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motion—

May—June 1987

A Socialist Magazine

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**CHINA:  
WHERE**

**IS  
IT**



**HEADING?**

## Forward Motion

May—June 1987  
Vol. 6, No. 3

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FORWARD MOTION is a magazine of socialist opinion and advocacy. We say socialist opinion because each FM presents analyses of important organizing work and reviews of political and cultural trends. We say socialist advocacy because FM is dedicated to a new left-wing presence in U.S. politics and to making Marxism an essential component of that presence. We share these purposes with other journals, but we seek for FM a practical vantage point from within the unions, the Black and other freedom struggles, the women's movement, the student, anti-war, and gay liberation movements, and other struggles. We also emphasize building working people's unity as a political force for social change, particularly through challenging the historical pattern of white supremacy and national oppression in the capitalist domination of this country.

## In this Issue

People in the United States are intrigued with what goes on in socialist countries. Developments there are daily grist for the media mill and alternately reinforce, challenge, and further confuse the image of socialism in the public mind.

Lately there have been some fairly dramatic shifts within several societies commonly identified as socialist, and most of those changes have been of great public interest in the U.S. Over the past six months we have seen massive student demonstrations and some leadership changes in China. We are also witnessing a potentially historic effort on the part of a section of the Soviet elite to reform certain features of its rule. Less publicized but still present in the daily press have been the personnel changes and self-criticisms within the Vietnamese Communist Party. To different degrees, all three involve pressures for and party elite experimentation with democratic reforms at times of high stress in the economy. These events plus the spy scandals, the steady flow of refugees from socialism, the latest battle report in Afghanistan, the continuing trickle of news from Poland, and the occasional media propaganda blitz a la "Amerika" all combine to keep the nature of socialist society alive as a mass issue. It's an issue on which everyone has an opinion.

Everyone, that is, but many socialist activists. In the face of one disillusionment after another, many of us often act as if silence is the safe bet. Nevertheless most would admit that no matter how independent, every left-wing workers' movement and every Marxist tendency lives in the shadow of those countries declaring themselves socialist. What happens there—and what has happened in those countries in the past—has a lot to do with Marxism's current crisis. That many Marxist activists are reluctant to talk about socialism at all is a symptom of that crisis: they feel they simply don't know what to say anymore.

Today the enormous problems in the practice of socialism and the deficiencies in Marxist theory's ability to account for and govern that practice are all too apparent, and the U.S. Left finds less agreement than ever on where socialism exists in the world and where it doesn't. For many, continuing on in the work means resting content to see it only in their mind's eye.

If the Left's greater independence from external socialist models is a good thing, then the demoralization and lack of vision

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# Forward Motion

May-June 1987  
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## ...In this issue

which often accompanies it must be overcome. It is to this end that *Forward Motion* dedicates this issue's four-way discussion of socialism in China, a country whose experience during the past twenty years has more than any other posed new theoretical and political problems for Marxism to resolve.

*FM* has not in the past devoted much attention to problems of socialist construction, but activists need to orient themselves to these issues if they want to remain socialist activists. As Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch pointed out recently in 1987's *Socialist Register*, "...the socialist project is solidly grounded in the growing awareness of vast numbers of men and women that the existing system cannot deliver on the promises which its apologists so generously dispense. The central problem for socialists is that this awareness is not accompanied by the conviction that there exists a socialist alternative to capitalism." At bottom what this issue's authors are wrestling with—and what Marxists everywhere cannot avoid addressing—is our identity as socialists today, and the future of our cause tomorrow.

The exchange on China and socialism certainly dominates the issue, but please don't miss our other features. "Changing Conditions" and a photographic essay by Samantha McCormick offer two "tidings of spring" in this seventh year of Reaganism—one, observations on a couple new cracks in the ice and the other, photos from an invigorated anti-Reagan movement in Washington on April 25.

Meizhu Lui adds a lively presentation of the basics of the "pay equity," and *LocoMotion* returns with invited guest critics. And we also continue our discussion of current Irish politics with an interview with Peter Urban of the Irish Republican Support Committee.

## China

# The Student Demonstrations

by Don Carroll

Recent student demonstrations in China only make sense set against major economic reforms dating back to 1978-79 followed by political reforms instituted in the early 80's. In particular, the 1982 Party Congress established a separation between the political and economic functions of governing the communes, villages and towns and managing industry. It also separated party and non-party functions. These reforms led to decentralization of control and more local use of resources; they forced local party leaders to let go of some of their power and give more decision-making



Anderson Gamma Liaison, USN&WR

Don Carroll has lived and worked in China and recently returned from his latest visit.

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authority to individual industries, institutes and universities, and, in many cases, to non-party people.

Motivating the Central Committee was its concern for economic progress. As in the past, the political reforms were broadly stated—probably purposely so. The Central Committee did not spell out in detail how much political reform was going to accompany the economic reforms. But the signals coming from some high party leaders were that there needed to be some loosening up in dealings in the arts and sciences, if China's ambitious economic goals were to be realized. Also, it meant that some party professionals who were not technical people would presumably have to give up some of their power and position and let technocrats rise and be appointed to party positions. Of course, the problem on a local level is that the people who are in power are not going to give it up easily.

Since then, some top party officials have criticized resistance to these changes and called for more rapid advances in both political and economic reforms in certain regions of China including Shanghai. In September of 1986, Deng Xiaoping himself criticized the local party officials in Shanghai for moving too slowly on some specific reforms such as bonus systems for workers and hiring and firing policies. He called for scientists and artists to be granted more freedom from direct party control.

### Science and Technology Students Lead Demonstrations

Long before Deng's September criticisms were made, a lot of students were pretty disgusted with the Communist Party. But what is interesting is that mainly science and technology students and not political and social science students were involved in the demonstrations. Most of the liberal arts colleges were also under-represented, although it is fair to say that many of these students sympathize with the demonstrators as do a lot of the urban workers and most of the faculty in the places where the demonstrations occurred.

One of the reasons for the science and technology students' apparent dissatisfactions with Party politics is that they are being relied on for the modernization program. Scientists and technicians are told they are the hope of China's future economic

progress. Yet assessing their own situation, they feel powerless to make decisions regarding their own lives and fields of work. They are often highly educated in a certain field, but lack the right lab equipment, administrative sympathy or encouragement to accomplish their goals. They feel that there is a lot of bureaucratic resistance from above and lack of resources at their own level. Because of the importance which has been attached to them, they feel that they are in an opportune position to make some demands. The Chinese students know the place of science and technology in the West. Many have been abroad or they have been in very close contact with those that have been abroad in Japan and Britain and especially the U.S. Their social status is quite high in China, but their salary and social status would be much higher in the U.S.

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*Scientists and technicians are told they are the hope of China's future economic progress. Yet assessing their own situation, they feel powerless to make decisions regarding their own lives and fields of work.*

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On the surface, a lot of the students' demands for better school, living and laboratory conditions are not particularly unrealistic. They feel that if the government is going to embark on developing certain technologies, it should do it in an efficient way, not waste resources and not have an elderly bureaucracy sit on younger people. Believing the system rigid and undemocratic, a lot of these young technical people are frustrated and disgusted with the Party. They feel that they are intelligent and that they should have the right to make certain decisions. When you come right down to it, they want freedom to compete for a job, to elect political leaders and make them accountable, have freedom of speech and press, etc. From this perspective, the demonstrations take on a much wider dimension.

As with most student movements, there are different trends within the current movement in China.

There are two quite distinct tendencies among the students demonstrating, while other students have a more muddled synthesis of the two. One trend is to reform socialism. For many students, the demands they are making do not amount to scrapping the system. They want to keep the benefits that socialism affords them: job security, social welfare benefits, etc. But if they had their druthers, they'd rather walk heavier on the side of capitalism and Western democracy and take the required risks. Only the more sophisticated are thinking about ways to work out a democratic socialism.

Another trend is to shake the Communist Party off its foundation in favor of Western democracy. Students in this trend are fatalistic about their ability to reform the Communist Party to make it more responsive to popular pressure. In their fatalism, they say that it just can't be reformed, so they want a multi-party Western style democracy. This is especially true of science and technology students, biochemists, physicists and students in the arts. They try very hard to study about things outside of China, but they have not spent a lot of time studying about social democracy or Eurocommunism as alternatives. They are very naive about the West. They have a yearning for democracy, but their conception of democracy is an idealized one, and they are not at all clear what form democracy would take in China.

And many are just smitten with the U.S. As with a lot of things in China over the past decade, there is this feeling that the U.S. is what the Chinese should aspire to, that they are inferior and that anything else other than the U.S. is inferior. This, unfortunately, is a very significant tendency in the student movement, especially among science and technology students.

### Pressure on Deng

All of these ideas are reflected in the Party leadership as well. While foreigners have a hard time knowing what kind of struggle is going on inside the party, it is clear by what is spoken about and published in Party organs that the debate goes on there, though in different terms. The key struggle in the party is between those who support the policies of Deng as well as Hu Yaobang (former Party General Secretary very closely allied with Deng but nonetheless forced to resign in mid-January) and those who

are called conservatives.

Deng Xiaoping's basic idea about things seems to be that he would like to have an American standard of living with a mixed market and state-owned economy, but with the state controlling the main resources. While Deng is not willing to release a lot of control in the political sector, he wants to have his economic program fulfilled and is willing to loosen up a lot, even in certain areas where politics and economics seem to overlap.



Globe File Photo

**Deng Xiaoping was willing to loosen up a lot politically in order to have his economic program fulfilled. The problem was that the student movement went too far.**

There are also a number of intellectuals, including party members of significant rank, who go much further than Deng and have called for a multi-party system and popular elections. Certain prominent party intellectuals have actually gone so far as to say that China should now rest more on capitalism than communism in the interests of developing the economy, and that China should look more to a Western democratic ideal rather than the traditional Marxist-Leninist ideal.

On the other side are the "conservatives" who are seen as more left, that is, adhering to a more doctrinaire interpretation of Communist Party principles. These conservatives are very suspicious of so-

called market and mixed economies and what they consider negative Western influences. Many were educated in the Soviet Union and still prefer the Soviet Party planning apparatus over what they might call the anarchic and Western characteristics of the current economic and political reforms.

While the highest level of Party leadership encouraged criticism of local party officials (as in Shanghai) which helped spark the student demonstrations, the problem for Deng and those allied with him is that the student movement went too far. It allowed Deng's opposition to extract major concessions. Hu Yaobang's departure as the general secretary of the party meant not only the loss of that position, but the loss of the person who, in all likelihood, was going to be Deng's successor. It was a very big concession. Deng's opposition was able to push him to the wall largely because the student demonstrations went so far in their demands. In the weeks before Deng got pushed to make his concessions, his people from Beijing were saying that the democratic sentiments of the students were correct and that a small number of disruptive elements would capitalize on that.

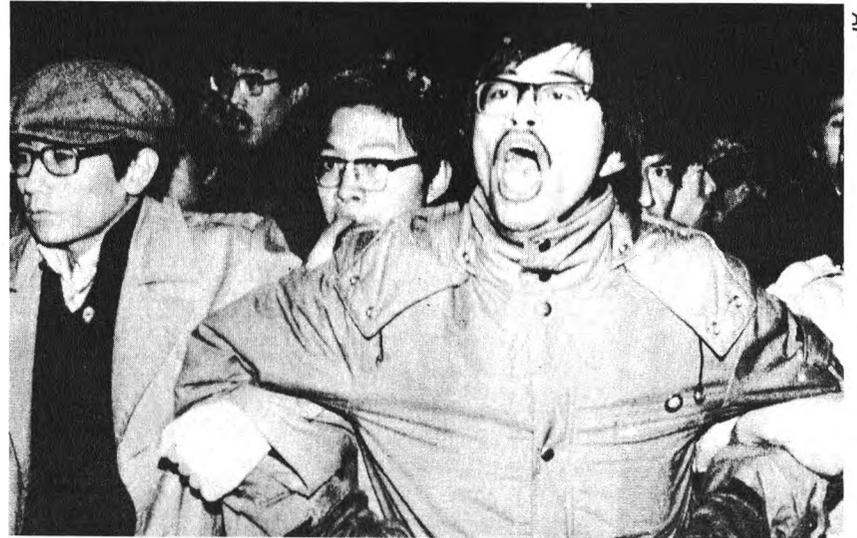
The relatively relaxed political climate created by the reformers (Deng and Hu) *did* lead to some very open and frank discussion of China's political institutions; still, the reformers did not want to raise the discussion to the level of a political campaign. They may have wanted some *criticism*, but not a campaign from below. Their problem was that they were not

necessarily aware of the dimensions of the students' demands. And they were not prepared for the largely right-wing trend among the science and technology students to gain such momentum as a democratic movement from below. And so, when pressure from the army conservatives grew, Deng and his allies in the Party were held accountable for a lot of activities their faction did not necessarily agree with.

### Broader Implications of the Demonstrations

How the party handled the student demonstrations and the related struggle in the Party may affect other important issues for China as well, such as its slated incorporation of Hong Kong in 1997. People in Hong Kong are afraid of losing certain democratic rights to which they have become accustomed, and so they watch what is going on in China very carefully. On the one hand, the students were not treated harshly at all, in fact quite liberally, which avoided antagonizing Hong Kong. On the other hand, Hu Yaobang's forced resignation is not likely to create warm feelings there. The fact that the left conservatives are putting pressure on Deng and winning major concessions is likely to make people in Hong Kong worry about future concessions made at their expense. This is crucial for China: if relations with Hong Kong are mishandled in any way, there could be a severe outflow of capital.

And, generally, the Party's prestige with young



Students demand the release of classmates arrested by policy for taking part in a pro-democracy rally in Beijing. The current crack-down on the intelligentsia is unlikely to take on the dimensions or severity of the Cultural Revolution.

people and with the urban intelligentsia is on the line. A lot of young people are thinking a lot about alternative philosophies to what they have been raised with. They feel that much of what they learned is outdated. They're very attracted to the "outside world." For instance, they always thought of the people in Hong Kong and Taiwan as being down-trodden by capitalist oppressors, but now they are hearing from people who travel there that these places have modern cities and towns and that development had marched along much faster than they ever dreamed. They don't necessarily take into account the history of a place like Taiwan: the raping of China's capital when the KMT left and the support that the Americans gave them. Some admit they are willing to relinquish certain elements of the Chinese society to achieve a situation comparable to Hong Kong and Taiwan. When they are asked to be more specific, many students will say: "Well, bear in mind that we don't have any personal freedoms. At least they have a higher standard of living and scientists work in a better environment than we do. So don't tell us that we are going to give up socialist democracy. We have socialist democracy and we are poor. They may not be free, but they are wealthy. We feel unfree and we would like to have that wealth."

