscow.

The exhibit's brochure explains, "Today, these artists and their daring and radically new conceptions have been officially rehabilitated within the Soviet Union."

Placards in the exhibit point out that the early Soviet avant garde was heavily influenced by the latest movements in European art—such as cubism (centered in France) and futurism (centered in Italy). Having stated that fact, unfortunately, the exhibit hardly touches on the fervent theoretical debates that the partisans of those movements engaged in.

Even before the 1917 Revolution, artists in Russia were generally more politically conscious than artists in most other parts of Europe. The reason lay in their having to confront the extreme economic backwardness of the country and the overbearing autocracy that ruled it.

The Russian futurists, for example, shared the enthusi-

Early Soviet theatre art on display in S.F.



asm of their Italian counterparts for the Machine Age. Machines, they believed, would be a force to liberate human beings from the tyranny of nature. But whereas the Italian futurists welcomed the clock-like precision of Mussolini's tanks, the Russians embraced the Bolsheviks' promise of a world transformed by industrialisation—under a workers' government.

Another pivotal artistic movement of the period (virtually ignored in the San Francisco exhibit) was formed around the Proletkult group, which was founded soon after the overthrow of the Tsar in February 1917.

Proletkult members believed that art could be a prime

means of organizing society. In order to build a new socialist society, they said, traditional art (which represents the old ruling class) must be smashed and replaced by "proletarian art."

But they were hard pressed to define what "proletarian art" was—if it existed at all. Some in the group pondered whether it simply meant works done by untrained artists and actors from the working class. Others opted for vast crowd spectacles that countered the notion of "bourgeois individualism."

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the earlier movements (such as cubism, futurism, and Proletkult) were synthesized into a movement and style known generally as constructivism.

The more extreme point of view among the constructivists argued that the artist should be supplanted by the "engineer/artist." As one constructivist, Alexander Gan, wrote in 1920: "A time of social expediency has begun. ... Art is dead! There is no room for it in the human work apparatus."

The prevailing wing among the constructivists proposed instead that artists act as a bridge between art and industry. Most of their designs, however, did not progress beyond scale models. "Art" was often too expensive for a Soviet Union struggling on the edge of famine.

The San Francisco exhibit points out that political repression, rather than natural artistic development, was primarily responsible for ending the Soviet avant garde movement. By the last half of the 1920s, many of the artists had become disillusioned by the continued erosion of civil liberties and the growth of bureaucratism and privileges.

But the exhibit curators fail to mention the existence of a strong opposition movement—led by Leon Trotsky and others from within the Communist Party—to Stalin's bureaucratic policies. Instead, suppression of the arts (and of freedom in general) is treated as a natural extension of "communist ideology."

Despite these gaps in the commentary, and a somewhat cluttered gallery space, the power of the art shines through. On the day I visited, quite a few Russian-speaking people were in the museum. Many of them, like the American-born visitors there, seemed astonished that "communism" could produce art of such vigor and imagination. If you are in the Bay Area, I'd highly recommend a visit to the exhibit. ■

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

"The Great Reversal: Politics and Art in Solzhenitsyn," by Paul N. Siegel. Walnut Publishing, San Francisco, 1991. 198 pp. \$9.95

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's novels "Cancer Ward" and "The First Circle" are among my favorite books. Both inspire and illuminate. They teach so much about Soviet society as a whole and in particular about the terrible Stalinist repression which permeated Soviet life for over 50 years.

But they are not didactic works. The characters are fully developed, the plot is complex, the writing style is lustrous. In short they are part of the tradition of great Russian novels like those of Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy. They are among those special long books that you don't want to end.

So I have often wondered how the

Author Paul Siegel dissects political evolution of Solzhenitsyn

Siegel combines rigorous literary criticism with well-grounded political explanations for Solzhenitsyn's "great reversal."

author of such great works of literature could now be a fountainhead of the most reactionary ideas—virulent anti-Communism, pro-imperialist war-mongering, and idealization of reactionary and patriarchal religion.

Paul Siegel's book provides many insights into this phenomenon. He combines rigorous literary criticism with

well-grounded political explanations for Solzhenitsyn's "great reversal." At the same time, this is a lively, enjoyable book.

One usually thinks of literary criticism as an academic exercise, accessible only to narrow university circles, where it seems that vocabulary is chosen as a way of excluding non-academics rather than illuminating subject matter. Siegel, while rigorously providing evidence to prove his points from Solzhenitsyn's work and the historical record, does not enter the academic trap for one minute. Even the extensive footnotes at the end of each of the book's six chapters are interesting reading.

The chapter I found most compelling is titled "Truth and Distortion in 'The Gulag Archipelago.'" Siegel shows us how

Solzhenitsyn produced "a mighty achievement that has contributed to our knowledge and understanding of the horror of the Stalinist prison camps as no other writing has done." But he points out that the book is also "a shoddy account of their origin and history that has ministered greatly to the false concept current in the West that Stalinism is merely the logical development of Leninism."

How Siegel illuminates this apparent contradiction provides an honest and insightful approach to literature and politics. In the process he provides much ammunition in the struggle against efforts of Western capitalists to discredit socialism and the revolutionaries who fought for it. As such, the book is a valuable tool for those who want to change the world and enjoy reading good books, too.

By MIKE ALEWITZ

The South African revolution lost a powerful and eloquent voice with the death of Dumile Feni. Mhlaba Zwelidumile Mgxaji Feni died young, only 52 years old, on Oct. 16 in New York City. His life had been bound up in the struggle against apartheid, and revealed much that was both tragic and heroic for artists who use their talents in the struggle for human liberation.

Dumile's art contained many influences that seemed to transcend time. He often told how he was inspired to make art by the cave paintings of his ancestors, which his mother had revealed to him when he was a child.

Later he was to study and learn of the great civilizations, and their culture, that had flourished in Southern Africa. He learned to cast sculpture in Johannesburg, where he was also exposed to Western European art. When he went into exile, he studied the art of Europe and America in a more formal way, and was involved in music and film making. Among his friends, acquaintances, and influences were artists like Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masakela, and Spike Lee. And so, within his short life were compressed influences spanning centuries.

Dumile was an implacable foe of apartheid and injustice for his entire life. Because of his artistic and political efforts, he was hounded by the South African government and police. He was arrested many times and spent years in prison. He was repeatedly beaten, and suffered hearing loss and other permanent damage that contributed to his already ill health.

Dumile was forced to flee South Africa in the late 1960s and lived in exile in London, making art while he continued to suffer from diabetes and asthma. He worked there for 11 years before coming to the United States, living for a short time in California and then settling in New York, where he remained until his death.

Dumile was an accomplished graphic artist and draftsman, and created many fine drawings. But it was as a sculptor

Dumile Feni: Eloquent voice against apartheid

that he excelled. His sculptures seemed to contain within them the strength of an entire people. The works transcend their small size with a monumental quality.

