



National mobilization for women's rights

Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

Two huge mobilizations—the March 29 San Francisco demonstration (see story on page 3) and the April 5 Washington, D.C., March for Women's Lives—represent the most powerful actions yet for women's rights.

Not since the 1989 Washington rallies of 600,000 and 300,000 sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW), has there been pro-choice mobilization on such a mass scale. But, what next?

This is an election year.

And unfortunately, the leadership of the various national pro-choice and feminist organizations have already begun to try to steer the pro-choice movement into registering voters, campaigning for so-called

Women in the ex-Soviet Union

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“feminist” candidates of the Democratic Party, and even announcing the establishment of a new pro-feminist (but not truly independent) party.

This electoral strategy can only serve to derail the movement. It won't win rights for women.

We can all agree that, with the failure of the courts to uphold *Roe v. Wade* and the increasing possibility that the U.S. Supreme Court will actually overturn it, we must win national legislation that guarantees reproductive freedom, including the unfettered right to abortion.

Where we differ with the leaderships of the national pro-choice organizations (such as National Abortion Rights Action League, NOW, and others) is *how* to win that legislation.

These two giant marches represent the way forward for the pro-choice struggle. Pro-choice is the majority sentiment of the American people—and it must continually be mobilized through independent action.

The Democratic and Republican parties are not the vehicles for mobilizing this sentiment. On the contrary!

Most eligible voters don't even vote. Why not? Because they perceive that neither party offers any solutions to the problems we face.

Both parties represent big business. Both vote to fund the military while cutting the social services that people need—education, healthcare, environmental protection, and children's services. Both parties vote to shift the tax burden onto the backs of working people and off the backs of the corporate rich.

Any efforts to work for or within either of the two capitalist political parties can only end up trading women's rights to

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75,000 marched in San Francisco, Calif., on March 29 to defend abortion rights. See story on page 3.

Caterpillar strike solidarity rally draws 20,000 in Peoria

By TINA BEACOCK

PEORIA, Ill.—“Union-busting won't play in Peoria,” Jerry Brown, United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 974 told a crowd of 20,000 Caterpillar strikers and supporters who turned out here on March 22.

Workers from across the country descended on Peoria for the rally—from Caterpillar plants in Illinois, Colorado, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania, and from other UAW locals from Michigan to Missouri. A representative from the Caterpillar plant in South Africa also spoke at the rally.

The rally was a positive step in demonstrating union solidarity, as the strike/lockout of about 10,800 UAW members at the world's largest producer of earth-moving equipment stretched into its fifth month.

Last Nov. 4, the UAW started a selective strike at the East Peoria assembly plant and in Decatur, Ill., pulling out 2400 workers,

to demand a pattern settlement along the lines of the modest agreement with John Deere. Union officials called for a partial strike to bring Caterpillar back to the bargaining table.

Caterpillar responded within three days by locking out another 5700 workers in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Tennessee. Its inflexible offer called for a series of 35 takeback demands. The most serious of these was a permanent two-tier wage proposal to reduce wages for new hires—and at parts plants in the Caterpillar system.

The company demanded that workers pay a \$25 per month assessment for healthcare, drastic cuts in retirees' benefits, a pay freeze for the two lowest paid groups of workers, no cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), the elimination of premium pay for overtime—and concessions on other disputed issues, including holiday pay and contracting out, or outsourcing.

In exchange for these takebacks, Caterpillar offered an illusory job-security guarantee. Workers at GM and Chrysler—themselves facing massive layoffs—can testify just what such promises are worth.

Caterpillar's crocodile tears

Caterpillar has been on an aggressive propaganda campaign through newspaper ads and letters to employees to demand concessions to maintain a competitive edge in the international market. But Caterpillar, 39th on the list of the Fortune 500 companies, can hardly claim to be hurting.

The corporation made \$11 billion in sales in 1990, \$5.75 billion in overseas sales; \$3.4 billion worth of machines built in U.S. plants were sold in other countries. Caterpillar made \$210 million in profits in 1990.

While Caterpillar reported a loss in 1991,

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"Stick 'em up, kid—hand over your school!"



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

The voucher fraud is back again, this time under the title, "Parental Choice Scholarships" initiative. Hustlers are out on the streets collecting petitions to place this disgrace on the November 1992 ballot in California.

It would be a constitutional amendment because it would require using public school funds for private and religious schools. The initiative transfers funds directly out of the public schools and offers a "scholarship" voucher that can be claimed by any student attending a private school, with no accountability placed on the school.

If a "Tammy Faye Bakker's Christian Elementary School for Cosmetics and Music" had pupils, they could get their share of public school funds. Or a "David Duke Elementary School of Hype and Hyperbole" could also stick their slimy hands into children's pockets and pull out \$2500 for their "white students only" school.

It's a sure bet that if this bunco initiative is passed, "fast buck" artists like Bakker and Duke

would open their private school doors the very next week.

Parents of public school children are critical of the education their children are receiving, and every school district across the country is papering the country with this year's latest improvement plan, which usually includes fighting school fund cutbacks by laying off more teachers, office personnel, librarians, school nurses, social service workers, etc.

In other words, as far as educating our children, they are fighting off a tidal wave of funding cuts with a sieve. So every year educational standards go down and the right-wing religious sharks await the final sinking of the public educational system with "voucher initiatives".

What would it take to save our schools and educate our children? First put teachers in the classrooms. That helps! Lower the class size to no more than 20. With 20, rather than 40 children per class, the teacher would actually get to know each of her or his pupils and their needs. Every

school should have after-school recreation and remedial classes with qualified, credentialed teachers.

Every elementary school should have attached to it an early childhood development center. These centers should be open to all children, regardless of family income, from the age of two. These centers should have qualified, early childhood developmental-credentialed teachers.

All schools should have free meals, free medical care, free transportation, and parent education classes. Schools should stay open until six o'clock for the convenience of working parents.

They should be bi-lingual and include all of the arts, music, dance, and sports, such as gymnastics, etc., free! This would give our children a very early

knowledge of the workings of their wonderful young bodies and minds. It would encourage them to keep themselves healthy forever.

The majority of children in public schools are being raised by one or two working parents. These parents need an expanded support system to help them raise healthy, well-educated children. Only the public schools can provide it.

Unlike the 1930s and '40s, when most jobs required less skills in math, language and science, today's job market requires far higher knowledge and skills. Most youngsters did not graduate from high school in the '30s and '40s, but managed to make a living and support a family as blue collar workers. Not today. It almost takes a college degree to

get through the door to apply for any job.

What's wrong with the system? The ruling class of this country wants to take back the social gains won by working people in great class battles.

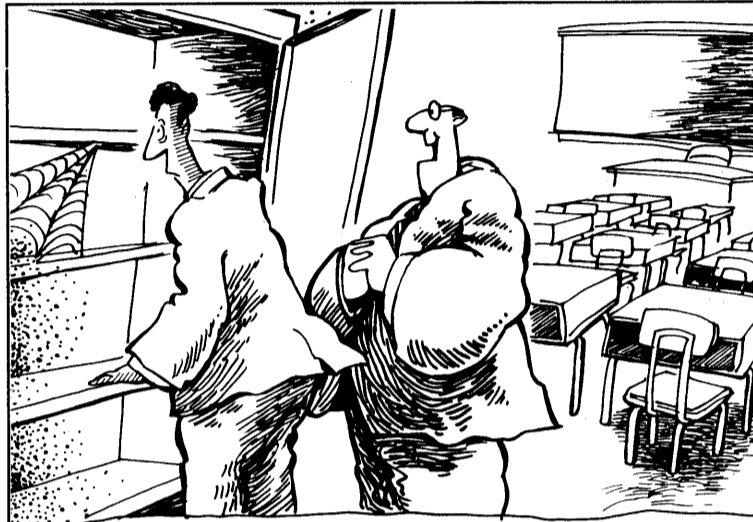
Workers fought for federally-funded social support systems, like compulsory education through public schools, old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and medical care.

These reforms were originally designed to make the capitalists pay for programs intended to guarantee that every child, every sick person, every senior citizen, every worker thrown on the scrap heap of the unemployed, had a fighting chance to survive in this dog-eat-dog capitalist world.

Now, the ruling class is trying to cut back on all of these gains, especially public education for our children. They want to place the burden of education directly on the family. They want to take public school tax monies and give them to the rich in the form of even more tax breaks.

That's why we now have the "voucher" initiative. They are trying to get thousands of signatures to put what is really a child-abuse initiative on the ballot. It will amount to a mass escalation of child-victimization to allow only those who can afford it to get a decent education.

If approved, the rest of our children—working class children—will have to scramble for class seats in even more overcrowded, unhealthy, dangerous schools. JUST SAY NO! to the voucher initiative. ■



"CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR PAY RAISE... IT SHOULD JUST ABOUT PAY FOR THIS YEAR'S TEACHING SUPPLIES."

Does being pro-choice mean you're anti-child?



... and in this corner

By
Joni Jacobs

I saw an interesting conversation recently on "CBS This Morning." It was between Andrew Pudzer, the Missouri official who wrote the restrictive abortion law upheld by the Supreme Court in its 1989 *Webster* decision, and B.J. Isaacson-Jones, director of the Reproductive Health Services clinic that challenged the law.

Pudzer considers himself firmly "pro-life," while Ms. Isaacson-Jones is just as firmly "pro-choice." Yet these two icons of radically opposed ideologies are finding common ground.

Pudzer has realized that if the state is going to deny women the right to abortion, it must make it economically possible for women to bear children. "If a woman has to have an abortion because she can't afford to have a child," he says, "then that's not a choice." In order to make birth an option, Pudzer wants both sides of the abortion debate to advocate publicly-funded prenatal care.

Isaacson-Jones agrees. She is also disturbed that lack of prenatal

care, among other necessary social programs, forces some women to choose an abortion. She thinks it's time the pro-life and pro-choice groups put aside their rhetoric and help give women real choices. "It doesn't matter who wins the abortion debate," she said, "if women and children still suffer."

While I also agree that publicly-funded prenatal care is needed, I think the dialog between Pudzer and Isaacson-Jones's misses the essence of the abortion debate. When the issue is framed only in terms of children, the opposing sides may seem reconcilable. But behind the rhetoric lie two views of women which are irreconcilable.

Pro-choice in the socialist sense means the right to have children, as well as the right not to have children. That right includes using the vast wealth of this society to benefit working people, rather than funneling super-profits to the ruling elite. Choice involves free health care for everyone, free quality child

care, education and housing, and full employment at living wages. These are basic human needs which must be met before we can begin to talk about choices for our lives.

While Pudzer defines "choice" much more narrowly, I doubt he'll find much support even for his limited view among pro-lifers. Throughout the 19 years since *Roe v. Wade*, the pro-life/anti-choice movement has been conspicuously absent on all other "life" issues except abortion. It has never tried to stop the death penalty, or opposed war, or advocated prenatal care or education for the babies it is so intent on saving.

Pudzer may be the exception that proves the hypocrisy of the pro-life movement: its concern for children begins—and ends—in the womb.

The pro-life/anti-choice movement is not about children; it's about oppressing women. It's about treating women as if we are intellectually and morally incapable of making decisions for ourselves. It's about proscribing our sexuality so that women can't have sex without bearing children.

Ultimately, Pudzer is no different. Pretending to offer "real" choices, Pudzer wants women to have only one choice—childbirth. Pudzer calls for a tradeoff whereby women will have economic support for bearing children only by giving up other reproductive options, especially abortion.

The problem is, of course, that

women are not breeders. We have needs and rights independent of our potential for childbirth, and we demand that these rights be realized.

Sometimes arguing against Pudzer-style misogyny sounds as if we're against women ever bearing children, because his argument employs the classic "divide-and-conquer" technique.

The anti-choice movement pits women against children by characterizing women who want to terminate unwanted pregnancies as selfish, heartless, child-hating harpies.

Raising children is so important, however, that it shouldn't be the sole burden of women, as it has been historically and as the pro-life movement wants it to be.

The essence of the abortion debate is the self-determination of women, just as the essence of the class struggle is the self-determination of working people. If a woman's right to reproductive self-determination is undermined, the rights of everyone—including children—suffer.

So while Pudzer is dialoguing with Isaacson-Jones, let's not be duped. At the heart of the abortion rights debate, there is no common ground. The abortion rights fight is another battle in the war to overturn the privilege and power of the few over the many.

Remember: half of our children grow up to be women. If Pudzer has his way, their rights will end when they reach puberty. ■

Socialist ACTION

Closing date:
March 29, 1992

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

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

RATES: For one year (12 issues)—U.S. 2nd Class: \$8, 1st Class: \$16; Canada and Mexico 2nd Class: \$12, 1st Class: \$18; All other countries 2nd Class: \$15, 1st Class: \$30. (Money orders or checks should be in U.S. dollars.)

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Action*. These are expressed in editorials.

'Largest women's march in West Coast history'



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

"The march was a tremendous affirmation of the idea that mass actions are an effective vehicle to mobilize and inspire activists to fight for their rights. Chants of 'We won't go back' broke out spontaneously throughout the day."

By JONI JACOBS

"I will die before I let you control my body." "Will you be there after the birth?" "Anti-abortion laws equal rape."

Pro-choice activists carried these slogans—and others—as they marched toward San Francisco's Civic Center on March 29. Elizabeth Toledo, president of the San Francisco chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and a key organizer of the march, estimated the size of the demonstration at 75,000. She called it the "largest women's march in West Coast history."

Prior to the demonstration, organizers received a significant amount of attention from the media. The San Francisco *Examiner*, for example, printed an editorial and prominent story in support of the march.

The composition of the march was overwhelmingly young and impressively diverse, both ethnically and geographically. Contingents of marchers came from as far away as Portland, Ore.; San Diego, Calif.; and towns in Iowa and Utah. A Canadian flag flew over one contingent, and there were reports that women from Mexicali, Mexico, also attended.

The march was a tremendous affirmation of the idea that mass actions are an effective vehicle to mobilize and inspire activists to fight for their rights. Chants of "We won't go back" broke out spontaneously throughout the day.

The movement was united

The size of the march demonstrated the power of a united pro-choice movement. The action was called by the San Francisco Pro-Choice Coalition. Scores of pro-choice organizations participated in the coalition, including NOW, Planned Parenthood, Cali-

fornia Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL), Defend Abortion Rights Emergency Coalition (DARE), and the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR). All of these groups actively built the march.

By contrast, when the coalition initiated a march and rally last Oct. 5, many of the largest pro-choice organizations—such as NOW, CARAL, and Planned Parenthood—refused to build the demonstration and withheld their support until the last minute. With their involvement this time, however, March 29th was many times larger than the Oct. 5 march.

Rally speakers represented the diversity of support for pro-choice. Speakers included Dolores Huerta, vice president of the United Farmworkers (UFWA); Norma McCorvey, "Roe" of *Roe v. Wade*; Lakota Hardin, a Native American activist; and Erica Chriss, an El Cerrito High School student, who explained the deadly effects of parental consent/notification laws. Socialist Action, a strong builder of the march, had a representative who spoke at the height of the crowd.

The program was not without controversy. Ethel Long Scott, of the Women's Economic Agenda, spoke about the potential misuse of Norplan to sterilize minority and low-income women, a theme echoed by Luz Alvarez Martinez of the National Latina Health Organization. This new form of birth control is being pushed heavily by Planned Parenthood as a safe, effective alternative to the pill.

Celebrities also spoke, including actress Rita Moreno, who spoke about her own illegal abortion. "Nobody can control our lives and shape our destinies—except us," she said.

Ed Asner, actor and long-time El Salvador solidarity activist, spoke about the

important role men must play in the fight to control our reproduction rights. "Pro-choice is considered a woman's issue," he said. "And this perception is the biggest threat to reproductive rights and the right of choice."

Asner told of the experience he and his partner had several years ago in obtaining an abortion. His partner was forced to travel to Cuba. "At that time," Asner said, "Cuba was known for cigars, sugar, and abortions."

Ironically, revolutionary Cuba has always provided free abortions to women, while the "democratic" capitalist United States is restricting women's right to choose.

Significantly, no politicians or political candidates were allowed to speak. However, speakers from many pro-choice organizations focused on an electoral strategy for the movement. Several Democratic Party candidates made their presence known with contingents in the march.

Barbara Boxer, a Democratic Congresswoman running for the Senate, had a large group of supporters at the march. Her campaign has highlighted her commitment to women's issues, and has tried to tap into the anger women feel at the Clarence Thomas confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Boxer's "commitment" is pretty shallow,

though, as shown by a recent fundraising letter. Sent to thousands of pro-choice supporters less than a week before the demonstration, Boxer's letter failed to mention either the March 29 or the April 5 marches.

Patricia Ireland's speech

Patricia Ireland, president of National NOW, was a keynote speaker at the rally. She reminded the crowd that 44 million American women have already lost their abortion rights. These women include low-income women, denied public funding for abortion; teen-aged women, victims of parental consent/notification laws; women in the military; women on Native American reservations; and rural women who live in areas without abortion clinics.

Ireland called for pro-choice supporters to gather in mass numbers in Washington, D.C., on April 5. She noted that the mobilization will be the day after the 24th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King.

"We are going to tell the world that bullets can't stop us, Bush can't stop us, bullies at the family planning clinics can't stop us," she said. "We will fight back and win."

But Ireland's proposal for how to fight back is the same, dead-end strategy that has failed the pro-choice movement for decades. Ireland said that since the Supreme Court may eventually overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the challenge is to elect women to Congress to pass pro-choice laws.

It is a contradiction that groups such as NOW organize huge numbers of people to demonstrate for their rights, and then tell them the next step is to vote for "pro-

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The following is the speech by Joni Jacobs at the March 29 March for Women's Lives in San Francisco, Calif. Jacobs was the Socialist Action candidate for mayor of San Francisco in 1991 and is the former chair of the Reproductive Rights Committee of the San Francisco chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW).

There's a myth in this country that America is a democracy. But what kind of democracy ignores the will of 80 percent of the people?

Eighty percent of Americans support legal abortion of some form. Thirty three percent support unrestricted abortion.

Yet Congress effectively outlawed abortion for low-income women by cutting off federal funding. Staff at federally-funded clinics can't even tell women that abortion is a safe, legal alternative to an unwanted pregnancy. And the Supreme Court is perched like vultures, waiting to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and send untold numbers of women to their death in back alleys filled with bloody coat hangers.

Who do these politicians represent? It sure as hell isn't us, or we wouldn't be here today.

This isn't the first time a movement like ours has been in our position. The Civil Rights movement faced in its day—as we face today—a hostile Supreme Court, a hostile White House, and a hostile Congress.

If leaders like Dr. King, Medgar Evers and Malcolm X had focused their struggle on lobbying, precinct-walking and the acceptable political process, there wouldn't have been a Civil Rights Act, a Voting Rights Act, or any other form of legal equality for African Americans.

Instead, the Civil Rights movement fought power with power. Each successive attack on Black rights was met with bigger and mightier demonstrations in the streets. They let loose a mass movement which couldn't be stopped no matter how hard the government tried.

This is true of every social protest movement. From the abolitionists in the 1800s to labor in the '30s to the anti-Vietnam war movement of the '60s, rights are won because people mobilize massively and independently. Independent of the government, independent of the Democratic and Republican parties that run this government of the rich and for the rich at the expense of working people.

But when social justice movements leave the streets and go back to "politics as usual," the opposition goes back to work undoing what's been accomplished.

Rights are not won through electing and lobbying so-called "good" politicians. Women didn't win the right to vote by electing anyone—we couldn't. That right was won through strikes, picket-lines, sit-ins, demonstrations and actions of irresistible force meeting seemingly immovable obstacles like the government.

This is the lesson we need to re-learn, and today's march is a great classroom. What we're doing here today—and what we'll be doing a week from today in Washington—is the best kind of lobbying possible. When we gather together, tens and hundreds of thousands and millions strong, we see the power that our movement possesses. We see that it's possible to take our right to choose from the politicians and courts that deny it to us.

Our bodies are the battleground in the fight for simple, democratic rights. We must be visible and mobilized on every front—in the streets, in front of the clinics, and in our communities.

Women's lives depend on our fighting for safe, legal, funded abortion—and nothing less!



The death penalty: If you're poor, Black, or uneducated—you die

By HAYDEN PERRY

"A Punishment in Search of a Crime," edited by Ian Gray and Moira Stanley; Avon Books; New York; 1989. 333 pages. \$8.95

Governor Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas, was campaigning in New Hampshire when he made a hurried trip back home. He wanted to be at the helm when Rickey Ray Rector, a man convicted of killing an Arkansas patrolman in 1981, was executed.

Did the so-called "liberal" governor dash home to stay the execution of Rector, who was brain damaged and legally incompetent?

Far from it. He returned to ensure that the execution took place. An Associated Press story said, "The execution could help Clinton distance himself from his party's soft-on-crime image, said some political observers..."

Clinton is willing to snuff out a human life to further his political ambition. He also calculates that executing a convicted felon would be approved by a majority of the voters. Many capitalist politicians believe that a majority of Americans favor the death penalty. But this has not been established.

Many politicians favor executing people, and use the fear of crime to stampede the voters to go along. Their final argument, "at least a dead murderer won't kill again," is supposed to be compelling. But this rationale can also be applied to drunk drivers, who frequently drive while drunk a second time, thereby risking the lives of innocent citizens.

No one has been sentenced to death for drunk driving, and no more than 30 convicted murderers are executed each year. This "avenges" only a tiny fraction of the 20,000 homicides committed annually.

These few people are chosen so randomly and capriciously that the U.S. Supreme Court in 1972 ruled the death penalty, as applied, was unconstitutional.

This ruling halted all executions for five years. Meanwhile, states modified their laws to comply with the Supreme Court standards and, once again, men and women are being executed. Today, a total of 2000 men and women await execution on death rows throughout the country.

In the face of this dismal fact, Amnesty International, U.S.A., has published "A Punishment in Search of a Crime" as a literary weapon in the fight against the death penalty.

The book comprises 42 interviews with prisoners, victims of crime, wardens, executioners, death row chaplains, Congress members, governors, judges, and prosecutors. Through these witnesses the reader accompanies the condemned from the court room, through the endless years on death row, to the final walk to the execution chamber.