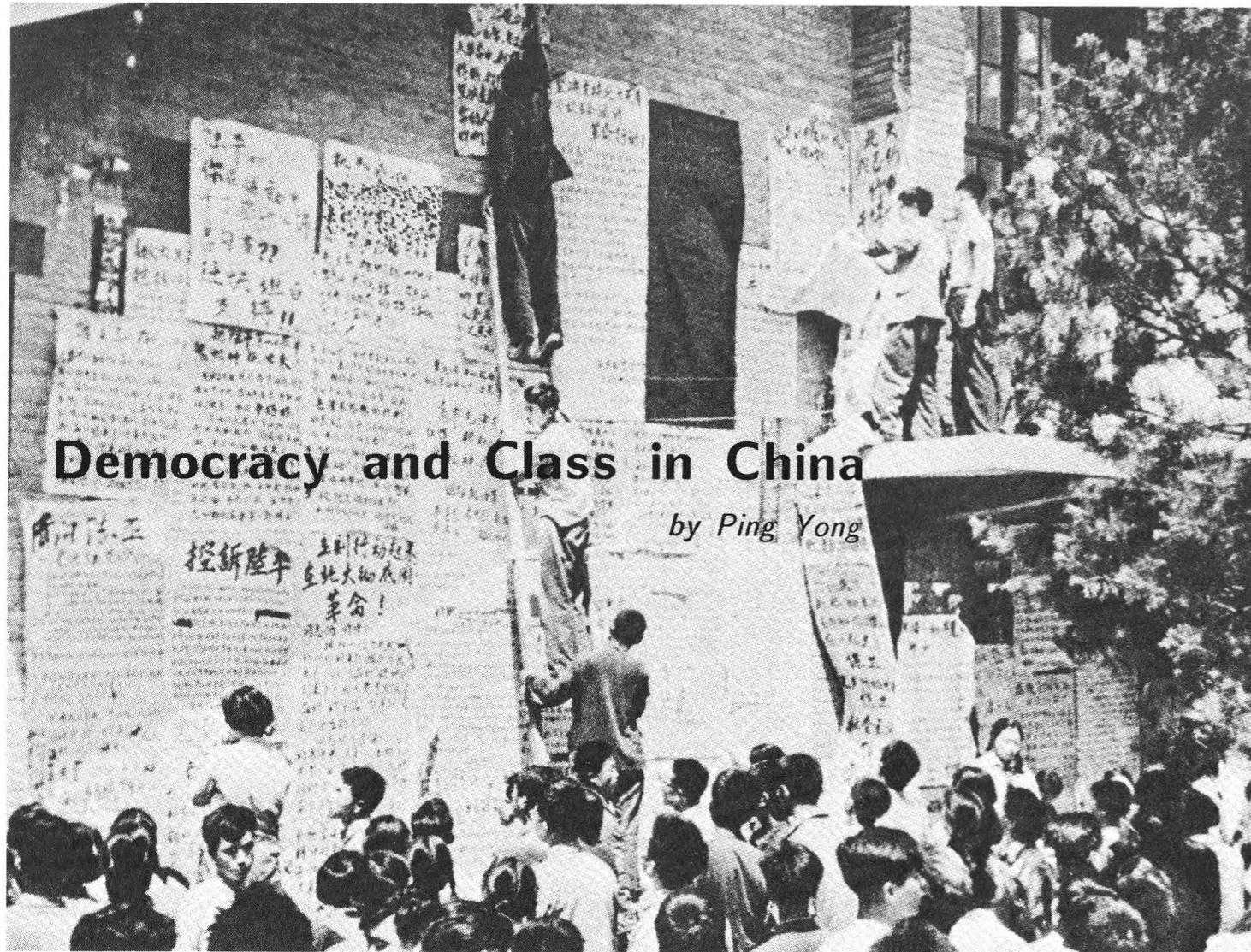
Generally, they feel they were led to believe that it was better for everyone to be poor and all rise together than to have some move ahead faster than others. Now they are very much disillusioned with that approach. And even if they are told that the "leftist" approach is not really Marxist, not dialectical, that it is utopian or left-wing communism, they just don't want to hear it. They feel that even if you bring in a new brand of socialism or communism, it will still be based on a formula that doesn't

work.

And for people who really think about these issues—which really means the urban intelligentsia, not the peasants—the Party is now seen as very arbitrary and very pragmatist. They feel that the Party will change the text whenever it needs to explain new reforms. So that a reform which would have been revisionist and unacceptable two years ago all of a sudden becomes the in thing, and the Party leadership will find the appropriate ideological justification for it. The people at the base see that as very arbitrary and nonscientific. They have come to the conclusion that some people in the Party are just not admitting they cannot have a successful free-market system without also having some of the political superstructure of the West. They believe that it is naive to think you can maintain a Marxist-Leninist superstructure and build the economic base to look like the U.S. Why not just call a horse a horse?

If there was a way of keeping ideology alive and taught in a way that let people feel it gave them guidelines and made things work more efficiently and democratically, probably more people would accept it. But Marxism is taught a little like catechism was taught in the parochial schools of the 50's and 60's. So many people feel that Marxist ideology is outdated, at least in the boring, stilted fashion they learn it. Even a lot of communist party cadre don't believe in the old orthodoxy any more.

So, for the time being, I think, the current "crackdown" on the educated intelligentsia will not likely take on the dimensions or severity of the Cultural Revolution. But it is also unlikely that the rural masses will be willing to join the educated elite in their demands for democratization. So for now, the students will probably take some time to wait and watch. ■



China Pictorial

## Democracy and Class in China

by Ping Yong

Recent student demonstrations in China have brought a lot of new interest in events there. On the one hand, the Chinese government is trying to introduce a capitalist-style market system and loosen its own tight control of the economy. On the other hand, it is suppressing the student movement and is unwilling to loosen up its political control. How does one evaluate this seemingly contradictory behavior?

To answer these questions, it is worth studying the September, 1986, *Monthly Review* interview with Su Zhaozhi, the head of China's Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought Institute. Do the events of the

last few years simply point to the need for more democracy in China, as the article implies, or do they reveal the existence of class struggle and people's protest against a new ruling class?

On the question of class struggle under socialism, Mr. Su's view is the same as the official Chinese view. In the interview he says: "Since after the socialization of private ownership, the exploiting class has vanished," and "...the principle of distribution 'to each according to his work'...cannot produce new capitalists" (page 22). Thus he condemns Mao's theory of class struggle under socialism and makes

the issue of democracy the main focus.

Su also refers to the debate between Lenin and Luxemburg during the 20's over the nature of the party and its role in the state. Su believes that Lenin might have been right for advocating iron discipline when he did, but it should not have been taken as a permanent principle. The party has to be more democratic as the country marches further down the socialist road. Is Su raising the same kind of issues that the students have been raising in their latest demonstrations? He might be, but he does not give any reasons for the lack of democracy in China. Is the resolution of this problem simply a matter of a change of work style, implementing some new laws, or just some consciousness-raising among the party leaders?

The emergence of a new ruling class and its need to maintain political power, in my view, explains to a large extent the anti-democratic behavior of the Chinese ruling elite. This is because democracy is a threat to their political control, and their mandate to rule in the interest of the people has long since gone. The sign of this happened some thirty years ago. The 1957 "Hundred Flowers" campaign was suppressed by Liu and Deng, and Mao's "Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" was an answer to their line. Twenty some years later, the "pro-democracy" Deng (labeled as such by the Western press) shut down the "Democracy Wall" in Beijing and outlawed the Big Character Poster—the only means of free press left in China. The negative reporting in China of the Polish Solidarity movement and the government's suppression of student demonstrations are both rooted in the same need of this new ruling class to maintain political power. This will be clearer, I think, if we examine some of the events of the last few years.

### Fertile Ground for Discontent

In December of 1985, Chinese students marched in the streets of many cities and demanded political reform. They were initially motivated by patriotism. The students saw many of the government's trade policies as sell-outs. They denounced the Japanese penetration of the Chinese economy and forced the government to stop the imports of Japanese cars and TVs. The reason was that those luxury items were mostly serving the ruling elite, and the massive im-

ports of those goods drained the scarce foreign reserve. I was told that one of their slogans was "Down with modern Li Hong-Zhang." If I have my history right, this slogan refers to the warlord in Beijing who signed the treaty with England in the early 1900's that opened China's port to foreign powers. This was the time of the beginning of the May 4th Movement which eventually led to the formation of the Communist Party of China.

Again, a year later, in December 1986, the university students demonstrated. This time they raised many more demands. They wanted truer elections and more democracy. And they wanted a return of their right to make Big Character Posters. The Big Character Posters represent the only channel of expression outside of the government's control, and the students need it to air their views on campus and in society.

This new wave of student demonstrations has led to a split within the ruling elite. The latest casualty of the student movement is Hu Yao-bang, the party's top man himself. The suppression that inevitably followed the students' demonstration, and the campaign against bourgeois liberalism that has just begun in China since the fall of Hu, seems to me to be nothing but attempts by the ruling elite to consolidate its rule.

They are not afraid of a few students; their fear is that the students' ideas may be contagious. The student demonstrations could be dangerous to the ruling elite if the students' slogans reached the ears of workers and peasants.

This fear is not unfounded. There is fertile ground for mass discontent. The glaring inequality and the rampant abuse of privilege that exists today in Chinese society cannot be swept easily under the rug. The more the party talks about the need to combat the "back doors," the more it becomes the social norm. Whose children get a chance to go to college when there is room for only four percent of the high school graduates? Whose "iron rice bowls" are being smashed [an old slogan against completely secure jobs, regardless of work—ed. note] while others are handed gold-plated ones? These are just some of the examples of the inequality that exists today.

The economic reforms have not led to happiness in all sectors of society. They have polarized the population. A few get rich very fast while most—

especially in the countryside—are just treading water. The much talked about prosperity of the countryside in the last few years came mostly from small sideline industries near the cities and not from agricultural production. In fact, there are signs of food shortages in China. The drastic rise of the free market prices of grain in the last years indicates a shortage. Some grain prices have more than doubled in the last few years. A general shortage of grain to feed the one billion people of China is a real possibility in the near future, despite a symbolic grain export to Japan a few months ago. There is a widespread belief that the government's figures on agricultural production have been inflated since they forced the break-up of the collectives. This belief is based on two facts: first, that a sizable number of peasants have left their land idle and gone into other, more profitable pursuits; and second, that the government has gotten its statistics on grain production mostly through local officials whose salaries are tied to the production numbers.

Another common complaint from people these days is about the proliferation of arbitrary taxes. There are taxes on just about anything. One gets the feeling that every little government authority tries to levy taxes on everything in sight. It seems that the current leadership in China learned the tax system from the West faster than they learned about Western political systems. People's resentment is manifested in a slogan that the students in Shanghai raised (according to a Hong Kong magazine) during their demonstration last December. It goes: "Wan sui (long sleep) Mao, wan sui (long live) Hua gou-fen, and wan sui (long tax) Deng Xiao-Ping." Is this a cry against taxation without representation?

### Bus Drivers' Job Action

Another source of discontent exists among the city workers. The government's efforts to convert industrial workers in the state sector into individually contracted labor threatens their job security. "No one is working hard as it is. If they change us to contract workers, we will work even less," said a worker in Beijing. It is becoming obvious to the workers that while the government is advocating the elimination of the "iron rice bowls" for the workers, the same officials have got "gold-plated" ones.

Sometimes this unhappiness gets translated into

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*The economic reforms have not led to happiness in all sectors of society. They have polarized the population. A few get rich very fast while most—especially in the countryside—are just treading water.*

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job actions. In November, 1985, Beijing bus drivers went on a three week slow-down. It was unprecedented in Beijing since the revolution. Even the chaos of the Cultural Revolution didn't prevent the drivers from doing their work. This is the account I was given of the situation: In the summer of '85, the bus drivers were promised a wage raise; this followed a

steep raise of the taxi drivers' wages in the spring. But the promise kept being put off, and the workers were asked to be patient, time and time again. The workers finally just couldn't wait any longer. As the weather grew colder and more and more people stopped riding their bikes and started to take the buses, their working conditions became even more strained. Eventually the drivers on some routes stopped trying; if they couldn't close the doors because too many people tried to jam into the buses, they just waited. The more they waited, the harder it was for them to move, and soon the whole city was tied up that way. The situation repeated day after day for weeks. City security was sent to find the leaders of the slow-down. But since the whole thing was spontaneously done by the drivers, and congestion had been a problem in the city for many years, the security people couldn't find anyone to blame for the slow-down. It was an open secret in the city that the problem was really with the wages. The taxi drivers who were serving the foreigners and the Chinese elite were given a wage raise to improve their service, but the bus drivers who were serving the working class didn't get a raise. It seemed very unfair to the bus drivers since they were assigned the job of driving the buses by the government the same way the taxi drivers got their jobs. The job action began to cause great disruption in the city's economy as more and more workers couldn't get to work. Fearing the situation would get worse, the city government granted the wage raise, and right away the congestion disappeared. But the seed of working class consciousness had been planted. The lesson was shown throughout the city that the working class has to rely on themselves to protect their own interests.

Similar lessons were learned throughout China in that fall and winter as widespread slow-downs and even strikes took place in many provinces over the year-end bonus issue. The news spread through unofficial channels among the workers. People said that, in many places, the managers got much bigger bonuses than the workers—a situation that the workers were not used to. It is not hard to understand that workers in any country would feel resentment towards managers who sit in the office all day and then get so much more than the workers who work so hard all day long. This heated debate led to slow-downs and strikes. The absolute number of incidents might not be much, but it was unprecedented

in new China. It needs to be pointed out that Mao put the right to strike into the constitution, and it was taken out quietly by the present leadership soon after his death. The slow-downs and strikes were really against the law, and the participants were under great risk to take those job actions.

### Burying the Silver

There is an old Chinese proverb which laughs at the kind of people who try to deceive others by their own stupidity. It goes like this: once upon a time, there was an old man who buried 200 ounces of silver under the ground. He was afraid someone would find it. So he put a sign on top of it and wrote: "There is no 200 ounces of silver buried here."

The new ruling class in China has branded Mao's theory of class struggle under socialism and his warnings of the danger of a new bourgeois class emerging within the party as erroneous. They go to great lengths to deny everything that Mao said about this subject. But the more they try to deny Mao's theory of class struggle under socialism, the more they sound like the old man who buried the silver. I think the reason for this is not stupidity on their part, but rather that their class interests dictate that they say this.

If it is true that there is a new ruling class in China, then what is the nature of this new ruling class? Can we call it a capitalist class? Paul Sweezy of the *Monthly Review* doesn't think so. He sees only market-based capitalism. Nevertheless, he believes that there is a new ruling class in China, and in all of the "post revolutionary societies." In any case, the basis of this new ruling class' power is not necessarily in their control of the economy but rather in their political control. The economic reforms in China are a case in point. They can be as far-reaching and as shocking as any socialist can imagine, as long as the ruling elite maintains political control. The four so-called principles that Deng set out at the beginning of the period of reform (dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist road, Marxism, and the party's leadership) are, in reality, only one principle: the leadership of the party. This is because their control is provided through the party's organization and its leadership in the society. This is the only principle that they hold to dearly.

All other so-called principles are subject to interpretation.

Deng and his official theoreticians are not totally wrong in saying that there is no possibility of capitalist restoration under socialism if one is to adhere to "public ownership" and "to each according to his work." After all, China was not a capitalist society before the revolution, so there is no capitalism to restore to. Furthermore, if we confined the meaning of capitalism to the sort of capitalist economies we are familiar with, then it seems unlikely for a Western-style free enterprise system to operate under "public ownership" where the state has the ultimate say on how the economy runs. And certainly no Steve Jobs-style millionaire entrepreneur would ever emerge, if everyone got only what he or she labored for.

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*If the working class cannot exercise its control, then the ownership in its name is meaningless.*

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But the question is: is "public ownership" and "to each according to his work" really socialism? Public ownership without the mastery of the working class, in my view, could be simply state capitalism. General Motors is "publicly" owned, and more and more factories in the U.S. are implementing workers' ownership through stocks. Better yet, France's Renault is state-owned. Do these represent socialism?

It has been pointed out by many Marxist scholars that the real issue is not ownership but control. If the working class cannot exercise its control, then the ownership in its name is meaningless. Furthermore, as the examples of workers' stock ownership in the U.S. shows, the important question is not

ownership but the principles under which an enterprise is operating. If profit is the ultimate goal and capital accumulation is the driving force in society, then no matter who the owners are or who's in control, it is capitalism. The basic contradiction between labor and capital is still there. The contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation that Marx talked about is still there. The strike of the Beijing bus drivers is a case in point. Adhering to "public ownership" and "to each according to his work" might prevent free enterprise capitalism, but it is in no way a guarantee of socialism.

Why do we care about this issue? I think it is because we are fighting for socialism in this country. We have to be clear about what socialism is. The Soviet model turned out to be more oppressive than the one we are living under. China's rebellion led by Mao in the 60's against the Soviet model gave new ammunition to the Left in this country. But it didn't last long, not after Deng discovered the "wonders" of capitalism. In this country, we don't need the slogan frequently heard in China that "getting rich is glorious"; we have enough capitalists. Neither do we need to propagate the profit motive; this country is the champion of the world in this. We need to study carefully the experience of both the Soviet Union and China, especially the experience in the last few years in China. We have to answer for ourselves why it is that all of the so-called socialist countries sooner or later end up on the same road. A new ruling class has emerged in all of them. Is it simply a coincidence or is some kind of law of history in operation? If we don't have a clear idea about this, we are not going to be effective in mobilizing the people in this country for socialism. ■

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*Ping Yong was born and grew up in China. He now lives and works in the U.S.*

## Ourselves Alone

by Tom Goodkind

The class struggle in China is news again. Among those on the U.S. Left interested in China, there are usually two tendencies when big things happen: on the one hand, natural and immediate cynicism; on the other, natural and immediate support. But if your sources, like mine, are limited to the sketchy and often biased accounts found in the Western media, then you can do little more than speculate about what might be going on. I'll do some speculating towards the end of this article, but it will be in the context of something a little more definite, something from the horse's mouth.

