

Louisiana anti-abortion law denies women right to choose

Soviet voters go to polls; try to vote out Stalinist bureaucracy

By GERRY FOLEY

Commenting on Boris Yeltsin's victory in the June 12 Russian presidential elections, Mikhail Gorbachev called for "harmony, harmony, and harmony again—as well as cooperation."

It is confirmed now that the Soviet president and the new president of the Russian republic are a twosome. That was in fact evident since the signing on April 23 of the agreement among the representatives of the nine Communist-controlled republics, including Yeltsin and Gorbachev.

Yeltsin's elevation to partnership with the chief of the Soviet Union was sealed by a warm diplomatic reception during his recent visit to the United States. Previously, Yeltsin's attempts to gain recognition from the American and European Common Market tops had been rebuffed.

The chiefs of Western capitalism had made it clear that Gorbachev was their man, and they were not going to take the risk of encouraging any opponent of the Soviet chief, either at the all-Soviet level or in the restive republics.

Since the strike wave in April against price rises, however, it has become clear for the capitalists that Gorbachev can no longer keep control of the political and social processes in the USSR. He needs the backup of someone with credibility for the democratic and workers' movement, and Yeltsin is the best placed to provide this service.

The *New York Times* editors recognized the Soviet chief's need for backing from the opposition when they wrote on April 26 that the agreement between Gorbachev and Yeltsin was "the first hopeful sign in months that radical reform can be revived and hard-line dictatorship avoided."

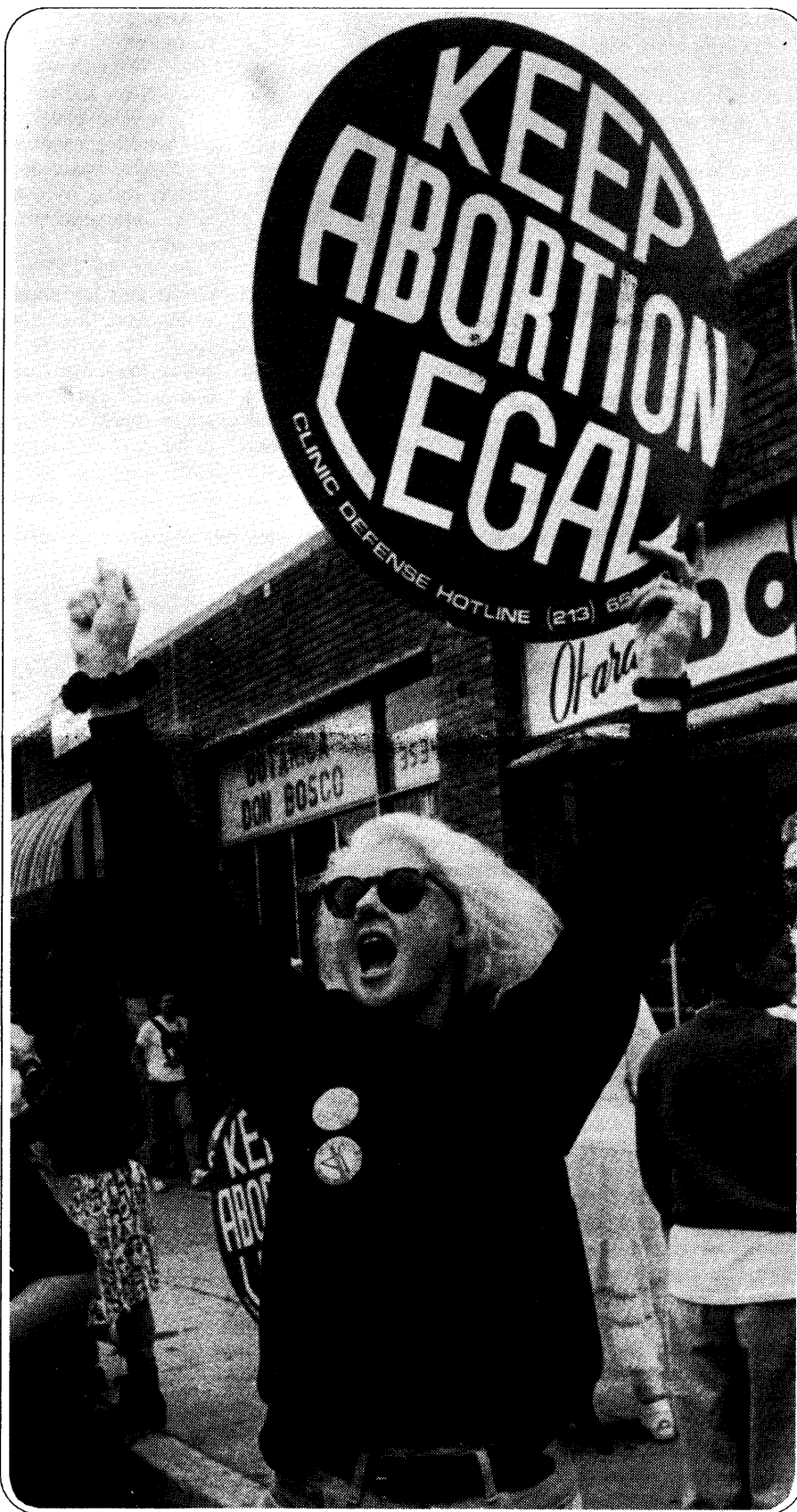
Yeltsin met the hopes of Gorbachev and his capitalist friends by succeeding, at least temporarily, in defusing strike action by workers aimed at bringing down the reform Stalinist regime.