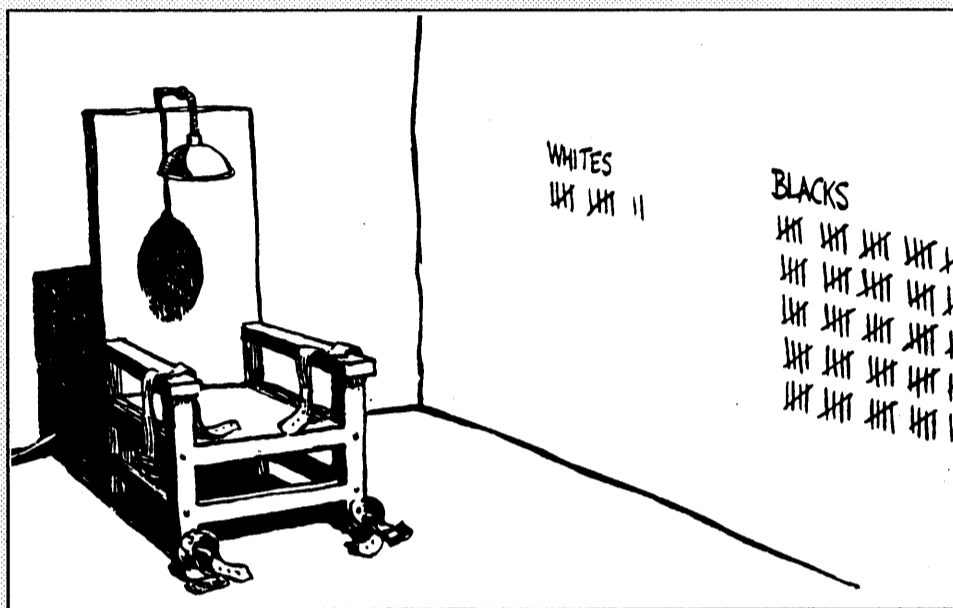
While each interview stands by itself, the 42 chapters combine to reinforce our conviction that killing criminals is a bloody, brutal ritual; that execution costs far

more than incarcerating a prisoner for life, and does nothing to reduce the 20,000 murders committed every year.

The authors document the evolution of killing techniques: Hanging, electrocution, the gas chamber, and lethal injection.

Each one in turn has been touted as a more "humane" means of snuffing out a life. Lethal injection, with the "patient" strapped on a hospital gurney, is the prevalent killing technique today. It permits the participants the illusion they are merely carrying out a medical procedure. But, say the authors, the mingling of execution with medicine violates the centuries-old Hippocratic Oath, which says, "I will give no deadly drug to any, though it may be asked of me, nor will I counsel such."

The few dollars spent on the needle and drugs might suggest that executing prisoners saves money. Warden Lawrence Wilson, a veteran of the California correction-



al system, denies this. "It costs twice as much to operate death row as the rest of the prison," he says. Other experts estimate the cost of a death penalty case to be a million dollars—often more.

Warden Wilson refutes the argument that without the death penalty dangerous psychopaths would eventually be released to kill again. The alternative, he says, is life without parole.

These "lifers" are the least burdensome to the prison system, where the inmates do all the work. "So why not let this guy live out his life, contributing to the state and its operation," this experienced criminologist asks. Others add that the more bestial the crime, the more important it is to study such psychopaths and find answers to their behavior.

Death row Chaplain Byron Eshelman says, "The state never executes the person who committed the crime. The one who finally steps into the gas chamber is by no means the same person who entered death row years earlier. To believe so is to ignore the terrible forces that mold, strengthen [and] shatter a man in the surrealistic world of the condemned."

This argument rarely reaches the average citizen who

wants to "get tough on crime." Henry Schwarzschild, a director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), casts light on American thinking: "The culture is now dominated by a kind of macho reaction. Toughness is the universal solvent to every problem that America faces. ... The death penalty is a symbolic demonstration of toughness."

However, "toughness" does not steel the average citizen to confront an actual execution. He or she prefers the threat to the actuality. Michael Millman, Director of the California Appellate Project (CAP), the last legal resource for condemned prisoners, explains where this contradiction leads.

He says, "The real question is how many executions do people really want? ... Extremists, who argue that we should execute every first-degree murderer, are not dealing with reality. ... We know that, historically, we are going to execute between 0.5 percent and 2 percent of those convicted. ... If we ever get to 60 a year, which is two percent of the intentional homicides, we will have a real crisis on our hands."

"People call for a return to 'the good old days' when we had lots of executions. How many executions did we have in the peak years, the 1930s? ... There were very few years in which the number per year was more than 10, and the average for the century is less than six."

"What will be gained by executing more than 10 people per year, assuming that anything is gained by executions at all? All we are ever going to do is perform a 'symbolic ritual' through which a minuscule percentage of society's murderers are executed..."

Who comprises this minuscule percentage? All contributors to this study agree that they are overwhelmingly Black, poor, and uneducated. Dr. Michael Radelet, who has written many books on the death penalty, says "One of the most striking things I have learned is that people are sentenced to death not so much for what they do but for who they are."

He also observes, "... there are over 2000 people on death row. If we were to kill them all ... the United States would witness the greatest slaughter of its citizens by a western democracy in this century..."

That would only clear death rows of their present occupants. Executions would have to continue, as hundreds more condemned men and women take their place.

President Bush wants to make sure there are plenty of candidates for the executioner's rope or needle. He has sent Congress a crime bill that extends capital punishment to 55 additional federal offenses. A sample of such offenses includes: murder of a family member of a federal official, arson, bank robbery, murdering a horse inspector or poultry inspector, aircraft hijacking, and treason.

To ensure that the condemned get to the execution chamber speedily, the bill seriously restricts the right of the prisoner to appeal. This bill, which has not yet been passed, is an immediate target of the anti-death penalty forces.

The campaign against the death penalty has not yet recruited mass forces. But logic will ultimately lead most Americans to follow the Europeans and many others to abolish this relic of a less civilized past. "A Punishment in Search of a Crime" is a valuable tool for winning the debate. ■

By MALIK MIAH

Which country imprisons more of its population than any other in the world?

Japan? Germany? Britain? Cuba? How about South Africa, where the Black majority are not even allowed to vote?

None of the above.

"The United States, which imprisons a larger share of its population than any other nation, has widened its lead over the second-ranking country, South Africa, a private research and advocacy group said today," reports Fox Butterfield in the Feb. 11 *New York Times*.

"The group, the Sentencing Project, which is based in Washington, said there are 1.1 million inmates in American prisons, a 6.8 percent increase from 1989 to 1990," Butterfield added. "That gives the United States an incarceration rate of 455 per 100,000, while South Africa's rate declined by 6.6 percent and is now 311 per 100,000, according to a report by the Sentencing Project based on statistics provided by various countries."

The U.S. prison rate is 10 times higher than that of Japan, Sweden, Ireland, and

The United States has become the largest prison house in the world

the Netherlands. Federal and state officials estimate the number of Americans in prison will increase 30 percent by 1995.

The report also noted that the prison population has doubled since 1980 and tripled since 1970.

The Sentencing Project's report, written by Marc Mauer, the group's assistant director, noted the higher percentage of Black inmates, reflecting racism in U.S. society.

There are about a half-million Black males in prison, giving the United States an incarceration rate for Black men five times that of Black males in South Africa. The U.S. rate for Black males is now 3370 per 100,000, compared to only 681 per 100,000 in South Africa.

In a 1990 Sentencing Project report, the group found that almost one in four Black men in the United States between the ages of 20 and 29 is either in prison or on parole or probation on any given

day.

Mark Moore, a professor of criminal justice at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, noted that, "You can't help but notice that many of these people in prison are poor and Black. You have to feel a large waste of lives and talent, and a failure of the society."

Sentencing Project's Mauer estimates its costs \$20.3 billion a year to keep 1.1 million Americans behind bars—an average of over \$18,000 per year each.

Yet the Bush administration and city and state governments are planning more resources and new prisons to "fight crime."

What a waste of working people's tax dollars. That \$20 billion, and the vast budget for the Pentagon war machine, would be better spent on rebuilding the infrastructure of the country and providing jobs and education.



Those who do carry out anti-social activities, for whatever reason, should be treated as victims. Rehabilitation steps should be taken to facilitate their return as productive members of society. That, of course, will not occur until a government of, by, and for working people is established. ■

Why the bosses pay Blacks, Latinos, and women less

Workers who are women, Black, Latino, "illegal aliens," or otherwise discriminated against in our society, receive significantly less pay. Women's wages, for example, are only 60 percent of men's.

Why is this? And what can be done about it?

It's pretty obvious that the capitalist owners of industry, who pay our wages, directly benefit from this state of affairs. Every penny they do not pay out in wages goes directly into their pockets as extra profits.

Since we are talking about approximately half the working class, these extra profits are enormous, amounting to billions and billions of dollars each year.

But how do the capitalists get away with it?

To get a handle on this question we should step back and take a look at what wages are under this capitalist system.

Under capitalism, pretty nearly everything in an economic sense is a commodity. Commodities are the goods that are bought and sold in the market.

The commodity the capitalists buy in the market by paying wages is workers—us—for a certain number of hours each day. That's right, we are commodities, and we go into the labor market to sell ourselves.

More precisely, what we sell the capitalists in exchange for our wages is our *ability to work*, which the capitalists then put to use to produce whatever commodities the individual capitalist enterprises make.

What determines the value of this special commodity, the workers' ability to work? Like all other commodities, its value is

determined by how much labor time is needed to produce it.

The labor time needed to produce the worker's ability to work is measured by the labor time needed to produce all the commodities the worker needs to live and to raise the next generation of workers. It is the value of the food, clothing, shelter, and all the other things the worker needs.

But just what does a worker need? This is an elastic concept. There is a minimum below which the worker can't physically survive at all. The workers fight to get more than that, to have enough to have some life as human beings over and above being cogs in the capitalists' productive machine. The capitalists seek to pay the lowest wages possible, because that leaves more left over for profits.

The actual wage level is a result of the ever-continuing battle between the workers and capitalists over this issue.

When white workers are paid more than Black workers, what that means is that the value of white workers' ability to work is considered higher than that of Black workers. When men are paid more than women, the same thing is true.

What this boils down to is capitalist society telling Blacks and women: Your needs are less than those of whites and of men, so you get less money. Since this is preposterous objectively, it can only work if there is a general assumption in society that Blacks and women are not worth as much, they are inferior.

This assumption must be held not only by the ruling rich, but by large sections of the workers themselves, including those dis-

criminated against.

Thus the first step toward equality in wages under capitalism happens when those discriminated against begin to stand up and say "I am a human being too! I am not worth less than anyone! I will fight for all my rights!"

The fight for equal pay is part and parcel of the fight for equality generally, and cannot be separated from it.

Let's take the fight for the right to abortion, for example. The capitalist class is trying to take this right away from women. Without this right, women cannot control their own bodies and lives. If they cannot do that, they cannot be equal with men. If they are not equal with men, their value on the labor market will be less than men's.

A word is in order on the slogan "equal pay for equal work." This has been used as a way to say that women and Blacks should get equal pay with men and whites, since the work they do is equivalent. So far so good.

But it can also lead to a trap. All work should be valued equally. If we get into the game of trying to define which type of work is just as good as another, we begin to accept that some work is better than others. Using the demand for equal pay for equal work, I've heard the argument that the work of a legal secretary is better than that of a janitor, and so is deserving of higher wages. The same old crap of denying the equal needs of the janitor rises to the surface.

Our demand should be "equal pay." This demand is in the interests of the so-called privileged white male worker, too.

Learning About Marxism By Barry Sheppard



A sorry sight to see is a male worker who thinks that because a woman gets paid less, he gets paid more. What a sucker!

To think that if the capitalist gets away with paying a woman worker less, that means the capitalist will turn around and give the difference to her male co-worker instead of pocketing it himself is like believing in the tooth fairy.

In fact, the lower wages paid to women and Blacks lowers the wage of the white male. This is because under capitalism, all workers are competing with each other. Lower wages for some workers are just like lower prices for some oranges on the market. The higher price on other oranges tends to fall. So the wages of the white male suffer, too, even if they are greater than those of women and Blacks.

More generally, workers are in a weak position facing the capitalists as individuals. When they band together, as in a union, they suppress the competition among themselves and can bargain with the capitalists from a position of greater strength.

It is in the interests of all workers to fight against sexist and racist discrimination, against all notions drummed into our heads by capitalist society that some workers are inferior to oth-

ers. This is the only road to working class unity, and unity is our only strength.

Capitalism inherited the oppression of women from previous class societies. But it has incorporated it and refined it according to its own rules.

Racism arose with the beginning of capitalism, and developed as a justification for the suppression of the darker-colored majority of humanity by a handful of rich capitalist nations. It also arose as a justification of the slave trade and slave system in the Americas that was an integral component of the rise of capitalism.

But the abolition of slavery didn't eradicate racism, which continued to flourish under capitalism and according to its rules, just as the oppression of women has. Racism and sexism cannot be abolished root and branch until the capitalist system itself is abolished. The fight against racism and sexism is part of this longer-term struggle.

This brings us back to the question of the unity of the working class, for it is only through this unity that the whole system of wage slavery and all its evil consequences will be overthrown and replaced by a socialist society of equal men and women of all nations and colors. ■

By GERRY FIORI

NEW YORK—On Jan. 31, after three and a half years of negotiations, a tentative agreement was reached at Trans World Airlines (TWA) between owner Carl Icahn and the leadership of District 142 of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), the union that represents half of TWA's 30,000 employees. The same day, the airline filed for bankruptcy.

The agreement removed the last obstacle to Icahn's "pre-packaged" Chapter 11 reorganization plan, designed to eliminate \$1 billion in debt from his carrier. Previous agreements had been reached with the airline's creditors. TWA's position in the U.S. market has declined in recent years and annual losses of up to \$300 million have been claimed, although Icahn milked the airline for years to pay for his investments elsewhere.

The contract will cover the years 1992-1994. It includes wage increases of five percent, five percent, and eight to 10 percent (based on job classification) over the three years covered. This contract does not keep pace with the cost of living nor make up for the fact that TWA employees have not seen a raise in wages for most of the past decade.

Furthermore, important concessions are also included in the package. The deductible for medical benefits for families will double, from \$200 to \$400, though the deductible for individuals will remain the same.

Retroactive payment of raises, which traditionally was counted from the date of the expiration of the previous contract, will cover only the beginning of the new contract. This not only causes each worker to lose out on thousands of dollars, but also creates a precedent whereby the company is given an incentive to drag out future contract negotiations in the knowledge that it

(Gerry Fiori is a member of IAM Local 1056 in New York)

TWA workers approve contract—reluctantly



Icahn forced TWA flight attendants to make concessions in 1986.

won't have to pay for it with retroactive wage increases.

The most significant concession, however, will be the introduction of part-time workers (TWA has been the only major carrier without part-timers). These workers will constitute 10 percent of the workforce. They will start at a new pay rate which will be two-thirds that of the lowest paid full-timers and half that of the highest paid full-timers.

(The different pay rates are called A, B, and C Scale. It currently takes five years to move from B to A Scale. Under the new contract, it will take eight years to move from C to A Scale.)

Thus, a two-tier structure will become a three-tier structure, further dividing the workforce.

Pressure from the bureaucrats

The contract was voted on in a series of ratification meetings held on Feb. 17-24. The union bureaucracy did all it could, both before and during these meetings, to ram the agreement through.

"Highlight" sheets were posted on union bulletin boards about two weeks before the vote. Five days before the vote, shop stew-

ards, after holding an informational meeting for themselves, "explained" the contract to those workers who could find them and knew the right questions to ask.

At no time did more than a handful of employees ever get to see an actual copy of the contract.

At the ratification meetings themselves, the bureaucrats used scare tactics to get the membership to go along with them. They held out the specter of a freefall bankruptcy and eventual liquidation of the company if the contract wasn't voted up.

They declared themselves to be at the mercy of the bankruptcy court, which could impose its own solution if there was no new contract. They used the standard lie that a "no" vote meant a vote to strike rather than a vote to renegotiate. At the same time, they tried to paint the contract as non-concessionary and a great victory.

Here at JFK Airport, many workers spoke against the contract at the ratification meeting, citing the givebacks it contained and taking the district leadership to task for not coming through with anything better after three years.

They were expressing the anger and frustration of the ranks who are seeing the

degradation of their standards of living and job security before their eyes while their "leaders" only look out for themselves.

Some said it would be better to strike than to accept the slow destruction of what used to be a job that passed from generation to generation.

The majority sentiment, however, was one of resignation. Given the dismal state of the economy, most workers felt that they had no choice but to accept the contract—bad as it was—rather than risk losing their jobs. "It's either take the contract or go on the unemployment line," they said.

Lack of leadership

Some felt that nothing better could be gotten since the company was in bankruptcy and it was necessary to "sacrifice" to save it. Above all, no one had any confidence that the union leadership could lead a winning strike if it came to it.

The contract was finally ratified by the union membership. It still must gain the approval of the bankruptcy court in order to go into effect. When the court met on March 19, representatives of the pension guarantors group raised objections to the payment settlement between Icahn and the banks, citing the fact that pension funds were low. The court will now meet on April 3, where the IAM contract settlement will come up for approval.

The workers at TWA deserved better. The level of discontent was high and could have been translated into a serious fightback despite the negative pressures of the recession and TWA's bankruptcy.

What was lacking was an organized rank-and-file movement, like Teamsters for a Democratic Union or the Hell On Wheels/New Directions formations in the New York Transport Workers Union, that could have provided a credible alternative perspective and leadership to the membership.

To build such a force in the IAM will be a necessary task to combat and defeat such concessionary contracts in the future. — ■

By CHRIS BIELER

N.Y. transit workers reject contract offer

NEW YORK—By a two to one margin members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 rejected a recent contract proposal with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA). Local 100, representing over 32,000 bus and subway workers, has been working without a contract since April 1, 1991.

The rejected contract called for cost-shifting on health care, lower wages for new hires, pension givebacks, and contained provisions giving the green light to speedup on the job through the establishment of "Worksmart Committees."

The mass "no" vote was a stunning rebuff of the policies of union head Sonny Hall, who had recommended that the membership ratify the contract. Spearheading the "no" vote was a coalition of rank and file activists called New Directions.

New Directions is one of a number of emerging rank-and-file formations (like Teamsters for a Democratic Union), who have come together on a platform of union democracy and militant trade-unionism. In the midst of New York City's deepening economic crisis, the contract rejection is a strong indication that New Directions' message is gaining a wider hearing among transit workers.

Prior to the contract vote, evidence of the new fightback mood among transit workers was seen at two recent demonstrations called by New Directions. On Feb. 12, over 1000 TWU members closed down the Manhattan-bound Brooklyn Bridge at rush hour. Prior to marching, over 500 had picketed and rallied in front of MTA headquarters, chanting "Vote No!"

On March 2, approximately 2000 workers again marched at the MTA headquarters. Signs carried by transit workers included "No to the Contract. No to Service Cuts," and called for a mass rally at Madison Square Garden to prepare for a strike. Signs also called for the union's defense of Robert Ray, the subway operator jailed on murder charges last fall when his train derailed from a



New York City transit workers during 11-day strike in 1980.

track containing inadequate safety devices.

Speaking at the March 2 rally was Tim Schermerhorn, a transit worker whose election campaign for Local 100 president on the New Directions slate recently received 34 percent of the votes.

And although Schermerhorn didn't win, New Directions did win a number of important executive board and division officer positions. In certain divisions, such as rapid transit—which includes train operators, conductors and tower personnel—workers overwhelmingly rejected

'friends of labor' [Democratic Party] politicians. We can rely only on our own strength and the support we can win from other workers in the city and [from] subway and bus riders."

While contract negotiations between the MTA and local 100 have been re-opened, job actions by the union have not been ruled out. The TWU has been one of the most powerful unions in New York because of its willingness to challenge the courts, the state legislature, and the cops during strike action at key points in its history. ■

incumbent Hall's candidates.

In a leaflet distributed at the March 2 demonstration, New Directions called for the formation of "contract action committees." "The only way we'll get a good contract is if we vote 'no' on the current one and take the planning for the next steps out of the hands of Hall and Co. and put it in the hands of the membership," the leaflet explained.

Supporters of New Directions, writing in the March issue of the rank-and-file newsletter *Hell on Wheels*, called for "preparing ourselves for action later in the year to win a good contract ... whether it be a strike, a slow-down or a sick-out. Most of us realize that a strike will be necessary sooner or later, if we are to win a real improvement in our wages, working conditions and pensions.

"A leadership that is committed to the mandate of the membership would find a way around obstacles, rather than using them to try to intimidate the membership or as excuses for not fighting back against management," they argued.

"The whole purpose of the Taylor Law [which outlaws strikes by public employees] is to keep us from taking effective action on our own behalf. The Taylor Law can be beaten. If we're strong enough, the MTA can be forced to back down."

Rejecting the TWU bureaucracy's political strategy that has gone hand-in-hand with the giveback contracts, they argued that "we have gotten nothing from

...Caterpillar

(continued from page 1)

Forbes magazine reported that "analysts say Caterpillar planned for a strike during most of 1991 and built up comfortable dealer inventories in a soft market."

Caterpillar owns 32 plants, 15 of them overseas, including a joint ownership of Shin Caterpillar Mitsubishi in Japan. As UAW secretary-treasurer Bill Casstevens pointed out at the March 22 rally, Caterpillar brags about dramatic increases in productivity in the plants.

However, Caterpillar executives weren't so worried about the company's competitive edge when they awarded themselves raises ranging from 11.6 percent to 19.2 percent. Caterpillar president Don Fites received an 18.5 percent raise, bringing his "compensation" to a cool \$503,483.

The Caterpillar work force has declined from 40,000 to 17,000 in the last 10 years, through downsizing and outsourcing (jobbing out specific work to other shops).

Caterpillar workers went through a bitter 206-day strike in 1982. Leading up to this strike, the company had prepared the way for its two-tier wage proposal by contracting out janitorial and other work in the plants, thus undermining solidarity among the workers.

During the current strike and lockout, Caterpillar refused any negotiations for months. It made sure locked-out workers got no unemployment benefits. Caterpillar also threatened to close the York, Pa. and Brazil plants if a settlement was not reached.

Union busting campaign

Not content with throwing out industry-wide bargaining, Caterpillar proposed negotiating work-rules on a plant-by-plant basis—or as they called them, at each "profit-center."

Caterpillar hired \$250-a-day goons, through an outfit called Vance, who brandished guns and threatened picketers. When the union went to court with complaints about these thugs, the court responded by limiting the number of picketers.

Then, in early February, Caterpillar officials proposed to end the lock-out, and reopen negotiations—only after workers



Tina Beacock/Socialist Action

returned to work. Union officials and members saw through this maneuver, and when the lock-out ended on Feb. 17, the UAW struck these plants and several more, bringing the total on strike to 10,800.

Strikers figured that Caterpillar, far from having a limitless inventory, was now coming under pressure to restart the lines, especially to produce 300 back-ordered tractors it contracted to deliver to Iran. Some speculate that now Caterpillar is preparing to send letters to strikers calling them back to work, and threatening to fire those who remain on the strike.

Strikers see Caterpillar's tactics as a union-busting campaign—pure and simple. One UAW Local 974 (Peoria) member pointed out in the local paper that Caterpillar is using the depressed economic situation to beat down their wages and work-rules.

A Local 145 (Aurora, Ill.) member explained, "Caterpillar is mounting the biggest attack on our wages and benefits since the beginning of our union. ... Working cheap has never saved a single job. Caterpillar's future has been determined far in advance by decisions made in Washington and corporate headquarters."