In the September 1986 issue of *Monthly Review* there appeared an interview with Su Shaozhi, director of the Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought Institute, Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China. The interview was conducted by Gordon Chang, who teaches Chinese history in California; it has caused and is bound to cause quite a stir among Marxist-Leninists. The reactions will vary, depending on people's views of China, the Soviet Union, and the crisis of Marxism. But at bottom, the Su interview only says what was inevitable; folks who are surprised by it probably just haven't had the time to follow developments in China over the past few years. Or else they've been kidding themselves.

Chang introduces the interview by asserting that "The Cultural Revolution in China...greatly impaired the study and development of Marxist thought in the most populous country in the world." This is a one-sided statement. Too often the Cultural Revolution is analyzed as a policy mistake at the top, an erroneous Party campaign that should never have been launched. But a materialist analysis needs to recognize that the Cultural Revolution, while generally led by a section of the Chinese Communist Party, was

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*Tom Goodkind is an editor of Forward Motion.*

also a mass upheaval, an historic episode of class struggle whose causes and effects can't be reduced to the machinations of a few ultra-leftists in power. Certainly there is evidence that the "left" dogmatism associated with some features of Chinese Marxism during this period discouraged theoretical development, especially in such areas as Comintern history, an appreciation of developments in Western Marxism, and certain problems of socialist democracy. But it is also true that the Cultural Revolution—whatever its results—uncovered for the world to see the central theoretical problem for Marxism in our time: the nature of the socialist transition, and the possibility of capitalist restoration. Whatever its shortcomings as Party policy and whatever its negative (and maybe even disastrous) effects on socialist construction, the Cultural Revolution responded to a genuine problem of historic proportions: how to continue the revolution under socialism, how to overcome the continuing influence and spontaneous reproduction of capitalist economic relations even after the working class has overthrown the exploiting classes and established its own rule.

The upheaval in China thus stimulated enormous theoretical controversy and development not only in that country but throughout the world. The Cultural Revolution posed the theoretical problems of the transition to communism in a mass way and in ways which opened questions that had remained closed since the 1930s. It is difficult to imagine the contributions of Althusser and Bettelheim without the experience of the class struggle that was the Cultural Revolution. And of course it remains difficult to assess the specific effects of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese Marxist theory without the benefit of Mao's collected works, which have apparently been suppressed by the Chinese Party (a friend of mine visiting China was told by his apparently authoritative guide that the editor had "resigned").

Finally, it has been ten years since the declared end of the Cultural Revolution, which itself lasted ten years. If it is fair to condemn the effects on Marxist theory of that episode in Chinese history, it is fair to ask today what have been the theoretical effects of the *repudiation* of the Cultural Revolution. It is with that question in mind that I want to consider some of Su's theoretical conclusions.

Gordon Chang claims that "The policies inspired by Deng Xiaoping have reawakened China these past



China Pictorial

*The Cultural Revolution, while generally led by a section of the Chinese Communist Party, was also a mass upheaval whose causes and effects can't be reduced to the machinations of a few ultra-leftists in power.*

six years, not just economically, but ideologically as well." I have not been able to follow developments in China very well, but whatever the calcification of Chinese Marxism during the Cultural Revolution, the interview with Su is anything but evidence of an ideological "reawakening." It certainly represents the consummation of a fundamental change in direction, but there are no new theoretical developments in it that I can see. There is an awareness of certain debates and trends in Western Marxism that was often

absent during the Cultural Revolution, but how familiar Su really is with those debates is thrown into question by his complete mischaracterization of Paul Sweezy's "post-revolutionary society" thesis (on which Sweezy himself comments at the end of the article).

The Su interview is very interesting, and people who read it will obviously make up their own minds about what kind of Marxism his is. But I'd like to point out what I consider to be three or four highlights, with some commentary that will reveal my own prejudices.

First is Su's overall assessment of Mao: "After 1957...most of his thoughts, I think, were wrong and his theories, especially his theory of class struggle in socialist society and the theory of continuous revolution under the proletarian dictatorship were completely wrong." Although not surprising, this is a sweeping and definitive statement. Again, it's difficult to make any independent assessment of this statement without access to Mao's collected works (specifically, his writings after 1957).

Second is Su's view of the nature of socialism. He sets out five "elements of socialism," including public ownership, distribution according to work, a government of the working people, some planned economy in conjunction with commodity economy, and an emphasis on "spiritual civilization" alongside "material civilization". He argues that "if we emphasize the first two factors...there is no danger of returning to capitalism." He says that "the principle of distribution 'to each according to his work'...cannot produce new capitalists since it's according to everyone's work," and Su insists that "it is wrong to say that in socialist society we have the danger of capitalist restoration."

Su sets out a theory of "stages" which includes a transitional stage, a socialist stage and a communist stage. The socialist stage itself contains three periods: early, middle and developed. There is apparently inner-party debate about the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the socialist stage. Su argues that it is clearly necessary in the transitional stage. "But after the victory of the socialization of private ownership, that means after we enter into socialist society, there are different opinions about this." He goes on to say that "now we emphasize peoples' democratic dictatorship..." For Su, "after the socialization of private ownership, the ex-

ploiting class has vanished, in the class sense of class. Of course the remnants of class ideas and so forth still exist. We say there still exists some class struggle. This class struggle is different than before in the transitional period. Some of this class struggle is something with the character of class struggle but not class itself since the exploiting class does not exist."

So upon socialization of private ownership, the bourgeoisie disappears (though some of its ideas remain). So long as public ownership and distribution according to work are emphasized, capitalist restoration is an impossibility, because a new exploiting class cannot arise. There is really nothing new here: we've heard one or another version of this since Stalin. The principle of distribution according to work may add a new wrinkle, but (as Sweezy points out in his comment) who knows what it really means? After all, Lee Iacocca "works," doesn't he? And the work he does provides work for thousands of auto workers. So why shouldn't he get \$800,000 a year?

But there's a more fundamental problem here, aside from the social definition of "work". If someone works hard, they can get rich. And if they can get rich, at a certain point they can employ others, especially where there remains some part of the economy which is not under "public ownership". Obviously there is some basis contained in the distribution principle itself for the germination of an embryonic capitalist class. This is not a terrible thing, but in a society which says that "to get rich is glorious" and discounts even the *possibility* of capitalist restoration, it's hard to see how the spontaneous development of capitalism—in the countryside as well as the state enterprises—won't be encouraged.

Su's view of the dictatorship of the proletariat is interesting first in that it so closely parallels the Soviet view of the "state of the whole people," and second in that it reverses the usual order of things. In China it was during the early phases of the socialist transition that the "peoples' democratic dictatorship" was called for: that was essentially the alliance at the state level of the working class and the peasantry. As the socialization of the economy progressed and as proletarian political power was consolidated, a transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat was appropriate. Of course, it's not clear why any dictatorship—democratic or otherwise—is nec-



A crowd gathered when this statue of Stalin was toppled in Hungary recently. Though criticism of Stalin has become accepted in many of the countries that call themselves socialist, his view of the "state of the whole people" is very much alive.

essary where exploiting classes and real class struggle no longer exist.

Su's view of "the socialist stage" is significant in that it essentially undercuts the concept of socialism as an unstable transition between capitalism and communism. Socialism becomes a definitive point at which public ownership is dominant and the exploiting classes are eliminated. Steady progress through the three "periods" of socialism is virtually assured through the development of the productive forces.

Su's assurances about the Chinese Party's ability to stay on the socialist road are undercut by his analysis of who else is on that road. This brings up the third thing worth noting in the interview: the new view of the USSR. Su says that, "In the past we once said that the Soviet Union had restored capitalism, but now we think that was wrong." This is a natural and inevitable conclusion of Su's other views, and in fact it is not all that new. In late

1979 the Chinese Communist Party apparently circulated a document summarizing a debate in the Academy of Social Sciences and concluding that the USSR remains socialist because its means of production are owned by the state (see "China Said to Weigh Lifting Revisionist Tag on Soviet," *New York Times*, November 10, 1979, p.3). But Su goes further. He actually argues that, while "China is in the beginning of the early stage [of socialism],...Russia and some Eastern European countries are in the middle stage." So not only are these countries socialist, they are further along the socialist road than China—closer to our goal of communism. There can be only one basis for this assessment: the development of those societies' productive forces. In fact, Su's criterion of distribution according to work really falls by the wayside here: who would care to argue that in the Soviet Union, or Poland, or Hungary, or East Germany, distribution really occurs according to

work? And clearly other criteria, such as a "government of the working people" or an emphasis on "spiritual civilization", can't be all that important when push comes to shove if we are to take such countries as our models.

A fourth point worth noting—and this flows directly from the new view of Soviet society—is the new view of the international situation. A lot of the changes are only implied, but they are nevertheless unmistakable. The ultimate implication is the abandonment of the Three Worlds thesis. A crucial underpinning of the division of the world into three is the analysis of the First World, which comprises two imperialist superpowers whose contention for global hegemony threatens us with world war. Since he abandons the notion of two imperialist superpowers, Su moves inevitably towards a "two camps" analysis, pitting the socialist against the imperialist camp. He argues that "Lenin's theory of the inevitability of wars between imperialist countries is no longer valid...because now the developed capitalist countries have basic common interests and multinational companies are very influential, and also the contradiction between the Soviet Union and the United States is greater than the contradiction among the imperialist countries." But I don't know of anyone who thinks that Lenin's thesis in today's world means that the U.S. will go to war with Japan or West Germany, although the continuation by other means of today's trade war politics is certainly not a long-run impossibility.

What we all want to know is whether the two superpowers will go to war in their quest for global hegemony. Su leaves open the possibility that the contradiction between the Soviet Union and the United States may lead to war, but it seems clear that such a war would be one between the imperialist camp, with its "basic common interests," and the socialist camp. Su's only mention of superpowers comes in the following sentence: "Of course local wars continue and in the background there may be some superpowers." It's hard to see how any kind of united front against the two superpowers can still be the Chinese position, if Su's views are authoritative. (Of course, his views may *not* be authoritative, and the Party may maintain its two superpower position coupled with silence on the nature of Soviet society.)

By the way, some folks critical of the post-Mao leadership have argued that the development of the

Three Worlds thesis was part and parcel of the rise of Chinese revisionism, and that it represented Deng's revisionist contribution on international matters. They saw the thesis as the theoretical justification for an international policy of rapprochement with U.S. imperialism. But that rapprochement has not really occurred in any strategic sense. Most opponents of the Three Worlds thesis (even, in subtle ways, the Albanian leadership) attacked it from a position weighted towards the Soviet world-view, and it is interesting to note that as Chinese theory begins to resemble that of the Soviet Party, the Three Worlds framework tends to dissolve. That this framework should be a late casualty of the general rejection of Mao's post-1957 thinking is difficult to explain for those wedded to the ultra-left critique of the Three Worlds thesis.

There are a number of other interesting and important points in the Su interview, but I'd like to get on to the significance of all this for Marxists who trace their roots to the "Maoist" section of the U.S. Left. As I said in the beginning, the revision of the Chinese Communist Party's earlier positions on the Soviet Union, the international situation and the nature of socialism was inevitable, given a whole series of theoretical and political steps taken by that party since 1978 or so. That these steps are now approaching some of their logical conclusions only highlights the huge theoretical tasks before us.

One of the unity documents of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization [available through *Forward Motion*] declares that the Soviet Union is "not socialist." It refers to the USSR as a social-imperialist superpower, "one of the two main enemies of the world's peoples." The article doesn't have a lot to say about the nature of socialism in general, but the group's "foundation stone and starting point in looking at the present-day crisis of socialism" is presented as follows: "The task of socialism is in essence one of making the masses of people into the conscious and active masters of society. Socialist construction must involve people learning how to control their own destinies through the development of social, political and economic institutions and structures which actually help them do it."

Now the Chinese Communist Party is saying something very different. And the stock of the "capitalist restoration thesis" is at an all-time low on the Left. Should the FRSO and others therefore

abandon their views? Obviously not. It was the Chinese Party that first advanced the thesis of capitalist restoration and described Soviet social-imperialism. But those of us who adopted it thoughtfully did not do so because the Chinese Party said it. In fact, their position was often noted as anecdotal, descriptive, and certainly no more than a first step. All we could do was look at the Soviet role in the world, examine a little bit the nature of contemporary Soviet society, investigate some of the history of class struggle in the USSR, and take a position. We never had a true historical materialist analysis of the USSR, and neither did anyone else, not the Chinese, not the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), not the Revolutionary Communist Party, not Paul Sweezy, not Charles Bettelheim. We had a position, based on some real evidence, and based on a certain theoretical framework—a certain understanding about the nature of the socialist transition—within which a whole set of facts could be understood. Personally, I don't believe the Chinese Party has any more analysis now of Soviet society than they had before; but they've changed their position, mainly because their theoretical framework has changed. What we need to do is study, discuss and work on our theoretical framework. I think the FRSO's theoretical framework, even as evidenced by those paltry statements in its Unity Documents, is more Marxist than that evidenced in Su's interview. But it has worn very thin.

Ever since the capitalist restoration thesis first appeared, significant arguments have been raised against it. The straight-up pro-Soviet positions have not been as important as the arguments of people like Sweezy or Mandel. Some of those arguments have been answered at great length by some very capable people such as Charles Bettelheim and others. No doubt there have been many weaknesses on both sides of the debate, and obviously the question remains open. We need to make our own independent assessment of these arguments, including whatever the Chinese Communist Party may contribute to the debate in the future. And most of all, we need to develop our own independent vision of socialism, and decide on our own whether we think we can point to it anywhere in the world today.

Our vision of socialism has to be based both on the concrete conditions of the class struggle in the United States and on some theoretical conception of what socialist society is all about in general. I think

that conception will have to maintain certain (if not most) elements of the framework which has carried us this far. I think we will have to insist that socialism is an unstable transition period between capitalism and communism, one during which classes and class struggle continue to exist, and during which capitalist restoration is always a possibility. We will want to insist on a continuous struggle to reduce the distinctions between mental and manual labor, between tasks of execution and tasks of administration, and on an ever-widening effort to empower the masses in the broadest possible democracy. We likewise should continue to insist on the enforcement of a democratic dictatorship over those classes and class fractions which seek to restore bourgeois rule, and on the integral connection of this state power with the empowerment of the masses.

The relation of political parties to state power, the nature and extent of political freedoms in socialist society, the autonomy of mass organizations such as trade unions, the organization of the economy and so on are all problems which demand our attention and imagination.

It is impossible to postpone forever having something to say about whether and where socialism actually exists. I don't believe groups like the FRSO or others who have held similar views should change their basic position on the USSR. It may take us awhile to work up the historical materialist analysis, but facts are facts. If what the Soviet people have is socialism, then we should think about going for something else. Internationally, Soviet policies are those of aggression, subjugation and preparation for war. Afghanistan and Eastern Europe are not small matters. Soviet subs off the Swedish coast, Soviet efforts in North Africa and Southeast Asia, the militarization of the Chinese border, even apparently insignificant foreign policy blunders such as their earlier ties with the Argentine military junta or their recent support for Marcos and Nazi president Kurt Waldheim—all these are indications of a superpower in pursuit of global hegemony. Domestically the existence of a ruling elite and an exploited working class and peasantry can't be denied. The impossibility of any significant internal opposition, an economy in shambles, no democracy or political freedoms of any kind, psychological torture, mass demoralization and political demobilization, and so on—all these are facts which can help ground our theory, and which



Afghan rebels continue their resistance to the Soviet takeover of their country.

can't be explained away by talk of different roads to socialism. And the facts of Soviet history, from the Stalin era through Hungary and Czechoslovakia, can't be denied either.