Gorbachev, while accepting that Yeltsin had won a clear victory in the Russian elections, still tried to minimize it: In a June 17 interview in *Pravda*, he said: "Of 103 million voters, 42 to 43 million voted for him [Yeltsin], 25 to 26 million did not show up at the polls, and more than 30 million voted for the other candidates."

High absenteeism rate

The strategy of the Gorbachev faction, in fact, had been to run several candidates in order to try to muddy the waters. It failed, however, to deny Yeltsin his majority. Gorbachev conceded that Yeltsin had won at least 57 or 58 percent of the vote.

General Makashov and V. Zhirinovski reportedly campaigned on Russian chauvinist themes. But little information about them has appeared in the press. Tuleev, a Kazakh by nationality, is from the Kemerovo district, and reportedly stood for local autonomy. Kemerovo, including the Kuzbass coal mining area, was one of the few districts where Yeltsin failed a



Kathleen O'Han/Socialist Action

Most restrictive law yet; poses direct challenge to Roe v. Wade

By JONI JACOBS

"America has tried making abortions illegal once before and the reason abortion is legal today is because we tried it the other way and it didn't work," said Teri Bartlett, executive director of Planned Parenthood-Louisiana. Last month, unfortunately, the state legislators of Louisiana disregarded this lesson from history and showed utter contempt for women.

On June 18, the Louisiana state legislature voted overwhelmingly to override Gov. Buddy Roemer's veto of the cruelest, most restrictive abortion law in the nation. It was the first time this century the legislature has overridden a governor's veto.

Under the new law, virtually all abortions in Louisiana are illegal. There are no exceptions for profoundly deformed fetuses or if the health of the woman is threatened.

Only if her *life* is endangered by the pregnancy, and in some narrowly defined cases of rape and incest, can a Louisiana woman seek abortion. In all cases, abortions must be performed within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.

Exceptions are a joke

The exceptions for rape and incest are "a joke," according to Bartlett. A victim of rape and incest must report the crime within seven days and seek medical attention within five days from a doctor other than the one performing the abortion.

This last provision is to ensure that the woman was not pregnant before the rape. Since rape and incest are among the lowest reported crimes, very few women will benefit by these exceptions.

The exemptions for life-threatening pregnancies are also Draconian in practice. In most cases, it is not discovered until later than 13 weeks whether a pregnancy endangers a woman's life. Under the law, a 15-week pregnant woman who finds her life threatened if she carries to term cannot receive an abortion.

The law also carries stiff criminal penalties against doctors convicted of performing abortions, including \$10,000 in fines and

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majority.

For an election of such importance, a 25 percent abstention rate seems high. Some left groups called for a boycott, as well as at least two national democratic organizations in the Tatar Autonomous Republic, Ittifak and the Tatar Social Center. The well-informed Russian-language Paris weekly *Russkaya Mysl'*, reported in its June 14 issue that on the eve of the elections there was a tense atmosphere in the Tatar capital.

In its June 21 issue, *Russkaya Mysl'* reported that only 35 percent of voters in the Tatar republic voted in the Russian presidential elections.