He continued: "Any corporation that can grant its chairman the equivalent of \$323.62 an hour when the wage of its workers is \$21.71 [per hour], and then has the audacity to demand that the workers make the necessary sacrifices 'to keep our company competitive,' deserves only one firm united reply—drop dead." (Al Orr, *Fox Valley Labor News*.)

"No contract, no work!"

The crowd at the March 22 rally heard national officials from the International Association of Machinists, the American Federation of Teachers, and from the state AFL-CIO. Letters of solidarity came from AFL-CIO head Lane Kirkland, new Teamsters president Ron Carey, and Caterpillar workers from France, Belgium, and England.

An official of the Service Employees International Union told the crowd, "Solidarity is important. Caterpillar will feel the earth shake, because solidarity is our earth-moving equipment. You here today are a symbol to the union movement all over the country."

UAW President Owen Bieber announced a one-time payment to strikers of \$2000

from the UAW international, and one million dollars in contributions was raised for the "Adopt-a-Striker" fund.

The crowd gave a hearty cheer to statements, like that of the Decatur, Ill., UAW local, to "stay out until we get a contract." Signs declared, "All labor is with Caterpillar workers," "We won't be bulldozed," and "No contract, no work." At one point, one contingent in the crowd interrupted the speakers to chant, "Stand up, can't take no more!"

The main aim of the rally was raising funds and a show of solidarity. But clearly some non-striking Caterpillar workers—those the UAW has yet to pull out—feel they would better serve that cause if the union called out all the company's workers. Many of the workers still on the job say they feel like scabs working during this fight.

This strike lays bare the lie in the common claim, by both the corporations and the union bureaucracy, that foreign workers are to blame for the attacks on labor.

One worker, from UAW Local 3000, received applause when he looked around the hall at all the "Buy American" signs and announced, "I work for a Japanese Company, Mazda, but I'm an American, just like you. I've worked in Los Angeles and a bunch of other places, and they're not that different. ... What we need is to shut down the country, show them who's boss for a change."

One disturbing note at the rally was the alacrity with which the local police, with the support of UAW officials, cleared out all those selling socialist papers, as well as supporters of Labor Party Advocates (LPA), and other labor organizations, from the street in front of the stadium.

This paralleled a denunciation several weeks earlier by the Caterpillar UAW Central Bargaining Council, of efforts to organize solidarity by those they perceived as supporters of the dissident New Directions caucus in the UAW.

A fighting union movement has nothing to fear from the broadest democratic debate over where to go next, how to build the strongest solidarity, and what strategy is needed to win.

The next round of negotiations between the UAW and Caterpillar are slated to get underway at the beginning of April. ■

By CAROLINE LUND

World-wide, the capitalist system is in trouble. Recession (depression?) is hitting country after country. Competition has sharpened for markets, trade, and profits.

Along with the trade war has come a war of propaganda. In this country, we are bombarded with "Japan-bashing." In Japan, politicians and businessmen are bashing American workers as lazy and overpaid.

Big business, in Japan and in the United States, is promoting an "us-against-them" mentality among their people. But who is "us"? And who is "them"?

Meanwhile, in the real world, General Motors announced in February that it will close plants employing 16,000 production and salaried workers—the first step in the company's plan to lay off a total of 74,000 employees.

Workers remaining with GM will be laboring under a regime of forced overtime and grueling, round-the-clock shift work. According to the Feb. 26, *New York Times*, GM Chairman Robert Stempel "has vowed to make maximum use of plant capacity by adding a third work shift to most U.S. assembly plants or by scheduling two 10-hour shifts a day, six days a week."

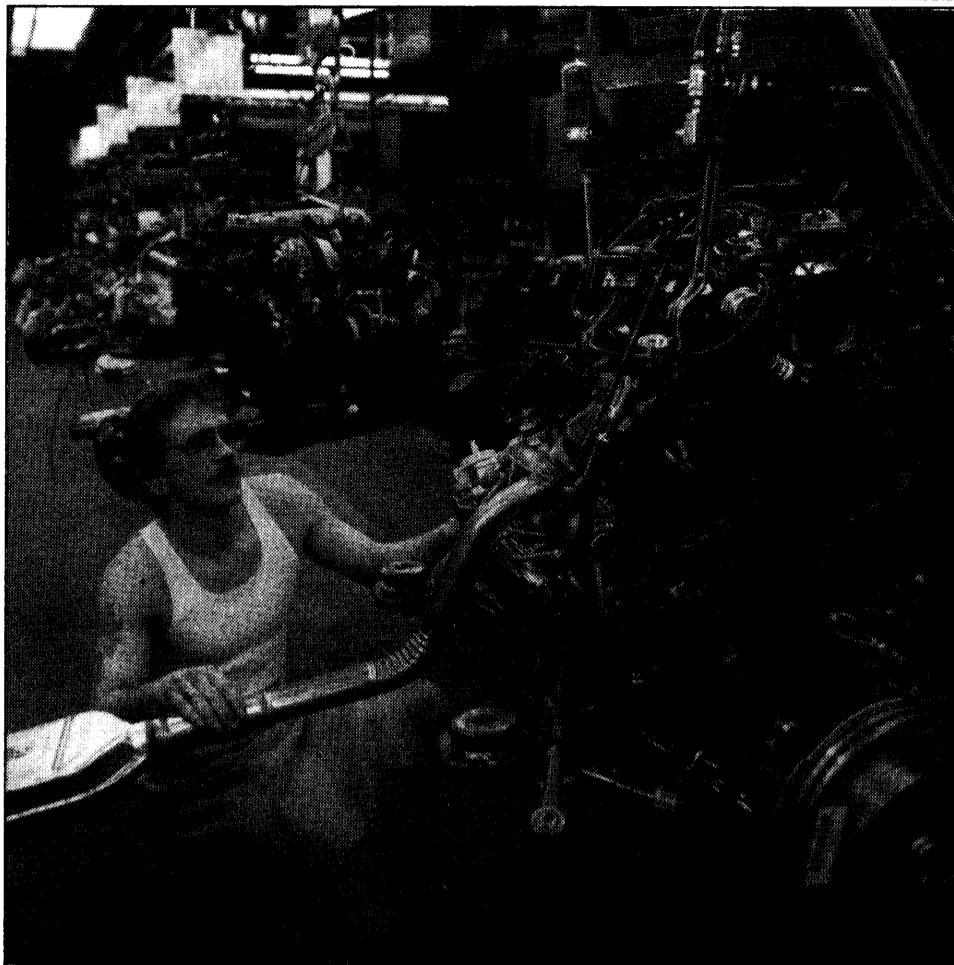
The article continued: "Since GM's capacity exceeds its sales, it is able to shut entire plants and still meet demand."

According to a newly published book, it's not only the GM workers who are either laid off or overworked. "The Overworked American," by Juliet B. Schor, documents how paid laboring time for the average American worker has increased by 164 hours a year (the equivalent of a month) between 1970 and today. At the same time vacation time for U.S. workers has decreased.

Schor notes that employers prefer to have fewer employees working longer hours, even at overtime pay, because this saves them costs of fringe benefits and training. And large numbers of unemployed workers is also good for business, because it makes people scared for their jobs and willing to work for less.

Japanese capitalists are no different from their U.S. counterparts. And Japanese workers face the same problems we do. The March 3 *New York Times*, carried an article titled "More Japanese Workers Demanding Shorter Hours and Less Hectic

Japanese and American workers face the same problem: Greedy bosses



Ron Watts/Black Star

"The real 'us against them' in the real world is not the 'American people versus the Japanese people.' It is the working people of all countries up against the rich capitalists of all countries."

Work." It noted that Japanese workers typically have to work the equivalent of a month more than U.S. workers per year.

For example, during good times Japanese auto workers generally work 12 hour shifts, with work over 8 hours paid at only time and a quarter. White collar workers typically work 13-hour days with no overtime pay.

But you can't even trust these figures,

because companies regularly lie about the amount of overtime they require of their employees. "A recent survey," notes the article, "found that 55 percent of employees worked unpaid—and unrecorded—overtime."

A big problem for Japanese workers is that what are called "unions" in the private sector are almost all company unions. Union officers are company employees,

paid to dampen worker militancy.

The *Times* article cited a Nissan worker who "said that at the height of car production in 1987, the company speeded up the work and the unions did nothing. He said that pauses of 10 seconds between tasks were eliminated and that workers had to carry parts on their belts to save the time taken to get them from the shelf.

"The workers were totally uninterested in what the union does," he said, "because the union is useless and powerless.... They just do whatever management wants."

In this country we desperately need stronger unions as well. The number of unionized workers continues to decline. The union officialdom does little more than tell us to "buy American"—that is, to help our own bosses get richer.

I work in an automobile assembly plant that is a joint venture of GM and Toyota. My bosses are both Japanese and American. My coworkers come from throughout the world—the United States, the Philippines, all over Asia, and the Middle East.

Due to a cut in orders, the company plans to adjust its production schedule downward for the rest of this model year.

To do this, it will increase the time that the vehicle is at each work station from 60 seconds to 64 seconds. Then more work will be added to the job at some stations so as to eliminate other jobs altogether.

There is going to be a lot of little battles over how much more work the company can get away with adding to our jobs to be done in those four seconds. Japanese auto workers fight these same little battles as we do—day in and day out.

The real "us against them" in the real world is not the "American people versus the Japanese people." It is the working people of all countries up against the rich capitalists of all countries.

This is the reality in our daily lives, and working class people need to recognize it and create bonds of solidarity with our brothers and sisters in all countries to fight together for a decent life.

As a first step, the United Autoworkers Union should go to other auto-producing areas like Japan, South Korea, Europe, and Mexico to coordinate with and learn from autoworkers there, to build a powerful united struggle against all the bosses for a workplace free of forced overtime, speed-up, low wages, abuse of our bodies, stress and intimidation. ■

GM continues assault on auto workers

William Deekay/Detroit Free Press



As GM lays off workers in the U.S., it super-exploits workers in Mexico.

By HENRY AUSTIN

DETROIT—After five weeks of rumors, General Motors (GM) announced on Jan. 26 that it will close down its Ypsilanti, Mich., plant, where 4700 auto workers assemble GM cars. This is the first phase of GM's plans to lay off 74,000 workers in its U.S. plants. Shock waves are now reverberating throughout the union ranks.

Ostensibly, GM's assault is due to a

\$1 billion loss on its 1991 earnings. But GM's rationale for laying off tens of thousands of workers doesn't stack up very well when you consider the \$9.5 billion in profits the four previous years.

As the history of capitalism has demonstrated, immediate returns are the only criteria these profiteers go by. The fact that it was the workers who earned them these profits is of little concern to them.

The axe fell not only on United

Autoworkers (UAW) Local 1776 in Ypsilanti, but on 5400 workers in other Michigan GM plants as well.

In stark contrast, top GM executives are being pensioned off with "golden parachutes." Roger Smith, past GM president, was retired with a \$1 million per year salary.

GM is being very selective about the plants it will close—for obvious reasons.

Preference has been given to its Arlington, Texas, plant, where UAW Local 276 agreed to three crews of workers to rotate on two 10-hour shifts four days a week—a non-too-subtle name for speedup.

The Ypsilanti workers had refused to agree to the new work schedule. Arlington is a town built almost entirely around GM, with a younger work force. Workers at Ypsilanti are much older, with longer seniority and militant traditions, and therefore, are prone to resist an attack on their standard of living.

GM, however is also an international wheeler-and-dealer. Capital goes where the money flows. The *maquiladoras* (U.S. companies set up in Mexico to pay workers a fraction of U.S. workers' wages) in Matamoros, where GM has parts plants, are not their only out.

Workers in these border towns live in large shantytowns paying \$50 a month rent, and earning \$11 a day. The Mexican government, notorious for its bureaucracy and graft, has still built only 500 housing units for this influx of workers.

GM also has a joint venture \$100 million investment with China in Shenyang—in the industrial north—to build pickup trucks. In Hungary, where workers accept lower wages as a result of years of Stalinist intimidation, GM has a \$193 million investment with Hungary's Raba factory to build Opel Astras for the

European market.

Ironically, last year GM made over \$2 billion in profits from its European operations. Robert Eaton, GM's president of European operations, has just signed-up to take over from Lee Iacocca at Chrysler next year, no doubt at a tidy sum.

Oddly enough, auto workers respect Toyota, which out-paces U.S. producers in its trucks. Several autoworkers openly criticize GM for its poor design and engineering when stacked up against Toyota. Many blame the decline in sales on the perks, privileges and obduracy of GM management, as much as on the current recession.

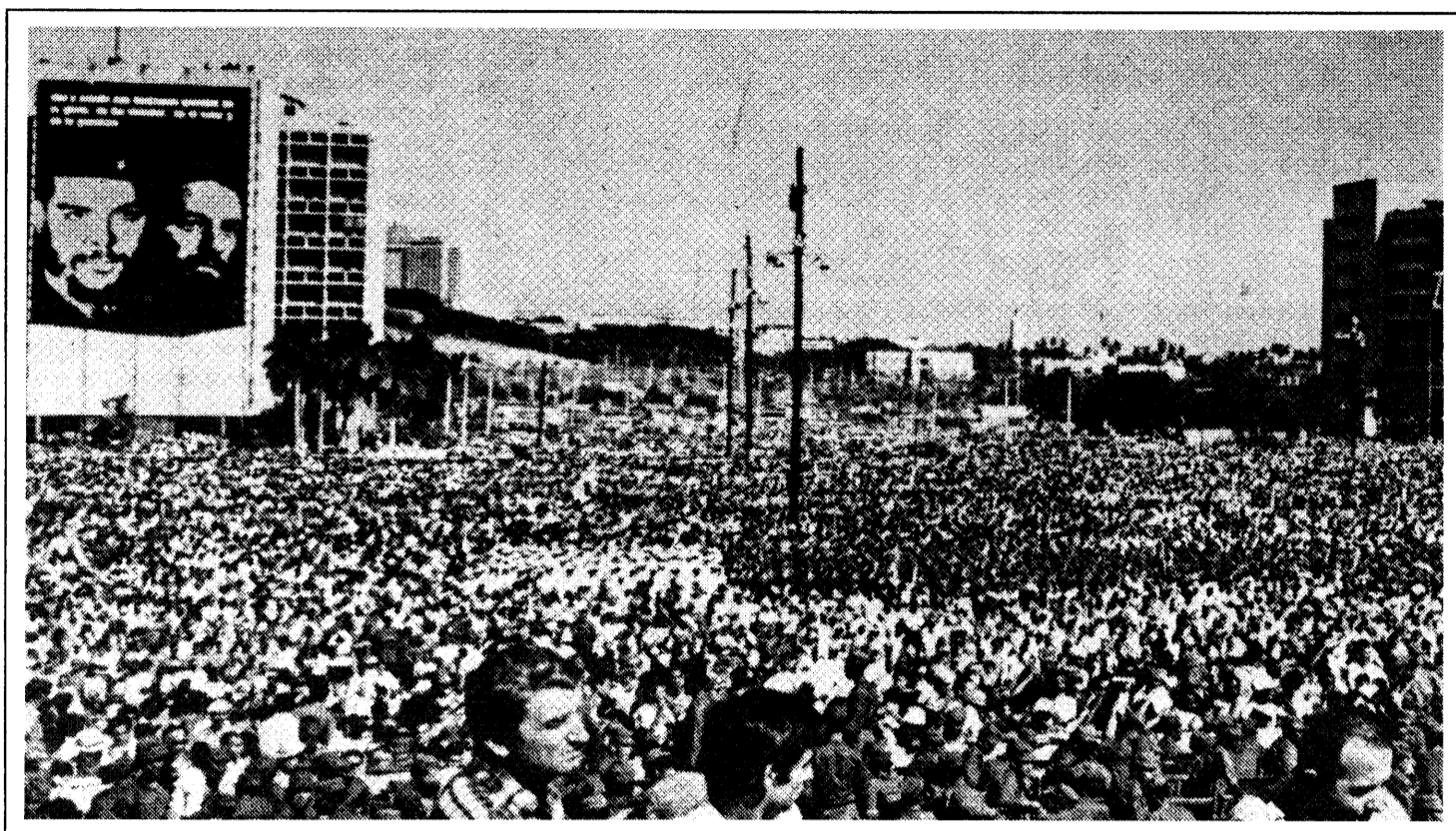
Reaction to the announced GM layoffs has been mixed and uneven. Recently, UAW Local 1776 began a campaign against Ford's *Classica* model, produced in Canada and used by local state and city governments.

On the other hand, on Feb. 26, Canadian Auto Workers Local 222V at the GM plant in Oshawa, Ontario, voted down a proposal for scheduled forced overtime and an additional shift, stating that they refused to be part of a campaign that would allow GM to close plants elsewhere, like in Ypsilanti.

This act of solidarity is precisely what is needed to combat GM's assault on the UAW. Ypsilanti Local 1776 sent 200 members to the March 22 UAW rally in Peoria, Ill., to support the striking Caterpillar workers. They contributed \$2300 from their treasury.

Despite the dismal political climate and the uncertain economic times, American workers are in a combative mood. Unfortunately, they are still hamstrung by a union bureaucracy that refuses to mobilize this combative mood into decisive action. ■

The political dilemma faced by ex-Communist Party members



Cuban Revolution in 1960. Ex-CP members have still not come to terms with the CPUSA's criticism of Castro because he overturned capitalism.

By JEFF MACKLER

This is the third part of a series of articles on the current split in the Communist Party USA.

Mike Myerson, is a recently-resigned 30-year U.S. Communist Party (CPUSA) veteran and free-lance journalist. He concludes his "Inside the CPUSA Explosion" article—in the February 1992 issue of *Crossroads* magazine—with some friendly suggestions to departing party members who have reorganized into "Committees of Correspondence" in the past few months.

"The first thing to learn," Myerson aptly explains, "is that there is much to learn. The communists have been grievously wrong on some matters that others have been right on. Traumatic as it is for many, it will likely be far easier to make a political and organizational break with the past than a psychological break with past methods."

Myerson's article reveals, perhaps contrary to his intentions, that both he and the Committees of Correspondence, now organizing in some 28 cities in 24 states across the country, have a long way to go before they can claim to have made "a political break with the past."

Thirty years ago, Myerson and this writer boarded a plane to Helsinki, Finland, to attend the Eighth World Youth Festival for Peace and Friendship for Youth and Students, an international gathering largely sponsored by Communist Parties throughout the world.

We were new friends who grew up in the civil rights and free speech movements and in the struggle against nuclear war. We were also two of the five youthful initiators of the 500-member American delegation, many of whom, with great enthusiasm, followed up their Helsinki visit with a first-time tour of the Soviet Union.

"Red-diaper baby"

As the "red-diaper baby" son of a lifelong CP member/supporter, I began my first associations in politics, as had Myerson, with a number of youth organizations adhering to the views of the CPUSA. From my then naive point of view, there were but two sides in the world class struggle.

On the one hand, there was U.S. imperialism, which I had come to know much about from my family experience with the McCarthy witch hunt. I hated the witch-hunters and the government behind them, which framed up and executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

I was repulsed by a racist government that maintained Jim Crow segregation, intervened militarily across the globe to protect the interests of the ruling rich, and used every tool at its disposal to defend the bosses' profits and attack the trade unions when they fought for workers' elementary rights. This was the capitalism Myerson and I learned about first-hand and came to despise with a passion.

On the other hand, there was, according to what I been taught, the opposite of capitalism—socialism. Its soul resided in the USSR!

After 10 days in Moscow and Leningrad, as the leader of the U.S. delegation, and the person with greatest access to Soviet spokespersons on many key subjects, I was convinced that I had been mistaken.

There were no soviets in the Soviet Union, no institutions of the working class where the real decisions in society were made by the people themselves. There were no working-class bodies that were democratically planning the economy.

I asked my tour guide about this. I was told that I would be given an answer shortly. There was no answer.

There was no one to answer the many additional questions I had come to ask. Why had the Cuban Communist Party refused to back Fidel Castro and the July 26th Movement in their struggle for power against the repressive regime of Fulgencio Batista? Why did the Soviet Union make the "mistake" of invading Hungary in 1956 when the Hungarian workers had set up real worker's councils to defend their interests? Why didn't Soviet workers have the right to strike? Why was access to the special stores I had been taken to restricted to members of the Communist Party?

"Peaceful Coexistence"

Upon my return, I had a final question for my Communist Party friends in the United States. "If it is true," I asked, "that the Democratic Party is a capitalist party, why does the Communist Party always support it?"

When I was told that my question was "ultraleft," that the Republicans were the party of big business and of the far right danger—even the "fascist" right—and that there were many "progressive Democrats," and "anti-monopoly" Democrats, I decided that my other friends, those whom the Communist Party referred to as "Trotskyite fascists," had been right all along.

I became a revolutionary socialist and joined what was then the best expression of this viewpoint in the United States, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Mike Myerson, however, became a Stal-

inist—an adherent to a school of political thought that subordinated the truth to unconditional support to whatever regime was in power in the USSR. Myerson became the head of the U.S. Peace Council, the U.S. associate of the Stalinist-sponsored World Peace Council. These bodies were designed to promote Stalinist style "peaceful coexistence" the world over.

"Peaceful coexistence" was the practice initiated by Stalin after the original Soviet Communist Party led by Lenin and Trotsky was decimated by mass purges, imprisonment, and then—literally—mass murder. "Peaceful coexistence," can best be understood by radicalizing youth today by its analogy to the events over the past half decade or so in relation to Soviet foreign policy.

The Gorbachev regime's pursuit of "regional agreements" with U.S. imperialism meant, in fact, subordinating all Soviet support to oppressed people struggling for liberation to a deal with the United States. Aid was cut to Nicaragua and El Salvador, and deals were negotiated behind the backs of the liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa. Aid and trade to Cuba was cut to the bone and more.

In every instance, as with "peaceful coexistence" from Stalin's time to today, the goal was to secure imperialist support to the Soviet bureaucracy in return for Soviet help to contain liberation struggles or to subordinate them to local capitalist forces.

In the United States, beginning in the mid-1930s, that took the form of the CPUSA leading a historic break with the traditions of the American workers movement. American labor and all the progressive social movements influenced or led by the CPUSA were tied to the "liberal" wing of the U.S. ruling class, the Democratic Party.

"Debates" on party policy?

Myerson's article, like many of those written by recently "enlightened" ex-CPers does have the great merit of revealing much about the U.S. Communist Party that has remained hidden. But like his associates in the mushrooming "Committees of Correspondence," Myerson glosses over many reactionary CP positions he still supports.

He retains, for example, the fundamental flaw common to all Stalinist and neo-Stalinist currents in the United States—an unshakable and continuing view that American politics begins and ends in the ball park of the Democratic Party.

I will return to this key issue after assessing some of Myerson's important

revelations about the CPUSA.