### Chinese Society Today

Many people will agree that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is fundamentally guided not by Marxism but by various shades of non-Marxist ideologies. If such a party has been at the helm of the USSR for thirty years or more, we have to ask where it wants to take things in that country. If despite its international policies and their connection with internal economic demands, despite mounting evidence of harsh treatment of Jews and other national minorities, despite great inequalities and imbalances in economic and political life, despite the continuing misery of the majority of the peasantry—if despite these things, someone does not believe that an exploitative class society has definitively returned to the Soviet Union, we should at least be able to agree on the direction the ruling party there would like to take the country. And we should be able to agree that there is little organized resistance to that direction from among the working class or other sections of the people. This is not a workers' state. Perhaps it is a new type of exploitative class society (the Sweezy thesis), which means a new mode of

production, or perhaps it is a new type of state capitalism. But it is not socialism.

Working out a position on the nature of Chinese society is still more difficult. I think the Chinese people remain in the transition period between capitalism and communism. I also think that, on the whole and despite some rise in the standard of living among certain sections of the people, the Chinese Party has been leading them backwards in that transition during the past five years or so, though I hope I'm wrong about this. In any case, the defeat of socialism in the USSR did not occur overnight, and I don't see how we can say anything decisive about China without seeing how the class struggle plays itself out over a fairly long period of time. This should be obvious especially in the immediate situation, which is complex, unstable, and almost impossible for anyone not on the Chinese Central Committee to really understand. I definitely think the situation in China can be reversed for the better, and without the violent overthrow of the state power such as would probably have to occur in the Soviet Union.

China's international role remains mainly positive, although there might be some surprises in store if a "two camps" analysis takes hold. There are fewer and fewer of the pro-U.S. gaffes of the late 70s, which is good, but as relations are normalized with the USSR we might expect to see more of the pro-

Jarulzelski, anti-Solidarity type of position (that was a strange position for a Party emphasizing "democracy of a high level," wasn't it?).

Domestically, certain political and cultural freedoms exist which appear to have been suppressed during the Cultural Revolution. Intellectuals especially have more freedom today than yesterday, although the limits of that freedom are currently subjects not just of political debate but of mass struggle, resignations, firings and purges. Whether there really exists more political freedom for the expression of mass dissent is unclear. After all, "big-character posters," which were a mass democratic innovation not of the Cultural Revolution but of a 1956 anti-Rightist campaign, have been discouraged for several years, while "Democracy Wall" itself was hastily torn down, which if nothing else symbolizes the lack of freedom for mass public criticism of the Party. And the anti-Solidarity position indicates the relative lack of freedom from state control for the trade unions. The Left (or ultra-left) obviously has little freedom in China today, and no one has the freedom to re-view Mao's later works.

Economically many Chinese seem to be better off, and some are even getting rich. Clearly there has been enormous progress in technical modernization in certain areas. At the same time, there are some emerging social relations (such as the family contract system in agriculture) which may have undercut both modernization and the socialist distribution principle (see William Hinton's letter to *Monthly Review* in the April 1984 issue, in which he explains how "In many cases the new system has led, not to distribution based on work performed, but to distribution based on means of production contracted with no limit on the amount that may be contracted or on the number of laborers who may be hired for wages"). And significant class differences appear to be re-emerging in both countryside and city.

Millions of Chinese appear to like the way things are going, and everyone says it's hard to find a good word for the previous direction. That has to mean something. But it also seems clear that widescale ideological and political demobilization has occurred with respect to continuing the transition to communism. Whether the current campaign against "bourgeois liberalism" will effectively counter or further that demobilization remains to be seen. It can be expected that as class differences continue to

emerge, class conflict will sharpen. Whether the transition is definitively reversed will depend on the outcome of these conflicts. Just as it is too soon to conclude that capitalism has been restored, it is silly to refuse to recognize that the transition is in danger. When leading theorists of a ruling party stop talking about the danger of capitalist restoration and even declare it a virtual impossibility, and when talk of socialist construction is completely overshadowed by emphasis on technical and economic improvements, something is going on.

Sketchy reports of the recent student protests and the self-criticism and removal from office of Hu Yaobang add new wrinkles for anyone trying to assess the struggle for socialism in China. What we're finding is that there has been considerable debate during the past five years pertaining to issues of capitalist restoration. In 1982, for example, Zhao Ziyang (Hu's successor) made a speech sounding an alarm "to quickly alert all party members to the question of capitalist inroads" (*Boston Globe*,



Fox Butterfield/NYT

Modernization of agriculture in villages like Long Bow have proven profitably. But the price may be the re-emergence of significant class differences.

1/18/87). And now, amid new talk of "bourgeois liberalism," "the principle of Communist Party leadership," and the "dictatorship of the proletariat," Deputy Prime Minister Li Peng has argued that "the party is guarding against a capitalist comeback..." (*Boston Globe*, 1/18/87). Shanghai writer and editor Wang Ruowang has been expelled from the Communist Party for "advocating the capitalist road" (*Boston Globe*, 1/15/87), a charge that has not been heard in a long time.

What should we make of all this? Obviously the renewed stress on the dictatorship of the proletariat contradicts Su Shaozhi's emphasis on "peoples' democratic dictatorship" and may signify a conclusion to the inner-party debate of which he spoke. But while some of us like to hear these phrases bandied about again, we have to admit that talk of principles means little in the abstract. Speeches in Poland and the USSR stressing "the principle of Communist Party leadership" must be a dime a dozen, and whatever has happened since 1925 in the Soviet Union has happened under the guise of a good deal of Leninist orthodoxy. If Marxist principles are being invoked in China in order to inspire mass criticism of bourgeois liberalism, that's a good thing. But if they are being cited as justification for curbing political democracy, suppressing mass dissent, and strengthening the state apparatus as a power separate from and above the people, then look out.

### Continuing the Discussion

Over the last few years many Marxists have spoken eloquently in the pages of *Forward Motion* and elsewhere about the crisis of Marxism or socialism, the need for developing our own vision of socialist society, the necessity to do our own historical materialist analyses of actual attempts at socialist construction, and so on. But most, and I definitely include myself here, have been complacent about actually doing this work. There's always been a hidden assumption that somehow, somewhere, somebody else would do it. There has always been and always will be too much of everything else to get done, so we leave it to history. I called this paper "ourselves

alone" (Sinn Fein) because that's who we can count on to come up with the answers. And it's time we all resolved to get down to business. I've heard people compare theoretical work to planting crops: it's a long wait for pay-off time, but if you don't plant the seeds someday you're going to starve.

Finally, I'd like to recommend a few readings from the sectarian archives. Although they are from a very narrow range of sources, they are things which can help shore up people's theoretical confidence. First, there are a few pages (6-10 and 145-152) in *What Went Wrong?: Articles and Letters on the U.S. Communist Left in the 1970's*, edited by Charles Sarkis (New York, 1982). These pages concern an exchange of letters between the Proletarian Unity League and the Workers Congress, two 1970s Marxist-Leninist groups, on the capitalist restoration thesis; they're pretty amusing, and the general approach—while insufficient—remains valid today. Then there are the following pages in the Proletarian Unity League's polemic with the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee entitled, *On the "Progressive Role" of the Soviet Union and Other Dogmas* (New York, 1978; pp. 31-61). This polemic gets very shrill at times, and perhaps a few points have not stood the test of time. But there remain a lot of compelling arguments about the theoretical basis of the "united front against two superpowers" position.

Third, I recommend a short piece from *Forward Motion* of January 1982 entitled "How to Think About the Soviet Union." This helpful article outlines four contending positions among Marxists on the class character of the Soviet Union, and tries to take some first steps in "rethinking the basis of the capitalist restoration thesis." Finally, I strongly recommend an article written by Ira Gerstein for *Theoretical Review*, Number 25, November-December 1981. It is entitled "Capitalist Restoration or Transition to Socialism?" and runs sixteen large pages. It takes as its starting point a critique of the Goldfield/Rothenberg book *The Myth of Capitalism Reborn*, and while it is really rough going in places, it's well worth the effort.

All of these articles are available through *Forward Motion*.

January, 1987

# China Advances On the Socialist Road



by Mic Kelly

More than anything else, the recent interview with Su Shaoshi, the director of the Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought Institute of Social Sciences in Beijing (*Monthly Review*, Sept. '86) indicates that Chinese Marxists really have "emancipated their minds" and have taken to heart the approach of seeking truth from facts. It is remarkably free from the stereotyped style that characterized the theoretical initiatives of the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" and offers some interesting insights into the nature of socialism, the possibility of inter-imperialist war, and some other general problems of Marxism.

As Gordon Chang (who conducted the interview) notes in his introduction, the views expressed by Su are his own. They are not "official or authoritative." At times they correspond with the positions adopted by the Communist Party of China (CPC) leadership.

For example, his discussion of the "five elements of socialism" is generally similar to the "seven characteristics" put forward at the 12th Party Congress in 1982, although, interestingly enough, one characteristic missing in Su's five elements is "highly developed productive forces" which will eventually surpass the capitalist countries.

At other times, Su's views seem to be different from the primary thrust of the CPC line. For instance, he states that if the principles of public ownership and distribution according to work are adhered to, there will be no danger of China leaving the socialist road. On the face of it, this seems at variance with the resolution on the "Guiding Principles for Building a Socialist Society with an Advanced Culture and Ideology" adopted by the CPC Central Committee last year.

Stressing the vital role of transforming societal

superstructure, the resolution states: "Our success in building socialism depends on our efforts to build a society with a socialist culture and ideology." The resolution also points out that "improvement of the work style of the Party is crucial to its very survival. Now that the Party is in power, the question of paramount importance is whether its members will wholeheartedly serve the people or behave like bureaucrats and overlords, riding roughshod over the people and abusing power for personal gain." To ensure that the Party does not become dominated by "overlords," the resolution calls for "effective systems of internal and popular supervision to monitor the work of leading cadre at all levels."

In a sense, Su is correct: if public ownership is *genuine* public ownership and if distribution is in *practice* "to each according to their work," capitalism cannot make a comeback. The point he does not go into is how to ensure adherence to these principles. The "Guiding Principles" resolution does speak to this, and it is being dealt with from a somewhat different angle in the ongoing struggle against bourgeois liberalization.

Putting aside for a moment the issue of to what degree Su's ideas coincide with the line of the CPC, it is useful to put his theoretical work in a general context. Since 1978 there has been a big advance in the level of Marxist theoretical work being done in China. What would have been "forbidden zones" ten years ago are now wide open. For example, not long ago, *Beijing Review* carried an article on the debate going on among Chinese historians concerning the role of class struggle as the motive force in history. It stated that while the majority of historians continue to hold that class struggle is central to historical development, there are four other schools of thought challenging this.

Of course, one response to this might be that it is terrible that the key tenet of historical materialism is under fire and that this is just one more indication that China is going down the tubes. But it is difficult to see how, without investigation and the contention of different points of view, the science of historical materialism will continue to make any advances. It is also an interesting fact that while some China scholars claim that Chinese historians "no longer champion the historical progressiveness of the peasant wars," the same article points out that this view is held by a relatively small minority.

Anyone who doesn't think that the approach of letting a "hundred schools of thought contend" is a good one should take a look at some of the material that passed itself off as historical research during the period of the Cultural Revolution. For example, much of the material that was produced in the Campaign to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius was not historical research at all; it had more to do with serving some narrow political ends than it did with historical materialism. Discussion of the "Duke of Chao" had more to do with a then-living Premier than it ever did with a long-dead aristocrat.

The ultra-left wasn't alone in the practice of using the dead to beat the living, and the practice of waging line struggle via historical analogy probably had more to do with deterioration of inner-party democracy than it did with anything else. Still today's turn toward seeking truth from facts and emancipating one's mind (which is defined as bringing the subjective in accordance with the objective) are things that should be welcomed by Marxists everywhere.

## Making Marxism Serve China

What impressed me favorably about the Su interview, or for that matter about the CPC's approach as a whole, is the determination to make Marxism work. To its credit, the Chinese Communist movement has long had this as a hallmark. From the late 50s onward, the leading line in the CPC was that the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was principal in socialist society. In practice this meant consistently broadening the targets of class struggle, laying a great deal of stress on revolutionizing the relations of production and the superstructure, and tending to downplay economic work. During the times when the economy was taken up in a "big way," the approach was not very scientific.

The CPC has since then summed up this set of policies as an error. It now sees the principal contradiction between the underdeveloped forces of production and the growing material and cultural needs of the people. In turn, the Chinese Party has shifted the center of gravity of its work to the economic sphere—i.e., the four modernizations.

The decision to adopt this orientation didn't fall from the sky. It was the result of a rigorous process of summation undertaken by the CPC following the

Cultural Revolution. In the course of this process, the CPC deepened its understanding of how setting up relations of production without corresponding advances in the forces of production, coupled with serious failure in applying the mass line, has caused severe damage to Chinese socialism. The movement to establish People's Communes in the countryside during the Great Leap Forward in 1958 is but one illustration of this. The people's communes were an untested form launched before the system of cooperatives was fully consolidated. Because the contradictions in the rural areas were tough and the masses of peasants wanted change, the material basis existed for a large scale mobilization (although it appears doubtful that the entry of 99% of the peasantry into the communes was voluntary).

In late 1958, the Central Committee stated "it seems the attainment of communism in China is not a remote future event," and as things developed, relations of production were put in place without the proper material foundation. The result was fairly widespread outbreaks of starvation, though bad weather and the cut-off of Soviet aid greatly magnified the difficulties. In the early 60s, it was necessary to return to organizing production along lines that weren't radically different from quite a few of the cooperatives.

Since 1978, not only have mistakes of the past been scrutinized, in addition real changes have taken place in the focus of the Party's work. The key to this has been a set of sweeping economic reforms, which have altered the previously existing relations of production (as well as some ideological assumptions) so as to unleash people's enthusiasm for developing the productive forces. In the countryside, this has meant making use of the responsibility system, frequently based on individual households within the framework of unified management.

While problems have cropped up, this is only to be expected in a situation where great changes accompanied by a large amount of experimentation are underway. That the material conditions of people's lives have improved in a somewhat dramatic way is indisputable. Figures released following the last five year plan also show that the increase in rural income has had the effect of narrowing the income gap between the cities and countryside.

In an indirect way, Su underlines the importance of economic reforms when he deals with Chang's

question on the crisis of Marxism. He states that the Cultural Revolution caused a lot of people to lose confidence in Marxism and that the Chinese Party had to "do much work to raise the prestige of Marxism." He then makes a very important point saying "the basic thing we have to do is to show our people that we succeeded because we put Marxism into practice correctly, which includes the development of productivity, the realization of the four modernizations, and the raising of the people's material and cultural living standards. These are more persuasive than words."

In considering these economic reforms and the process of making Marxism work, it is legitimate to ask if it is Marxism that is being made use of, or is it something else. This can really only be answered by undertaking an in-depth look at the existing conditions and the actual content of the reforms. It should be noted that there is a struggle both in the Party and among the people over what directions the reforms should take. An editorial in the January 6, 1987, *People's Daily* highlighted this by stating, "When we talk about economic structural reform, the [advocates of bourgeois liberalism] want to take the capitalist road; and when we talk about political structural reform, they want to copy capitalist practices."

Generally speaking, the CPC has decided that there is a dialectical relationship between the reforms and the four cardinal principles. First advanced by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, the four principles are the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship (or dictatorship of the proletariat), the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. In its annual New Year's Message, *People's Daily* stresses that "adherence to the four cardinal principles is the basic guarantee for making the reforms and the open policy a success."

### Su's View of the Soviet Union

Many people have expressed a fair amount of anxiety over Su's assessment of the USSR: he argues that the Soviet Union has arrived at a more advanced stage of socialism than China has. A couple of points on this are in order. First, to my knowledge, this formulation has not appeared in the Chinese press or in any public documents. Second, it would be alarming if there were any indications that

China planned on following the Soviet model, and was moving towards a departure from the path of "building socialism with Chinese characteristics." Finally, the fact that the CPC regularly continues to denounce the Soviet Union as a superpower seeking hegemony, guilty of great power chauvinism, would not lead us to believe that the CPC wants China to "advance" to the place the USSR happens to be at.

It would be incorrect to conclude from Su's interview and CPC statements which upon occasion have referred to the USSR as socialist that China is now moving close to the "two camp" theory [i.e., the notion that the world ultimately divides into socialist and capitalist "camps" or geopolitical groupings—ed.] or that it has ceased to hold to the main elements of the Three Worlds thesis. Since the early 80s, there have been relatively few public references to the Three Worlds thesis. This is probably because the major document on this topic, "Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism" (*Beijing Review*, #45, 1977) has formulations within it which are not in accordance with reality.