Though the sculptures were meant to be cast in bronze, he was never able to raise the money for that expensive procedure. So they remained as they had been, molded in black clay. Economic in form, symbolic in nature, totally stable and centered, it was a profoundly African art.

I met and worked closely with Dumile when I designed and directed the Pathfinder Mural Project. Dumile was invited, on behalf of the African National Congress, to paint one of the central figures of the mural, that of Nelson Mandela.

Dumile struggled with his painting over many weeks in the cold weather. He was demanding of those around him, but mostly towards himself. We would sit across the street, continuously appraising the work, discussing, then plunging in anew. He took great pride in his work; in his heart he felt he was painting for his people as well as for himself.

Dumile was not primarily a painter, but became so absorbed in the medium that he made plans to go back to school to study painting. He was always seeking ways to improve his work.

Unfortunately, as the project was nearing completion, the mural was subjected to censorship from Pathfinder's directors, the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP leaders began to demand that the artmaking be directed by party officials, often leading to bizarre demands regarding head sizes, colors, etc.

(When I wrote a document critical of this policy, I was expelled by the central leadership of the party. The history of the mural was then rewritten to exclude all mention of my participation in the

project.)

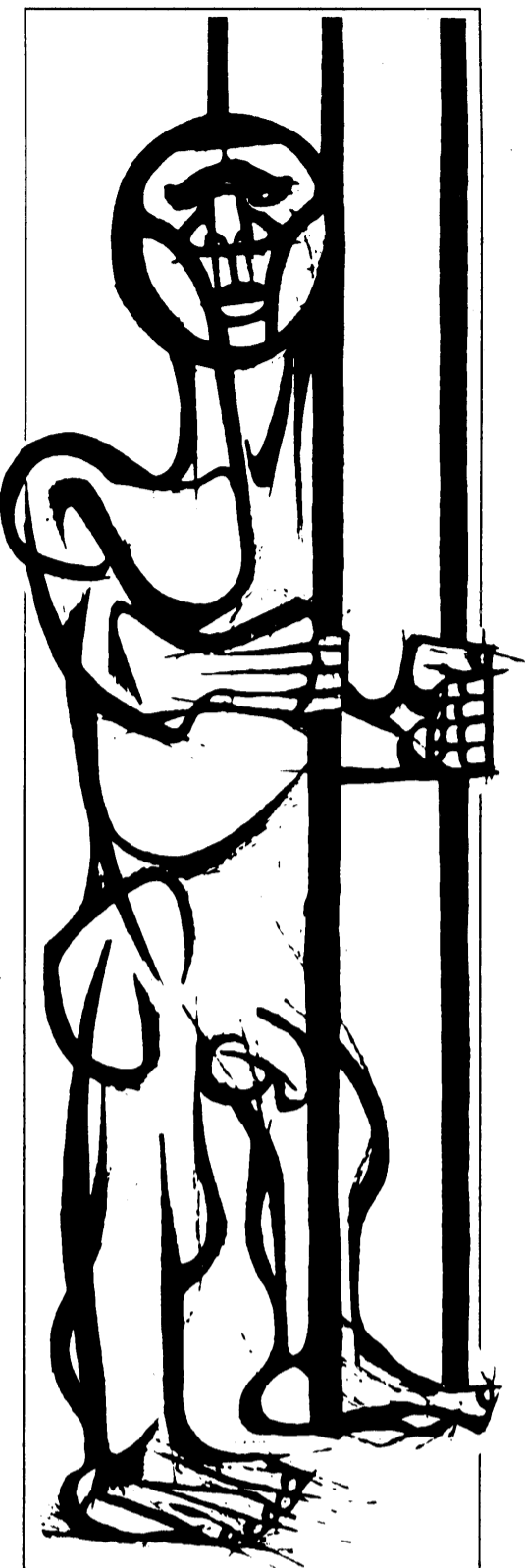
Dumile was opposed to this censorship on principle. He refused to be demoralized by the censors and, much to his credit, was one of the artists who helped to see the project through to completion.

Later, he became one of the initiators of Art/Work, an organization of artists and activists that organizes in support of working-class struggles and opposes censorship from any source. Declining health prevented him from joining us on such projects as brigades to the Pittston Coal Mine Strikers, but he never failed in his political support.

Dumile Feni was the victim of apartheid and the criminal policies of the U.S. government. But he made important contributions to their destruction. Not only his art has inspired us, but the example of his life. In a time when the ruling class promotes artists interested only in self-enrichment and personal comfort, Dumile shrugged off such concerns. He steadfastly kept to the task of exposing truth through his art.

Dumile was one of those individuals who possess such dignity that they seem to transcend their impoverished surroundings. He was contemptuous of artists who sought only to profit, of pompous critics writing to confuse, and of party officials abusing their authority.

Pathfinder Press has announced they are building a memorial to Feni, and have begun to promote him in death. This may be commendable, but it would be far better to honor Dumile by promoting the truth. Dumile never wavered from that notion; he remained true to the struggle, to himself, and to his art. His life now becomes part of our collective consciousness, as we move on to struggle and create anew. ■



Henry Snipper: Life-long supporter of the party

By HAYDEN PERRY

Socialist Action lost a staunch supporter when Henry Snipper died on Oct. 25 at the age of 81 in Oakland, Calif.

Almost a native Californian, Henry spent much of his life in Los Angeles, where he worked as an electrician. The Socialist Workers Party is indebted to Henry for the hours he spent wiring the numerous headquarters the party opened around L.A. throughout the years.

In a sense, Henry inherited his radical politics. His parents came from Russia carrying with them the socialist ideology of the Jewish Bund. It was natural for Henry and his brother, Mitt, to join the Socialist Party. Their wives, Alice and Ann, also became active socialists in the 1930s.

When the Trotskyists entered the Socialist Party in 1937, the young Snippers were attracted to the militant program the revolutionary socialists introduced. When the Trotskyists were expelled in 1938, Henry and Alice joined in founding the Socialist Workers Party.

Life for the Snippers revolved around the party. The two families built a house together in Los Angeles that was designed to serve as a social center for the party. In the dark days of the witch hunt of the 1950s, the Snipper home was a rallying center. In 1967, Cuban counterrevolutionary "gusanos" recognized the political importance of the house, and fire-bombed it.

Now the years have taken their toll. Mitt Snipper died in 1984. Alice Snipper died in December 1987. Ann Snipper



Henry and Alice Snipper in 1981

died in October, and Henry the same month. This is a grievous loss for the movement.

But a younger generation of Snippers and Snipper in-laws is active today in Socialist Action, pursuing the socialist goal their parents and grandparents fought for. ■

Ann Snipper: Activist for the cause of workers

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Ann Snipper, a socialist for more than a half-century, died in Los Angeles on Oct. 3. She was 77.

At age 16, in 1929, Snipper joined the Young People's Socialist League, the youth group of the Socialist Party. In the early 1930s, she helped muster support for striking farm workers in California.