Myerson begins: "There has not been open questioning and debate about party policy since the 1960s, when a new post-McCarthy-period generation of radicals joined the CPUSA, influenced by the movements of that decade."

This is not accurate. The questioning in the CP stopped with the Stalinization of the party in 1929. Any current offering any opposition to the line of the CPUSA, which mimicked the line of the Soviet CP for six decades, was expelled or driven to silence.

My parents were a case in point. In 1946, in the temporary climate of the post-war euphoria in the CPUSA—resulting from the wartime alliance between the United States and the USSR—Communist Party head Earl Browder actually succeeded in dissolving the party.

Browder insisted that the CP continue its reactionary wartime policy of policing the unions to impose a wage freeze, even after the war was over. He, and the entire party leadership, insisted that only a tiny minority of the American ruling class could be considered enemies. The rest were placed in the category of "progressive capitalists."

The CP was replaced with the Communist Political Association (CPA), and Browder offered to publicly shake the hand of leading capitalist titan J.P. Morgan.

My parents—who had joined the CP in their youth, in the early 1930s—were expelled on one day's notice when they expressed the opinion that U.S. capitalists could not be expected to be labor's allies in the future.

Six months later, word came from Moscow that the U.S.-initiated "cold war" suddenly required a different course in the United States. Stalin picked William Z. Foster to lead the American party. Browder was removed virtually without a whimper from the ranks—who had learned that even a whimper led to expulsion, ridicule, and disgrace.

My parents were given appropriate apologies and asked to rejoin. They declined, although their memories of the CP of their youth—including the working-class struggles they had engaged in—caused them to remain party supporters.

"One-man-one-rule"

Myerson launches a number of personal and political missiles at CPUSA head, Gus Hall. With the death in 1986 of CP National Chair Henry Winston, General Secretary Hall assumed Winston's title, as well as maintaining his own. Myerson comments:

"An African-American, 'Winnie' [Winston] was much beloved throughout the ranks, and his co-leadership with Hall symbolized the Black-white unity at the center of the organization's ideological-political program."

With Hall's combining of his and the deceased Winston's posts, Myerson argues, "One-man-one-rule, specifically one-white-man-rule, was in place."

Myerson continues: "Without Winston's presence to keep him in check, Hall's racism and chauvinism made themselves readily apparent."

This took two forms, according to Myerson. The first was the exclusion of several leading Blacks from the "inner circle" of the CP leadership.

Additionally, Myerson claims: "It wasn't long before the centrality of Black liberation or equality to the class struggle came under question in discussion, and under attack in practice. The Rainbow Coalition was held at arms length, while the party failed to provide any serious support for Jesse Jackson's historic presidential campaigns."

"The South African Communist Party, because of Joe Slovo's critique of Marxism-Leninism as practiced in the USSR and Eastern Europe, became the object of scorn."

"When Angela Davis and Charlene Mitchell (Mitchell was the head of the CP-led National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression) returned from a visit to South Africa hosted by Nelson Mandela, the ANC, the SACP, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the head of the Ohio party district 'banned' Mitchell

(continued on page 9)

The Patrick Buchanan campaign: Pushing capitalist politics further right

By BARRY SHEPPARD

The rightist campaign of Patrick Buchanan for the Republican presidential nomination has little chance of winning in 1992, but it has succeeded in pulling the Republican party and capitalist politics generally further to the right.

The well-known journalist speaks directly about the severe economic crisis, warning that there is "a storm coming." He makes promises to middle-class layers and sections of the working class based upon their fears, insecurities, and backward sentiments.

Exit polls after the New Hampshire primary showed he won a majority among Republicans who said their family situation was worse off than 10 years ago.

Buchanan's main theme is "America first." This demagoguery, which is present in all the candidates of both parties to one extent or another, is taken by Buchanan to new heights. He blames the crisis on foreigners, and blasts Bush and the Democrats for selling out to them.

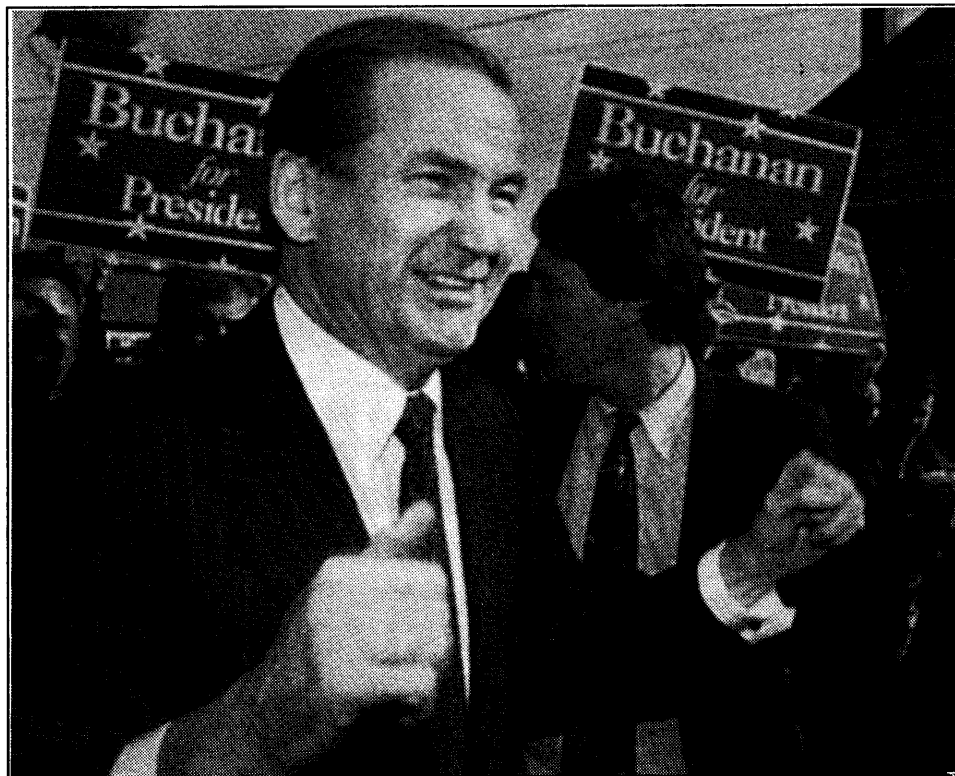
Japan-bashing with an openly racist message is a stock in trade. He attacked a Bush aide who is a lobbyist for a Japanese consortium as a "geisha girl of the new world order." He calls Japanese people Bush's "little friends."

He says he would phase out U.S. troops in Europe. "It's time," he said, "to tell the big boys in Europe who steal our markets around the world that they should look after themselves."

He wants to deploy some of these troops as "border guards in the Southwest," to keep out Mexicans and others.

His racism with regard to Blacks is virulent. Referring to his hometown of Washington, D.C., he tells crowds that it was a nice place until "they" moved in. Now, he says, his wife has to put up with walking by "bongo players" on the street corner.

"If we had to take a million immigrants in, say, Zulus, next year or Englishmen, and put them into Virginia, what group



Buchanan: Admires Hitler and wants to imprison the homeless.

"Buchanan has taken the thunder from David Duke, the Nazi and Klaner, who cleaned up his image to attempt to enter the Republican right wing."

would be easier to assimilate and would cause less problems for the people of Virginia?" he asks his cheering audiences. Of course, he fails to mention that a cross-section of English people today would include a large number of people not of his preferred "type."

His anti-Semitism is so notorious that even the rightist William Buckley of the *National Review* has criticized him. Buchanan charges that "Jews" have too much power in Congress.

He ran an anti-Bush advertisement along the lines of Bush's famous Willie Horton ad appealing to racist fears, but managed to get in gays, "pornographers" and "liberal intellectuals" as well as Blacks. The ad was an attack on the National Endowment for the Arts. It depicts a scene from a film underwritten by the NEA that showed—horror of horrors—nude gay Black men. Buchanan wrote in one of his hate-filled columns that AIDS was "nature's retribution" against gays.

...U.S. Communist Party

(continued from page 8)

from speaking in 'his' state.

"Rick Nagan—a Ph.D from a manufacturer's family who poses, like several of his counterparts, as a 'working class' leader, and who heads an overwhelmingly white party in the majority-Black city of Cleveland—thus tried to stop an African-American, female Communist Party leader from making an anti-apartheid tour of Ohio, something De Klerk's apartheid regime never attempted."

Aside from Myerson's CP-style race-baiting, his hyperbole about Hall's alleged racism masks another debate in the disintegrating CP that is probably more to the point.

Support to Jesse Jackson

The great majority of the small layer of Black CP members have left the party and are today working with the Committees of Correspondence. Within the CP, they generally favored a more aggressive orientation to the election campaign of Democrat Jesse Jackson, while Hall preferred the more mainline liberal Democrats who eventually got the Democratic Party nomination.

Jackson's campaign, however, was by no means independent of the Democratic Party. Largely funded with corporate money, including huge grants from the Ford Foundation, it was designed to channel the rising discontent in America's Black and other oppressed communities, and in the working class as a whole, into the Democratic Party.

Following Jackson's primary election defeats in 1984 and 1988, his immediate switch to the victorious Democratic candidates said all that needed to be said.

His support in 1984 to Walter Mondale, who threatened to "quarantine Nicaragua"

while the United States deepened its aid to the contras, was in the same vein as his support in 1988 to Democrat Michael Dukakis—who paraded around in a tank in front of the media to demonstrate his commitment to continuing U.S. military might.

The Jackson campaign was further designed to integrate a number of local Black reformists into the administration of various city governments to prevent the possible emergence of an independent Black leadership.

The CPUSA, including its Black leaders, long entrenched in a variety of Democratic Party formations at the local level, sought to deepen this process with the Jackson campaign. The aim was to become part of the system, not to oppose it.

"Differences" on South Africa?

Similarly, the support of Angela Davis and Charlene Mitchell to Joe Slovo's South African CP—and Hall's opposition—had nothing to do with racism, as Myerson insinuates. Davis and Mitchell tied their future, as did Slovo, to the Gorbachev wing of the former Soviet CP, despite its orientation to the restoration of capitalism in the USSR.

If race were the issue, they would have supported the more Stalinist wing of the SACP headed by Black leader Harry Gwala.

Both wings of the South African CP, like the CPUSA and the Committees of Correspondence, seek a negotiated solution in South Africa that is based on the continued maintenance of capitalist rule.

The Committees of Correspondence have made it absolutely clear that their "new" politics represent no "break from the past" regarding their rejection of the fundamental principle of the revolutionary socialist movement, that is, the political independence of the working class.

In the first issue of its publication, *The*

Corresponder, Coordinating Committee member Charlene Mitchell's keynote address is reprinted.

Mitchell states: "The movement to defeat George Bush must unfold now ... for 1992, to defeat George Bush necessitates the broadest, most united front against the ultra-right danger Bush represents. Whether we like it or not, the only way to defeat Bush at the ballot box is with a candidate of the Democratic Party."

Knee-jerk hatred

Myerson's "political break with the past" is deficient in other areas. His knee-jerk Stalinist hatred of Trotskyism is still firmly in place.

Attacking Gus Hall's trade-union policies, Myerson utilizes the classical Stalinist method of constructing a political amalgam to discredit his opponents by alleged association. In the past, the Trotskyist movement was likened to Hitler's fascists, and then to the CIA. Today it's likened to Gus Hall himself!

Myerson writes: "Acting more like traditional Trotskyists, the party leadership has taken to attacking the leaders of such progressive unions as Local 1199 in New York and the United Electrical Workers nationally."

Here Myerson somehow lumps Hall's feud with some local labor officials—when he didn't like the outcome of union elections where CP-supported candidates were defeated—with "Trotskyism."

Of course, Myerson doesn't bother to state just how these "Trotskyists" were wrong in the past. It's enough to just mention the word to send the proper hate signal to people Myerson considers to be still receptive to Trotsky-baiting.

Myerson berates Gus Hall for Hall's opposition to the Fidel Castro leadership of the Cuban Revolution. "Hall is also the man who wrote to Fidel in the early years

He rails against the right to abortion, including in cases of incest and rape. He takes Bush to task for not vetoing the recent civil rights bill, falsely claiming it is a "quota" bill. All the candidates from both parties are against "quotas," that is, affirmative action, but Buchanan takes them one step further. He even wants to arrest and imprison the homeless.

Buchanan has taken the thunder from David Duke, the Nazi and KKKer, who cleaned up his image to attempt to enter the Republican right wing. Buchanan doesn't carry Duke's Klan and Nazi baggage, although he calls Hitler a "great man" and defends Francisco Franco, Spain's fascist dictator who took power in the 1930s.

Buchanan was a speech writer for Nixon and a White House assistant to Ford and Reagan. He has a well-established base in the right wing of the Republican Party. As such, he is part of the mainstream of capitalist politics. His radical rightism in this campaign is designed to move capitalist politics to the right, and in this he has succeeded.

Bush whimpers under his attacks, and defends himself by identifying with some of Buchanan's positions.

"There is no question that we have not only been driving the debate, we have been winning the debate," Buchanan crows. "The proof is that George Bush has moved crabwise in a conservative direction ever since we announced."

The fact that rightist politicians like Buchanan can strike a chord in some workers and middle class people hurting from the crisis of capitalism is testimony to the default of the so-called leaders of the labor movement.

Labor should be vigorously campaigning against anti-foreigner prejudice and Japan bashing, instead of joining in on it. It should be championing affirmative action for Blacks and other oppressed minorities, and women, including the use of quotas. It should be defending gays and mobilizing to further the right to abortion, instead of dodging the issue.

Labor should be putting the blame for the economic crisis squarely where it belongs, on the capitalists and their system, and formulating a fighting class-struggle program in the interests of the workers and their allies.

Labor's failure to do so leaves the door open to demagogues of the right—like Buchanan. ■

of the revolution," Myerson explains, "demanding that he hold elections so that the CPUSA could build support for the revolution; Hall, for a decade dismissed Fidel as an adventurist and Trotskyist...."

This aspect of CPUSA policy was kept hidden for some time. The American Stalinists, however, were only reflecting their Soviet counterparts in denouncing—as "Trotskyite ultraleftism"—the idea that Castro could do anything more in Cuba other than form an alliance with Cuba's "progressive" capitalists. After all, this was the same policy the CPUSA followed in the United States in its lifelong alliance with the Democratic Party.

When Castro broke with this policy in 1960 and mobilized the Cuban masses to abolish capitalism and establish a state based on many of the historic ideas of socialism, the CPUSA was openly critical. They were held in check only by the fact that an entire generation of radicalizing American youth saw in the Cuban revolution the best traditions the revolutionary movement had to offer.

While the CPUSA thought that Castro had gone "too far," the world Trotskyist movement hailed and defended the Cuban Revolution.

When the Trotskyist movement embraced revolutionary Cuba, it was in keeping with its tradition of fighting for the real legacy of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Trotskyism represents the struggle for the continuity of the revolutionary socialist movement, which was gravely compromised with Stalin's destruction of the Soviet party. Today, Trotskyism is represented in the United States by the revolutionists organized in Socialist Action, and internationally in the Fourth International. ■

(To be continued next month.)

The fight for women in the ex-Soviet Union

The crumbling of Stalinism has broken down the barriers that prevented contacts between those fighting for women's rights in the countries of so-called actually existing socialism and those engaged in a similar struggle in the rest of the world. It has opened up the way for an important international widening of the women's movement.

The following article compares the situation of women in the former Soviet Union and in the West. It also tries to assess where the women's movement is today in the ex-USSR. The article has been taken from the March 16, 1992, issue of *International Viewpoint*, the journal of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. It has been slightly abridged.

By BARBARA SCHULTZ

For a long time, education and training of women have been comprehensively guaranteed in the Soviet Union. In 1984-85, 54 percent of high school students and 58 percent of technical school students were women. For medical and teacher training institutions, the proportion of women reached 69 percent and 73 percent, respectively.

At the same time, 37 percent of magistrates and 40 percent of academics were women. But only 14 percent of higher ranking academics were women. Moreover, medical doctors are not highly respected professionals in the USSR, and teaching is actually looked down upon as a miserably paid "woman's" job. Women made up 80 percent of primary school heads, and 37 percent of heads of secondary schools.

Women represented 53 percent of the population and 51 percent of the workforce. However, as in the U.S. and Western Europe, Soviet women on average earned only about 60 percent to 65 percent of what men earned. Thus, we have to be wary about what the formal equality in education between the sexes means.

In the Soviet Union also, women have been concentrated in certain industries. They make up 85 percent of the workforce in textiles, 91 percent in trade and catering, but only 16 percent in engineering.

In 1988—and nothing has changed decisively since then—some analysts pointed to the difficult situation women face. Some 3.5 million of them worked in unhealthy conditions. Moreover, four million did night work (more than the total for men), despite the fact that legally women can only be required to do night work in special cases.

Since 1988, it has become clear that when an enterprise adopts the profit principle, it is women who lose their jobs first. Women with children are not hired and the enterprise's social amenities are cut back, with women suffering the most.

Some 80 percent of job cutbacks in administration have hit women. In November 1991, 77 percent of the unemployed in Moscow were women. A ban on laying off women who are the "sole providers" for their households is now under consideration.

The Soviet leadership realized that they had to draw women behind perestroika. That is shown by the fact that they set up women's councils in the factories.

The Law on Enterprises [one of the principal pieces of legislation involved in perestroika] proposed tasks for these bodies, but they were only vaguely defined. The councils were "to concern themselves with matters that affect women at work and in everyday life." Without clearly defined powers, however, these councils could not do anything.

Abortion, birth control, divorce

A special problem that now at least is being brought to public attention through readers' letters, concerns the principal form of birth control—abortion. It was legalized immediately after the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

In the Stalin era, abortion was again made a criminal offense. After 1936, it was totally forbidden. In 1955, it was again officially permitted on medical grounds. In 1968, all restrictions were removed. Abortion became the method of birth control.

Means for contraception are not widely available even in the big cities. The quality

of condoms—whose production was increased with the advent of AIDS—is inadequate (they tend to be either leaky or too thick). Moreover, a lot of women are so afraid of the effect the pill might have on their health that they refuse to use it. A typical remark is "the pill is a hormone preparation, and I think it's harmful."

(Thalidomide is confused with drugs preventing ovulation, and the consequences of taking thalidomide are presented as the results of taking the contraceptive pill.) Women, however, do use the coil as a method of contraception.

Almost every woman in the ex-Soviet Union has had an abortion, usually from one to five times. But some have had as many as 15 abortions. Unless they pay for it themselves, they face a bloody and barbaric operation. It is now being stressed that every woman has a right to anaesthesia both in abortions and births.

Babies are delivered exclusively in clinics. And in most births the availability of painkillers depends on readiness to pay. From many interviews and descriptions, it can be gathered that medical care and drugs can be had for the right price. Naturally, women are particularly bitter about this sort of corruption.

Although in much of the ex-Soviet Union unmarried couples living together is tolerated, marriage remains the acceptable norm. While formally only a type of registration, marriage has a romantic element expressed in a ceremony resembling a church service, with white dresses, dark suits, bouquets, music and speeches.

The bridal pair can obtain a "marriage book" when they set the date. This entitles them to make purchases in special stores, where they can buy a sort of trousseau and wedding clothes.

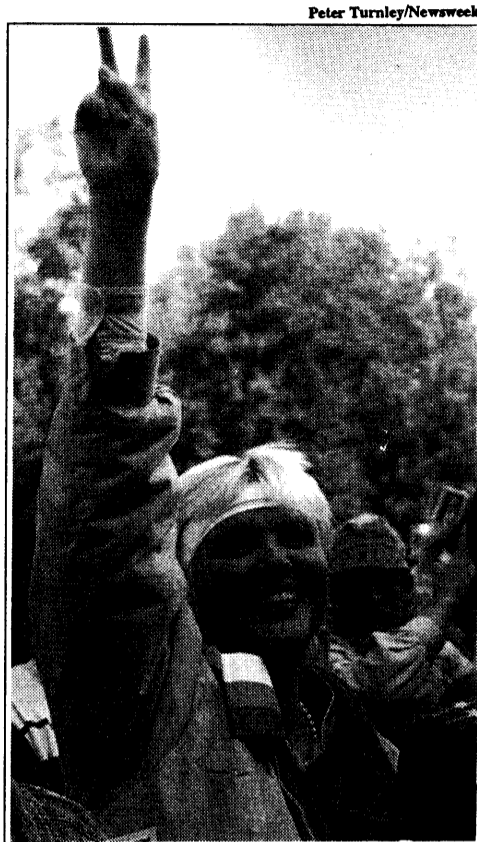
Often marriages do not last long. The divorce rate in the old USSR was 3.4 per thousand inhabitants, as compared with a marriage rate of 9.3 per thousand. In most cases, divorce proceedings are initiated by women, frequently because of their husbands' alcoholism. A "ruined sex life" is also often cited as a reason.

Problems of everyday life fall disproportionately on women

Virtually no sex education is provided in the schools. Today, however, everything is up for discussion, and the need for sex education is being openly raised. The AIDS problem, now openly recognized in the ex-USSR, is an argument for sex education. At the same time, pornography and prostitution are surfacing.

Divorced women do not face serious material losses, although a single woman with two or more children is regarded as a social problem. They have their own jobs and incomes. Childcare is an exceptionally difficult problem, as is general family support.

In families that stay together, it is the



Peter Turnley/Newsweek



Denis Raquin/AP

"In the countryside, grandmothers often still assume a part of the burden of rearing their grandchildren. In the cities, families depend on public institutions."

women who assume the predominant share of the housework. They do 70 percent of the shopping, 80 percent of the cooking, 64 percent of dishwashing, 90 percent of the laundry, and 87 percent of the ironing. (These figures are from the 1960s. Since then, the situation may have improved slightly.)

In the big cities, in particular, especially in Moscow, 20 percent to 25 percent of families are crammed into shared-housing arrangements. Today, the per capita living space is 15.2 square meters (in the United States it is 40 sq.m.).

Large dwellings may accommodate two, three or often even more families. Young couples often live with their parents, so that five or six people are sharing two rooms, and cooking and washing facilities have to be shared with even more people.

In 1986, the Twenty Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided that by the year 2000 every family should have an apartment or house of their own. Home building was to be officially promoted, since having your own home "makes for strong and big families."

In the countryside, grandmothers often still assume a part of the burden of rearing their grandchildren. In the cities, families depend on public institutions.

Motherhood laws in the ex-USSR have made it easier for mothers to care for their children in the first stage of their lives (the fathers are not mentioned in these laws). To care for infants, mothers were granted a year's part-paid leave, which could be extended for another half year. They were guaranteed a job to return to. In 1990, they were accorded three years *unpaid* maternity leave.

A special complaint of women in Moscow, however, is that the daycare centers usually are neither near their homes or their workplaces. Women—and sometimes men—have to make hour-long journeys twice a day on overcrowded public transport to and from the daycare centers. As a result, single women in particular place their charges in children's homes and see them only on weekends.