For example, a major theme developed in that article was that the Soviet Union was the most dangerous source of war. At a time when U.S. imperialism is systematically attempting to reassert itself, can it still be argued that this is the case? Also, because the article held that the Soviet Union was ruled by "monopoly capitalists"—the implication being that Soviet social imperialism was guided by the same economic laws as U.S. imperialism—a world war between the two superpowers was a very immediate threat. This ultra-left conception led China to over-emphasize the development of defense work to the detriment of the economy, an error which was only corrected recently with the decision to cut defense spending and to demobilize one million military personnel.

Despite the modifications in the Chinese international line, the main points of the Three Worlds thesis are maintained. The 12th Party Congress affirmed that there are two superpowers in "pursuit of world domination" and that the "emergence of the third world on the international arena after World War II is a primary event of our time." The themes that the two superpowers are the main enemies of the world's people, that the second world (Europe and Japan) are relative independent of the two su-

perpowers, and that the third world is the main force in the struggle for peace and progress continue to be central points in the CPC international line.

### People's Democratic Dictatorship

It has been suggested that the formulation, "Peoples Democratic Dictatorship," closely resembles the Soviet "State of the Whole People" and therefore there is something wrong with it. This is off on several counts. The basic problem with the CPSU's "State of the Whole People" was that it completely negated the existence of class struggle within the framework of socialism. The CPC has held and continues to hold that, while internal class struggle is not the principal contradiction, class struggles will continue to exist within certain limits for a long time to come and may even grow more acute under certain conditions ("owing to certain domestic factors and influences from abroad"). (*Resolution on CPC History*, CPC Central Committee, 1981). In this view, Deng Xiaoping noted in a 1982 speech on economic crime, "Unless we take it seriously and firmly stop [economic crime], the question of whether our Party will change its nature may arise. This is not just alarmist talk." Also, the current struggle against bourgeois liberalism is a class struggle, a struggle between the socialist road and the capitalist road.

The democratic dictatorship of the people was defined by Mao as the rule of the working class and the peasantry under the leadership of the working class, via its party. In 1962 Mao stated, "To practice democracy among the people and to practice dictatorship over the enemies of the people, these two aspects are inseparable. When these two aspects are combined, this is then proletarian dictatorship, or it may be called people's democratic dictatorship." The 1981 resolution of CPC history notes that by putting forward this formulation, "Comrade Mao Zedong enriched the Marxist-Leninist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat."

The idea of a People's Democratic Dictatorship has a number of strengths, especially in light of the specific conditions prevailing in China. Because the vast majority of the Chinese population is comprised of the peasantry, proletarian political power cannot exist unless the working class, led by its Party, enters into an active alliance with the peasants. It is impossible to exercise a dictatorship over rural reac-

tion, or for the people to take hold of state power unless the non-exploiting elements of the countryside are mobilized.

Also, the formulation, "Peoples Democratic Dictatorship"—i.e., dictatorship over reactionaries and democracy for the people—embodies the central political tasks that will face the Chinese people in the transition to communism. In a 1981 speech dealing with this topic, Central Committee member Deng Liqun stated, "Without democracy there will be no socialism. The political goal we have established for socialism is to put into practice a high degree of socialist democracy, and only if we have this high degree of democracy can we practice the most powerful dictatorship over a minority. This will guarantee the development of our socialist system, finally leading us to communism." Returning to this theme two years later in a speech to participants at the National People's Congress, Deng stated, "To avoid bureaucracy and degeneration, it is necessary to maximize inner-Party democracy and people's democracy and to supervise from below Party organization and state functionaries at all levels."

While it is beyond the scope of this article to examine all the democratic reforms that have been carried out over the past several years, or to examine in depth the new ones that will go into effect this fall, it is interesting to look at how the new views of democracy and class struggle have affected the current campaign against bourgeois liberalism. Generally speaking, the CPC leadership has treated the contradiction between the advocates of the capitalist road and the socialist road as a manifestation of class struggle among the people. Even the more extreme advocates of bourgeois liberalism and "total westernization" have not been jailed or deprived of their civil rights. In some cases they have been expelled from the Party, with whose principles they disagree, or they have been removed from their posts in the press or educational apparatus. For example, Fang Lishi, a major promoter of "total westerniza-

tion" and one of the chief players in the recent student unrest, continues to be a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences where he is still making contributions in his field. Likewise, former Chair of the CPC Hu Yaobang has not been consigned to political oblivion, despite the fact that he displayed insufficient energy and attention to combating bourgeois liberalism: he has made a self-criticism and continues to be active in the leading circles of the country's political life.

The practice of using different methods to deal with contradictions, and sharply drawing a line of demarcation between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions is an incredible advance over what came to characterize the period of the cultural revolution.

### Conclusion

The liberation of China in 1949 freed one fourth of humanity from the rule of imperialism, setting into motion the most dramatic social revolution of our era. Standing on the rostrum of Tienanmen Square, the late Mao Zedong announced to the world, "the Chinese people have stood up." The victory of socialism in China was an inspiration to revolutionaries everywhere.

Today, while different conclusions can be drawn from the Chinese experience, some of which will be more materialist than others, perhaps the most important lesson is that Marxism-Leninism can only have life when it is applied to a specific situation. It is in that application that Marxism itself is developed. In my opinion, that is exactly what China is doing, and while American Communists cannot copy what has been done in China, there is a great deal to be learned from the approach being used there. ■

*Mic Kelly is a student activist at the University of Minnesota. Edited by Minneapolis-based free-lance journalist Kim Tedrow.*

# CHANGING CONDITIONS

## Spring Tidings — I

Ah, Pearlygate.

Every scandal has a central vein of dirt. In the Boesky/insider trading affair, it's greed. In the Iran/contra business it is, arguably, stupidity—Bud McFarlane clutching his autographed Bible in the Teheran airport. But you have to hand it to these teevee preachers; they know how to throw a *scandal*. Sin, brothers and sisters, S-I-N.

Adultery. Blackmail. Hypocrisy. Innocence drugged and assaulted. A preacher seduced and betrayed. Soap opera heartbreak. Substance abuse. Unnatural practices like oral sex. Pleas for forgiveness. Sleaze abounding. And all this was only the first round of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's tribulations. As FM goes to press, another minister has revealed that the upper levels of the PTL club were riddled with spouse swapping, sodomy, commerce with prostitutes, and, the ultimate horror, homosexuality.

Delightful in themselves, the lurid details also are a very helpful way of telling Pearlygate apart from the ongoing Boesky/insider trading scandal. Marxists have often argued that *how* religion is practiced in any given period is conditioned in large part by the way the economic system is organized in that period. You couldn't ask for closer parallels than those exposed by Pearlygate.

What we've seen is a corporate entity, the multi-million dollar PTL empire, suddenly faced by a hostile takeover bid. Rival evangelist Reverend Jimmy Swaggart made his play based on manipulation of insider information, namely the documentation of PTL Jim Bakker's terrycloth-clad assignation with Jessica Hahn and the subsequent hush money payments. The PTL board turned to a classic '80s corporate maneuver, the "white knight" defense. The outsider invited in to reorganize and restore faith in the corporation is Jerry Falwell, the fundamentalist toadstool best known for assembling the so-called Moral Majority. The Bakkers meanwhile were hanging on to

their "golden parachute," a costly package of retirement goodies guaranteed to top management when they're dumped.

Looking beyond this corporate metaphor, which other observers have noted, the underlying economics of Pearlygate parallel just as closely the difficult and transitional period the American capitalist economy is in. An ongoing revolution in communications and information processing has been one of the main factors driving and reforming the economy. That revolution made possible teevee empires like PTL, the 700 Club, and so on. The idea of mass media preaching isn't new, but it was with the growth in the last decade and a half of cable and satellite communications technology, not to mention incredibly sophisticated direct mail programs, that the television preacher came of age. A whole new audience, tens of millions strong, was forged—and milked mercilessly for donations. But as with other new products, market saturation has become a problem. Cathode-ray churches geared to rapid growth are finding new "parishioners" hard to come by. Diversification, like PTL's Heritage USA "Christian theme park", is one response. At bottom, though, the capitalist imperative "expand or die" means that it's time to fight it out with other competing television programs for audience, and let's be clear, donations. Even while the PTL takeover was on, Oral Roberts made his famous "If y'all don't give me 8 1/2 million right now, God's gonna take me home" pitch, to the mingled embarrassment and envy of other preachers.

Even though the Pearlygate scandal is at bottom a manifestation of economic competition, any useful analysis has to consider other aspects of the situation as well. One of the most important is the drastic nature of Jerry Falwell's appointment to head the PTL ministry. Unlike the Bakkers, Swaggart and most television preachers Falwell is not a pentecostal, a charismatic. He is a rock-ribbed fundamentalist of

Southern Baptist persuasion. Pentecostals and fundamentalists agree that the Bible is literal truth and that salvation is available only to Christians who are "born again." But doctrinaire fundamentalists like Falwell do not believe in the "gifts of the spirit" ("charisma" is the Greek word for these gifts)—healing, working miracles, prophesying, speaking in tongues—which are the heart of modern Pentecostalism. Jerry is playing a tricky game, since the standard PTL guest engages in behaviors, which Falwell's school believes have only three possible sources: charlatanism, mental disorders, or *possession by Satan himself*.

Falwell's acceptance of the white knight role was probably motivated by a desire to control PTL's considerable assets, but he is also the man who got the two tendencies working together in the Moral Majority in the '70s. Yoking the two more closely would greatly increase their, and his, political clout. While the pentecostal preachers surely share his political agenda, they are equally sure to use the theological differences to challenge his bid to control and remold PTL. The beleaguered Bakkers have announced that they want back in, citing Falwell's views, and Jimmy Swaggart has been working himself into a daily froth preaching from I Corinthians 12 and suggesting that the Lord can't think much of Falwell if He won't even let Jerry heal the occasional goiter or turn a hurricane or two away from the Florida coast.

Delightful though the scandal and the infighting may be, it doesn't pay to overestimate the long-term effects. Pearlygate is not the beginning of the end for televangelism or the fundamentalist/charismatic right. Donations to the PTL club are up, although new rounds of accusation may finally turn that current. The main point here is that this is no superficial phenomenon that will fold at the first blow. The base for right-wing Christianity is large, it is in keeping with the overall political climate of the last decade and the preachers have been doing their ideological groundwork day in and day out for years. Like Reagan's post-Contragate problems, Pearlygate marks a break in the rightward political momentum, but the forces and political climate built up during the boom in teevee evangelism—like those fostered during the Reagan administration—will be with us for years to come.

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In mid-February, the Brazilian government announced it was suspending interest payments on loans from foreign commercial banks. Suddenly our old friend the international debt crisis was back, once again catapulted into the headlines from the middle of the business section where it had been biding its time for months as the international debt *problem*. The panicky press coverage was no surprise. Brazil is a growing economic power and the largest single debtor nation in the Third World, roughly \$110 billion in the hole. For several years, Brazil has been touted by the U.S. as a model of responsible economic development and of the peaceful transition to "Western-style democracy." Several major banks had to put Brazilian loans into "nonaccrual" (\*ie. dead-beat) status, hammering their predicted profits for '87. BankAmerica alone will drop \$140 million in income unless payments are resumed.

At first glance, this is just the start of another round in the alternating waves of crisis and papering over the debt situation has gone through since first erupting in the 1980s. Two factors, however, suggest the crisis may be entering a new phase. First, the papering-over methods devised so far seem to be reaching their limits. Country-by-country, renegotiation of existing loans has resulted in many cases in a greater percentage of countries' GNP going to debt service. No major debtor has dramatically reduced its burden, even as debtor economies have been devastated. Mexico's economy *contracted* 4% last year.

The second factor has to do with the monstrous U.S. trade deficit and the looming threat of global recession. More and more of America's capitalists are looking to Third World countries, especially in Latin America, for salvation in the form of increased business. Latin imports from the U.S. soared by 338% during the 1970s. Since then, austerity programs demanded by the U.S. and the IMF and the outflow of capital, in the form of dollars, to foreign creditors have hobbled economic growth in those countries. Naturally imports from North American transnationals have fallen like a cinder block. Heavyweight economist Henry Kaufman of Salomon Brothers pontificates that "current efforts to stress adherence to creditor-debtor contractual arrangements are now a powerful limiting force to world economic expansion."

Kaufman's careful wording introduces a very interesting consequence indeed of these developments:

the growth of an approach in U.S. ruling circles which can be summarized as "Throw the big banks to the wolves." A month ago Gary Hart, in a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Sao Paulo, Brazil called the U.S. government "a collection agency for overextended banks" and warned that "full repayment of these loans is no longer tenable as a primary goal of U.S. policy." In this, he is biting a rap that has been pioneered and championed among mainstream Democratic politicians by Bill Bradley. Considering the low esteem in which banks are now held in farm country and energy-producing states, this is not a dumb stance to take. Look for a lot more such rhetoric as November '88 draws closer. The analysis that the big banks caused this mess by massive irresponsible loan policies to recycle the petrodollar glut of the 1970s is now conventional wisdom, found on the op-ed pages of every newspaper in the country.

The banks are fueling the motion against them with a hardass stand. Citicorp Chairman John Reed's position on the current crisis is that no solution is permissible which threatens the banks' embarrassingly large profit margins on Third World debt. To be sure, they feel no heat from the Reagan administration to cut any deals that will cost them.

There's a pseudo-theoretical issue it would be helpful to dispose of here: "The big banks, why that's finance capital, and if finance capital dominates American society, how can they throw themselves to the wolves?" Three points on this. First, the political and strategic dealignment within the ruling class which characterizes the present period (see "Big Changes" in *FM* Aug-Sept '86) includes savage infighting between capitalists. Part of this is the ongoing process of finance capital reorganizing itself in the context of deregulation and reregulation in the banking industry. This is exemplified most notably in the rise of powerful regional bank centers, some of which aren't heavily exposed in foreign debt. Second, the banks have already prepared for the possibility of default and repudiation. For example, though they don't publicize it, there's a whole global market in discounted Third World debt. For nine cents, you can buy a buck's worth of Bolivian debt; a similar claim on the richer, more stable Venezuelan economy will cost you as much as seventy-three cents (figures as of April 7). Third, even if a coalition of capitalist forces, politicians and popular strata take a strong

shot at the big banks, the result will be a compromise, in which Manufactures Hanover, Bankers Trust and the like will survive and no doubt prosper. (BankAmerica may go belly-up, but it might anyway. Someone else will just grab its assets.)

There's a preview of one form such a compromise may take; a program being test driven in the Philippines right now. The government pays off its debts at close to full value—but in financial instruments denominated in pesos, not dollars. The banks then sell these pesos for dollars or yen or another "major" currency to transnational firms which want to invest or expand their holdings in the Philippines.

And here we can clearly see a new set of contradictions developing. Direct imperialist investment in, and control of, the growing productive sectors of Third World countries will expand more rapidly again, enriching the metropolis and distorting development. This classical form of capital export would not replace but go hand-in-hand with the kind of debt peonage which, for example, played the main role in draining \$132 billion in capital out of Latin America over the last five years. You don't have to be a big-time political economist to predict some of the results—more runaway shops here, greater misery in the Third World, further expansion of global manufacturing overcapacity, intensified anti-imperialist resistance from both the people and forces among the national bourgeoisie, etc.

In short, near-term global repudiation followed by the collapse of the American banking system and a re-run of the Great Depression is not in the offing. More likely the profit drive of the banks will continue to deform the growth of the global economy and reproduce dependence, misery, instability and dangerous crises. Developments in domestic and world politics seem to be aligning some important forces against the giant banks. Taking advantage of this opening will enable progressives to do some education about the character of capitalism itself. More, those who are situated where policy debates are going on—political campaigns, the Rainbow, the union bureaucracy—can push the issue and create favorable conditions for maximizing cuts in the Third World's debt burden and for making sure the tab gets delivered to the banks.