Small, theoretically self-governing nationalities make up 17 percent of the

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Cuba: Under economic siege

See pp. 12 - 13



How we will win the war against anti-choice bigots



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

On Saturday, June 15 (the day before Fathers Day), I was at Planned Parenthood at 6:30 a.m., along with 85 others to defend the clinic from a threatened attack of Operation Rescue (OR). That's the anti-choice, neo-fascist band of hoodlums which tries to stop women from exercising their legal right to choose. Fathers Day, we figured, would be the perfect day for them to attack women and try to deny us our rights.

We stood around drinking coffee and eating a variety of baked goods donated to clinic defenders by local bakeries. Then the day went like this:

Ellen, the representative of Planned Parenthood, thanks everyone for showing up and gives us the latest information on OR and general information about the latest attack on abortion rights. She asks how many were new to clinic defense, and almost 25 young women and men raise their hands.

Lisa from the National Organi-

zation for Women's Reproductive Rights Committee speaks. She explains S.F. NOW's leading role in clinic defense.

Because there are so many new people, we go through actual defense training and, as usual, Joni Jacobs does this part. (Joni is also the Socialist Action candidate for mayor of San Francisco. She is the only candidate that has personally defended our clinics almost from the beginning of the attacks by OR.)

Everyone then settles down to await the arrival of the social neanderthals. But on this day, they do not show.

Clinic defenders in the Bay Area have beaten the socks off of OR no matter where they struck and have out-mobilized them in almost every encounter.

Now, however, the Supreme Court along with politicians from both capitalist parties are working overtime to accomplish what OR was unable to do; this time to

destroy abortion rights through the courts and state and national legislatures.

Everyone on the clinic defense line is mad as hell at the recent Supreme Court decision to place a gag on doctors at federally funded clinics, and the Louisiana legislature's outlawing of the right to choose.

At every level, it seems, there are evil, narrow minded, arrogant bigots who are trying to rob women of their natural right to determine their reproductive lives. And when we read recent Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action, illegal search and seizure, and workers' health rights, we know that it is not just women's rights that are at stake but the rights of all victims of capitalist injustice.

Lessons from history

It is good to take some lessons from our history. How did women win the right to vote and workers win the right to organize into unions?

They fought back the only way a majority can—in massive demonstrations and strikes that forced the monsters of that day to change the laws in favor of the majority. In the 1900s, women marched, demonstrated, went on hunger strikes, and in general told the courts and judges that their law's were unjust and would not be tolerated. This is how women won the right to vote; it was not granted out of the goodness of the



rulers' hearts.

And in the 1930s, it was illegal to organize a union or go on strike. Workers were jailed, fired, blackballed, and murdered because they wanted better wages, hours, and working conditions. But they won these basic democratic and human rights by organizing massive demonstrations, strikes, and sit-ins.

Before the 1950s, the Supreme Court and legislatures in many states said that segregation was legal. There were "white-only" water fountains, toilets, schools, bus and train waiting rooms. In many states, Blacks had to stand in the back of buses and even—in this "land of the free"—were denied the right to vote!

So Black men, women and children organized massive marches. They boycotted, struck, and refused to obey unjust laws by the millions. This is the way they got rid of the "lily-white" Jim Crow laws and scared the hell out of racists everywhere.

All of our rights, all of our human needs, have been won through struggle. And that's why we must organize as women, organize our allies in communities, counties, and states and get back to the streets.

We have to tell the black-robed, hand-picked judges that we will not abide by unjust laws. Our bodies belong to us. Not the church, not the state, women will decide their fate!

Circuit Court rejects Christic Institute suit

Following are excerpts from a statement released by the Christic Institute on June 24, 1991.

On Tuesday, June 18, an 11th Circuit Court of Appeals panel of three judges refused to set aside Miami Federal District Judge James Lawrence King's 1988 dismissal of *Avirgan v. Hull*, the civil racketeering lawsuit filed by the Christic Institute against 29 contra supporters, former U.S. officials, and others accused of terrorist acts, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling.

The panel also allowed to stand King's 1989 ruling that the Institute, its general counsel, and its clients—Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey—must pay \$1 million in court costs and attorneys fees for filing the action.

Christic Institute General Counsel Daniel P. Sheehan called the ruling "an act of judicial hypocrisy of the highest order," and said that the Institute will ask for a review of the three-judge ruling

by all 12 judges of the 11th Circuit. "If this fails," he says, "an appeal to the Supreme Court will be taken."