Many women have a low opinion of the kindergartens. Mothers complain that the children are always sick, especially with colds. Class size is often 25 or more.

The 1986-1990 five-year plan provided for 3 million more places in pre-school institutions. In 1983, there were places for 14.4 million children in such institutions, as compared with only 4.4 million in 1960.

On the basis of population increases, it can be estimated that there are 33 million children of pre-school age, of whom four to five million are being looked after at home. Thus, only about half of children in this age group can find places in public institutions.

In general, shopping is women's work. Often groups are formed in the plants, who send women to do shopping on a shift



The fight for women's rights in the ex-Soviet Union

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Georges De Keerle/Sygnia

"In the stores, shoppers have to go through three lines—one to choose the merchandise, one to pay for it, and one to pick up their purchases. Shopping for a family of three takes an hour and a half."

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The laws that were passed in the ex-Soviet Union to protect women can be seen in reality as laws that protect the position of men. The legislation spared men the discussion of their responsibility for raising children. Here also, as in a market economy, women have been part of the reserve army of labor.

The 1919 program of the Bolsheviks considered equality in marriage and family law to have been achieved. The new demand in the program concerned "ideological and educational work" within the party. The Bolsheviks demanded that in order to "women to be freed from the material burdens of outdated housework, communal housing, public restaurants, wash-houses and daycare centers should be set up at the time."

Deifying the family

Recent policy in the ex-USSR has not measured up to this demand either materially or in concept. To be sure, the 1986-1990 five-year plan called for an increase in the quantity, and above all the quality, of services available. Moreover, the Law on State Enterprises of July 1987 explicitly takes up the social tasks of enterprises. But the axis of all this is "strengthening the family."

At the Eighth Congress of the Writers' Union, the secretary talked in his keynote speech about the complexity of the marriage problem, and decided to strike a positive note: "There are also happy, to a certain extent, even exemplary families welded together by a present and enduring love." It is suspicious to say the least, that a prize was awarded to a story entitled: *The Warmth of a Cosy Home*.

At the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the CPSU [February 1986], Mikhail Gorbachev said: "We have to organize the practical activity of the state institutions and social organizations in such a way that they strengthen the family and its underpinnings. ... This is necessary to assure that dynasties of workers become rooted far and wide, to promote good family traditions and to educate the younger generation on the experiences of their elders."

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The fight for women's rights in the ex-Soviet Union

Peter Turnley/Newsweek



Denis Raquin/AP

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women who assume the predominant share of the housework. They do 70 percent of the shopping, 80 percent of the cooking, 64 percent of dishwashing, 90 percent of the laundry, and 87 percent of the ironing. (These figures are from the 1960s. Since then, the situation may have improved slightly.)

In the big cities, in particular, especially in Moscow, 20 percent to 25 percent of families are crammed into shared-housing arrangements. Today, the per capita living space is 15.2 square meters (in the United States it is 40 sq.m.).

Large dwellings may accommodate two, three or often even more families. Young couples often live with their parents, so that five or six people are sharing two rooms, and cooking and washing facilities have to be shared with even more people.

In 1986, the Twenty Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided that by the year 2000 every family should have an apartment or house of their own. Home building was to be officially promoted, since having your own home “makes for strong and big families.”

In the countryside, grandmothers often still assume a part of the burden of rearing their grandchildren. In the cities, families depend on public institutions.

Motherhood laws in the ex-USSR have made it easier for mothers to care for their children in the first stage of their lives (the fathers are not mentioned in these laws). To care for infants, mothers were granted a year's part-paid leave, which could be extended for another half year. They were guaranteed a job to return to. In 1990, they were accorded three years *unpaid* maternity leave.

A special complaint of women in Moscow, however, is that the daycare centers usually are neither near their homes or their workplaces. Women—and sometimes men—have to make hour-long journeys twice a day on overcrowded public transport to and from the daycare centers. As a result, single women in particular place their charges in children's homes and see them only on weekends.

Many women have a low opinion of the kindergartens. Mothers complain that the children are always sick, especially with colds. Class size is often 25 or more.

The 1986-1990 five-year plan provided for 3 million more places in pre-school institutions. In 1983, there were places for 14.4 million children in such institutions, as compared with only 4.4 million in 1960.

On the basis of population increases, it can be estimated that there are 33 million children of pre-school age, of whom four to five million are being looked after at home. Thus, only about half of children in this age group can find places in public institutions.

In general, shopping is women's work. Often groups are formed in the plants, who send women to do shopping on a shift



Georges De Keetle/Sygnia

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Driving women out of workforce

In order to lighten the burden of child raising and housework on individuals, more attractive, cheaper and efficient service centers would be needed. However, all public statements and interviews make it plain that there is a strong promotion of the nuclear family. The rediscovery of the family has been carried so far that it is believed to offer a solution to the problem caused by laying off workers.

For example, Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a member of the Academy of Sciences, has said “I think that a section of women in work should give up their jobs and give priority to housework, if their husbands' incomes increase as planned.”

This begs the question of whether women with qualifications will be prepared to leave their jobs just like that. It is hard to believe that women will take seriously such remarks as the following by a woman professor of medicine: “In the last analysis,

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Nikolai Ignatiev/Network-Matrix



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The first signs of an independent woman's organization could be seen in the 1979 samizdat publication *Women and Russia*. This collection presented the situation of women in essays and poems, and also dealt with the conditions they faced in jail.

The work of the women involved was obstructed by the authorities, and they either left the country or became religious. Today, there are no signs of feminist self-

organization. But in many regions, women have founded local groups. It is hard to see any real change coming from the former official women's organizations.

It is true that in November 1990, a women's union was founded in Russia by various women's committees, associations and clubs, with the objective of protecting "the interests of women and the family."

However, the latter formulation precisely reveals that women's interests were not really the central concern. These women also started off from the idea that women's problems had to be dealt with in collaboration with "the state and legal organs."

Only in some cases, has the work of the women's councils [set up under the Law on Enterprises] been independent.

In the Zukowski district in Moscow, there was an attempt to put up two independent women's candidates for the Congress of People's Deputies. But it seems to have come to nothing. There were similar attempts for the 1990 elections to the local Soviets.

Among women in the creative professions, networks have formed going back for a longer time. In 1989, the Lotos Institute was founded in an institute of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. There, women can pursue studies of gender issues and the daily life of women.

In March 1991, a women's congress was held in Dubno. It was built by 15 women from various organizations, and 200 women attended. All were from Russia, including from the far east of the Russian Federation.

The participants were not only feminists but also women from the power structures and journalists. The congress took place under the motto "Democracy without women is not democracy."

The congress took up such themes as "Women and the Market," "Women as Subject and Object of Politics," and "Patriarchy and Violence Against Women." The greatest interest was in economic questions.

Most of the new democratic or less democratic parties show no awareness of the need to address women's issues. Only in Ukraine has a feminist written for a democratic party.

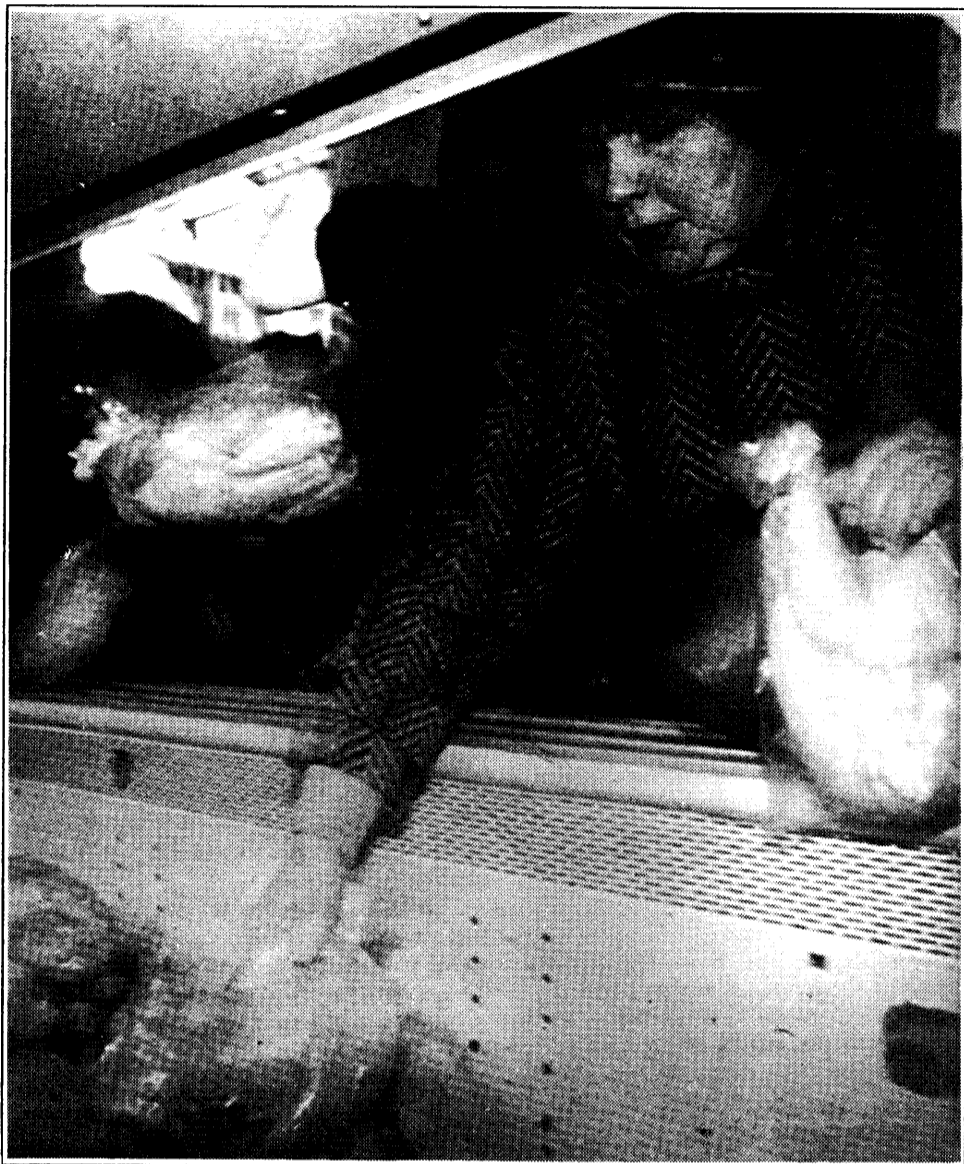
There are feminist periodicals with a certain audience. But none are well known except *Eva*, which is published in Lithuania. It presents itself as Christian feminist. It takes up such questions as abortion, the situation of unmarried women, and violence against women. It is interesting that this periodical appears in both Lithuanian and Russian.

As in most of the countries of former "actually existing socialism," there has been no critical reappraisal of feminist literature and discussions.

Since the early forms of the women's movement were embalmed by a state-ordered policy for women, it is very hard now to promote the women's movement as an independent movement.

This makes it all the more important to defend the rights for women that exist today and not to give up a single inch of ground. Only on this basis will it be possible to defend and extend women's rights. Furthermore, economic poverty will be "coped with" at the expense of women.

This is a worldwide problem that confronts all of us. ■



Georges De Keerle/Sygnma

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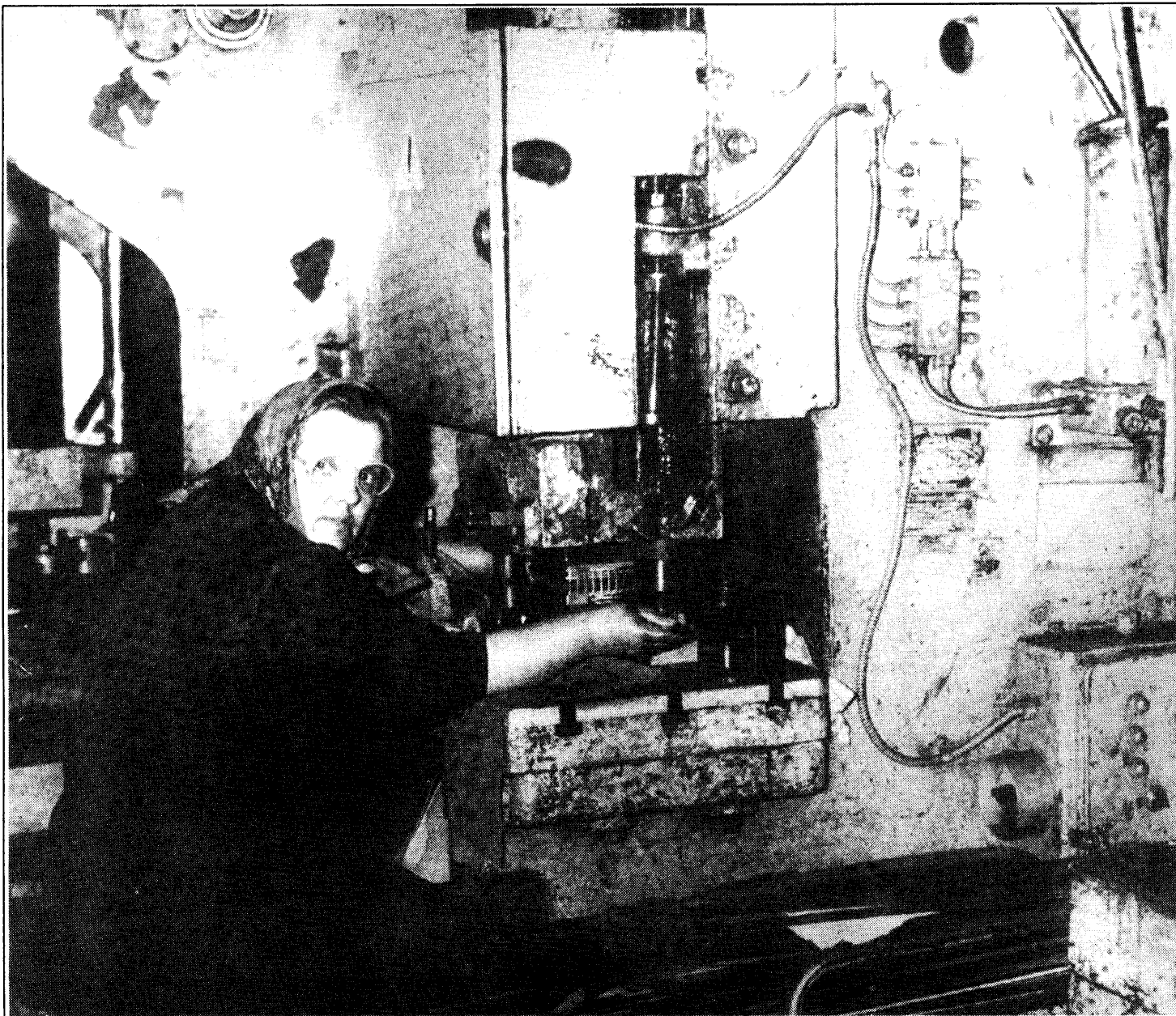
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Nikolai Ignatiev/Network-Matrix



Why capitalism is having difficulty sinking roots in ex-Soviet Union

James Hiller/N.Y. Times



A Soviet worker operates a punch press that her entrepreneurial boss "borrows" from a state factory.

By NAT WEINSTEIN

Former President Richard M. Nixon hit the front pages early last month when he criticized President Bush for failing to respond vigorously enough to an historic opportunity to guarantee the successful transition from "communism" to capitalism in the former Soviet Union. This "elder statesman's" warning—that world capitalism may have won the cold war but is in danger of losing the peace—has been increasingly sounded in many capitalist quarters in recent months.

Clearly, the former Soviet economy's resistance to capitalist restoration has exceeded anyone's expectations. Although the Stalinist bureaucracy retains control over all the key positions of power, their efforts to make the transition to capitalism has so far led mainly to deepening unemployment, inflation and mass misery. Along with this has come an orgy of unrestrained plunder of public property by bureaucrats and other hopeful entrepreneurs aspiring to become members of a new class of capitalists.

Nixon only underscored the obvious with his warning that "a new despotism" will take hold if Russian President Boris Yeltsin fails to get positive results. But hardly anyone will take this at face value—the record of U.S. support to brutal dictatorships is well known. The "new despotism" they fear is not a new Stalinist dictatorship but, rather, the inevitable entry by the working class into the center of politics in their own name and in their own class interests.

Already, there is ample evidence of a growing loss of faith by masses of workers in the promised miracle of capitalist prosperity. Meanwhile the highly touted system of parliamentary democracy in the former Soviet Union lies dead in the water and Yeltsin and his counterparts must rule essentially by decree, albeit with the consent of the republics' parliaments.

The deepening crisis engulfing the former Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe poses two momentous questions:

"The preconditions for capitalist production are yet to be achieved, and the economy, now neither planned nor yet market-driven, continues to decline."

• Why is it proving so much more difficult to go back to a market-driven economy than it was to establish a new social order based on a planned economy?

• And, second, why have the workers, who mobilized by the millions to overthrow the political dictatorship of Stalinism, stopped short, so far, of finishing the job and resuming their march toward world socialism begun on October 25, 1917?

Barriers to capitalist restoration

The answer to the first question is partly contained in the very posing of it. Never in the past has a newer form of social organization returned to an earlier form. No country which had developed from feudalism into capitalism, for instance, has ever reverted back to feudal property relations.

Moreover, the development of the market was and remains an essentially unconscious process—it can't be simply legislated. The evolution from episodic, accidental forms of exchange to an institutionalized, highly fluid one based on money—a universal equivalent capable of expressing the values of the world of commodities—is a prolonged evolutionary process and takes place behind the backs of society.

Now, as a result of this long historic process, it is possible for billions of exchanges to take place every day in the capitalist world. Billions of people buy and sell everything they need for daily life including labor power. The value of each class of competing commodities is discovered and rediscovered daily through these

billions of essentially free transactions. Without this fundamental mechanism a "freely" functioning market system—and thus capitalist production—is impossible.

Of course it will not require a thousand years of commodity exchange to reestablish the free market in the bureaucratized workers' states. A highly developed market system is in place throughout the capitalist world and technically, at least, can be quite swiftly transplanted inside these transitional societies. But this can happen only on the highly unlikely condition that workers will meekly accept the consequences—the abolition of guaranteed jobs, minimum living standards, and of an advanced system of free social services.

Capitalist-style "free labor," after all, means labor that has no such guarantees, and thus is terrorized by the ever-present danger of joblessness and impoverishment. And whenever, in the course of unending class struggle, workers are able to get the upper hand over their employers, the capitalist state finds the first opportunity to use its lawmakers, courts and cops to restore the fullest domination of capital over "free labor."

In exactly the same spirit, after Russian workers conquered the heights of governmental and state power in their October Revolution, their state intervened on their side against the capitalists. The new state created by the Soviet workers immediately authorized armed workers and farmers to exercise exclusive democratic control over the means of production—even though still under private ownership.

Russian capitalists, naturally, resisted. The revolutionary workers, therefore, proceeded before very long to smash the source of the social power of the capitalist class: They expropriated the means of production from the capitalists and established a planned economic system to serve humanity, not private profit.

Consequently, from the first day of the Russian socialist revolution, commodities, including labor power, no longer exchanged strictly in accord with the laws of commodity exchange. The workers' used their state to intervene in favor of the great majority. Wages and prices were no longer set by the market. They were more or less arbitrarily set to guarantee that everyone could at least receive the necessities of life.

For reasons this newspaper has explained many times before, the Soviet state came under the domination of a privileged bureaucratic caste. This caste had to crush workers' democracy in order to defend and advance its privileged position. But without democracy, without the conscious participation and control over the economy by millions of workers at every level of the productive and distributive process, catastrophic bureaucratic inefficiency was inevitable.

The bureaucracy makes its move

By 1985, the bureaucratic system of command over the planned economies was in serious trouble. Production in all the bureaucratized workers' states was declining at an increasing pace. Workers were reaching the end of their patience. Even in Poland, where the Stalinist rulers had cracked down on Solidarnosc four years earlier, the Polish workers' movement was again on the rise and threatening a new revolutionary upsurge.

The Mikhail Gorbachev-led Communist Party of the Soviet Union, seeing the handwriting on the wall, took the only course open to it. They made the decision to chart a course toward the restoration of capitalism.

The bureaucracy had long known that it could not democratize the economic system and also hold on to its elite life-style. They could preserve their privileges only by transforming themselves from a caste of self-serving managers into a class of private owners of the means of production. Moreover, they calculated that this would win them the wholehearted support of world capitalism, and with that, the material aid necessary for stabilizing their dominant position on the new class basis.

Now, after seven years of intense efforts to tear down the conquests won by workers in the October Revolution, the workers continue to resist; the preconditions for capitalist production are yet to be achieved, and the economy, now neither planned nor yet market-driven, continues to decline.

Moreover, because prices of commodities still have little relation to their values, a real currency able to serve as a reliable measure of value remains beyond the reach of the capitalist restorationists. By the same token, convertibility of the ruble with other currencies also remains beyond reach.

Consequently, without such a stable means of exchange and measure of value, the buying and selling of everything from hamburgers to steel mills is so hobbled that establishing capitalist relations of production remain impossible. And the repatriation of profits from foreign investment remains a formidable task yet to be achieved.

Furthermore, how will the nationalized economy be privatized? Who will buy the giant factories? The bureaucrats and other aspiring capitalists have nothing approaching sufficient capital to operate them, much less pay more than a token price for the state-owned means of production. Meanwhile, the piecemeal sneak-thieving of the publicly-owned means of production is already provoking mass outrage.

Foreign investors, of course, have the wherewithal to buy these industries. But why would they? Where would they sell the products of these obsolete industrial dinosaurs? Why would they spend the billions it would require to modernize and make them efficient producers, able to compete on the world market, when they are already being plagued by a developing

(continued on page 14)

WARSAW—Jan. 1 marked the second anniversary of the introduction of a pro-capitalist reform program in Poland, drawn up by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Known in Poland as the "Balcerowicz Plan," named after the Finance Minister at the time, it has focused on slashing workers' living standards and liquidating public-sector industry in an attempt to pave the way for privatization and the imposition of the rule of private capital.

The results of two years of austerity policies have been disastrous. Average incomes are lower than two years ago. Industrial production has fallen by almost half. Savage cuts have been made in the social services. Around 2000 nursery schools and daycare centers have been closed. School hours have been reduced. Class sizes have risen from 50 percent to 100 percent. Huge price increases have been introduced for medicines and fees imposed for basic healthcare services. Thousands of essential capital construction and modernization projects have been abandoned.

But perhaps the most dramatic effect of the drive towards the restoration of capitalism has been the soaring rate of unemployment. By the end of January, the number of jobless topped 2,300,000—an 11.9 percent unemployment rate. One quarter of that number are not entitled to benefits and factory managers are announcing tens of thousands of layoffs every week.