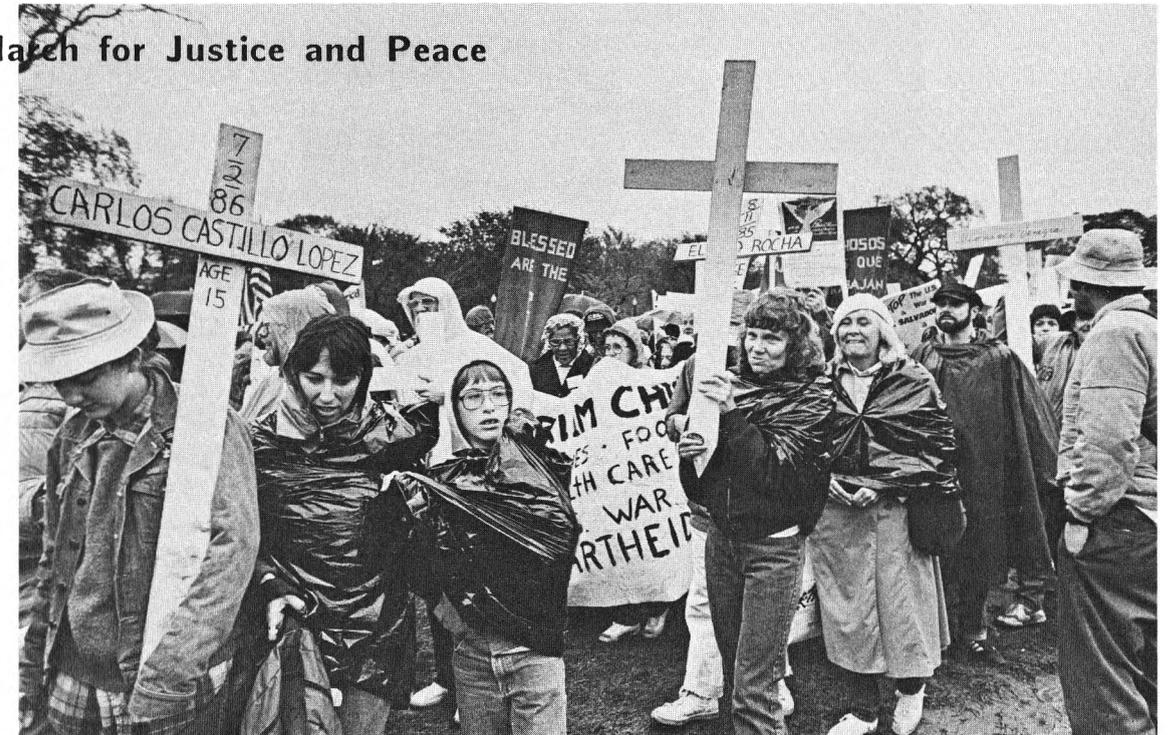
*Dennis O'Neil and Lee Ornati, April 28, 1987*

# Spring Tidings — II

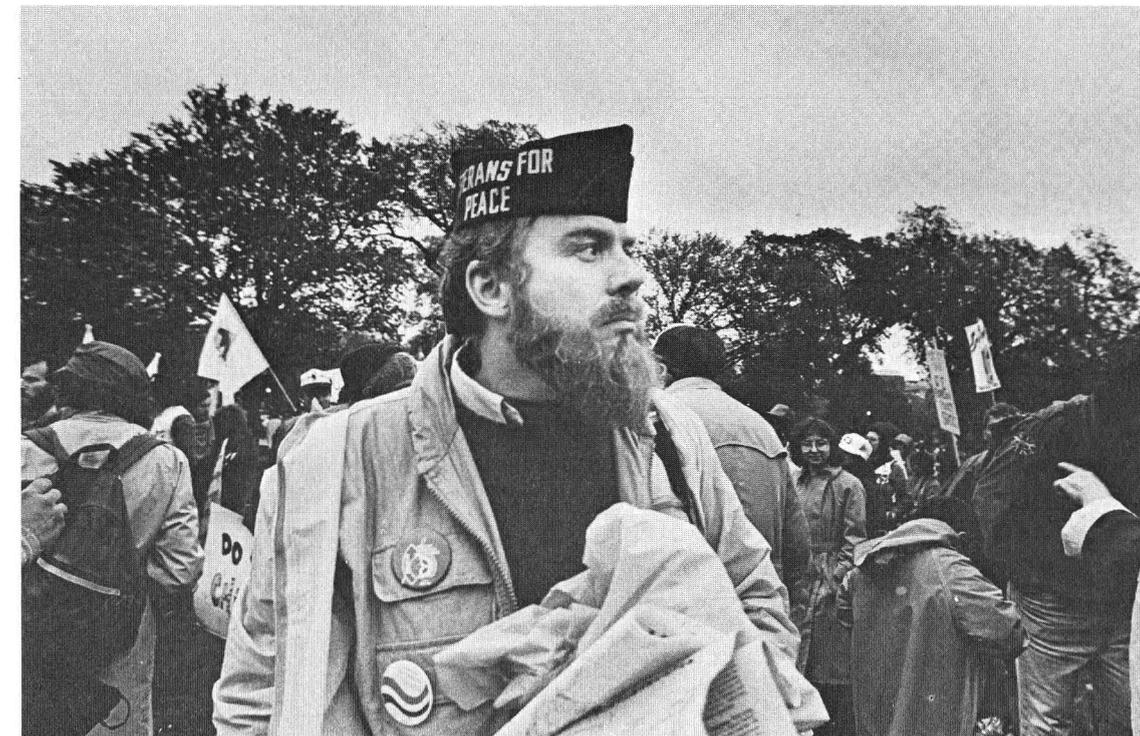
Samantha McCormick



## April 25 March for Justice and Peace



in Central America and Southern Africa





*Meizhu Lui is President of AFSCME 1489 at Boston City Hospital.*

## Exploring the Pay Equity Issue

# Women's Work

*by Meizhu Lui*

At one time, America and all its values and rules were determined by "white men of means." You may remember from your high school civics class that those were the only people originally allowed to vote. Even working class white men were left out of the process. Some of the earliest union battles were the fight of white men without property to have some say over the making of values and rules.

Since then, democracy has been extended. Women and people of color have the right to vote. But the battle for democracy is far from over. Mel King, a black man who ran for mayor of Boston in 1984 likes to joke about how sometimes his tongue slips, and instead of saying "white men of means," he says "mean white men." We still have "mean white men" in power to contend with. Look at the current batch. Reagan's Civil Rights Commission Chair, Clarence Pendleton, though himself Black, got the job of voicing what this administration thinks of the idea of women's economic equality with men—which is what pay equity is all about. A few years back he announced that pay equity is "the looniest thing I've heard of since Looney Tunes." And the Reagan administration has a similar opinion about the idea of economic equality of people of color with whites—which is what affirmative action is all about.

White men of means believe they are the ones who are suffering. They blame union wages for the fact that they are moving their operations overseas. They ask the government for welfare—also known as "bail-out"—when their companies' profits decline. They say women are already equal: look, they are executives and astronauts, Supreme Court judges and vice-presidential candidates. Yet in the years since 1960, the gap between men's and women's wages have widened. In 1960, women working full-time made 64

cents to every \$1.00 made by a man working full-time; now it is only 61 cents. For women of color it is only 47 cents. But they go even further and say that women of color have a double advantage. "Aren't you lucky to be women of color! You can have your pick of any job!" They think that democracy has been over-extended.

Things probably do look different from the Star Wars space station. But let's get our feet back on the ground. The struggle for democracy still has a long way to go. You have all heard about the feminization of poverty. A better term would be the impoverishment of women, since poor men, especially men of color, have not been getting richer and richer at the expense of women. This trend has a lot to do with the growth in the number of female-headed households. One out of every ten women with children is the head of her family; two out of every five women of color are heads of households. One out of every four white women who heads a household lives in poverty; for women of color, it is one out of every two. Immigrants without English skills have it very tough. While Chinese women make up less than one percent of America's workforce, they make up more than fifty percent of the stitchers in the low-wage, piece-rate garment industry. So, far from having double the pleasure and double the fun, women of color bear the double handicap of race and gender.



We can bring the reality behind these numbers home by looking at a particular situation like my own. I work in the kitchen at Boston City Hospital. Twenty years ago, the kitchen staff was all white. In

1984, when our union interviewed mayoral candidates as part of our endorsement process, candidates Ray Flynn and David Finnegan both told us that their mothers had worked in lowly jobs at BCH. But Mel King could not make such a claim. People of color only began to be hired at the hospital twelve years ago! And this was only after federal laws prohibiting discrimination were extended to the public sector—and even then, only after discrimination suits were fought and won. Even in female-dominated jobs, there is racial segregation. Nurses are white women; nurses aides are women of color. Dietitians are white women; kitchen workers are women of color. And, there is segregation by sex. There are no women in the maintenance shop, nor more than a few percent among emergency medical technicians.

Why are women's wages lower than men's? There are two reasons. First, almost all women work two full-time jobs: one at their workplace, and the other at home. A Puerto Rican woman who works with me in the kitchen in BCH described to me how she goes home after eight hours of working with food, and then has to hurry into the kitchen at home to make dinner for her family. Who has got time to improve working conditions? Who has got time to worry about whether this job brings self-fulfillment, or is a meaningful career? It is just go to work, make it through the day (as long as school isn't called off or the kids aren't sick or the babysitter never shows up), get a paycheck, in order to put food on the table.

The second reason is that wages—or values—are set by men, who do not see our work as valuable. Let's take an example. Most child care workers who are women are paid less than dog pound attendants who are men! It would follow that the mean white men who rule value their dogs more than our children! If that's not loonier than Looney Tunes, my name is Elmer Fudd!

So this is where pay equity comes in. It has the potential for liberating women not just economically, but ideologically as well, because it challenges the assumption that "women's work" is something that can be discounted or taken for granted. In order for pay equity to be such an ideological weapon, the very criteria used to determine the value of a job must be challenged and redefined. And if we can take over the task of determining rules and values, we will find that we are redefining the shape of the whole of

society.

Let's give "women's work" a good, hard look. I still hear people say, "She is just a housewife." There was an international women's conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985, and one of the resolutions they passed demanded that housework be included in the gross national product figures of each nation. There is a ton of work done by women all over the world that is not accounted for. Unfortunately, in the world today, and especially in America, "value" means money. So what this group of women was saying was that we must force the men who rule to recognize that what women do has value, by assigning housework a monetary value. This is important because if housework is unpaid, and therefore of "no value," then since many of the wage-paying jobs held by women are an extension of housework, those jobs are assigned very little monetary value. Their jobs include cleaning, preparing and serving food, caring for the health of children and the elderly.

Pay equity is a concept that can be applied by race as well as gender. And if you look closely, the work done by men of color is often women's work! At BCH, there are few men of color in male-dominated jobs like doctor or tradesman. But there are many in housekeeping and cleaning the kitchen. Look at the jobs of Chinese men. For a century, they have been relegated to laundries and restaurants. Kicked out of minework, railroad work, and farm work when they were no longer needed, they were only allowed to do what white men would find too demeaning to do—jobs considered "women's work."

In fighting for pay equity, women's consciousness can be raised as well as their wages. There are different ways you can approach pay equity. You can simply compare jobs predominantly held by women to those predominantly held by men on the basis of the same evaluation criteria currently used, such as skills required, working conditions, number of people supervised, level of responsibility. When you compare some jobs, you will find that many women's jobs deserve upgrading. In San Jose (a commonly used example) it was found that nurses were paid \$750 a month less than fire truck mechanics, solely because of their gender.

It is great that nurses got upgraded. But we can go further, which is why I like the term "pay equity" better than "comparable worth." Simple comparisons that do not challenge the criteria of com-

parison sometimes seem to put down men: "A professional like a nurse paid less than a mere mechanic!" Yet these are men who well deserve what they are paid. Simple comparison benefits professional women more than it does women who work in jobs that are an extension of housework. So it speaks less to women of color. Simple comparisons according to existing criteria do not challenge the determination of value of the "mean white men" who rule. So how can we change the criteria?

First of all, let's take a look at "skill," by going back to our example of the day care workers who are paid less than the male dog pound attendants. How did this happen? Male job evaluators consider taking care of dogs a skill that you must learn, but they think taking care of kids is not a skill, but a "quality intrinsic to women." Do you hear echoes of "just a housewife?" What if the shoe were on the other foot? What if women determined pay scales? We might put construction workers at the low end of the scale. After all, men are just a bunch of lugnuts who like to lift heavy objects. They do this for hours just for fun—so laborers should get paid less than a typist who had to learn that skill! Women have to get our "qualities" recognized as skills.

How about working conditions? Men get points for being in dirty jobs, like handling car grease, or working in a noisy place. But there is men's dirt and women's dirt, like changing shitty di-



Taking care of kids is a skill too.

apers, gets no credit from male evaluators, even though they'd rather drop dead than change a diaper! Or consider nurses aides who have to bathe and de-louse patients who may suffer from all sorts of diseases, yet their jobs are not considered dirty or their conditions of work difficult.

What about the category of "human relations know-how?" You would think that here is where women would make out like bandits. But no! According to the male system, human relations means the number of people you supervise. So a cashier, a secretary, or a telephone operator who must constantly deal with the public gets no points. Or look at my job. When you are a patient in the hospital, do you look forward to the white, male doctor coming to your bed bearing needles and probes and cold fingers? No, you look forward to that kindly woman of color bearing a tray of hot food! Our patients at BCH are mainly poor and mainly from the communities of color. The white, middle class doctors and nurses are foreign to these patients. It is the aides who are the patients' friends and neighbors who can translate the medical talk and who can find out how the patient really feels; who can give them emotional support and comfort which are so vital to recovery.

Pay equity is a tool in the battle for the extension of democracy. But it is not the total solution to gaining economic equality for women, especially women of color. Twenty percent of us are unemployed. Pay equity only deals with wages in the already existing job structures. If you are not working, it does not help you. And if you are dead-ended in the kitchen, it doesn't open any new doors for you.

Affirmative action is still extremely important as a strategy to deal with our needs in hiring, promotion, and job retention. In fact, pay equity is a kind of affirmative action, in the sense that it goes beyond saying "thou shalt not discriminate." It takes positive steps to redress past discrimination as well. Through pay equity victories, women have been awarded back pay. I bring this up because my sense is that men in the labor movement seem more supportive of pay equity than of affirmative action. Why



is this? Can it be that there are "mean white men" who are not property owners who want more control over rules and values for themselves, but who do not really want democracy extended to include everybody?

Pay equity and affirmative action are linked—it is not that pay equity is a women's strategy and that affirmative action is a minority strategy. And both are linked to the struggle for union organization, which is not just a white male strategy.