Sheehan said the appeals court expressly ignored critical evidence supporting the charges made in *Avirgan v. Hull*, including the murder indictment in Costa Rica of the two key defendants, contra supporters John Hull and Felipe Vidal, for the very crimes with which they stood charged by the Institute.

"It is absurd that, with all the public evidence that demonstrates the veracity of our charges, the Circuit Court will not allow us to present our case to a jury," said Sheehan. "We deserve our day in court."

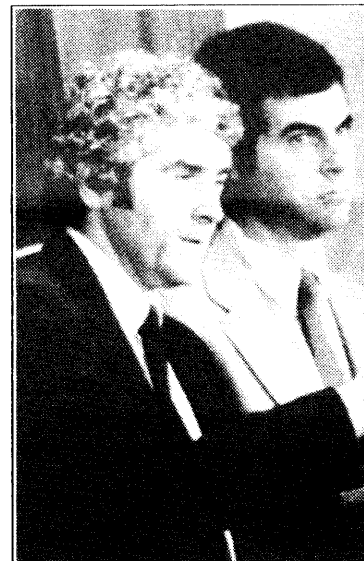
Avirgan v. Hull was filed in Miami in May 1986 on behalf of journalists Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey. Though it was filed six months before the Iran-contra affair became public, the names of the defendants in the suit would later read like a "Who's

Who" of the Iran-contra scandal.

Former generals Richard Secord and John Singlaub; former C.I.A. clandestine operations specialists for George Bush, Thomas Clines and Theodore Shackley; American contra supporter John Hull; and Rob Owen, Oliver North's contra courier, were all named as participants in the criminal "Enterprise."

A total of 29 defendants were charged with participating in the federal racketeering "Enterprise," which smuggled weapons to the contras, smuggled drugs through the contra support infrastructure into the United States, and participated in illegal paramilitary operations on behalf of the rebels.

According to the suit, in May 1984; members of this "Enterprise" carried out the terrorist bombing of a press conference given by contra commander Eden Pastora at his jungle outpost in La Penca, Nicaragua. The bombing killed three journalists and five other persons and injured 20 more, including plaintiff Tony



Daniel Sheehan

Avirgan. Pastora himself was injured, but survived the blast.

Sheehan says the appeals panel's ruling is only the latest in a growing string of court decisions that have protected participants in the Reagan Administration's semi-private operation to support the contras by blocking juries from hearing the evidence of their crimes.

"When juries are allowed to see the evidence of the crimes committed by contra supporters, they convict them," he said. "By keeping the evidence away from juries, the judicial branch is actively abetting an assault upon our democratic system. The American people are losing control of the people who are supposed to serve us."

Sheehan said that it is now clear that the judicial branch cannot be expected to resolve this issue. "We have an executive branch that is directly involved in criminal activities, a Congress that has deliberately failed in its investigation of those crimes, and now the judicial branch is actively obstructing—rather than aiding—the effort of private citizens who are trying to do what work the government should be doing," said Sheehan.

"The Christic Institute will continue to fight—in all available arenas—to make sure that the truth about Iran-contra is told. The American people must insist that our government act truthfully and honestly to bring these people to justice."

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Barry Sheppard: New business manager for Socialist Action

Socialist Action has expanded its circulation and business department with the addition of Barry Sheppard to its staff.

Sheppard, who is the acting National Organization Secretary for *Socialist Action*, the organization with the same name as the newspaper, has become the newspaper's Circulation and Business Manager. He will be overseeing the work of the staff in processing subscriptions and bundles, mailing, and expanding *Socialist Action's* circulation.

Barry Sheppard was formerly a national leader of the Socialist Workers Party. In 1988, he left the SWP—whose organizational degeneration prevented him from

expressing deepening political disagreements. In 1989, he joined *Socialist Action* as a result of a political convergence.

May May Gong, who has been functioning as Business Manager, will remain on the volunteer staff.—The editors

Chicago

Abortion Rights Under Attack:
How do we fight back from Louisiana to the "Gag Rule"

A Panel Discussion

Saturday, July 13 at 7:30 pm

Chicago Circle Center

705 South Halstead,

\$3 donation—\$2 unemployed & students

Erik Larsen, Tahan Jones fight railroading by Marine Corps

By JEFF MACKLER

Marine Corps antiwar activist/conscientious objector Erik Larsen and his attorney, Robert Rivkin, discussed the plight of GI Gulf War resisters with *Socialist Action* during a June 22 interview at Rivkin's office in San Francisco.