Moreover, the real state of the problem becomes apparent, if we look at the rate of urban unemployment (excluding agriculture). In several Polish provinces, unemployment is approaching 50 percent. Even official forecasters speak of 3.5 to 4 million unemployed by the end of 1992. This would give Poland the highest rate of unemployment in Europe.

In fact, everything indicates that in 1992 Poland's ruling elite intends to step up its attack on living standards. Faced with a huge fiscal deficit, a deepening recession, and the total fiasco of plans to attract Western capital, the government's economic policy for 1992 boils down to the following—mass factory closures, further cuts in expenditures for social services, and a virtual wage freeze in the public sector, which still employs well over 80 percent of the urban work force.

In attempting to defend this policy, Economics Minister J. Eysmontt claims it should permit an improvement in living standards—"around 1994."(!)

Proclaimed as the most advanced and ambitious project of "market restructuring" in Eastern Europe, the Polish program for capitalist reform has proved to be a complete disaster. It is in this context that the beginning of the new year saw the beginning of a mass fightback by Polish workers, specifically directed against the economic policies being imposed by the IMF.

First signs of fightback

The first signs of a new radicalization in the Polish workers' movement were already apparent in mid-December 1991, when a new right-wing government was finally formed after almost two months of infighting among the 26 parties elected to Parliament in the Oct. 27, 1991, elections (characterized by a 60 percent voter abstention rate).

The new government of Jan Olszewski, supported by the right and the extreme right, was sworn in at a time when militant struggles were beginning in many parts of Poland. In Lodz, Poland's "second city" and the center of the textile industry, factory occupations were underway in two major plants. The aviation industry was also the scene of protests, with an occupation launched at the huge WSK Mielec helicopter factory. More limited protests were undertaken by shipyard workers, teachers, and autoworkers and coal miners.

The new Olszewski government, declaring that it intended to "amend" the economic policies of the last two years, believed it would be granted the same "grace period" as the two post-Solidarity governments that had preceded it. In particular, it had laid great stress on its policy of

Strike wave hits Poland as workers resist ravages of 'market reforms'



Polish coal miners protesting increases in energy prices during national one-hour strike on Jan. 13

"On Jan. 13, a national one-hour strike was organized by Solidarity, which was supported at the factory level by other unions. The strike was a huge success. In many plants, the one-hour stoppage actually lasted the whole day."

"de-communication," hoping to capitalize on the anti-Stalinist sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the Polish working class. This is the same sentiment that had allowed two previous governments to push through viciously anti-worker policies by masquerading as the conquerors of Stalinism.

Government policy misfires

But the new government made a series of miscalculations. First, it believed it could legitimize itself by reference to the Solidarity mass movement and opposition to "Communism." In fact, Polish workers are increasingly hostile to the elites that have taken power under the banner of Solidarity and to the bureaucratic apparatus of the Solidarity trade union itself,¹ whose official policy over the last two years has been one of "maintaining a protective umbrella" around the Solidarity governments to allow them to implement the market reforms.

With regard to the policy of "de-communication," it now holds little water. It was the main plank in Lech Walesa's presidential campaign over one year ago, yet nothing has actually been done to break the administrative power of the ex-Stalinist apparatus in the army, police, and civil service.

1. There are currently three main union federations in Poland: Solidarity, which claims a membership of 2,500,000; the OPZZ (the official union movement set up under martial law, still controlled by its original Stalinist leadership), which claims a membership of 4,500,000; and Solidarity-80, a radical splitoff from Solidarity ("80" is a reference to the old Solidarity union established after the strikes of August 1980), which claims a membership of 250,000 (and is the only one of the three that claims to be growing). All of these figures are probably substantially inflated. By comparison, Solidarity itself had a membership of over 10 million in 1980-81.

And still less has been done to break the new economic power of the former Stalinist economic apparatus, which today is by far the most influential group of private capital in Poland and a major bulwark for the restoration of capitalism.

Second, the new government's other mistake was to commit itself immediately to continuing the most unpopular economic measures planned by its predecessor, in the name of deepening the market reforms. This represented a gross miscalculation of the popular mood and dispelled illusions that the new government's "amendments" to its economic policy would reverse the trend of plummeting living standards.

Specifically, the government declared an enormous rise in prices for electricity, gas, and heat, to take effect on Jan. 1, 1992. Over the first few months of the year, the effect of this price rise was to increase the price of most consumer goods and foodstuffs by 25 percent to 40 percent.

Finally, the new Olszewski government chose at first to ignore the most important single struggle that erupted at the close of 1991—the hunger strike at Poland's biggest industrial plant, the Nova Huta steelworks, and then—as support for the steelworkers mounted throughout Poland—to surrender frantically to their demands in an effort to appease public opinion.

In reality, the government's retreat on the issue of the Nova Huta steelworks was recognized as an indication that mass action could win, that time for determined workers' protests had returned, that the tide of the last two years could, after all, be reversed.

A spontaneous strike wave

The Nova Huta steelworkers, fighting to prevent planned mass layoffs, achieved their victory on Jan. 6, after a hunger strike of 15 days (supported by classic strikes in

the steelworks itself and solidarity strikes in other plants). In the final days of the hunger strike, it had become the major domestic news item in the Polish media—and the effects of the workers' victory were immediate.

Two days later, on Jan. 8, the Solidarity trade union commission for the textile industry met in Lodz and was attended by delegates from 46 textile plants throughout Poland. The situation of the Polish textile industry is catastrophic. In Lodz, over 90 percent of the plants are already technically bankrupt. Unemployment in the city is skyrocketing, and in the first week of January, Lodz saw the first spontaneous protest march of the unemployed.

The Solidarity textile commission supported the decision of local textile workers to declare a hunger strike, demanding government intervention to guarantee wage payouts in insolvent textile factories and to halt unemployment. In the next few days, the Lodz hunger strikers were joined by textile workers from several other towns.

The example of the Nova Huta strikers and the public outrage at the energy price rises triggered individual strikes and factory occupations at many plants in the first weeks of January. For the first time, this also included factories owned by domestic or foreign capital. In one privately-owned clothing plant in Lower Silesia, the female workforce not only occupied the factory but also took the owner hostage. He was freed—36 hours later—by local Solidarity bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, the government decision to raise energy prices was also condemned by the leaderships of all the Polish trade-union federations. Aside from the economic hardships caused by the price increases, the new government, in its arrogance, had also broken the law. Polish law still declares that all price rises of this kind must first be subject to a process of consultation with the trade unions, a procedure that the government blithely ignored.

Coordinated protests

Under pressure from the spontaneous strike wave, the leaderships of both Solidarity and the OPZZ called for protest action.

- The first protest took place in Gdansk, where the regional section of Solidarity organized a one-hour work stoppage on Jan 8.
- Beginning Jan. 9, teachers held a series of one-day strikes in various regions of Poland.
- On Jan. 13, a national one-hour strike

(continued on page 14)

...Restoration

(continued from page 12)

crisis of overproduction? In any case it would be far cheaper to build new, modern, and competitive productive facilities anywhere else in the capitalist world, where market relations are already in place.

So far, foreign investment has been practically limited to setting up pizza parlors, extracting raw materials that can be easily changed into hard cash when shipped home, and to a handful of relatively efficient industrial enterprises.

This is not to say that the imperialist world has given up on capitalist restoration in these lands. Although they are reluctant to pour dollars into this extremely risky project, they know they must do so before it's too late.

Neither is Nixon's loud cry for aid to Yeltsin intended to force President Bush to take action.

Nixon is providing cover for Bush from critics on his right. His "criticism" is calculated to make it easier for Bush, or whoever is the next U.S. president, to take the awesome, but necessary, risk of losing billions in the desperate gamble to make

the "socialist" countries safe for capitalist profiteers.

Why workers are marking time

There are objective factors which help explain why the workers in the bureaucratized workers' states have stopped short of finishing off the hated bureaucracies.

The main factor blocking the rise of revolutionary consciousness there—and everywhere, it must be said—is the over 40-year period of relative calm in the class struggle in most of the developed imperialist countries.

(This in turn, as we have explained many times before, is the result of Stalinist and reformist betrayal and the failure to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership.)

The workers in the bureaucratized states naturally yearn for the living standards they see on West European television. Many of these workers know that planned economy plus workers' democracy would certainly much improve productivity and thus create the precondition for improved living standards.

But most workers in the former Soviet bloc sense that so long as they are excluded from free access to the world market place, and are denied credit for modernization of obsolete factories, their dreams of qualita-

tive advances are not realizable.

They certainly are not unaware of the revolutionary socialist option. After all, despite Stalin's falsifications, a significant minority, at least, have read Lenin's views on world socialist revolution. But they also know that taking this course would be certain to provoke merciless opposition from world imperialism. In this case, solidarity from workers in the bastions of imperialism would be crucial in the short run and decisive in the longer run.

Unfortunately, revolutionary aid from this section of the world doesn't appear likely in the present context of social stability in the bastions of world imperialism.

(Pessimism results from not taking into account the positive impact on workers everywhere of a determined struggle for unrestricted workers' democracy and for a socialist world.)

These static impressions have worked to the advantage of the bureaucracy's pro-capitalist "solution" as the only realistic step forward in the present context. And despite all the negative results so far, this hope has not yet flickered out.

It should come as no surprise that the masses will not lightly take the road to revolution. Neither should we be surprised if they are not inclined to do so until there

seems to be no other way out. On the whole, people need very good reasons before they are ready to risk their lives and the lives of those they love in a struggle for something better.

But the objective basis for world capitalist stability is now showing signs of coming to an end. While it's impossible to set a time-table, a world-wide economic, social and political crisis, deeper than the one that broke out in 1929, is inevitable. The world's capitalist rulers have postponed the outbreak of a crisis of overproduction at the price of an enormous accumulation of public and private debt.

The episodes of stagflation—recession combined with inflation—which have erupted here and there since the late 1960s are harbingers of a coming storm. The coming generalized crisis will have elements of the worst of both worlds—economic stagnation and financial and monetary destabilization.

The world's working class will be compelled to fight for its life. This will establish the objective conditions, once again, for the vision of world socialism to capture the minds of workers everywhere—especially those in the lands touched by the great October Revolution. ■

...Polish workers

(continued from page 13)

was organized by Solidarity, which was supported at the factory level by other unions. The strike was a huge success. In many plants, the one-hour stoppage actually lasted the whole day. Demonstrations were held, and many local demands were added to the general national demand for the rescinding of the energy price increase.

(Some 90 percent of Polish industrial enterprises are judged to have taken part; for example, of 84 coal mines, only four did not stop work.)

•On Jan. 15, an additional one-day strike was held in all Polish aviation factories.

•On Jan. 16, a national day of action was called by both the OPZZ and Solidarity-80 union federation, resulting in strikes, demonstrations (20,000 at a Solidarity-80 demonstration in the port city of Szczecin) and protest marches in most Polish cities. In some cities, this strike was also supported by local organizations of Solidarity.

As this is being written, the result of the protest against the energy price increases is still unknown. The Solidarity trade union first threatened a national general strike if the price increases were not revoked, then began a process of negotiation with the government, declaring that it believed a "compromise solution" could somehow be reached.

Talks between the union and the government were still dragging on at the end of February, with Solidarity leaders, frustrated at the refusal of the government to make any concessions, once again returning to the theme of a general strike.

While most local union leaderships had called off protest actions in February, waiting for the results of these negotiations, tension again began to mount as it became clear that the government had no real intention of treating the union seriously.

Local strikes are continuing, and a number of regional protest actions began again in the second half of February. Ambulance workers struck for several days. Teachers stepped up their protests and announced plans for an indefinite all-out strike for mid-March. Rail workers held a two-hour "warning strike" on Feb. 19.

A divided labor movement

Nevertheless, the Polish trade union movement as a whole remains divided and incapable of coordinating systematic protest action. With very few exceptions (mostly initiated by radical left activists within Solidarity-80), there has been no attempt to generalize the lessons of the past weeks and organize inter-union structures committed to fighting for an overall rejection of the government's capitalist restorationist policies.

This is despite the fact that workers in more and more factories have been raising more general demands that could serve to unify and give direction to the unions. In this respect, a particularly notable feature

of the new workers' movement has been the frequent emphasis on the need to protect the state sector of industry against attempts to kill it off by discriminatory taxation and pressure to sell off assets at rock-bottom prices to any buyer that can be found.

While the bureaucratic leaderships of the union federations attempt to concentrate attention on the "illegality" of the most recent price rises, a general theme running through workers' demonstrations has become opposition to the government program of privatization.

This is seen as a policy that serves only to enrich the combined elites of the old

ment's restorationist policies. Moreover, the possibility of victories being won that would aid the rise of a newly conscious workers' movement is strengthened by the growing confusion among Poland's ruling elites.

Procapitalists close ranks

The government, visibly stunned by the scope of workers' protests in January, was only capable of declaring that strikes were "pointless" and warning that, if they continued, it would be forced to resign.

Since then, Prime Minister Jan Olszewski has been playing for time in his negotiations with the unions, while attempting

niewski, declared that he fully supported the government's economic program, and suggested that Leszek Balcerowicz, the person most associated with the policy of capitalist restoration, be appointed head of the National Bank of Poland.

As for President Lech Walesa—who has declared several times over the last months that, if mass workers' protests were to break out he would "take his place" at the head of them—he now seems completely at a loss.

At the end of November, he proposed a series of constitutional amendments that would greatly increase the powers of the Presidential Palace (allowing him, for example, to appoint the prime minister and cabinet) and permit the government to rule by decree. These amendments are still being discussed by a special parliamentary commission.

Capitalist restoration discredited

Meanwhile, as he waits for this commission's verdict, Walesa has been uttering increasingly contradictory statements, blaming the tragic effects of procapitalist policies on everything and everyone but the policymakers themselves.

(Thus, Walesa has been blaming the West for failing to invest in Poland, the collapse of Poland's markets in the ex-USSR, and the Polish people themselves for failing to "change their attitudes.")

Opinion polls show that, if the 1990 presidential elections were to be rerun today, Walesa could expect a mere 20% of the vote. Similarly, the government of Jan Olszewski, although in power for only two months, has the confidence of only 29 percent of the population.

Yet, probably the most significant opinion poll was one commissioned by the main Solidarity daily paper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, at the beginning of February. The survey showed that twice as many Poles were opposed to the market reforms as supported them.

Under the front-page headline, "End of public support for reforms?" the paper's editors noted: "Only one Pole in four wants faster privatization, the opening of our borders to Western goods, the entry of foreign capital onto the Polish market and greater freedom for entrepreneurs. Over half the population would like to protect state industry and its workforce against unemployment and foreign capital. ... The majority of Poles reject the capitalist principles of the economic reforms."

The editors note that this reflects a definite trend. The number of Poles supporting private business and the privatization of state enterprises is constantly getting smaller.

In these circumstances, it seems most improbable that the maneuvers of President Walesa and Prime Minister Olszewski can curb the tendency to heightened social struggles in Poland. The policy of capitalist restoration stands discredited. Mass opposition to this policy will continue to grow. ■



President Lech Walesa: Blaming everyone but the policymakers themselves.

Stalinist bosses and their post-Solidarity successors, while leading to the dismantling of large sections of Polish industry and mass unemployment. So far, however, these sentiments have yet to find the political and organizational expression required.

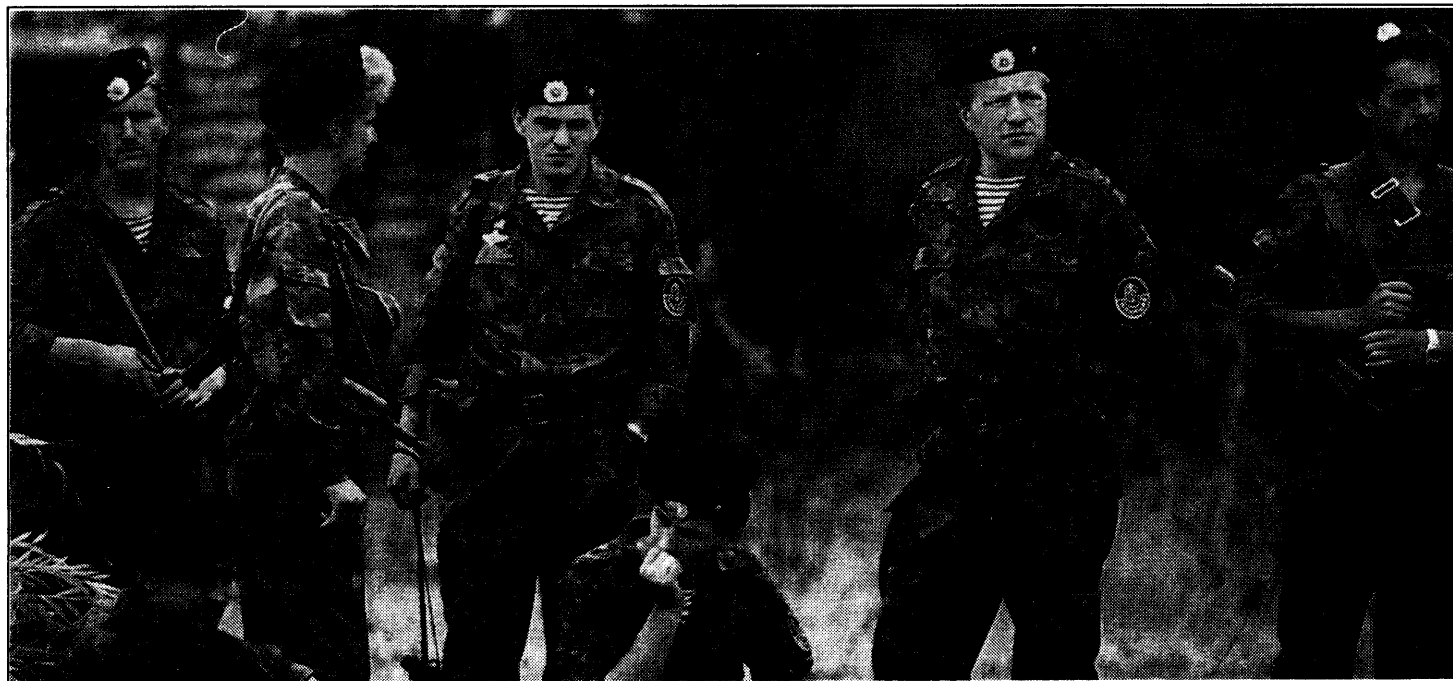
Nonetheless, the organizational weakness of the new workers' movement, reflecting the overall political disorientation that has resulted from the last two years of "Solidarity" governments, is one that may rapidly be overcome as mass struggles develop against the concrete effects of the govern-

to "enlarge" the present governmental coalition to include virtually all the "post-Solidarity" political parties present in Parliament.

Faced with mass resistance to their policies of austerity, unemployment and privatization, most of these procapitalist politicians see the need to close ranks against the threat from working people.

The "social democrats," successors to the Stalinist Polish Communist Party, are equally concerned about this threat. On the day of the rail strike, their leader, A. Kwas-

Stalinist demonstrations in ex-USSR fall short of the mark



Andy Hernandez/Newsweek

By GERRY FOLEY

The neo-Stalinist counteroffensive that began with a Nov. 7, 1991, demonstration in Moscow—and continued with rallies on Feb. 9 and Feb. 23 in the former Soviet capital—seems to have fallen well short of its mark.

The meeting of deputies of the dissolved Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR on March 17, and the rally called to support it and to demand the restoration of the USSR, failed to mount a sufficient challenge to the governments now in power in the former USSR.

Among other things, only about 200 Soviet people's deputies attended the symbolic session instead of the 1000 expected. Apparently, most are still afraid to commit themselves to the neo-Stalinist campaign.

However, the neo-Stalinist danger has by no means disappeared. Its strength doesn't lie in popular support but in the surviving repressive forces, primarily the army. The Stalinists' appeals have, in fact, been focused mainly on the officer corps.

In terms of popular support, which is almost non-existent, all the neo-Stalinists need is a veneer of political cover for launching a new coup attempt. That means bringing out enough people behind their banners in protests against the Yeltsin government and showing that the masses are prepared at least to tolerate the neo-Stalinists taking political power.

"Soviet patriotism"

The neo-Stalinist demonstrations raised slogans against the Yeltsin government's privatization and marketization policies. This represents a turn on the part of the neo-Stalinists since the January price increases. Before that, their leaders, such as the chiefs of the August coup, the now silent *Pravda*, and figures such as Colonel Alksnis, the "black colonel," stressed their support for the economic reforms.

Alksnis has said he differs with the reformers only in that he thinks a "strong government" is needed to carry out the reforms. Another one of the neo-Stalinist leaders, Yeltsin's vice president, Rutskoi, has said that he just thinks the price raises should be delayed until October.

Despite the turn of the neo-Stalinists to left-sounding slogans, the principal focus of all their demonstrations has been "Soviet patriotism," the demand to restore the old Soviet state. That is, they have all been "Soviet" (actually Great Russian) chauvinist demonstrations.

Thus, the first and second of the 15 resolutions passed by the rump March 17 assembly of former deputies of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR had to do with restoring the old Soviet state institutions. They began and ended with that question.

Resolution No. 15 was on supporting the results of the March 17, 1991, referendum on maintaining the USSR. At that time, when the totalitarian rule of the

"However, the neo-Stalinist danger has by no means disappeared. Its strength doesn't lie in popular support but in the surviving repressive forces, primarily the army. The Stalinists' appeals have, in fact, been focused mainly on the officer corps."

Communist Party was still essentially intact on most of the territory of the USSR, 70 percent of the population voted for preserving the essential framework of the Soviet Union.

This neo-Stalinist "constitutionalism" is the polar opposite of the Bolsheviks' concept of workers' democracy. They based themselves on bodies elected directly by the workers and recallable at any time, which had to stay in touch with the opinions of those who elected them.

But the neo-Stalinists are trying to base themselves on elections held a year ago and two years ago, since which vast changes have occurred. Even when they were held, it is highly dubious that the elections in question were genuinely representative. At the time, the Communist Party's totalitarian machine still dominated most of the old USSR.

The "constitutional" and "democratic" arguments of the neo-Stalinists amount to the thinnest of pretexts for trying to reimpose a repressive straitjacket on the population of the old USSR as a whole, and to drive the peoples who have begun to exercise their right of self-determination back into an even grimmer "prison house of peoples."

Right-wingers join the rally

At the March 17 demonstration in Moscow, red flags and the republic banners were mingled with the old Russian imperial standard, reflecting the participation of the self-proclaimed bourgeois right-wing parties of the Russian National Assembly. This is the continuation of the People's Agreement bloc that walked out of Democratic Russia, the coalition that has supported Yeltsin, when the latter refused to support Yeltsin's attempt to crack down on the Chechen government that defied Russian authority.

The main components of this bloc are the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets), named after the principal bourgeois party in prerevolutionary Russia, and the Christian Democrats.