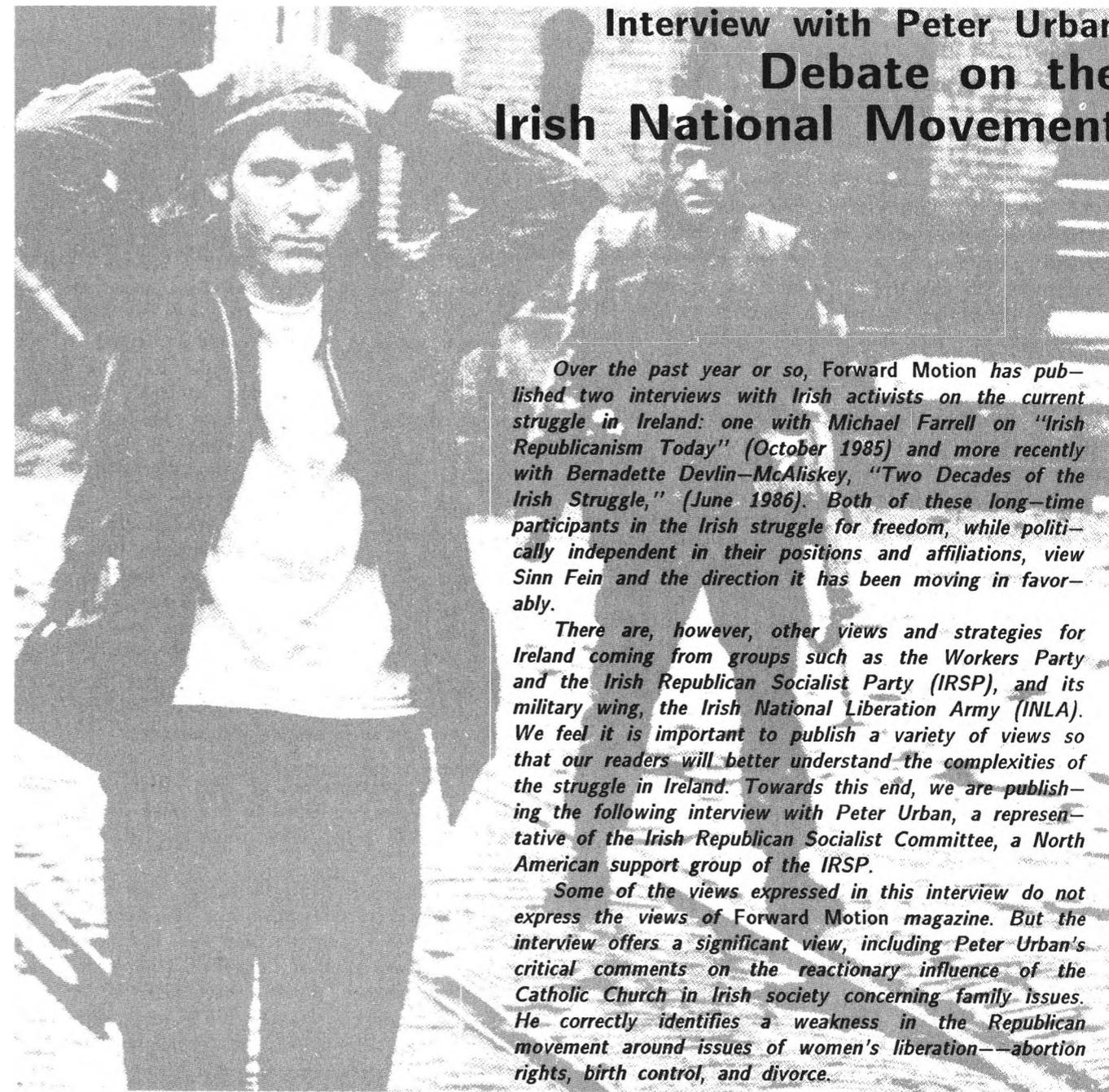
Reagan, Pendleton and their ilk have a solution to the economic inequality of women and people of color. They say help those with property to increase their property, and then they will let some of it trickle down. Our solution is the unity of all working people, to create a tidal wave to wash them away. We have to be inclusive of all those whose interest lies in challenging the "mean white men" who rule. If we do, then we will be going to the heart of unionism: the empowerment of all working people. ■

## Interview with Peter Urban Debate on the Irish National Movement

*Over the past year or so, Forward Motion has published two interviews with Irish activists on the current struggle in Ireland: one with Michael Farrell on "Irish Republicanism Today" (October 1985) and more recently with Bernadette Devlin-McAliskey, "Two Decades of the Irish Struggle," (June 1986). Both of these long-time participants in the Irish struggle for freedom, while politically independent in their positions and affiliations, view Sinn Fein and the direction it has been moving in favorably.*

*There are, however, other views and strategies for Ireland coming from groups such as the Workers Party and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), and its military wing, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). We feel it is important to publish a variety of views so that our readers will better understand the complexities of the struggle in Ireland. Towards this end, we are publishing the following interview with Peter Urban, a representative of the Irish Republican Socialist Committee, a North American support group of the IRSP.*

*Some of the views expressed in this interview do not express the views of Forward Motion magazine. But the interview offers a significant view, including Peter Urban's critical comments on the reactionary influence of the Catholic Church in Irish society concerning family issues. He correctly identifies a weakness in the Republican movement around issues of women's liberation—abortion rights, birth control, and divorce.*

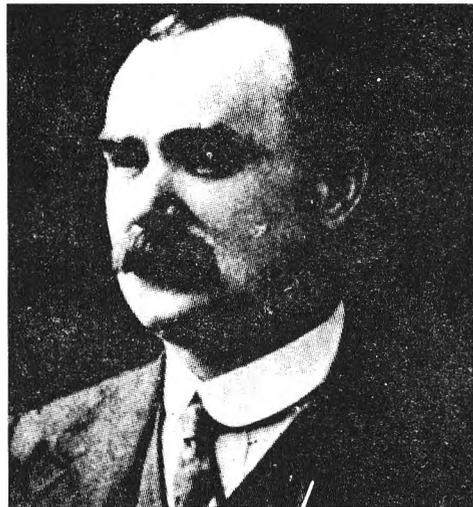


In November 1986, Sinn Fein voted to end its historic policy of abstentionism from the Irish Parliament, the Dail Eireann. This provoked a split of over a hundred mostly veteran members who formed themselves into a new group called Republican Sinn Fein. The interview occurred shortly after this split, so we were able to get the IRSP's thoughts on this event.

The interview was obtained by FM West coast correspondent, Mike Conan. Following the interview is a commentary by Bill Nevins, coordinator of the Irish Information Coalition of New England.

**FM:** What do you see as the principal political differences between the IRSP and Sinn Fein?

**Urban:** Sinn Fein is a part of the Irish Republican movement. Its objective is to create a republic independent of British control. In contrast to that, the IRSP has its roots in the Irish Republican socialist movement which was founded by James Connolly at the turn of the century. Connolly asserted that there was no distinction between national liberation and the struggle for socialism in Ireland. The liberation of the nation meant the liberation of its people, and the masses of the Irish people are working class people. Therefore, we also have to liberate the people of Ireland from economic exploitation, both foreign and domestic. A clear example of this difference in perspective is that the IRA—the armed wing of Sinn Fein—says it will lay down arms when the British



James Connolly.

leave Ireland and when the island is reunited. The INLA, on the other hand, has repeatedly stated that it intends to maintain arms until we have achieved a socialist republic. We don't see ridding the six counties of British occupation as the resolution of the struggle we are engaged in.

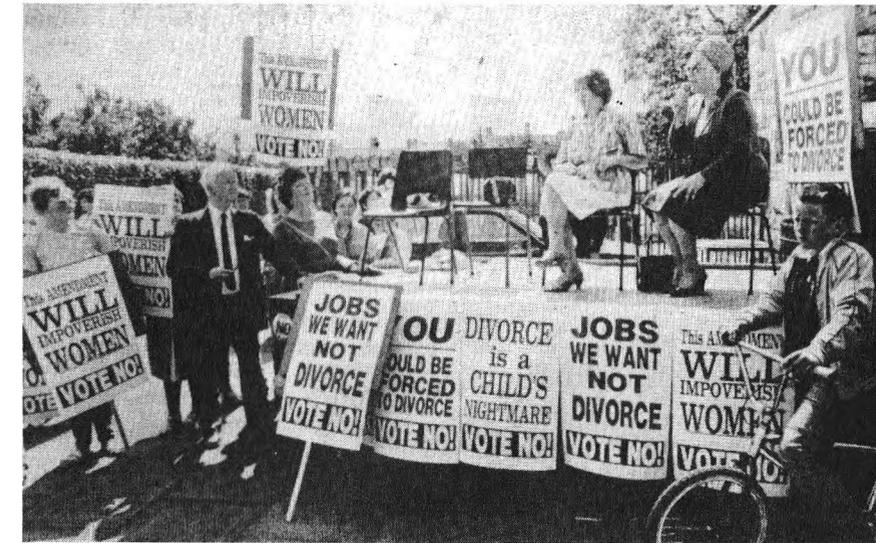
Up until now, abstentionism from electoral politics had been a major division between the two organizations. But in its November 1986 conference, Sinn Fein decided to run for seats in the Irish Parliament—the Dail Eireann—and now has a position much closer to that of the IRSP. We hope that they will reach the same understanding of the tactic of parliamentary intervention that the IRSP has—that there is no purely parliamentary road to revolution.

Another difference is in the whole area of women's rights. Sinn Fein has reversed an earlier position and no longer supports a woman's right to choose abortion. Nor has Sinn Fein played the leading role it could have in opposing the anti-divorce measure that was recently passed in Ireland. In addition, neither the Sinn Fein nor the IRA have much of a record of bringing forward women comrades as leading figures. In contrast, both the IRSP and the INLA have had a series of women in key leadership roles, the most obvious example being Miriam Daley, who took over leadership of the IRSP after the murder of Seamus Costello. These points taken together tell us that Sinn Fein and the IRA are still, to some extent, shackled to the reactionary social policies of the Catholic church in Ireland.

Sinn Fein is essentially, in our view, a broad-based popular movement. Within its ranks are represented politics from very conservative to socialist. The breadth of their organization imposes certain limitations on their political development.

**FM:** US supporters of the Irish Republican struggle were interested in the news of the recent split in Sinn Fein. What does the IRSP make of it?

**Urban:** While the IRSP feels that Sinn Fein's decision to reject abstentionism is a step forward, neither Sinn Fein nor Republican Sinn Fein has demonstrated that they have grasped Connolly's tenet that national liberation without socialist revolution is only exchanging one set of masters for another. Until such a time as Sinn Fein comes to a revolutionary socialist position, their intervention in the Irish Parliament can



In the recent referendum on divorce sponsored by the ruling party, the Right mounted a vociferous campaign against it, and it was defeated 2:1. Critics of the Sinn Fein say it could have played a stronger role in supporting the measure from a left, nationalist perspective.

produce no revolutionary outcome. This split has been seen by some as a shift to the left on Sinn Fein's part. However, other resolutions passed at the conference such as their reversal of their previous position in favor of a woman's right to choose abortion clearly demonstrate that Sinn Fein has far to go in ridding itself of its backward tendencies.

Republican Sinn Fein, on the other hand, maintains the same basic policies as Sinn Fein while restricting itself to a purely military campaign—a policy whose futility has already been demonstrated by the disastrous Border campaign of 1956 to 1962 [an earlier and unsuccessful phase of nationalist military action—ed. note]. Republican Sinn Fein's failure to grasp the importance of mass political struggle suggests that they will ultimately stand to the right of Sinn Fein.

**FM:** The issue of abstentionism is a confusing one to many U.S. leftists. Why is a disagreement over electoral tactics seen as a splitting issue?

**Urban:** To many people in the Republican movement, it is not a tactical question at all, but rather a question of principle. The question of abstentionism first arose in the mid-19th century Republican movement. The modern precedent, however, was established in the early 20th century. Having won a majority of the parliamentary seats in Ireland, Sinn Fein established themselves in 1919 as the Irish government—or Dail—and declared itself the legitimate government of Ireland. The mandate of this

original Sinn Fein has been passed on through the years. Therefore, for the abstentionists, taking seats in any parliamentary body calls into question the legitimacy of their claim to be the actual government of Ireland. Regardless of how you view the complicated chain of historical events that lead to this conclusion, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland do not see either Sinn Fein or the IRA as their legitimate government. So, part of the support for abstentionism as a principle arises out of a romantic tendency within the movement. It becomes a question of ideological purity.

On the other hand, historically, when a Republican grouping has dropped abstentionism it has swiftly transformed itself into little more than a reformist electoral group. This was the case with Fianna Fail, Clan na Poblach'ta and, of course, the Official Sinn Fein. You might recall that when the Republican movement split in 1969-70, it was also over this issue of abstentionism. The IRSP went with then Official Sinn Fein, which took a non-abstentionist line. Only five years later, the IRSP was forced to split from Official Sinn Fein when they liquidated the military campaign. Thus, we see the current developments in Sinn Fein as something of a repetition of our own history.

In the Irish national movement, unlike many other national liberation movements, it has tended to be the most politically advanced sections of the revolutionary struggle that have favored action within

the Parliament coupled with the armed struggle, rather than an exclusively military policy. The intense significance attached to this question has led to a tendency for revolutionary tactics to be posed as either parliamentary or military struggle. Few have grasped the position taken by the Republican socialist movement that the revolutionary struggle can only be effectively waged through a synthesis of the two. In fact, the IRSP is the only party prior to this recent development in Sinn Fein, that has been able to pursue an electoral policy without abandoning its commitment to armed struggle.

It is interesting to note two additional things about the recent Sinn Fein decision regarding elections. The first is that Sinn Fein has only dropped abstentionism in regards to the Parliament of the Irish Republic. Abstentionism remains Sinn Fein's policy both in regards to the British Parliament and the Parliament of Northern Ireland. Also, Sinn Fein strongly reiterated their long-standing policy that the IRA would take no military action against the Irish police force or army. This suggests to some that Sinn Fein has yet to overcome its historical difficulties in effectively combining military and electoral work in the same sphere.

**FM: How does the split affect the possibility for closer political cooperation between the IRSP and Sinn Fein or, conceivably, Republican Sinn Fein?**

**Urban:** The IRSP has recently re-stated its consistent policy of calling for a broad front of all anti-imperialist forces in the Irish struggle. It is sincerely hoped that both Sinn Fein and Republican Sinn Fein would respond positively. It may well be that the current split will enable Sinn Fein to develop a position more closely aligned with that of the IRSP, fostering cooperation. Unfortunately, the initial response has been for Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams to verbally attack the INLA. In an obvious attempt to distract attention from suspicions that Sinn Fein plans a reduction of their own military campaign, Adams referred to the INLA as mere posers in the armed struggle. This, despite the fact that unlike the provisional IRA, the INLA has never declared even a

temporary ceasefire since its formation. We also hope that the natural tendency towards hostilities between Sinn Fein and Republican Sinn Fein does not develop into a violent feud which could only hurt the entire movement.

The Irish struggle is clearly entering a period of realignment which holds the potential for a complete transformation of the revolutionary forces leading to the final resolution of this 800 year old struggle for national liberation. In the modern era, this can only be achieved through the creation of an independent socialist republic.

**FM: Given the broad popular base that Sinn Fein does have, what position do you think that U.S. progressives ought to take towards the Irish movement today?**

**Urban:** I think that Sinn Fein and the Republican movement generally deserves the support of all North American progressives. The importance of the struggle against British colonial and imperial policy in Ireland is one that should be self-evident to all progressive peoples. The absolute necessity for democratic reforms in the six counties where the nationalist people suffer under a system of religious apartheid should be repugnant in the eyes of any progressive North American, and we would certainly encourage their strong support to the Irish Republican movement.

Ireland is unique in that it exhibits the tendencies of a highly industrial urban nation, and, at the same time, the dire and tremendous economic exploitation that is found in developing nations exploited by imperialism. We exist as a bastion of ferment on the edge of the European proletariat, of which we are, of course, a part. The role of the revolutionary struggle in Ireland should be considered fundamental to the entire American progressive community.

I would only add, however, that the North American progressive community has been somewhat reluctant to consider the significant differences between the IRSP and the Republican movement. As a result, I would say it has failed in its duty as socialists to look toward the ultimate and very real interest of the Irish working people. ■

## Commentary

"Romantic Ireland's dead and gone. It's with O'Leary in the grave."  
(Yeats)

Surely the most tragic of the many sad ironies of Irish history are the bloody feuds which have torn apart and crippled movements for national unity and sovereignty over the centuries. It has been long-standing British imperialist policy to foster and exploit these divisive tendencies in order to destroy effective resistance. Comrade Peter Urban is correct in pointing out how arcane (and, to outsiders, *silly*), disputes within the nationalist-revolutionary movement in Ireland have set back that movement's progress again and again. Certainly Comrade Urban must be painfully aware that shortly after he outlined valid criticisms of the factionalized Provisional Republican movement in his FM interview, his own Irish Republican Socialist movement was decimated by a lethal armed feud which has left more than a dozen nationalist activists dead, many more injured, the IRSP/INLA defunct to all intents and purposes, and the already-beleaguered nationalist people of Northern Ireland frightened and perhaps seriously disillusioned with the very concept of "armed struggle." Iron Lady Thatcher and her counter-insurgency experts must be toasting their good fortune. (More likely than not, British Intelligence, if not the CIA itself, played a role in fomenting this disaster. Fear of British secret-service infiltration and manipulation of the Irish National Liberation Army has been expressed by nationalist Northern Irish sources for years now.)

Friends of the Irish working class, including long-time critics of the INLA (such as the Provisional Republican leadership and allied activists like FM interviewees, Michael Farrell and Bernadette McAliskey) can take no pleasure in the demise of the IRSP/INLA under such circumstances. But there *is* a



Bobby Sands, the first of the Irish hunger strikers to die in prison.

sense of inevitability and a feeling that warnings went unheeded: calls for the disbanding of the INLA had been open and insistent in Irish nationalist circles for at least the past year. An informed American observer must ask *why* the IRSP/INLA thought it politically necessary and justifiable to carry on as a separate organization "to the bitter end," despite the obvious handwriting on the wall and the cautionary lessons of Irish history.