Larsen had returned briefly to San Francisco on June 20 for a court-ordered rehearing of his previously denied application for Conscientious Objector status. He still faces a court martial trial in Camp Le Jeune, N.C., for "desertion in time of war," a charge which potentially carries the death penalty.

Larsen and his friend, Tahan Jones, are the only Marines to be charged with this offense. A third Marine, Kevin Sparrock, who was previously in this category, has been sentenced to six months in military prison. The desertion charges against him were only dropped in the course of a negotiated settlement.

Sparrock, who was reportedly eight hours late following the activation of his unit to Saudi Arabia, agreed to forego his right to a trial in exchange for a guilty plea to the lesser charges of "missing a troop movement" and "absence without leave." Like many of the Marines awaiting trial at Camp Le Jeune, Sparrock felt compelled to negotiate his democratic rights to avoid the extreme punishment threatened by a military establishment—currently intoxicated with its victorious slaughter of the virtually defenseless Iraqi people.

"Kuwaiti-style justice"

Larsen's attorney has been defending GI rights since the Vietnam War. He described to *Socialist Action* what his client and all other GIs who resisted the U.S.-led war Gulf war face today: "They [the U.S. military] don't seem to care about the niceties of constitutional rights or any other rights. They seem to be concerned about meeting their agenda—isolation, intimidation, and incarceration—and doing it as soon as possible. It's a pure power play. I've called it Kuwaiti-style justice."

The string of Marine Corps violations of Larsen's rights, according to Rivkin, include holding Larsen's Article 32 (preliminary) hearing, on June 4, without the presence of his civilian attorney. Larsen was also denied the right to present any of the 38 witnesses prepared to testify on his behalf.

"It's their game, and you play it on their court and there's no one around to enforce their own rules," Rivkin explained. "The only court we can appeal to right now is the court of public opinion." Rivkin has called for a congressional investigation into the railroading of antiwar GIs.

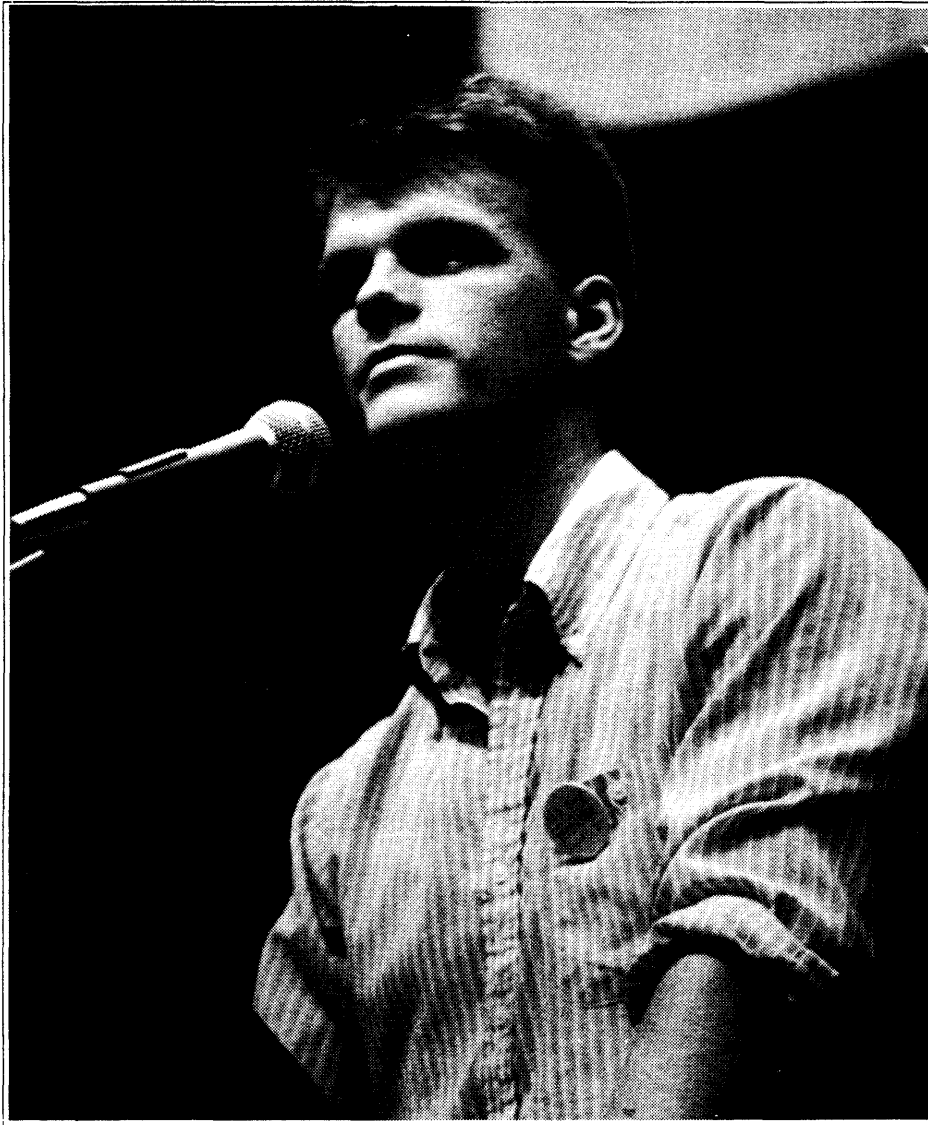
Following Larsen's charade-like Article 32 proceeding, Major J. F. Blanche, the hearing officer, recommended to his superiors that Larsen be tried for "desertion in time of war." In a significant departure from past Marine Corps threats against Larsen, however, Blanche recommended that the maximum penalty for this offense, the death penalty, not be imposed.