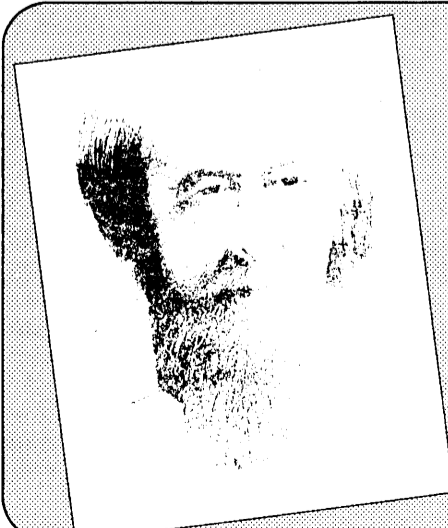
As a member of the Socialist Party, she joined with the Trotskyists in opposing the reformist politics of the party leadership. In 1937, she and other revolutionary socialists were bureaucratically expelled from the party. In 1938, she became a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

In 1940, Snipper left the SWP with the grouping led by Max Shachtman and Martin Abern, who rejected the idea that the Soviet Union remained a workers state

(although bureaucratically degenerated), which must be defended against imperialism. But Snipper soon reconsidered, and rejoined the SWP.

Throughout the next three decades, Ann Snipper played an active role in a wide range of party activities. In the early 1960s, she joined other SWP members in building the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. In recent years, she participated in the pro-choice movement, helping to defend women's clinics under attack by right-wingers.

In 1983, Snipper and other long-time SWP members were bureaucratically expelled from the party for their principled opposition to the leadership's abandonment of the Trotskyist program. A majority of the expelled members formed Socialist Action. Others, including Ann Snipper, went on to found the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. ■



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CAPITALISM CREATES ITS OWN GRAVEDIGGERS

By BARRY SHEPPARD

Newspapers, radio, and television in this country all speak of the death of "communism." As evidence, they point to the demise of the Stalinist parties of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

But is communism really dead and buried, or has the corpse has been deliberately misidentified? In this column last month, we saw that communism has two definitions. According to the older and more general definition, communism is described as a society in which the means of production are held in common. We referred to Stone Age hunting and gathering societies as an example.

Now we come to the more restricted definition, the modern idea of communism.

This meaning of the word developed as a result of the rise of capitalism and the consequent first stirrings of the modern working class. True modern capitalism is based on machine production and is marked by the emergence of two new classes, the capitalist owners of industry and the modern working class—which hires itself out to the capitalists for wages.

This system arose in the first factories to produce cotton cloth, in England, sometime between 1760 and 1780. From there, it has spread to conquer the world.

As in all previous class societies, capitalism contains within itself a class struggle. But unlike all previous class societies, capitalism has tended to reduce the number of conflicting classes and

is continually wiping out intermediate classes, leaving the capitalist class and the wage workers as the major contending forces.

Modern communism, in addition to standing for a communist, classless society, is first and foremost a movement—the movement of the working class of the world toward its own emancipation. Insofar as it is a theory, it is the generalization of that movement.

It announced its birth in 1848, with the publication of the "Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

"Communist Manifesto"

Marx and Engels had developed the foundations of modern communism as young men in the 1840s. They were recruited by a clandestine group of communist-minded workers in 1847. In turn, they won this group to their world outlook, and were asked by the group to write the "Manifesto."

Marx and Engels had been active in the movement for a democratic revolution in their native Germany. They had also been greatly influenced by workers' struggles. Engels had gone to England, where he witnessed the fight of the wage slaves there for the 10-hour day and other demands. A revolt by weavers in Silesia, then a part of Germany, impressed Marx.

The "Communist Manifesto" explained the development of history as a history of class struggles. It explained the fundamentals of how capitalism works and the nature of the class struggle

between the capitalists and the workers.

Capitalism had revealed the powers latent in human labor. A society of abundance with enough for all could be created on the basis of the methods developed by capitalism.

Capitalism was also conquering the globe and creating an interdependent world through the world market. It introduced cooperation in production and distribution at levels unheard of before and on an international scale.

The contradiction between such vast social cooperation and the private appropriation of its fruits by the capitalists drives this system to economic catastrophes and other crises like war.

But the system also produces its own gravediggers in the form of the modern working class. This class is educated by capitalism in cooperative production. It owns no private property in the means of production. In the course of its struggle against its own exploitation, the working class will "win the battle of democracy" in alliance with other producers like working farmers. It will then become the ruling class in place of the capitalist class.

It will use this state power to progressively expropriate the capitalist class through nationalizing the means of production, which will gradually become social property. The state form of a workers' democracy will itself gradually die away as its function of suppressing the property privileges of the former capitalist class becomes less and less nec-

Learning About Marxism

By Barry Sheppard



essary.

The administration of people will gradually become the administration of things. The working class itself will gradually become the whole people. This will be done on a world scale, overcoming the divisions between rich and poor countries, and advanced and backward.

Communism was no longer a utopia, but a realistic perspective, founded on history, and firmly rooted in the movement of the workers. As such it came to be known as *scientific socialism*.

What about our corpse?

The October 1917 revolution in Russia was a revolution of the workers and peasants led by a working class party armed with scientific socialism. It set out to be the first in a chain of socialist revolutions in Europe that would create workers' states and begin the construction of the classless society.

But the revolution was defeated in the advanced capitalist countries. In the isolation and poverty of backward Russia, there was a counterrevolution based on a privileged caste of bureaucrats, which halted the progress towards socialism and saddled the workers' state with a murderous police

apparatus.

It's now clear that this bureaucracy wants to lead back toward capitalism. For a long time, it clothed its misrule with socialist rhetoric, and kept the name "communist." Now it has cast off even that mask.

So what is dead is not communism, but the pretensions of the Stalinist bureaucrats to be advocates of communism or socialism—as they rush to try to become capitalists.

The Soviet and Eastern European workers are resisting the concrete measures (such as layoffs and a rise in prices) that must be put into place before capitalism can be restored. Whatever the immediate outcome of this struggle, the workers there will continue to fight for their real interests. The generalization of that fight is—communism. The workers will learn this in the course of the battle.

Communism will arise again as a massive movement, cleansed of the anticommunist virus of Stalinism, because the movement of the workers towards their emancipation is inevitable—in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the whole capitalist world. ■

Subscription and fund drive campaigns extended

By BARRY SHEPPARD

We have decided to extend our subscription drive and our fund drive another month. Both drives will now end on Jan. 15, 1992.

We have received 608 subscriptions out of a goal of 650. Since we are so close to our goal, we decided to take another month and go for it!

Supporters in the San Francisco Bay Area ran an ambitious election campaign for Joni Jacobs for

mayor, as well as doing the job of moving Socialist Action into its new headquarters. They feel they can use the extra time to go out and hit some of the campuses they were unable to get to during the drive.