These were also the main components of the Congress of Civic and Patriotic Forces held on Feb. 9 and addressed by Rutskoi, in which the neo-fascists of Pamyat and the National Republican Party participated.

A Kadet speaker, Artem Artemov, announced from the platform that the bloc was holding its own demonstration on

April 5 to demand Yeltsin's impeachment and that he hoped there would be fewer red flags there.

On the other hand, he said, the Russian flag used by Yeltsin (blue, red, and white) was unacceptable because "they [Yeltsin and the majority of Democratic Russia] ... have soiled it with their filthy paws." (Obviously, from his point of view, the "filth" on their "paws" was not their capitalist restorationist policies but their failure to defend the "territorial integrity" of Russia.)

The speakers included two relatives of leaders of the attempted coup in August, who appealed for their release. The civil courage of the demonstrators was hailed by Aleksandr Nevzorov, a notoriously chauvinist and anti-Semitic TV newscaster. He said that it was a shame that the March 17 assembly was not held during the August coup to better support it.

The former dissident writer Edward Limonov raised the slogan, "We have one people, the Soviet people, and one country!" (Limonov has also become an advocate of an alliance with neo-Stalinist Serbia on the basis of the Eastern Orthodox tradition Russia shares with that nation.) The old Hymn to the Soviet Union, with its verse, "Great Russia has welded together an inseparable union of free republics," was often intoned. "USSR! USSR!" was one of the most popular chants.

Some leftists are impressed

The relative strength of the neo-Stalinist demonstrations have apparently impressed at least some of those who have devoted themselves to rebuilding a new socialist movement on a non-Stalinist basis.

Thus, Boris Kagarlitsky wrote in the Feb. 13 issue of the British *Socialist Organizer* that the new Labor Party in which he is working decided that it was a mistake not to participate in the Feb. 9 demonstration. "It would have been better to join the demonstration using our own slogans," he said.

There have in fact been many slogans in the neo-Stalinist demonstrations that attack the policies of the Yeltsin government from the left. But they have not changed the fundamentally chauvinist nature of these actions, nor discouraged procapitalist rightists from participating (under the imperial standard!).

The masses also probably remember that

when Yeltsin was the outsider, he sought the support of the working people with promises he would defend their immediate economic and trade-union interests. In power, he undertook an accelerated version of Gorbachev's policies.

The neo-Stalinist demonstrations, moreover, have to be seen as a threat to the rights of expression and organization that have been gained by the masses, as well as to the self-determination of the peoples of the former Soviet Union. If they grow (and that remains doubtful), such threats will become more acute, and thus they could in fact reinforce the Yeltsin government rather than mobilizing an effective opposition to its capitalist restorationist policies.

In order to mobilize and fight effectively against the Stalinist bureaucracy and the policy of restoring capitalism that all sections of it fundamentally support, the working people in the former Soviet Union need a new socialist alternative not discredited by association with any faction of Stalinism. ■

A dispute in numbers

There are great political stakes in the latest series of political tests mounted by the neo-Stalinists. This is presumably what explains the vast differences in the reports of them. Thus, in the March 21 issue of *People's Weekly World*, the paper of the U.S. Communist Party (CPUSA), Mike Davidow wrote from Moscow that 300,000 people had turned out for the March 17 demonstration.

The same demonstration was estimated at only 10,000 by *New York Times* correspondent Serge Schmemmann, who dismissed the whole affair as a farce. However, the Paris-based anti-Communist weekly *Russkaya Mysl'* quoted a press source in the Democratic Russia Press (DR) as saying that although there were not many people on the square at the beginning, the crowd eventually grew to about 40,000 or 50,000.

One of the speakers, according to this source, announced over the microphone that there were 350,000 people there from 60 cities. It seems, then, that the demonstration could have hardly been so small as 10,000, or such an announcement would have been too obviously false.

The figure cited by DR Press seems to be the most likely estimate. The neo-Stalinists have a mass base in the apparatus, although this is a small minority in the population as a whole. Hundreds of thousands of bureaucrats in the USSR central apparatus have been fired by Yeltsin, and many of them could be expected to support such a demonstration.

Moreover, it seems reasonable to expect that some people are attracted by the left demagoguery of the neo-Stalinists, since there have been no other opportunities for protesting against the Yeltsin economic policies that have been drastically cutting the living standards of the population. But it is also clear that the neo-Stalinists have not yet been able to attract the discontented masses to their flag.

It is equally clear that the demonstration could not have been anything like 300,000 people. *Russkaya Mysl'* reported the presence of very large numbers of journalists. If there had been a really massive demonstration, news of it could not have been blacked out, and there would certainly have been reverberations.

The neo-Stalinists seem to have decided to make wildly exaggerated claims in order to maintain the morale of their faithful, who, they apparently expect, are still prepared to believe just about anything their leaders tell them.

Why *The New York Times* would minimize the size of the demonstration is another question. Most likely, it hopes to imply that Yeltsin is firmly in control.—G.F.

French elections confirm mass discontent with SP policies

By DAVID CAMERON

PARIS—On March 22, French voters were called to the polls in what was widely considered to be a dress rehearsal for the legislative elections due to be held in March 1993. Voters were called on to elect assemblies for France's 22 regions, as well as for half of the seats in the departmental (county) councils.

The result of the elections created a minor earthquake. The ruling Socialist Party, which has been in office for most of the last decade, received an unprecedented rebuff. Only 18.3 percent of the electorate voted for the party of President François Mitterrand and Prime Minister Edith Cresson.

If there was no doubt about who was the big loser in these elections, it was not as easy to identify who won. Certainly not the traditional right, which ran a common slate under the name "Union of the French People" (UPF). It got 33 percent of the votes, with another 4 percent going to independent allies. Nor were the neofascists of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (NF) the big winners. The 13.9 percent they got was well short of their expectations and far from being the breakthrough hoped for and announced.

Nevertheless, the NF has stabilized its electoral influence and is now represented in all 22 regional councils. Moreover, in some areas, it got well over 20 percent and even 25 percent. In the city of Nice, Le Pen himself came on top of the poll with 30 percent.

As for the Communist Party, which had hoped to attract disillusioned SP voters, it had only a very limited success. With eight percent of the vote, it barely managed to stem its long-term electoral decline.

Who were the "winners"?

The big "winners" were the two ecology parties—the Greens led by Antoine Waechter, and Generation Ecology, led by Brice Lalonde, minister of the environment in the Cresson government. Between them, they garnered 15 percent of the votes.

The abstention rate was much lower than almost all observers had predicted, just under 30 percent. That compares with 51 percent in the 1989 elections for the European parliament and 34 percent in the 1988 legislative elections.



Unemployed demonstrate against Mitterrand government.: "We want jobs!"

This fact is important. Up till now, working-class rejection of the right-wing policies of the SP has mainly been expressed through abstention. This time many electors chose to go to the polls and find another way to protest. More than a million of them (out of 25 million who voted) expressed their rejection of all the parties by spoiling their ballot papers or voting blank.

Moreover, if the ecologists were the main beneficiaries of the valid votes, all sorts of other slates that could be perceived as independent of both the government and the right-wing opposition registered good scores. These ranged from the faintly eccentric and apolitical "Hunting, Fishing, Nature and Tradition" slates, which got enough votes to elect regional councilors in 13 regions out of 22, to the all-women slate, which got a regional councilor in Alsace.

Also worth noting is the fact that almost everywhere that dissident members of the SP or CP ran slates, they scored well—in several cases surpassing the official slates and getting elected.

Not all these slates were to the left of the official parties. In the case of the SP, however, this was the case to some extent. The SP dissidents were among those who opposed the Gulf War, but without taking

an anti-imperialist position and without breaking from reformism and general support for the government.

Most of the dissident CP slates, on the other hand, were, if anything, to the right of the party leadership. They were led by cadres nostalgic for the time when the CP was allied with the SP in the class-collaborationist "Union of the Left." The most successful among them was led by Marcel Rigout, who from 1981 to 1984 was in the cabinet of SP Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy.

Also to be noted is the special case of Corsica, where nationalist and autonomist forces registered important gains.

The main lesson to be drawn from these elections is that in the absence of a credible left alternative to the SP, many voters refused to vote for the right and chose mainly the ecologists, without positively endorsing the rather confused policies of Lalonde and Waechter. But in so doing they voted for parties that have nothing in common with the workers' movement, and could tomorrow be part of antiworking-class governments, of the right or of the "left."

Indeed, although Brice Lalonde managed to "autonomize" himself from the SP during the campaign, it should not be forgotten that he is a minister in a govern-

ment that is responsible for attacks on workers, women, youth and immigrants.

Role of revolutionary left

The only revolutionaries to run a national campaign in these elections were the Trotskyists of the organization Lutte Ouvrière (LO), who ran slates in 30 departments out of 90. The LCR (French section of the Fourth International) ran only a few candidates, as did the followers of Pierre Lambert, now dissolved in a "Workers Party."

The LO slates got around 300,000 votes (from one to three percent in most departments), and progressed in relation to the elections in 1986 and 1989.

The LCR called for a vote for LO. Its youth organization, the JCR, ran an active campaign, through meetings and leaflets and in its newspaper, *L'Egalité* in favor of a vote for LO, while expressing criticisms of their platform.

In France today, many workers and youth are looking for a way to fight against the Cresson government without helping the right. The strikes of last fall (see the December issue of *Socialist Action*) showed a willingness to fight, but they were undermined by the class-collaborationist and divisive policies of the SP, CP and trade-union leaderships.

When there is a broad-based mobilization against government policies around clear demands, the response can be massive, as we saw with the big antiracist march last Jan. 25 (see the January issue of *Socialist Action*).

But what prevents an overall fightback is the role of the reformist leaderships and the weakness and division of the revolutionaries. This is also true on the electoral front.

There is no chance that SP leaders will draw the conclusion from these elections that they should change course and start defending the working people who elected them.

On the contrary, Mitterrand is now studying a range of possibilities, all of which involve "broadening" the government to bring in even more representatives of the right than there are already. This might even include forming a government with a non-SP prime minister.

The task that faces revolutionaries from now until 1993 is to reinforce the fight to get rid of this anti-working-class government and force the SP and CP to form a government that satisfies the workers' demands, without any representatives of the right.

That involves, above all, mobilizations from below, such as the battle for a united demonstration of the workers and antiracist movements on May Day. But it also means starting now to prepare an effective intervention of revolutionary political currents in the 1993 elections. ■

What's behind the struggle in Nagorno-Karabakh?

By GERRY FOLEY

The near success on March 27 of an attempt by Azerbaijani armed forces to shoot down a plane evacuating wounded Armenians from Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, illustrates the character of the recent fighting in the disputed enclave.

The Azerbaijani forces have been trying to break the resistance of the Armenian majority in the enclave through a blockade and long-distance shelling. Thus, the decisive factor has become the airlift with Armenia.

Land fighting has centered on clearing the airport for Stepanakert in order to allow Armenian planes to land. Low-flying helicopters are very vulnerable to groundfire from the Azerbaijani forces.

The deaths of Azeri civilians in Khodzhal on Feb. 26 were related to an operation by Karabakh Armenian forces aimed at breaking the Azerbaijani blockade.

In a news conference in Paris on March 16, Elena Bonner, widow of Andrei Sakharov and a Soviet dissident with Armenian connections, made the following argument: "The world press is repeating the lie that when they took the village of Khodzhal, the Armenians killed thousands of people, that they shot down women and children. That is not true.

"Already a week before this, the Armenians had made it clear that they were going to wage a fight for Khodzhal, the only airport on the territory of Karabakh. Without this airport, Karabakh, subjected

to a four-year-old blockade, had been deprived of any sort of normal link with the outside world.

"Before the beginning of the conflict, Khodzhal was a very small town. It was built fundamentally after the start of the dispute with some of the 400 million rubles that the USSR Supreme Soviet appropriated for Nagorno-Karabakh, recognizing that Azerbaijan had created insufficient funds for developing the area."

Bonner went on to accuse the Russian vice-president and neo-Stalinist chauvinist leader, Aleksandr Rutskoi, of mounting a provocation against Armenia. The Russian chief had raised a hue and cry about an alleged attack by Armenian militiamen on Soviet soldiers in the town of Artik.

It has been notable throughout the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh that neo-Stalinist forces have been closely linked to Azeri chauvinists. Yegor Lichachev, Gorbachev's erstwhile rival, touched off a new wave of Armenian protests, for example, by promising the Azerbaijani Communist Party leadership that Nagorno-Karabakh's subordination to Azerbaijan was a settled question. Before the failure of the August coup, the Soviet army was forcibly deporting Armenian populations near the area of conflict.

In Armenia and among the Armenians in Karabakh, the fight for national rights was launched from below and opposed by the Stalinist leaders. In Azerbaijan, the campaign against the Armenian demands for Karabakh was supported by the Communist Party leadership.

A national-democratic movement did arise in Azerbaijan similar to those that have arisen among other oppressed peoples of the old USSR, the Azerbaijan People's Front. It was obliged to win its right to organize in a struggle against the Stalinist authorities.

But it made the error of taking the easiest road and falling into the rut of traditional anti-Armenian feeling. It even tried to outbid the Stalinists, becoming involved in supporting a blockade of the Armenians and was implicated in anti-Armenian pogroms.

The result was that when an Azeri uprising against Great Russian domination developed in January 1990, Gorbachev was able to crush the movement with relative impunity. Subsequently, the Azeri front itself fragmented and became relatively marginalized.

It is the Great Russians who have oppressed the Azeris, not the Armenians. If the Azeris have anything to fear from the Armenians, it is that they will serve as the agents of the Russians in the Caucasus. The right wing of the Karabakh movement, intellectuals such as Silva Kapoutikian and Zori Balayan, did try to appeal to the tradition of the old Christian alliance.

However, the leadership of the Armenian movement has rejected this approach. Thus, they denounced the Soviet repression of the Azeri front, despite the suffering it inflicted on Armenians, and sought to negotiate a settlement with it.

There is no better way to force the Armenians into the arms of their "Russian protectors" than the policies followed by the Azeri government and Popular Front. That would be a tragedy for both peoples. ■

Genocide against the Kurdish people is by no means limited to Iraq, which Washington now considers an enemy state. It has in fact been carried out most consistently by Turkey, where the largest numbers of Kurds live and which is one of Washington's most reliable allies in the region. Needless to say, this conflict has gotten much less attention from the U.S. politicians and media.

Since the founding of modern Turkey, Kurdish forces have waged repeated desperate struggles against the fate assigned them by the Turkish rulers. In recent years, this conflict has been escalating. The Turkish air force has been bombing Kurds in Iraq, claiming that it needs to destroy training bases for the guerrillas of the PKK (the Kurdish Workers' Party), which has been waging a guerrilla campaign in the eastern part of the Turkish state since 1984.

March 21, the Kurdish new year, saw the sharpest clashes yet between Kurds and Turkey's repressive forces. In Cizre, near the Iraqi border, the Turkish army and police attacked a funeral procession of several thousand, who were marching to the local cemetery to honor fallen PKK guerrillas. Scores were killed. Fighting was reported in a number of localities.

The deputy head of the Turkish Human Rights Association, Akin Birkal, observed the fighting in Cizre. He commented: "They [the Turkish repressive forces] have put out the fire of Nowrouz [the Kurdish new year] with the people's blood." The fires of the Kurdish struggle, however, are certain to grow and no one can say how far they will spread. The following article describes the development of the most recent Kurdish struggle in the Turkish state and its problems.

By PINAR SELINAY

ISTANBUL—Having worked its way up from being an isolated guerrilla movement in the 1980s, to being the leadership of an increasingly dynamic national liberation movement with a mass following in the 1990s, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) appears to have reached a critical turning point.

The gains of the struggle so far include the recognition of the Kurdish people as a distinct nation with rights to linguistic and cultural expression, as well as the election to parliament of 20 representatives who are openly in favor of the national liberation movement.

In the government itself, more and more politicians are in favor of granting democratic rights to the Kurds in order to quell the blazing struggle for liberation, whose repercussions are beginning to be felt even in the major cities of Western Turkey. But the regime is doing its utmost to keep such concessions to a minimum.

Although people are no longer being imprisoned for speaking Kurdish, there are certainly no plans for teaching the language in the public school system. And no one in the government today has referred to the possibility of a Turco-Kurdish federation.

This is despite the fact that the Turkish ruling class has hailed the emergence of formally independent Turkic republics in the territories of the former Soviet Union and that this reshaping of the map would give special force to the idea of transforming Turkey into a federation of Turks and Kurds.

The newly elected coalition government in Turkey has been promising to end the violence in the region and start treating the local people "gently." Obviously, these promises are designed to undermine the PKK's base of support and win the confidence of the population for the state.

But they can have no effect unless the government is able to get rid of the counter-insurgency teams, which are continuing to kill people indiscriminately; unless it can lift the state of emergency that has been in force since 1978; unless it can withdraw the so-called special teams of police that are intensely hated by the population; and unless it can scrap the despised village guard system whereby certain families are paid to work as informers.

In order to make these crucial changes, however, the government would have to confront the entrenched Turkish military, who hold the real power in the region and are known to act outside the government's

Turkish Kurds' fight for autonomy heats up; leadership jockeys for maneuvering room



A Kurdish Peshmerga (fighter) in Iraq: Kurdish guerrilla movement in Turkey claims to have 6000 armed militants.

"The thousands of youth who are waiting for a chance to enter the training camps are an indisputable sign that the PKK is being seen as the only available alternative to the widespread unemployment, destitution, and oppression that characterize the area."

control. As the struggle continues to escalate, it remains to be seen whether the government will have the strength and determination to take on the military.

Repression incites revolt

The bankruptcy of the policies of state terrorism and intimidation that have been relentlessly applied throughout Kurdistan since the military coup of 1980 is now quite clear. In fact, such policies did not begin in 1980. Intimidation, forced exile, genocide and forced assimilation have been practiced since the Turkish republic was founded.

With the growth of the guerrilla movement in the 1980s, however, the struggle took on new dimensions. Every time the state's special counter-insurgency forces murder a Kurd, whether a civilian or a guerrilla of the PKK, the response is a mass funeral-demonstration involving anywhere from several thousand to half a million persons shouting slogans in Kurdish and vowing to take their revenge.

Even the repeated over-the-border bombings of Kurdish villages in Iraq by the Turkish air force—which have been clearly aimed not only at destroying the PKK's training camps in the mountains, but warn the population about what will befall them if they fail to "cooperate"—have had the opposite effect of uniting the struggle on both sides of the artificial border.

A new sister party to the PKK, known as the PAK (Kurdistan Freedom Party), was founded in southern Kurdistan (Iraq) in June 1991. It is becoming a pole of attraction for more and more Iraqi Kurds, especially youth, who are by now disillusioned with the conciliatory politics of the traditional leaderships.

The PKK's undisputed leader, Abdullah Ocalan, generally called "Apo," has repeatedly criticized the Barzani and Talabani groups, and the other organizations that make up the Kurdistan Front in Iraq.

He criticizes them for their reliance on external forces, their concessions to both the Iraqi and Turkish regimes, and their refusal to lead a consistent struggle for

national liberation.

On the other hand, in late 1991, "Apo" himself appealed to the government to negotiate and declared that he was ready to take part in any such talks without conditions. He renounced Marxism-Leninism, which he now says is "an issue of debate throughout the world."

At the same time, he has abandoned the demand for an independent Kurdistan, which he says is an impossibility. These shifts are cause for wondering where the PKK is headed.

Contradictory role of negotiations

It is possible that the sudden call for unconditional talks may be only a maneuver designed to highlight the hypocritical nature of the Turkish regime and to make it clear that the source of the terror is in fact the Turkish state itself. But following through with such a policy would end up breaking the momentum of a powerful struggle.

In that case, Kurds could be forced to settle for vague promises of "autonomy" that could be revoked by the state once the balance of forces was again in its favor. A quick glance at Kurdish history is enough to reveal the danger involved in such a compromise, which is clearly not what Kurdish freedom fighters are dying for every day.

Meanwhile, the PKK, which is said to have about 6000 armed militants in Turkish, Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian territories, continues to expand and prepare for the establishment of a popular army under the command of its armed wing, the ARGK. In fact, it is complaining of inadequate training facilities for the massive influx of recruits.

The thousands of youth who are waiting for a chance to enter the training camps are an indisputable sign that the PKK is being seen as the only available alternative to the widespread unemployment, destitution, and oppression that characterize the area.

As this goes on, the PKK is also engaged in setting up a Botan-Bedian (a region in eastern Turkey) wartime govern-

ment that would further reinforce dual power in the region.

The complexity of the present situation is illustrated by the open admissions of both "Apo" and the new prime minister, Suleyman Demirel, that they do not know what the other is up to, and are not quite sure what to do next! "Apo" has stated that he is not sure whether the government has a serious intention to end state terror in the region—and is only being prevented from doing so by its inability to confront the Turkish military—or whether the statements made so far are only designed to disarm the struggle.

State terrorism increases

In fact, 19 people were murdered and hundreds more wounded during a funeral procession Dec. 24, 1991, when, despite the insistence of many high officials that the procession be allowed to proceed, a colonel ordered his men to open fire.

Many military officials have made statements to the effect that only genocide will stop the PKK, and they would be happy to carry it out. On the other hand, the government and the ruling class have tended to lean more and more in the direction of making concessions.

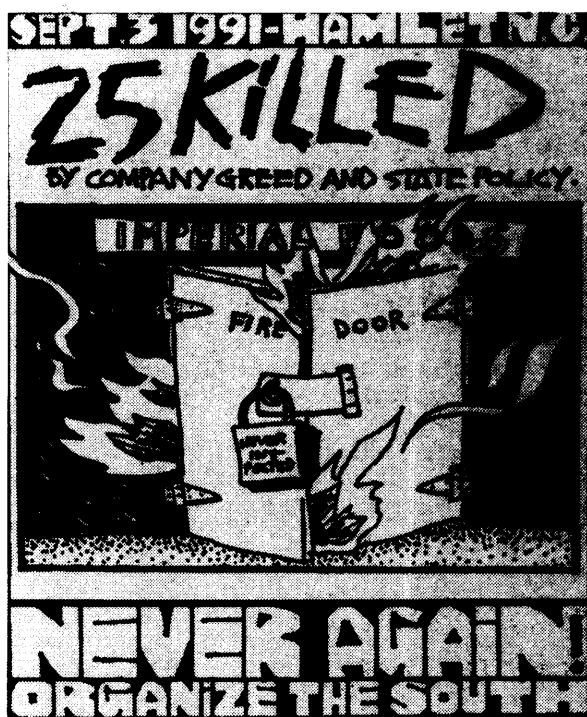
Regardless of whether the PKK leadership is actually contemplating selling out the struggle at the negotiating table, as similar movements have done in the past, or its conciliatory-sounding statements are part of a maneuver to test where the government is headed, it is clear that not everyone in the PKK agrees with these statements.