Blanche's report and recommendation now go to Major Gen. Vermilyea, commanding general of the Fourth Marine Air Wing. Vermilyea has enormous discretion in this matter, ranging from dropping the charges entirely to authorizing a court martial with the maximum proposed penalty.

The recent hearing

Larsen's new Conscientious Objector hearing was held in closed session, on Treasure Island, San Francisco, June 24-26. During this three-day proceeding, 12 witnesses provided testimony on his behalf, including several from the religious community.

The one Marine reservist from Larsen's unit called by the government to testify against Larsen, had in earlier depositions made several potentially damaging statements. In the course of the hearing however, this witness was thoroughly discredited when he gave several different versions as to when a particular statement by Larsen was supposed to have been made.



Erik Larsen speaking at Sept. 14, 1990, Berkeley teach-in on the Gulf war.

The witness initially claimed that last August, during a Marine drill, Larsen told him that he was applying for CO status to avoid going to war. In fact, the record indicated that there was no such drill in August.

When the witness changed his story to put Larsen's statement in September at another drill period, the record showed that Larsen was not present at this event as well, and in fact, had already publicly announced his CO stand.

To deny Larsen's application, the Marine Corps has only to find that there is a "basis in fact" for the decision.

Civilian military attorney John Murcko, who represents Tahan Jones, told *Socialist Action* that the "basis in fact" criteria "is an extremely limited standard of proof which allows for great discretion in the military."

Murcko explained that during the Vietnam War, in spite of this standard, some 90 per-

cent of the CO applications he was familiar with were approved. Of the 28 GI resisters originally confined to Camp LeJeune, however, not one has been granted CO status. All have received prison sentences based on conviction after trial or plea-bargaining.

Larsen was singled out

The original denial of CO status to Larsen was based on a non-proven assertion that his objection to war was solely "political," as opposed to the narrow legal criteria of sincere opposition to all war based on religious, ethical, and moral grounds.

But Larsen explained: "A person can be ethically, morally, and religiously opposed to war and be a sincere Conscientious Objector and still be a vocal critic of government policies or government in general." It was this vocal criticism—including hundreds of speeches in 14 states and three foreign countries—which led the

Marines to single out Larsen for special persecution.

Larsen's CO views crystalized during a special training period at Dugway, Utah, where the Marines have been testing biological, chemical and nuclear weapons for the past 50 years.

"We were told not to go outside a certain area," Larsen told us. "There were unexploded devices. They told us don't dig in the soil because you might come across a biological or chemical pocket that's been left over since the '60s. Always wear your gas mask."

"So one day, these two Marines came across something—or maybe they had heat exhaustion. It was treated as if it were a chemical incident. Three hundred Marines had to go up a hillside and don our gas masks. It was pretty scary to be fearful of something you can't see."