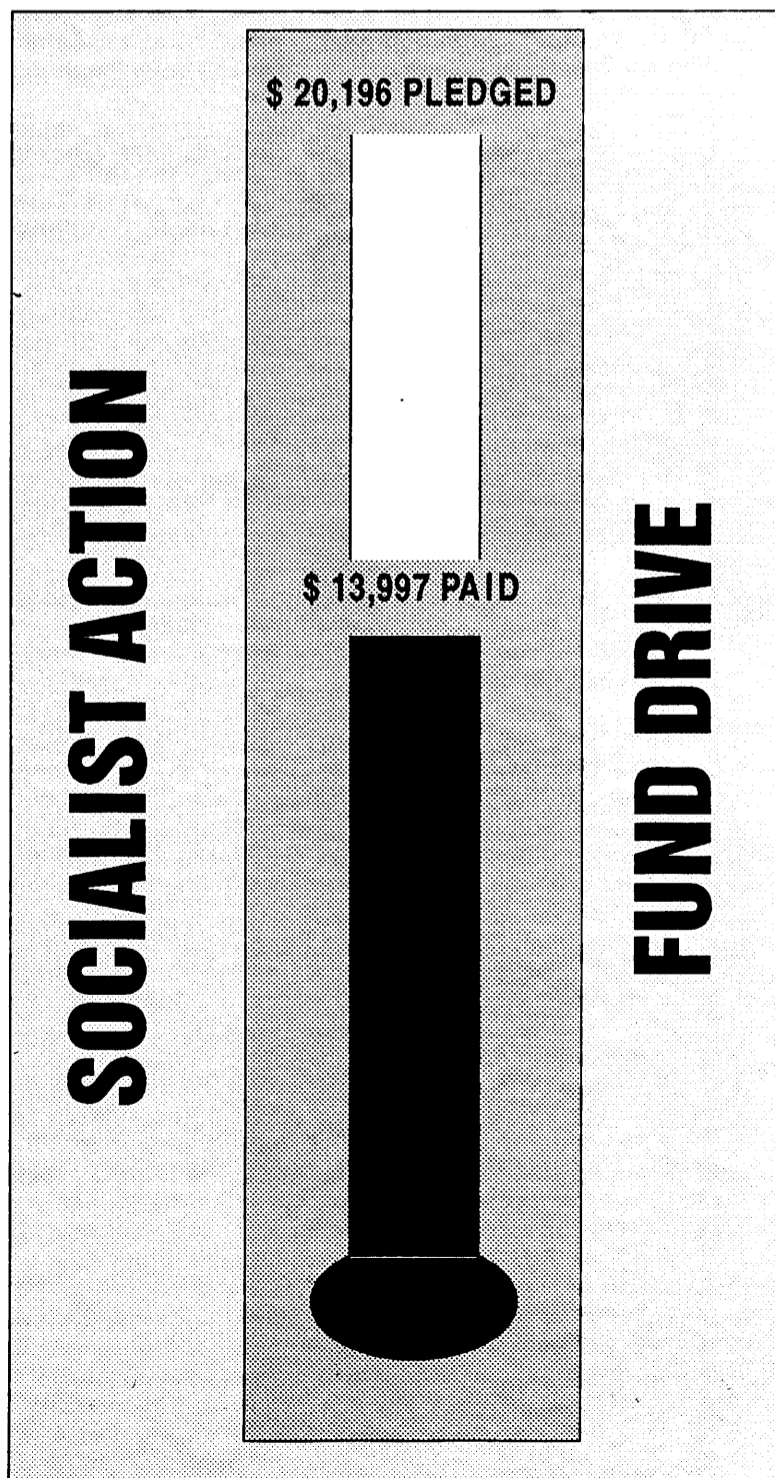
The one-month extension will enable those areas who are close to making their goals to do so, as well as to make the national goal. Every area can contribute by getting just a few more.

On the fund drive, we were hop-

ing originally to raise \$24,000. But the pledges to the drive have come to just over \$20,000. It is unrealistic to think we could now make up the difference. Collections of the pledges are also behind. Consequently, we have set our goal during the next month to collect the outstanding pledges.

Many of our supporters have been hit hard by the recession. Some have been laid off. Money is tight for workers right now. But these times of looming crises—and great confusion—are precisely the time to dig a little deeper and help us get out the truth about capitalism and socialism. ■

City	Goal	New	Renew.	Total	Pct.	
Milwaukee	10	19	1	20	200%	
Baltimore	60	66	12	78	130%	
Detroit	10	4	8	12	120%	
New Brunswick	5	6	0	6	120%	
Los Angeles	25	13	13	26	104%	
San Francisco	250	218	32	250	100%	
Boston	75	64	10	74	99%	
Kansas City	5	2	2	4	80%	
Portland	15	11	1	12	80%	
New York	55	6	0	42	76%	
New Haven	5	1	2	3	60%	
Chicago	50	26	3	29	58%	
Twin Cities	25	6	5	11	44%	
Philadelphia	20	3	2	5	25%	
Cleveland	15	1	2	3	20%	
Bath, Me.	5	0	0	0	0%	
Cincinnati	5	0	0	0	0%	
Other	25	15	18	33	132%	
Total	As of Dec. 27	650	473	135	608	94%



Marine resister Tahan Jones faces 7 year prison sentence

By JEFF MACKLER

One of the nation's most outspoken antiwar fighters, Marine Reservist Corporal Tahan Jones, faces frameup charges of "desertion with intent to avoid hazardous duty and shirk important service." According to Jones's attorney, John Murcko, "If Jones is convicted of this charge and the associated charge of 'missing a troop movement,' he could serve a maximum prison term of seven years."

Murcko, a military specialist who achieved national prominence for his defense of GIs during the Vietnam War, is preparing the legal defense for Jones's court martial trial, which is expected to take place in mid-January.

Jones was one of 24 antiwar Marine reservists stationed in military bases across the country who, in violation of military law and the Constitution, were herded to Camp LeJeune, N.C., because of their opposition to the genocidal U.S. war against the Iraqi people.

Jones will argue that the Marine Corps hierarchy, in violation of his rights, established "a firm policy wherein all reservists with pending conscientious objector applications suspected of unauthorized absence would be summarily referred to a General Court Martial on charges of desertion and missing troop movement."

The purpose of this "illegal command influence" was "to isolate, intimidate, and incarcerate," all opposition within the military. The effect of this policy was also to deny conscientious objectors the right to have their cases and actions reviewed and judged at the local level, where they could have direct access to and help from local witnesses, legal counsel, family, friends, and organized defense committees.

Undemocratic regulations

Jones, whose unit is in Hayward, Calif., is also challenging a new Marine Corps regulation that prohibits defendants from calling witnesses from a distance of more than 100 miles from Camp LeJeune.

During the Gulf War, Jones was among the most frequently heard antiwar reservists. His speech at the Jan. 26, 1991, San Francisco demonstration to "Bring the Troops Home Now," which drew over 200,000 protesters, vividly described the plight of Black youth in the "economic draft." These youth, he pointed out, hoped that promised training programs and future educational benefits would allow them to avoid the bleak prospects of millions of African Americans in racist America.