The most interesting developments can be observed by following the PKK's semiofficial monthly *Ozgur Halk*, which is published in Istanbul. A series of articles on subjects such as internationalism, the disintegration of "actually existing socialism," and a criticism of petty-bourgeois reformism, indicate an evolution toward revolutionary Marxist positions on the part of some cadres.

These cadres have followed the implications of consistent struggle for national liberation to their logical conclusions and have come up with results that seem to be in the same vein as Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

It is hard today to determine how influential such views are, or to know how much "Apo's" calls for a consensus are being challenged in the organization. In any case, it is clear that there is a trend toward an independent Kurdistan and that it is growing day by day. ■

Black workers organize for justice in the South



In late February, Ina Mae Best toured the San Francisco Bay Area. Best's message was simple: "Organize the South." She and other Black women workers on the tour were well received. Her home state of North Carolina is the least organized in the country, with only 6 percent of the non-agricultural workforce in unions. Other Southern states aren't much better.

Best's story is typical of many union activists in the South. She had worked for 18 years at the Goldex Textile Factory in Goldsboro, N.C. She was fired after she led a drive to unionize the factory. The organizing drive was supported by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU).

Best, however, did not give up her organizing efforts. She became more determined to get out the union message. Her own experience at Goldex is not atypical of lowly-paid workers.

"After working at Goldex for 18 years," she explains, "I know

my job. And I always did a good job.

I have never been given a written complaint about my work, nor have I ever been told that I was doing a poor job. For six years, I never took a vacation. For over 10 years, I never missed a day of work. And in 18 years, I was never late for work.

"There was never any problem until I fought for the union. I stood for the union because I believe we need a union at Goldex. I fought for the union because we were not treated like human beings. We were not treated with respect and dignity. And our wages and benefits were not enough to care for our families.

"Even though we did not vote the union in, it was our right to fight for it. I was fired because of my belief in making things better for all. We need to stand together and fight back for our dignity and our rights."

The Imperial fire

Also touring with Best, was Conester Williams, a victim of the Sept. 3, 1991, fire tragedy at the Imperial Food Processing Plant in Hamlet, N.C. Twenty-five workers died, and 55 more were injured. Eighteen of the 25 were women.

Williams described how the plant operated and how the workers were treated. She herself had worked in New York City and

understood a little about unions. There were no safety standards, she explained, and on the day of the fire all the exits either were obstructed or locked from the outside. "We were treated as less than human beings," she said.

Imperial's owner, Emmett Roe, paid an average wage of \$5.40 an hour. Like many other employers, he had moved his plant from Pennsylvania to Hamlet seeking cheaper labor costs and less state regulations. The plant was non-union.

Because of the national outrage arising from the deaths caused by obvious greed, three officials of the Imperial plant were indicted March 9 for involuntary manslaughter charges. The three include Imperial owner Roe and his son, the plant's director of operations.

Williams urged workers in the Bay Area to support organizing the South as a way to defend themselves. On May 2, a national march on Hamlet is scheduled.

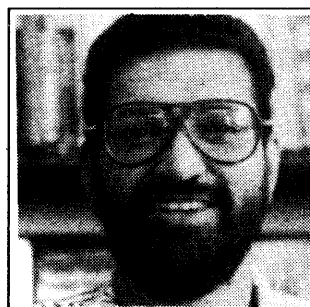
Organizing Schlage Lock

A third speaker on tour came from a San Francisco-based company, Schlage Lock. Joan Sharpe described the fightback of workers at Schlage's Rocky Mount, N.C., plant. Schlage decided in 1988 to move that facility to Mexico for lower wages.

Interestingly, in 1972 Schlage shutdown much of its San Francisco plant to go to North Carolina for the same reasons.

(I briefly worked at Schlage in San Francisco in 1988, still open because the company retained some of the most skilled jobs there.)

After a concerted campaign by the non-union workers there, Sharpe explained, they were able to force the company's owners to grant some severance pay and agreed to take steps to clean up contamination to the community



Which side are you on? By Malik Miah

caused by the plant. The organizing of the workers with community support was primarily done with the help of the Black Workers For Justice (BWFJ) organization. Sharpe strongly urged solidarity with the organizing efforts of workers in the South, and for the BWFJ.

Unfortunately, the AFL-CIO and affiliated unions are doing very little to organize workers in the South—or in the North, East, or West. It's why organizations like the BWFJ exist—and others may emerge. Not as dual unions or competitors to the established unions. But as pressure points, particularly for the most oppressed and exploited sections of the working class, such as Black women workers.

The BWFJ is an important but relatively new organization. It was formed in 1981 and is primarily based in North Carolina. Ajamu Dillahunt, a leader of the BWFJ, explained that the purpose of the BWFJ is to help organize Black (and white workers) in North Carolina and the South to fight from within their workplaces against the daily injustices they suffer.

The BWFJ's basic strategy is to build workers' committees to fight around immediate issues, while training and preparing these committees with community support to win unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO to come in and sign up the non-union employees.

Dillahunt, who is also president of the American Postal

Workers Union local in Raleigh, N.C., also explained that BWFJ teaches that only by organizing the South can the labor movement nationwide protect its wages and benefits.

Because most of the southern states are "right to work" (for less) states, average wages are 50 percent less than in the North.

This impacts on what unionized workers can demand in the North, since employers will threaten to go to the non-union states or abroad. To fight "run-away shops," he explained, labor must have a policy of solidarity and union organizing, particularly among poor women.

The BWFJ is a modest organization. It exists because Black workers in the South face racism and want unions.

It deserves the support of the unions and all working people. Significantly, its main activists are Black women, who tend to receive the lowest wages and most harassment by the employers. They are militant and will represent an important component of the future leadership of both a fighting Black and labor movement.

Black Workers For Justice publishes a monthly newspaper, *Justice Speaks*. For more information on the BWFJ and subscriptions to *Justice Speaks* write to: BWFJ Rocky Mount Ctr., 216 E. Atlanta Ave., P.O. Box 1339, Rocky Mount, NC 27802. Telephone: (919) 977-8162. ■

Our readers speak out

Yugoslavia

Dear editors,

I greatly appreciated Gerry Foley's article, "Stakes are high in Yugoslav Civil War," in the November issue of SA. I found it particularly valuable in contrast to the lead article by George Buchanan in the Nov. 29 issue of *The Militant* [reflecting the views of the Socialist Workers Party] titled, "Sanctions in Yugoslavia not in workers' interests."

Buchanan's article provided just one more example of the

SWP's political bankruptcy and confused attitude toward world events. The article ignores what should be the central issue—the terroristic nature of the Yugo-Serbian assault on Croatia—and focuses instead on the European Community's (EC) sanctions, which *The Militant* asserts (echoing the Stalinist Milosevic regime) "will only increase the hardship of Yugoslav working people."

What *The Militant's* article fails to address, and what Gerry Foley discusses quite clearly, is that the real assault on working

people's interests lies in the terrorist methods used by the Yugoslavian government to force Croatian citizens to flee their homes and villages.

In fact, a Croatian student who spent last year with us as an exchange student has been virtually unable to communicate with her parents because, after being driven out of their town by Serbian-led forces, they are in hiding. This has been the story for many terrorized Croatian working people.

Donald Winters
Minneapolis, Minn.

Good newspaper

Dear editors,

Sign me up for another year of your excellent publication. After a daily onslaught of propaganda from the capitalist media, it is refreshing to read the latest monthly issue of *Socialist Action*.

The Marxist views expressed by your writers mirror my own views. I especially like Barry Sheppard's column, "Learning about Marxism."

Socialist Action is an excellent

source for news about social-change movements. I appreciate your coverage of the pro-choice and labor movements. I am planning on "marching for choice" in Washington, D.C., on April 5.

One area where I would like to see more coverage is the environmental movement. You should know (being out in San Francisco) about how angry the bosses have become at environmentalists. Keep up the good work. Long live socialism!

John Coviello
Summit, N.J.

Searchers for kidnaped activist killed and injured in helicopter crash

José Ramón García Gomez, a leader of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) was the victim of a political kidnapping Dec. 6, 1988, in Cuautla. His party, like Socialist Action, adheres to the Fourth International, the world organization of revolutionary socialists founded by Leon Trotsky.

The PRT has information that the Mexican government has received more than 6000 letters and telegrams from around the world demanding that he be brought back alive.

At the beginning of this year, the Mexican president, Salinas de Gortari, decided to allow a new special prosecutor to take charge of investigating the case. Daniel Estrella, lawyer and member of the national

leadership of the PRT, was appointed, indicating the pressure that the Mexican government was under.

On March 20, Estrella and Edgard Sanchez were going in a helicopter to Corral de Piedra, in the state of Guerrero. Accompanying them were a member of the National Commission on Human Rights and several Guerrero judicial officials. They were trying to confirm a hint they got earlier that day that the main suspect in the kidnapping of José García was there.

At about 10:45 am the helicopter crashed. Three people died. Estrella and Sanchez have multiple fractures. As of March 26, they were out of danger but still in the hospital.

Early reports by inhabitants of

the area indicated that the helicopter had been shot down. This should be confirmed by the special inquiry commission that has been set up.

In this situation, it is urgent to relaunch a flood of letters and telegrams to the Mexican government to demand (1) A full inquiry on the events in which Daniel Estrella and Edgard Sanchez were injured; (2) the speedy arrest of Antonio Noguera Carvajal, former chief of the state police of Morelos, believed to be the main person responsible for the arrest-abduction of García; (3) that José Ramón García be brought back alive.

Letters and telegrams should be sent to Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Presidente de México, Palacio Nacional, México, DF, México. Send copies to PRT, Av. Xola 181, Col. Alamos, 03400, México DF, México. ■

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'The spirit of freedom is rising'

The following is a speech by Don Muhammad, Minister of Mosque #11, Nation of Islam, in Boston, Mass. The speech was given at the March 6 Democracy in South Africa Tour forum at Northeastern University where the featured speaker was WOSA organizer Mercia Andrews. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Chris Nteta of Northeastern University.

Well, you really didn't come here to hear me this evening. I'm here because I want to hear Sister Andrews. But I will just have a few words to say—because South Africa is just next door to Massachusetts. If you're not careful, it might be next door to Roxbury. We're not that far in this country from what is going on in South Africa today.

But what the world powers really fear about what is happening in South Africa is that people at Northeastern [University] tonight will listen to a representative of WOSA who will gravitate to her words. They're fearful that a movement might get started ... that will see that justice is done. Not only in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The world powers are fearful that a spirit of unity might be created, and watered, and nurtured here tonight.

So don't worry about thinking that South Africa is a long way off; it might just be at the tip of your fingers. Because what's going on in South Africa if we're not careful, will come back to haunt us the way it was in Mississippi and Alabama just a few years ago.

Because the real threat today is about power and money. And it's not really power today to go to a restaurant with another individual. It's not real power to sit down at a lunch counter with another individual. It's not even real power to be able to sit in a school with another individual.

See, real power comes from money. Real power comes from economics. And the world powers see that what is going on in South Africa is an effort [by Black people] to gain control of their economic destiny. And they want to cut it off at the pass.

It's not about one man, and one vote. It's about getting access to power. It's about getting access to what really runs the world. And if you don't have any eco-

nomie power, then you don't have any power. So make no mistake about it, that's what the bottom line is.

And if you play sports—they worry about you on first base. Maybe a little bit more on second [base]. But when you get to third base, they've got to stop you from scoring. So the move that's going on in South Africa is tantamount to be the movement on third



base—because the masses are crying out in South Africa that their voices must be heard.

They gave us the vote without too much of a fight in America because our numbers were not that significant. But in South Africa, you can vote yourself into power and into economic independence at the same time. That's what the fight is about.

They're fearful that some support may come from you, in Roxbury, in Massachusetts, in Boston, in Cambridge. And all over this country, hopefully, people will see that what Sister Andrews represents is a fight that we all must take part in.

No decent human being should ever go to bed and say

the world can be tucked in because you have a blanket over yourself. Never say that the whole world has been fed when you don't have any hunger pains. Never say that the whole world has a home because you have the key to go into a dwelling.

Say that—NO!—nobody has a home until we all have a home. Nobody has anything to eat unless we all can get up with a full stomach. Say to the world that no one is educated until the least is educated. Because the world powers want to keep you and me fighting and we must get rid of what is keeping us apart. Don't let anyone tell you that class, that race and creed, is the barometer.

No, I never saw a white person that didn't have but five fingers, and I never saw a red person that had more than two hands and I never saw a yellow person who didn't have two eyes. We're one and the same.

You know, it's just like mashed potatoes and french fries; it's just like potato salad and home fries; it's just like vanilla and chocolate and strawberry. It's just the flavor that you like.

But the flavor that stirs us all is freedom and we know when we don't have it. You cannot look at an individual and say, no matter what his language is, he cries the same way, he pains the same way, he loves the same way, he hates the same way, and the spirit of freedom is something on this earth that is rising. And you may as well join this time or be swept by.

I'm here tonight because I want to support the freedom fighters whose cry for freedom is echoing in my

ears. And the Atlantic [Ocean] is not going to stop me from joining with my brothers and sisters because as they need help today, we might need their help tomorrow. And if we can get them freedom today, with the gold and the diamonds and the uranium and the tungsten in South Africa, they can help fuel our revolution should we need to have one in America.

So I'm happy. I'm pleased just to be here with you. Because I'm just a cog in the wheel—the wheel of freedom that's going to roll over every oppressor on earth. And you do not want to be underneath it, you ought to want to be with the wheel that's rolling. Thank you very much. ■

... March 29

(continued from page 3)

choice" capitalist candidates.

If there were labor party candidates to vote for, an electoral strategy to winning our rights would make sense. In the absence of a mass working-class party, however, focusing on elections is tantamount to tying the movement to the very politicians who deny us our rights.

By contrast, speakers from Socialist Action and other groups who emphasized the importance of mass action, independent of the two-capitalist-party system, got the best response from the crowd. This showed that the activists gathered at the rally were receptive to strategies other than

just voting. This message should not be lost on the leadership of the pro-choice movement when it decides its next step.

Unfortunately, besides going to the voting booths in November, not much else was presented to women's rights activists about what to do next.

For example, little was said of the need for continuing clinic defense against Operation Rescue. This was despite the fact that an Easter Week blockade is being organized for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Because of the electoral focus of many of the groups represented at the rally, it's unclear how the pro-choice movement will unite for the next steps after April 5. Many groups are focusing on the upcoming elections, at a time when the need for mass mobilizations in defense of our right to choose has never been greater. ■



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

...What next?

(continued from page 1)

politicians who, because they are beholden to the interests of the rich, will sell us out. This is the proven record of the electoral strategy of the women's movement.

On the other hand, these two marches prove that when the call goes out to mobilize in defense of our rights, and a serious effort to organize women's rights supporters is made, the response is tremendous. How can we capitalize on this success?

The March 29 action provides one answer. That march was organized on a local basis by the San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition. Though people came from other areas in California and a few Western states, the bulk of the demonstra-

tors came from the San Francisco Bay area. In the current crisis, such local and regional efforts must be repeated on a coordinated national basis.

Failure to use our most powerful tactics—mobilizing ever-larger street demonstrations—can only result in a defeat, as the dismal example of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) campaign shows.

Abortion rights are being lost in state after state. Though we still formally have *Roe v. Wade* on the books, real accessibility has already been lost!

Independent mass action is a proven winner. It's how women won the right to vote. It's how workers won the eight-hour day. It's how Jim Crow segregation was smashed. We can win reproductive freedom by the same methods. ■

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Referendum solves nothing in S. Africa

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"Today we have closed the books on apartheid," declared South African President F.W. De Klerk after scoring a large victory over his right-wing opponents in the March 17 whites-only referendum. Over 68 percent of the white electorate voted in favor of continuing the CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) negotiations between the government and the African National Congress (ANC) and other Black groups.

But few Black people in South Africa share De Klerk's enthusiasm. At the same time that the results of the referendum were being made public, thousands of Black demonstrators thronged the streets of Capetown to protest the government's new budget, as well as plans for a Value Added Tax.

Despite the fact that apartheid laws have been rubbed off the books, Blacks are still denied citizenship rights. Almost 90 percent of the wealth in South Africa is still owned by a mere five percent of the population.

De Klerk called the referendum to try to out-manuever the rival Conservative Party and other far-right parties. He assured voters that the government, in pursuing negotiations, was following a "middle road" between the left and the right. On the other hand, he warned, a "no" vote would cause Blacks to "rise up in anger" in radical—if not violent—mass action.

The rightists used the same kind of fire-and-brimstone arguments in order to urge a "no" vote on the referendum. They, like De Klerk, went on the campaign trail to attract whites who fear losing their privileges when a Black-majority government comes to power. They found a hearing among many white farmers, for example, who are afraid that their lands will be redistributed



William Motilla/COSA TU

"Despite the fact that apartheid laws have been rubbed off the books, Blacks are still denied citizenship rights. Almost 90 percent of the wealth in South Africa is still owned by a mere five percent of the population."

to poor Black farmworkers.

In campaign rallies, the right-wingers portrayed De Klerk as a traitor to white people. The government is handing over South Africa to Black "communists," said Andres Treurnicht of the Conservative Party. "It is a referendum between God and the communists," said Eugene Terre Blanche of the neo-nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement.

Despite the threat of God's wrath, the big corporations and media lined up with De Klerk. Companies distributed flyers to their employees saying, "Vote yes!" Several multi-nationals threatened to disinvest from South Africa if the referendum didn't pass. The U.S. government hinted that economic sanctions could be restored. After the victory, Johannesburg stock prices bolted upward.

By BARBARA PUTNAM

Mercia Andrews, a South African trade unionist and national organizer of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA), recently completed a highly successful North American tour. Thousands of people in 18 local areas were given a first-hand account of the South African freedom struggle and WOSA's demand for a democratic constituent assembly. The tour began Feb. 27 and ended on March 28.

The tour was organized by the Democracy in South Africa Tour Committee. It was co-sponsored by a broad spectrum of over 100 organizations and prominent individuals in this country and Canada. A number of campus departments also chipped in to make the tour a success. Other co-sponsors included religious organizations, labor unions, and political groups.

Andrews participated in over 80 meetings and in several radio and newspaper interviews. Fund-raising and generous contributions by people attending the events allowed the tour to cover all its expenses. In addition, donations raised at the meetings were sent to South Africa to aid the cause of freedom.

A "racist" referendum

There was high interest in the freedom struggle in South Africa during the tour because of the publicity given to President F.W. De Klerk's all-white referendum on March 17. Andrews was frequently asked, "Aren't you excited about the referendum results?" Andrews told questioners that she believed the vote was racist, allowing 15 percent of the population to make a decision for 85 percent.

She said that when De Klerk called for the referendum, he essentially said to whites, "Give me your confidence. We are not going to strip away your privileges, but actually retain them by other means."

Andrews pointed out that "the most important reason the De Klerk government

S. African trade unionist tours U.S., exposes De Klerk's "reforms"



Jonathan Halabji/Socialist Action

Mercia Andrews being interviewed on a New York radio program.

began a process of dismantling apartheid was because of the movement of resistance in our country." Unless there was change, she said, "the government believed it would be faced with a revolt from below."

Negotiations, she said, are clearly an attempt by the South African government to draw the liberation movement into a deal that offers Black people a limited form of democracy—in order to blunt the struggles of working people.

For that reason, she said, De Klerk's initiatives are carried out with the approval of the bosses of big industry, as well as their counterparts in the United States and its partners in the New World Order.

Andrews pointed out that while, after two years of "reform," the worst trappings of apartheid have begun to disappear, inequality remains. Black people are still

economically disenfranchised. Unemployment is 42 percent and growing. Seven million people live in shacks—with no hope of ever getting a house. The majority still are without citizenship rights. And the white referendum shows that the government still wants to give the white minority veto power over the aspirations of the Black majority.

Highlights of the tour

The Mercia Andrews tour began in New York City, where she addressed the Organization of South Africans/Azanians for Liberation Education (OSAAL) and spoke at Columbia University. She then went to Minneapolis, where she spoke to about 60 people at two campus meetings.

In Pittsburgh, Pa., events at the University of Pittsburgh were organized by

The African National Congress, for its part, hesitated on what position to take on the referendum. At first, ANC leaders strongly denounced the referendum as a "hallmark of racism" and tantamount to a white veto. But the ANC was under mounting pressure to support De Klerk, and finally came out for a "yes" vote.

The results of the referendum were "a great relief across the country," said Nelson Mandela. "This overwhelming 'yes' vote means the [negotiations] process is definitely on course."

But negotiations to what end? Mervyn Frost, a professor at the University of Natal, points out that the referendum "will strengthen De Klerk's hand at the negotiating forum, CODESA, and endorse his policy platform—which includes a tough set of checks and balances aimed at ensuring power-sharing." (*Christian Science Monitor*, March 19, 1992.)

In its proposals for a multi-party "interim government," the ANC has already come a long way in signing onto the government's power-sharing scenario. De Klerk will now argue that, in order to consolidate white support, he needs even more concessions.

A mere five days after the referendum, De Klerk made several moves to strengthen his hand. He called for the creation of multi-racial "transitional councils" to advise the government, which would be appointed by the president. He also proposed a two-chamber parliament and a rotating presidency—both of which would assure minority guarantees for whites.

The ANC promptly accused De Klerk of renegeing on previous agreements. It pointed out that the new proposals would leave "all powers in the hands of the present government." But the pressure on the Black movement to agree to compromises is stronger than ever. CODESA negotiations are scheduled to resume in April. ■

supporters of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and chaired by noted South African poet, Dennis Brutus.

In Boston, Mass., she spoke to 50 Black construction workers and several hundred students at Tufts, Harvard, and Northeastern Universities. The Nation of Islam played a key role in sponsoring the Boston segment of the tour.

In Milwaukee, Wis., the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group helped sponsor a meeting, which was attended by people from several countries in Africa. In Chicago, Ill., she spoke at a broadly sponsored meeting of 75 at the Chicago Circle campus and on other campuses. In Toronto, there was a successful community meeting of 50 activists, including several South Africans living in exile.

In Cleveland, Ohio, Andrews spoke to 100 people at a meeting sponsored by the Northeast Ohio Anti-Apartheid coalition. Later, she addressed several hundred of the all-Black congregation at Cleveland's Antioch Baptist Church. Her arrival in Baltimore, Md., coincided with the all-white referendum in South Africa. The questions from the audience focused on that subject when she spoke at Morgan State University and at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, campus.

In Kansas City, Mo., Andrews spoke at a community meeting sponsored by several Black organizations and other groups. In Portland, Ore., she spoke to 75 students at Portland State University.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, Andrews spoke to approximately 800 people, including a meeting of 250 workers at a Machinists union local. She also spoke at several community colleges and the University of California, Berkeley. Meetings in the Los Angeles area included one of 150 at Long Beach State University.

Andrews also spoke at meetings in Iowa City, Iowa, Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., and Bucknell College in Lewisburg, Pa. ■