The blood feuds between the "Official" IRA and both the Provos and the INLA came very close to totally discrediting nationalist armed resistance among its own base population in the early and mid-1970s. One would have thought that survivors of these counter-productive adventures would have learned enough not to go down the same grim path to defeat once more. It would seem that the Provisionals

have learned this lesson, in that so far the IRA has refrained from any military action against the dissident "Republican Sinn Fein" faction and conciliatory efforts are underway.

Unity in the revolutionary movement is essential not only to success, but to the very survival of that movement in Ireland, particularly at this crucial time when a sophisticated form of fascism seems truly on the horizon, both north and south of the partition border. No less is unity needed in other frontline situations (South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile, etc). But those of us linked by long-standing concern for Ireland must see the need there as particularly obvious and desperate.

The Socialist-Republican tradition, dating back

through Ronnie Bunting and James Connolly, has historically guided the Irish working class through stark crises and always forward toward the workers' republic. It must be our fervent hope that in this dark hour for Ireland, the best tendencies towards unity and socialist solidarity will prevail in forging a strong and resilient democratic revolutionary movement out of near-chaotic disunity. Positive contributions towards constructive dialogue are needed from the support movement in America, especially from such dedicated friends of the Irish people as Comrade Urban. ■

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*Bill Nevins is the Coordinator of the Irish Information Coalition of New England, based in Keene, NH.*

## LOCOMOTION

### Rock and Roll to Change the World

by Dennis O'Neil

The last edition of this column (in the Jan-Feb '87 *FM*) called on Locomotion readers, if any, to comment on something in rock and roll they found noteworthy over the last year. To my delight, it turns out some of y'all do read this. Several people took the time to put together some comments, thus cutting my work for this issue considerably.

Mind you, I did my bit too, and you'll find it below.

#### "Bombs Aren't Cool!"

*Bonne Meike*

Many urban adolescents have little patience for peace education. They know that the biggest guy on the block gets the goods. They are so overwhelmed with issues of personal survival that planetary survival seems a distant and abstract concern. To many young people a military career presents the possibility of financial security, and often respect, from peers.

For several years I have produced special events in global education at a multi-service youth center as an adjunct to a health awareness program. Finally, the "Bombs Aren't Cool!" rap music video from Stan Davis and Joan Jubela makes disarmament approachable. With the rapping of "Double Trouble," it uses familiar turf-street scenes and iconography, basketball courts and break-dancing in a language that speaks to teenagers. [This duo—Li'l Rodney C and KK Rockwell—are veteran N.Y. rappers who appear in *Wild Style*, the first, and arguably the best movie of the hip-hop culture. —ed.]

*"You're messin' with my mama, you're messing with my cat  
You're messin' with my future and I don't like that!"*

The words, images, and music of "Bombs Aren't Cool!" en-



"Bombs Aren't Cool."

gauge young people and give them an opportunity to consider the reality behind military advertisements. The video makes connections between disarmament issues and economic factors that affect personal decisions they will have to make as young adults. In our health education curriculum, we discuss the value and hazards of peer pressure. Kids listen to each other and they will agree—"Bombs Aren't Cool!"

—Bonne Meike is a health educator at The Door—A Center for Alternatives, NYC

### The Scorpions!

Frank Alvarez

The Scorpions, since their major and successful breakthrough in the American music industry, have contributed some of the finest, loudest, and most melodic heavy metal music of the past decade.

The musical chemistry of the Scorpions is heard through the group's ability to produce feelings of ex-

citement, joy, and gloominess. Songs such as "Dynamite" from *Blackout* and "Coming Home" from *Love At First Sting* induce high levels of excitement and encourage outbursts from the average metal music listener.

With their power and charisma in songs like "The Zoo" and "Coast to Coast," the Scorpions' music fills the air with vibrations that bathe the listener with powerful feelings of joy and gloominess. The hard and heavy driving drum beat and low bass qualities produce the war-like marching patterns, while the guitar riffs and high-pitched vocals of Klaus Meine lead the music into its climaxes.

Influenced by themes of war, as heard on "Crossfire" and "China White," the music—and especially the lyricism—of the Scorpions is more directed to, and for the attraction of, beautiful women. Their melodic expertise is expressed like a bursting volcano on classic ballads like "Holiday," "Lady Starlight," and two of my favorites, "Always Some-

where" and "Still Loving You".

The Scorpions are definitely a group to look and listen for in the months to come. With the release of *World Wide Live*, the double live album, and a concert movie of the same title, the band managed to capture some of their most screeching performances ever to be recorded for home video use.

On "Six String Sting," the fiery guitar playing of Mathias Jobs is some of the most dramatic window-shattering stuff known to the world of heavy metal. On "Rock You Like a Hurricane," the thunderous drumming of Herman Rarebell, the groovy bass licks of Francis Bucholz and the thick, but sharp, rhythm playing of Rudolf Schenker, take the audience to even greater heights of heavy metal concert performing.

The Scorpions have definitely made their mark in heavy metal and are certainly one of the best heavy metal bands that I've heard in a long time.

—Frank Alvarez is a guitarist, as well as the president of the MECHA chapter at Mira Costa Community College, in San Diego, California.

### Video Fun!

R.J. Camshaft

"Remember when rock had no message? No meaning? No nuthin' but pure fun?"

This question begins the promo for a best-of album getting heavy air time on MTV, the USA network, and Ted Turner's CNN. But the very concept behind *Fun Rock* (the compilation's title) exhibits how and why rock and roll was NEVER without a message. The advertisement uses such classics as "Louie, Louie" and "Yakety-Yak" to illustrate what it means by pointless rock.

To me the songs, regardless of their apparent message (or lack thereof), were calls to disobey the strictures of adult authority. "Fun" itself might've been what you'd call the clarion of rebellion in those days. This split two ways of course, and that's why "fun rock" appears to be something else today. It's the era of insider-trading on Wall Street. Fun is hedonism today, not the "Have a Good Time (But Get Out Alive)" the Iron City Houserockers sang about a few years back. The Houserockers were talking about getting a "blow 'em away" one night break from work in the mills around Pittsburgh, before the steel industry shut down altogether. Fact is,

on MTV hedonism is the name of the game. The promo for their Caribbean vacation contest promised winners the most FUN in the islands since the invasion of Grenada.

This hedonism/fun contradiction might be best illustrated in the video for the Los Lobos song "Set Me Free (Rosalie)." Los Lobos is the East L.A.-based band that wrote and recorded "How Will the Wolf Survive" about a Chicano laborer crossing the border into California to find work "in a land once our own," yet they're also one of the most riotously fun dance bands recording today. "Set Me Free" conveys every bit of this party spirit without the video needing shots of leggy young women in mini-skirts to get the message across.

—R.J. Camshaft is an unemployed autoworker who writes about issues raised by TV & popular culture.

### Red Bird On The Rise

Music is the only medium in the world where one can combine the visual, audio, and other sensory perceptions. To elaborate on this statement, one can come to a concert dressed in Indian clothing and African braids, to hear white, Message-Metal music. We all have a duty to spread revolutionary awareness in our own ways. That is why I call upon artists to contribute works which will inspire people to believe that they can make a difference; that we can work together by being more understanding of one another. In other words, we should leave room for mistakes from which we gather valuable lessons rather than putting each other down and making things worse. I want to make it known that an idea whose time has come is the most powerful thing on earth—the idea of World Brotherhood. By being understanding with each other and letting our voices be heard, we will do our part to make this world a better place.

—Red Bird On The Rise is a musician and composer, as well as a MECHA member at Mira Costa Community College in San Diego, California.

### World of Wonders

Tom Goodkind

I listen to WBCN (Boston) all day. That's probably the best mainstream rock station in the country. But it's definitely mainstream—which

means that I don't get exposed to much on the fringes of rock. I don't buy many albums these days, partially because Korvette's doesn't sell them for \$2.69 anymore. But I did buy a few albums in 1986, and one of those—Bruce Cockburn's *World of Wonders*—is my pick of the year. I thought I'd take advantage of Locomotion's offer to "be a big-time rock critic" by plugging an album which some folks might not otherwise check out.

Cockburn (pronounced Co-burn, like Alexander of *The Nation* and *In These Times*) is Canadian and some sort of Christian revolutionary/pacifist whose contact with Latin American struggles over the past few years has remolded him. Half the songs on his last two albums are about one or another feature of U.S. imperialism, and most of those are better than any leaflet I've seen in a long time. Although *World of Wonders* doesn't have any single as truly outstanding as "If I Had a Rocket Launcher" from his previous album (*Stealing Fire*), overall the music is just as good if not better. And since his one hit of six or seven years ago, "Wondering Where the Lions Are," his ideology has gotten less mystical and more anti-imperialist, his folk roots have been pushed further into the background and his music has rocked a lot harder.

The production and instrumentation on *World of Wonders* are big improvements over *Stealing Fire*, especially the drum sound and keyboards. Even Cockburn's lead guitar (not his strong point) has improved, and he somehow keeps churning out amazingly strong melodies to back up his lyrics. Songs like "People See Through You" (which should be the anthem of anti-CIA demonstrations), "Santiago Dawn," "See How I Miss You," "Down Here Tonight" and "World of Wonders" are just stone good regardless of their redeeming social content.

And then there are his lyrics. Rock has shown itself to be an extremely flexible medium, capable of treating any subject from head to animal experimentation and of expressing any social tendency from devil-worship to bible-thumping christianity (Stryper). But have you heard a song yet about the International Monetary Fund? Consider Cockburn's "Call It Democracy":

*north south east west  
kill the best and buy the rest  
it's just spend a buck to make a buck*

*you don't really give a flying fuck  
about the people in misery  
IMF dirty IMF  
takes away everything it can get  
always making certain that there's one thing left  
keep them on the hook with insupportable debt  
see the paid-off local bottom feeders  
passing themselves off as leaders  
kiss the ladies shake hands with the fellows  
and it's open for business like a cheap bordello  
and they call it democracy*

Cockburn has two big problems: he talks too much, and he gets carried away with his self-image as a poet. Sometimes he's just too wordy, as in "Berlin Tonight" where he refers to "that anal-re-tentive border wall," and sometimes he recites where he should be singing. Generally he overwrites. But his sense of melody and beat are so strong that only the impressive spontaneous censorship of the rock industry can have prevented his greater penetration of the U.S. market. I guess the mainstream just shies away from singles that call for shooting down U.S. helicopters or threaten "one day you're going to rise from your habitual feast/ to find yourself staring down the throat of the beast/ they call the revolution."

—Tom Goodkind is an editor of *FM*.

### Now Back to Dennis

A lot interesting has happened in rock and roll in the last year. I thought of writing about Paul Simon's brilliant *Graceland* album and the controversy over its politics and Simon's appropriation of Azanian popular music. Or I could stir up some noise with a little praise for the Beastie Boys. I could wax cranky about Huey Lewis and the News or the fourteen record Live Springsteen compilation (actually I think it's only nine, but it sure seems longer). And sometime soon I'm gonna plug the Black Rock Coalition, which is exactly what it sounds like, a bunch of Afro-American bands, musicians and critics who make rock and roll (a lot of it fairly spectacular) and fight the various racism of the rock world.

The most gratifying half hour of rock and roll I experienced last year, though, took place at a Battle of the Bands in Westport, Connecticut, a hincty suburb where I did time in high school. Me and my partner Tom arrived at the outdoor bandshell too late

to catch the first band, who were evidently area favorites. Band number two reminded me of an old critic's proposal for truth-in-labelling legislation for rock and roll—you know, if it doesn't contain a certain percentage of the real thing, it would have to be called "rock and roll flavored product" or some such thing. Although my idea of a truly uplifting cultural experience involves four or five adolescents with emotional disorders, problem complexions and large amplifiers, I was losing hope fast when the third and final band was announced—Matthew 24. "Oh, grand," I snarled at Tom, "some fucking Jesus rock band. Whaddaya say we blow Dodge?"

Well, golly, I'm sure glad I didn't. Three rock and roll looking kinda guys mounted the stage and the bass player leaned into the mike and began ragging the audience for being rich, complacent assholes in the face of nuclear annihilation, U.S. aggression in Central America and so on. The few remaining operational synapses in the aging O'Neil brain snapped to attention. This was the real thing. A nice, loud crunchy U2-flavored power trio. Their Christianity was of the militant, Liberation Theology school. They had serious musical chops, but didn't flash 'em around. One instrumental number had a wicked bass solo, which didn't outstay its welcome.

The lyrics were relentlessly political, radical, socially concerned, call it what you will. They were aimed at shocking people awake. "Lebanon" was one of the strongest tunes. It was certainly heartfelt—the drummer, John Tyler, was an ex-marine who had been rotated out of Beirut only weeks before the airport bombing. The other two-thirds of Matthew 24 are Tylers, too—Jerry and Jim. At their set's end Jerry, who sings, plays bass and writes their tunes, lurched at the amps with his bass and started to smash the bass up. "Old hat," I hear you say. "Townshend did it twenty-two years ago." Well, bunk, ya hadda be there. It was pretty damn exciting, especially when Jerry got frustrated with smashing, jumped off stage and chucked his ax into the river that ran behind the stage.

I talked with the Tylers for a bit after the show, bought a couple of short tapes they'd made, and went home thrilled. They were good, the set was fine, but the best thing was what they are—three brothers in their early twenties from Norwalk, a small Connecticut city, who hate war and injustice and want to make rock and roll that can help change the world. Hey, people, there are hundreds of bands like this scattered here and there around the country. Go listen to a couple of 'em. ■

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## To the Editors...

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### FM-Editors:

At a recent Bay Area forum, an associate editor of *Forward Motion* [Bill Fletcher] gave a presentation in which he spoke of the need to unite with the leftward thrust of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, strengthen working-class participation, bring the trade union movement into the campaign and build the unity of Black, Chicano and white people.

Discussion following the presentation seemed to center on the question, "How do revolutionary organizations participate in bourgeois elections?" The group as a whole accepted the idea that Marxists *must* participate; the central question became *how*? How do we participate without being sucked into the traps of bourgeois politics? How to participate without giving up or watering down Marxist ideology? What may we expect from our participation?

Several answers present themselves to this important question. The Peace and Freedom Party, a socialist-oriented organization, rejects outright supporting any candidate that does not openly proclaim adherence to socialism. This promising party has succeeded in isolating itself from anyone who, while questioning the structure of society, has not yet moved to the radical acceptance of revolutionary socialism. They have in their purity refused to support Ron Dellums, Jesse Jackson or those forces in Congress who might block aid to the contras, conclude a test ban treaty with the Soviet Union, cut the "defense" budget, or any of the other progressive moves in the bourgeois Congress.

Some left groups, including the Communist Party, have objectively become the left-wing of various progressive movements and of the Democratic Party. They have helped organize and win important struggles within the nuclear freeze movement, the fight for social security, etc. They have encouraged sections of the churches toward a position of

opposition to many right-wing doctrines. They have moved with the churches against nuclear arms and many of the more obnoxious positions of U.S. imperialism.

Both the "left" isolationist policies of Peace and Freedom and the non-revolutionary politics of the C.P. have had some success. But the weakness of both approaches is most evident in the inability to build a viable Communist Party. The fragmented situation of the left is at least partially due to the failure to advocate a revolutionary Communist Party that takes an active part in the daily struggles of the workers, whether electoral or otherwise, and at the same time openly and honestly proclaims its belief that the ultimate solution to the problems of capitalism is social revolution.

What might be the response of Jesse Jackson to a forthright proposal of unity with a revolutionary party of socialism? It could be outright rejection and red-baiting. But revolutionary persistence, setting out the need for and advantages of a united front while working steadfastly for the progressive goals Jackson himself has set out—this would after a time influence the rank and file, stimulate discussion of fundamental issues within his movement and among the progressive masses, and tend to isolate those forces opposed to unity.

This dual path of unity and struggle is not a simple one. It invites open and sub-rosa attacks by the bourgeoisie. But so long as we honestly put forward our program (both immediate and long-range), connect with the daily struggles of the masses, fight for the unity of all progressive forces, and keep our socialist goal before us, we are bound to succeed in the end.

*Dick Alexander*  
*Bay Area, California*