"I began questioning a lot about weapons of mass destruction. They don't know friend or foe. Their targets could be anyone, civilian or military. ... That was pretty much the last straw. ... I didn't want to prepare any more for going to war. I didn't want to prepare any more for supporting our policies—which would be killing thousands of people, tens of thousands of people."

Rivkin expects the hearing officer to release his recommendation within the next few weeks. If Larsen receives a favorable recommendation and if it is approved by the military tops, the Marines will be hard-pressed from a political and legal standpoint, to proceed with a court martial.

Larsen argues that he would not have been activated if his CO application was handled fairly. A San Francisco federal court judge has, in fact, ruled that the Marines denied Larsen a fair hearing when they ruled against his original CO application in November.

But a letter to the Larsen family from an authorized spokesperson from the Marine commandant's office, indicates that the Marines care little about formalities. They assert that Larsen was still under Marine jurisdiction when they ordered his unit activated.

The legal cards are no doubt stacked against Erik Larsen, Tahan Jones, and all other Marines who said "No" to the Gulf War slaughter. The antiwar movement has a special responsibility to come to their aid.

On June 22, more than 200 activists and supporters attended a Berkeley, Calif., rally/birthday party for 24-year old Larsen. Larsen and Jones family representatives proudly supported their son's courageous fight in the face of difficult odds. Over \$2000 was raised at the event. An estimated \$60,000 will be required in the months to come.

Contributions and other support are urgently needed. Checks and communications can be sent to The Tahan Jones/Erik Larsen Defense Fund, Box 225, 1678 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA. 94709. Phone (415) 655-1201. ■

Joni Jacobs takes her campaign to the streets

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

SAN FRANCISCO—The campaign of socialist mayoral candidate Joni Jacobs really got underway during the month of June as supporters began collecting the signatures required to qualify for ballot status.

All candidates must pay a \$2581.80 filing fee, which for reasons unknown to the San Francisco Registrar of Voters is based on two percent of the mayor's annual salary (\$129,090). The only way to avoid the filing fee is to collect enough signatures to offset the cost at \$.25 each, or 10,327 total.

Saturday mornings, campaign supporters meet in the San Francisco Socialist Action headquarters. After coffee, bagels, and donuts, volunteers split up into teams and head out into the city's neighborhoods to gather signatures and talk to people about Joni's campaign. Literature tables with posters, buttons, and flyers are set up throughout town.

Supporters are also taking petitions with them to pass around at work and school or to gather signatures at train and bus stations, movie lines, and political events.

Petitioners report a generally friendly response to the idea of helping a socialist

candidate get on the ballot. Not a few signers comment that it will be good to see someone besides a Democrat or Republican on the ticket. After being told of Joni's role in organizing defense activities at abortion clinics, people often sign on that basis alone.

The fact that Joni is an activist involved in the real-life issues facing San Franciscans sets her apart from the other candidates. She's probably the only candidate who goes into the streets to put herself on the ballot—and she is always one of the top signature-getters.

In just four weeks, over half the necessary petitions have been filed. But more are needed, and supporters of the Jacobs socialist campaign are welcome to join petitioning in July.

On June 19, Joni was interviewed by the San Francisco National Organization for Women (NOW) Political Action Committee to determine the chapter's endorsement. When her lack of experience balancing a municipal budget was questioned, she replied, "I look forward to the challenge of balancing a \$3 billion budget. Balancing a \$3 billion budget isn't hard. What's hard is balancing the budget of a family of four on \$600 per month SSI benefits." ■

When asked whether she would raise sales taxes or cut social spending, Joni criticized the terms of the debate in which the poor and working people are the losers in both "solutions."

Despite Joni's credentials as a NOW member for eight years and clinic defense organizer for two years, the chapter chose to endorse mayoral candidate Richard Hongisto, who did less to defend women's rights and keep clinics open with his powers as sheriff than Joni has as a feminist activist.

Hongisto is also the wealthiest candidate, running with \$8 million in property from real estate alone. Jacobs called the endorsement "a cynical choice of the lesser evil" from among the capitalist candidates rather than picking a true representative of the struggle for women's rights.

Anyone who wants to help support the campaign, talk to the candidate, and eat a great meal besides, should come to our fund-raising dinner at 7 p.m. on Saturday, July 13, at 77 Cedro St. in San Francisco. Call (415) 821-0458 for details.