Jones provided inspiration for Black, Latino, and Asian youth to form their own antiwar organizations to address the special issues faced by oppressed nationalities in the United States.

His widely publicized appearance at a public hearing of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors earned Jones the admiration of progressive activists across the country. At that meeting, Jones testified in a successful effort to prevent pro-war elements from ending San Francisco's adopted position as a "sanctuary city" for conscientious objectors.

USMC violates its own laws

The case against Jones is fraught with gross violations of the Marines' own regulations. Jones, for example, was activated for duty while his CO application was still pending.

In another instance, on Feb. 8, 1991, the Commandant of the Marine Corps specified that the number of reservists to be activated for duty to the Fresno, Calif.-based battalion in which Jones had previously served was to be 413. However, more than 650 reservists were activated by the local Marine Corps affiliate. Jones's unit was never activated by the Commandant—as is required by law.

The Marines counted on the government-orchestrated patriotic hysteria to cover their violations of elementary democratic rights. The persistence of Tahan Jones's defense efforts, however—which have been coupled with those of his Marine Corps friend Erik Larsen—have forced the Marines to back



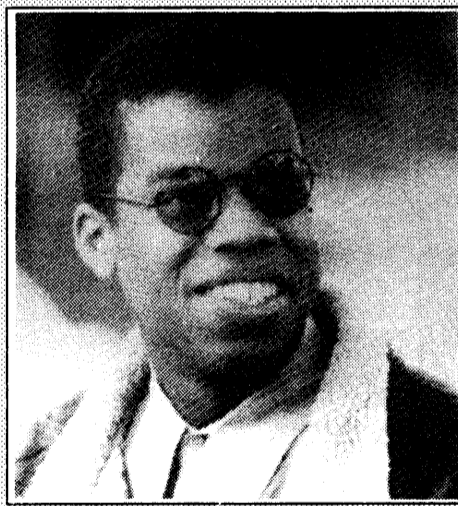
(L-R): Muhammad Mosque #11 assistant minister, Rodney X, greet war resisters Eric Larsen and Tahan Jones.

off from some of their most gross excesses, like threatening Jones and Larsen with the death penalty. The Marine Corps tried to induce Jones to testify against Larsen. A reduced sentence was implied. Jones refused, preferring to abide by the truth, his bond of friendship, and commonly held political and moral views.

Solidarity and support

Jones's case has won widespread support in the Black community. *The Final Call*, the newspaper published by the Nation of Islam (circulation: 400,000), prominently featured an article on Jones and Larsen in its Dec. 2, 1991, issue. The article gave a vivid description of a defense rally for Jones and Larsen on Oct. 19 in Boston. Assistant Minister Rodney X of the Nation of Islam was one of the speakers. German TV station ZDF, the largest non-commercial TV station in Berlin has indicated they want to cover Jones's court-martial as part of their on-going coverage about the aftermath of the Gulf War. Germany was a center of anti-Gulf War demonstrations and GI resistance. Regardless of the outcome of Jones's case, his contribution to exposing the truth about U.S. war policy and the racist military establishment—as well as his refusal to buckle to military pressure for an easy plea bargain—will not be forgotten. Friends and supporters can write to Tahan Jones as follows: Cpl. Tahan Jones, 564-43-9553, HQ, 2nd MEB, Subunit 1, Bldg. 435, Rm. 311, MCB, Camp LeJeune, N.C., 28542-5090. Contributions should be sent to: Tahan Jones/Erik Larsen Defense Committee, 1678 Shattuck Ave., Box 225, Berkeley, CA 94709. Telephone: (510) 655-1201.

Final Call shows Minister Rodney X talking with Larsen and Jones during Boston defense rally.



By TAHAN JONES

I am an African American man who enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps when I was 17. Last year I filed for a Conscientious Objector discharge from the military. I want to draw the clearest possible picture of the reasons why I took that action and what it has been like for me. I especially want to reach young African Americans who might be thinking about joining the military. Last winter I spoke at high schools, churches, universities and rallies in the San Francisco Bay Area about my moral opposition to war. I found that most people do not know the correct meaning of conscientious objection. A Conscientious Objector (C.O.) is a person who rejects war as a means of solving differences between nations. This can be based on religious, moral, ethical, political, or any other beliefs that would prevent a person from killing another. The individual may adopt these beliefs years after signing the Enlistment Agreement when entering the service. When people apply for a C.O. dis-

Can a Black person be a conscientious objector?

charge, they are confronted with a review process influenced by a society in which violence is institutionalized and, in the case of Black applicants, has a racist attitude. One discovers that the military have a narrow idea of what constitutes a Conscientious Objector. There is a biased perception that a C.O. is white and well-to-do, educated and intellectual, a complete pacifist with a strong background in a religious group or particular body of moral thought, and is gentle, sensitive and naive. The key to winning C.O. status is in how well an individual can express him or herself. People whose education was impaired by budget cuts and high college tuitions may find their lack of writing or speaking skills an impassable obstacle to getting a C.O. discharge. The burden of proof that one is sincere and that one's views are deeply held is on the applicant. When I discovered that I would have to write an essay explaining my beliefs about war, I was afraid. I knew my writing skills were not up to the challenge of writing an essay about my views opposing war. Friends came to my aid with the grammar, but only I could express my feeling toward war and why I cannot kill another human being. My C.O. statement reflected rage toward our government and the society in which I live. Political beliefs can also be an obstacle. The Uniform Code of Military Justice states that political discontent can be in a claim, as long as it is not the only reason for objecting to war. Yet, a C.O. application can be denied on the grounds that the applicant is motivated by "political beliefs" or opposition to certain wars, called selective objection. The hierarchy in the military affects the decisions. The overwhelming majority of

officers in all branches of the military are white men of middle- and upper-class backgrounds. An African American enlisted person seeking a C.O. discharge is trying to express beliefs to an individual who does not share his class or race perspective. In the case of women C.Os, they do not share a female perspective. The applicant is a subordinate to the investigating officer assigned to study the application so he or she must try to express beliefs without offending this superior officer. I was assigned Captain Swanson, a white man, as my investigating officer. He asked typical questions, customized for an African American, like: Would you fight in the Civil War to free the slaves? What kinds of conflicts would you fight in, if they occurred in Africa? Swanson's report was based on racial stereotypes, attacking people and organizations with which I have worked. He stated that I am "a Marine of marginal intelligence." There is an inherent stereotype that Black people are not intelligent enough to be C.Os. In his summary of my investigative hearing, Swanson wrote, "After observing Cpl. Jones throughout the investigation, I believe that he is incapable of articulating any discerning thoughts or perceptions concerning such subjective matters as conscientious objection to war." Capt. Swanson was very prejudiced against people and organizations that helped me during the C.O. process. He referred to Vietnam veterans as "disgruntled vets," and the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker-based pacifist organization, as an "off-center" group. Another step in the C.O. process is an interview with the "morale officer," a military chaplain who upholds military values. The chaplain plays a large role in

determining the applicant's sincerity of belief. I am from a Muslim family; there are few Muslim chaplains. Fortunately, I was assigned an African American chaplain who, although of a different faith, was able to relate to my experience. He stated my beliefs are sincerely held. There is so much misunderstanding of Black people and what pacifism can mean for a Black person. When living in a society in which aggression is treated as the best way to solve problems and money is more important than human life, the African American has a problem. A low value is put on the Black person's life, making him or her a target for violence. So how can we find the pacifist ways to resolve differences? What is more, white Americans do not understand us. The NAACP surveyed white Americans during the Persian Gulf War. People of color made up 40 percent of the frontline troops. Yet, 55 percent of the white Americans surveyed believed that African Americans and Hispanics are more violent, not as brave, less patriotic and less intelligent than white Americans. This obviously has a big impact on the persons of color seeking a C.O. discharge. The average C.O. faces a misguided and sometimes hostile public. He or she also confronts a hostile chain-of-command, part of a monolithic organization that has historically violated human and civil rights whenever it believes that will help get the job done. The C.O. of color faces, in addition, a narrow and biased definition of who is sincerely a C.O. Confronted with racism, sexism and cultural ignorance, the obstacles before an African American applicant for C.O. is a jagged ravine with hungry sharks waiting at the bottom. Reprinted from *The California Voice*, Nov. 5, 1991.

Deepening recession spurs rank and file ferment

The 1990-1992 recession has been called a "white-collar" recession by the big-business media because tens of thousands of professionals have already lost their jobs, including upper-income Wall Street financial managers.

In 1981-82, professionals were barely touched. Manufacturing jobs ("blue-collar" workers), on the other hand, lost some 2.2 million jobs. This included tens of thousands of union-organized, highly paid production jobs in auto, steel, and other basic industries.

In truth, the current recession is hitting production workers extremely hard. Five times more production and service jobs have been lost this recession than professional positions. Overall, jobless rates are twice the level for wage workers than "white-collar" employees. (The broad category of "blue-collar" jobs as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics includes skilled and manual laborers.)

In November, the unemployment rate for production workers was 9.1 percent. By contrast, the white-collar unemployment level stood at 4.1 percent. And most of the production jobs, especially those in union-organized factories—and which employ the most Blacks—are probably gone forever. Labor productivity has increased to the point that fewer industrial workers are needed today than 10 years ago to pro-

duce greater amounts of goods.

General Motors' announcement that it will close 21 assembly plants and fire/lay off more than 70,000 workers over the next few years is only the latest hit against labor by the employers, as they rein in costs and seek to increase profits. In the last year alone, three major airlines have permanently shut down—Eastern, Midway, and Pan Am. Silicon Valley electronic firms have laid off thousands. And clerks and other low-paid bank workers have seen thousands of their jobs eliminated in new mergers.

Not surprisingly, workers who are still employed are lowering their expectations. At United Airlines, where I'm employed as a mechanic, most workers recently approved a very weak contract because of fear of the recession. (See story on page 4.)

Dead-end policies

Worse, however, is the policy of the top labor officialdom. Instead of organizing the declining union movement to fight back for higher unemployment benefits and a national healthcare plan for all working people, the AFL-CIO and its affiliates have stepped up a reactionary "Buy American" protectionist campaign as their solution to international competition.

Their answer to the bosses' anti-labor attacks is to blame "foreign competition," and thus

workers abroad. The fact that corporations like GM employ as many workers abroad as they do in the United States is irrelevant to the union misleaders.

What workers want is a decent wage and living standard, no matter who owns the company they work at. This is true for workers of all countries.

The officials also continue to toot their horn for the Democratic Party—as the 1992 presidential year begins. Yet the Democrats, like their Republican cousins, support antilabor policies to "reduce the deficit" and make "America more competitive." No wonder more working people are turning away from traditional politicians and looking for alternatives!

The question is, will hard-hit workers and farmers be sucked up in demagogic rightist campaigns aimed at tapping the genuine anger of working people—as David Duke did in Louisiana and Patrick Buchanan is also seeking to do in his campaign against Bush?

Or will the labor unions offer an alternative on the left? So far, the labor tops have shown that their policy will not change one bit. They are out of touch with the rank and file.

Even those labor leaders seeking to tap that sentiment for change are doing so with kid gloves. The best example is the initiative by former secretary-trea-

Which side Are You On?

By
Malik Miah



surer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), Tony Mazzocchi. He's formed the Labor Party Advocates, hoping it will be a nucleus of a workers' party, while not asking those who join it to break with the Democratic Party. He does not see it running candidates in 1992.

Richard Trumka, president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), is open to a labor-party option some day too. "But first," he said recently, "we have to demonstrate to the worker that the Democratic Party won't be a voice for him." The UMWA has started running its own members in Democratic Party primaries.

Rank and file ferment

But there are some signs that the membership of the unions are open to a new policy, even if it is confused and not yet a clear-cut class struggle orientation.

The first example occurred last spring in the railroads. After railroad workers were routed in April by the employers and government

after a failed strike, two unions threw out their old leaderships.

The second example is the election that took place in December in the sizable Teamsters union. The insurgent campaign for president of the union by Ron Carey and his slate was victorious.

While none of this yet reflects a movement toward independent political action and a new class-struggle policy in the unions, it does indicate that the rank and file is fed up with the current top leadership and its policies.

In this period of economic instability and recession, and growing international capitalist competition and class polarization, opportunities for revolutionary-minded workers to help forge a new leadership in the unions will arise.

It can begin around a democratic fight to throw out an old entrenched leadership or a campaign against a bad contract—or even a fight to hear all points of view at a union meeting before the presidential elections. That's what's on the horizon in the 1990s. ■

Our readers speak out

Thank You

Dear editors,

Your paper is much appreciated. Is there a source for additional information in reference to the article on page 9 of the December 1991 issue: "50 Years Ago Trotskyists Were Put on trial by Roosevelt Government"?

As a person in his middle 60s (my wife also), we grew up through very interesting times (at the time we weren't aware of any of this). We both grew up in very closed, narrow, provincial surroundings; and even though our parents were working class and survived the Depression, somehow they were Republican in political orientation and anti-union. No wonder I am confused at times.

Many of us have had to stumble into alternatives of analysis and perspective on our own. I sure have had to. We had no mentors, no rebels. I have been struggling with these concepts for 20-25 years, although as I think about my earlier life, certain socialist-communist concepts were there from somewhere, but poorly realized and supported.

It is so easy to be overwhelmed as one progresses to alternative concepts and theories and tries to practice them. We thank you for your paper. It helps a lot.

Frank Roemhild,
Bayfield, Wisc.

The transcript of James P. Cannon's testimony in the trial is reprinted in "Socialism on Trial," published by Pathfinder Press. This highly readable book is an excellent introduction to the basic ideas of socialism, as well as an historical document of the period.

—the editors

Dialectics

Dear editors,

"Dialectics" usually means "double talk." Cliff Conner's articles

are different—they actually make sense! I enjoy reading them.

But it seems to me that they have a serious weakness. They give a history of ideas, which is interesting to those of us who like that kind of thing. But they don't make a convincing case that dialectics can have practical results in the real world.

They could make a more convincing case if they discussed Carl Von Clausewitz. He was the founder of modern military strategy—and he founded it on dialectics. His book "On War" is a model of dialectic thinking. More important, it explains WHY you need dialectic thinking to understand a subject like war.

Formal logic is good for dealing with things that don't fight back. In mathematics, for example, you can solve any problem—or prove that it can't be solved—by following certain rules that never change. "2+2" cannot decide not to "equal 4."

War is different because the enemy DOES fight back. If you follow certain rules that never change, the enemy will know what you are going to do next, and wipe you out in the next battle.

War, says Clausewitz, "is always the collision of two living forces. ... So long as I have not overthrown my opponent, I am bound to fear that he may overthrow me. Thus, I am not in control; he dictates to me as much as I dictate to him."

Clausewitz was not just the founder of modern military strategy. He was also the founder of the Prussian general staff—the brains of the German army. That's important because the Germany army was a political as well as a military force. It was the power behind the throne of the German empire—the vanguard party of the German ruling class. During the time when Marxists were a serious political force, the German army was their most important enemy.

The German army defeated the

Marxists politically in 1914, when its appeal to God and country sent the Marxists' followers marching off to World War I. It lost World War I, but then defeated the Marxists again. The revolution that started in 1917 was stopped in Germany in 1919—stopped by the German army.

If you want a revolution that won't be stopped, it behooves you to learn how that was stopped. One thing to learn is that the people who stopped it used dialectical thinking—used it better than the Marxists did.

Ed Jahn,
Fairfax, Va.

Anti-Bolshevik

Dear editors,

For Hayden Perry: Your supposed correction of Chomsky regarding the alleged democratic practices of Lenin and Trotsky suggests that your reading in the period did not go beyond their own accounts. "All power to the Soviets" seems to have deceived you as badly as the folks in 1917.

Long study of many sources convinced me that it was just Lenin's opportunistic slogan on the path to power, which he obviously jettisoned in early 1918. Bolshevism has very little to do with anything democratic.

Read more! I close quoting a cable from Lenin to the front during the civil war: "Take out and shoot all prostitutes that are [distracting] Red Army men."

C'mon, shed your illusions.

A. Fortunoff,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Abdul Wali Muhammad

Dear editors,

On Dec. 28, Abdul Wali Muhammad, editor of *The Final Call*, died

of a massive heart attack in Chicago at the age of 37. He made an enormous contribution in the pages of *The Final Call* in telling the truth about the Gulf War, and supported the defense of Tahan Jones and Eric Larsen

Roger Sheppard,
Boston, Mass.

John Tisa

Dear editors,

On Dec. 12, John Tisa, who fought in the Spanish Civil War as a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, died of a stroke. He was 77.

Although it was organized and dominated by the Stalinists, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade attracted some 3000 idealistic men and women from the United States, who put their lives on the line in order to fight fascism. John Tisa was one of them. He described those years in his book, "Recall-

ing the Good Fight—An Autobiography of the Spanish Civil War."

After World War II, John Tisa was elected president of the International Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers Union in Camden, N.J. He subsequently organized workers in canneries and packinghouses throughout the country. During the period of the anti-Communist witch hunts, Tisa was fired from his union job after being called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Since it was hard to find work afterward, John Tisa and his wife, May, opened a pet shop. It was always a treat for me to visit the shop or to go over to the house on a Sunday to play with their sons, Kenny—who was my age—and Willy. Johnny always seemed to have a joke and a wide grin ready for us kids. I'll miss him.

A reader,
San Francisco, Calif.

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

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Baltimore, MD 21218

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Political perspectives for Blacks in 1992 limited by leadership void

By MALIK MIAH

What is the road forward for Black politics in 1992? Should Blacks continue to support candidates in the Democratic Party? Should they, as many Black conservatives advocate, turn to the Republicans and President George Bush?

Or should a new course be followed? Maybe an independent candidate for president? Does it matter, since Blacks are a minority?

One thing is evident. None of the Democrats who have declared themselves candidates for president have much to say about the real problems facing Blacks and working people.

In last month's television debate, even Virginia Gov. L. Douglas Wilder, the only Black among the six, put his emphasis on cutting waste in government without an increase in spending on social programs. Wilder also made clear he was against major cuts in the military budget. He seeks to out Bush Bush!

The ruling class's onslaught against social programs, civil rights, and other gains reflects the fact that no strong independent Black, women's, or labor movements exist to challenge these attacks.

At the same time, the absence of an independent political movement emboldens right-wing demagogues like Patrick Buchanan and David Duke to take the reactionary policies of the Bush government to further extremes.

It is in this framework, as we enter the 1992 presidential year, that a discussion on the state of Black politics is useful. The situation for Black America is not good. The recession is hitting the Black community twice as hard as the population as a whole. The reason is simple—the institutionalized racism that is woven into the fabric of our society prevents full equality.

National Policy Institute

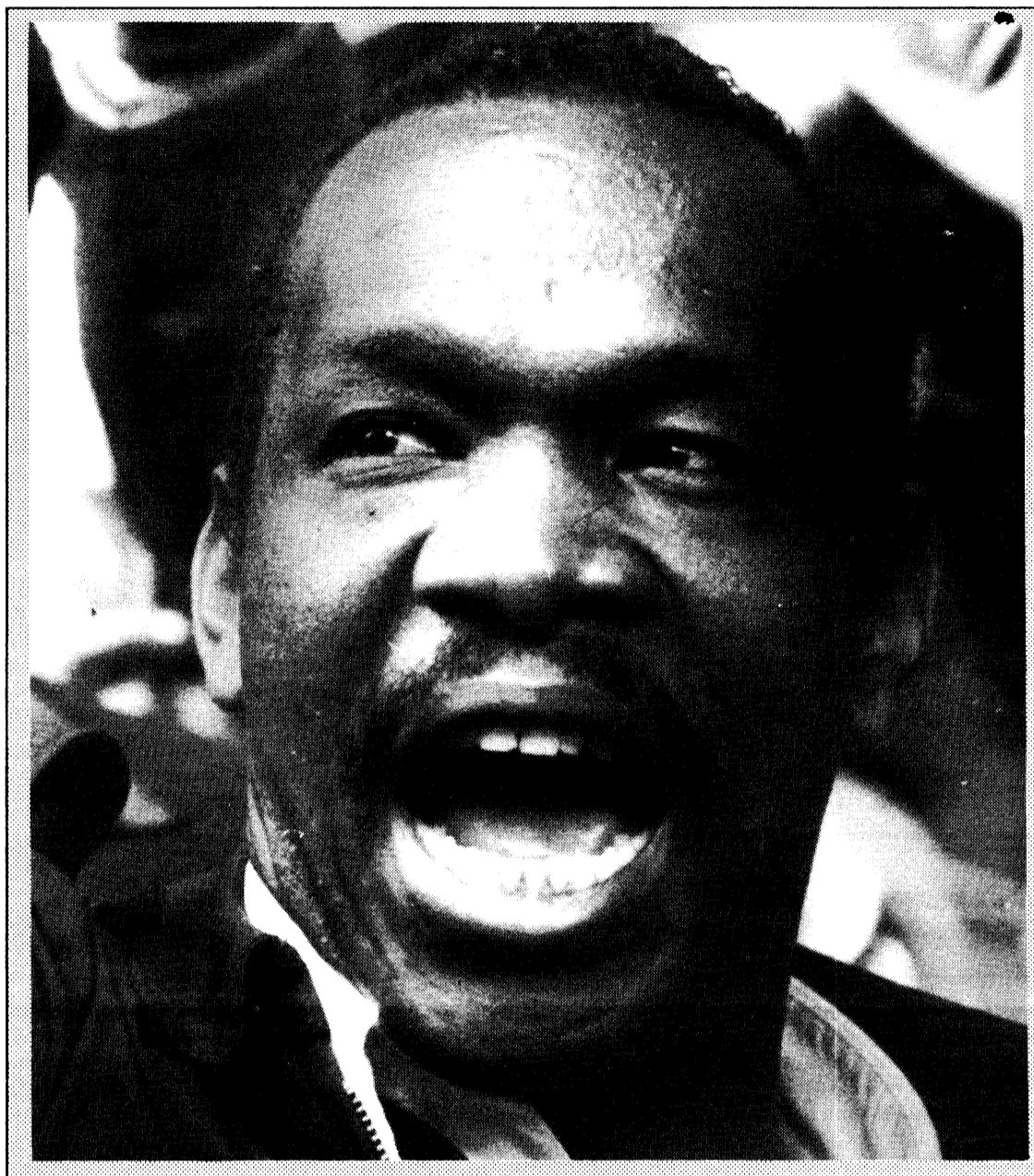
Not surprisingly, the self-proclaimed Black leaders—elected officials and the heads of traditional civil rights groups—are all talking about how to alleviate the economic crisis in the Black community. These leaders' main base is in the Black community, even if more and more of them are professionals and live a middle-class existence.

On Jan. 22-25, these leaders will meet at the Sixth National Policy Institute (NPI) in Washington, D.C., to discuss the crisis in the Black community. They plan to focus on the issues of education, healthcare, and drug abuse. More than 500 Black elected and appointed officials are expected to attend.

The NPI is sponsored by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (a Black think tank based in Washington), the Congressional Black Caucus, and six national organizations representing Black elected officials.

Eddie Williams, president of the Joint Center, says: "The further advancement of Black America is being stymied by the scourge of drug addiction and inadequate access to quality education and affordable healthcare. Until there is a national commitment to address these problems, many African Americans will be denied full access to the American dream—but the nation will pay dearly in terms of lost opportunities to strengthen the economy and to achieve a better quality of life for all Americans."

Williams's stress is on Blacks being able



"One thing is evident. None of the Democrats who have declared themselves candidates for president have much to say about the real problems facing Blacks and working people."

to achieve the "American dream." The problem, however, is that no working people—let alone Blacks—are able to reach that objective.

Jesse Jackson bows out

More and more, the Black leadership seeks to integrate Blacks into the two-party system and the state apparatus. This "solution" leads to more class and social divisions in the Black community, where the middle class (a growing sector) is less in touch with the vast majority of Black working people.

Non-voting Washington, D.C., Statehood Senator Jesse Jackson is aware of this problem. He seeks to bridge the gap between his middle-class supporters and the Black community to get them to believe it is possible to achieve the "American dream."

In 1984 and 1988, Jackson ran for president as a Democrat on a platform appealing to the oppressed and working poor. In 1992, he has decided not to run. Yet his goal remains the same—to organize Blacks and other workers into the Democratic Party.

As head of the National Rainbow Coalition, Jackson says he will run delegates for the Democratic Convention to push his liberal program for "the forgotten Americans." His goal is a "Democratic president" by the year 2000.

Instead of calling on Blacks to march for jobs and full equality—as his mentor, Martin Luther King Jr., did in the 1960s—Jackson sees himself as a mainstream Democrat speaking for all of the party. He is in agreement with the other Black officials that the "American dream" is possible under capitalism.

Ron Daniels's campaign

Ron Daniels is the former deputy campaign manager of Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign and the former executive director of the National Rainbow Coalition. Now Daniels has announced that he is planning to run as a third-party presidential candidate in 1992.

"Unless a third force or new political party emerges on the left to counter the danger that David Duke represents," Daniels explains, "this nation will be consumed by the politics of race for the

foreseeable future. The progressive movement must organize itself to pose the alternative to the racist and reactionary forces on the right, or minorities and poor and working people will continue to be victimized by the politics of divide and exploit."

Unfortunately, this call by Daniels is not one for a genuine break with the Democrats. It is an attempt instead to use the anger of many Blacks and other workers to organize a pressure campaign on the future Democratic presidential nominee.

It is an effort parallel to Jackson's campaign to open up the Democratic Party. Daniels has called for support to "progressive" Democratic Party candidates and members of Congress. Regrettably, Daniels—who in the 1970s supported the formation of an independent Black political party—no longer mentions that as a viable goal.

King and Malcolm X

What's striking about the leadership void in the Black community today is the lack of progressive political thinking. All the ideas espoused by the major Black leaders are those pushed by the mainstream ruling parties—with modest variations. Racism is criticized but the answer is to agree that welfare is bad, that Blacks must pull themselves up, and that the "American dream" is possible with hard work.

While Martin Luther King remained a supporter of the capitalist system, he understood that an end to Jim Crow laws would only

come about by doing more than talking to the president and Congress. That's why he marched and protested until the laws were changed.

Politics for Blacks, as for the working class as a whole, are not simply a question of which candidate or party to vote for in November. Voting is not the most important aspect of politics. It is the *action* taken outside of the ballot box that is decisive in determining what the ruling Democrats and Republicans (who represent the owners of big business) do.

How the White House and Congress attack civil rights, women's rights, and the rights of labor is not pre-determined by a scheme. By means of independent political action—mass demonstrations and picket-lines, etc.—we can force them to grant us concessions.

Malcolm X lived the same time as King and was assassinated three years before King's 1968 murder. Malcolm's main contribution to the fight for Black liberation was his clear and revolutionary explanation that the source of racism and the oppression of Black people is the system itself.

He explained that the Democrats and Republicans were the flip side of the same coin. He said that it would require mass political action by Blacks (a minority) based on a program of unity, solidarity, and independence to win the support of all working people in the common battle against big government and the rich.

As part of the political vanguard, Blacks need to create a new leadership for themselves and for working people in general. That's what must happen in the 1990s for racism and ultra-rightism to be defeated, for Blacks to make advances toward full equality and self-determination, and for the working class as a whole to chart a course of independent political action. ■