Funds are needed. Checks should be made out to the Joni Jacobs for Mayor Campaign and sent to 3435 Army Street, Room 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. ■

No light at the end of the tunnel for the uninsured: Medical-insurance profiteers undermine national healthcare



BY HAYDEN PERRY

In 1988, Americans spent \$542 billion on healthcare—12 percent of the gross national product. This was 85 percent more per capita than France, 131 percent more than Japan, and 171 percent more than Britain. But spending more money has not produced more healthy Americans, only more anxious Americans who wonder how they will pay their inflated medical bills.

The pain that Americans suffer from inadequate healthcare is also felt in the boardrooms of some of the nation's largest corporations. The directors of the multinationals are not suffering from untreated stomach aches but are feeling pain in their corporate balance sheets.

Corporations are incurring ever rising costs for their workers' health insurance. According to an article in the March 25 issue of *The Nation*, the Chrysler Auto Company pays \$700 in healthcare for every car that it builds. In Canada, which has national health insurance, the health cost in the Chrysler plant is \$225 a car.

This bothers American automakers, who must compete on a world market. Chrysler's chief, Lee Iacocca, complained recently, "Most of our foreign competitors have a \$300 to \$500 cost advantage over us just in health costs alone for every car and truck they build."

Cutbacks in coverage

Part of the excessive healthcare costs are rooted in the market-based insurance system corporate America supports. Like cost-plus military contracts, healthcare is delivered on a fee-for-service basis. There is no incentive to cut costs. Inflated charges are paid by insurance companies that raise the premiums to be paid by corporations and their workers.

Concern has been expressed by Richard Heckert, president of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). He told Congress, "I hope that none of us abandon our employees, but we are going to cut our losses."

When businessmen talk of cutting losses it usually means loading those losses on the backs of their employees. The health-

care crisis is no exception. Employers are cutting benefits, making employees pay a larger share of the cost, and screening out workers who might have medical problems.

Nevertheless, employers can go only so far in cutting costs this way. Maintaining and expanding healthcare benefits has been the main issue in hard fought strikes in coal and other industries. In addition, growing numbers of retired employees are demanding continued coverage.

Now the problem is too big for industry to solve alone. In a recent poll, 73 percent of the executives of the largest corporations admit this fact and call for government intervention. They want the government to control medical costs and force their competitors to buy health insurance.

This is scarcely a comprehensive health plan, but the executives do not favor "socialized medicine." They only want to pass their healthcare costs on to their competitors, their workers, and the taxpayers.

The multi-nationals cannot agree on a common program. At last count, six plans were before Congress. Except for one, they all propose buying more health coverage from the insurance companies that are creating the healthcare crisis.

Monopoly for insurance companies

In his book, "In Critical Condition," Sen. Edward Kennedy indicts the insurance industry on many counts. He points out that many of the 1800 health insurers in America are controlled by physicians. This doctor-insurer complex is in no position to impose cost control on the medical industry.

Physicians dominate the boards that set Blue Cross fee schedules. Kennedy says, "They will never take a hard nosed stand on behalf of the people. They are set up to serve the providers, and depend heavily on the providers' support."

Since there is no competition on the price of medical care, insurance companies compete by designing glitzy policies that seem to offer far more than that they do. Health insurance coverage is so complex that few workers know what their policy will cover until they get sick.

The exclusions are buried in the fine print. This can result in financial shock—as in the case of a mother with a sick one-week-old baby who required a \$6000 operation. The insurer would not pay because the policy excluded the first 15 days of the infant's life.

More profitable to insurance companies is excluding whole classes of citizens: people with diabetes, high blood pressure, and other chronic conditions. Workers with diabetes may be covered by a group plan where they work, but they can get no other insurance if they leave.

This may tie workers to obnoxious working conditions for the rest of their working lives.

More often, a worker who leaves a plant that has a health plan finds it difficult to find another job with a comparable plan. Companies all over the country are dropping health plans as "too expensive."

Even more expensive are the private plans with even minimum coverage. No laid off worker can afford them. So he or she joins the 50 million Americans who can only pray that they don't get sick.

Another reason for the high cost of insurance is criminal collusion among the insurance companies. In 1945, the McCarran-Ferguson Act was passed exempting the insurance industry from anti-trust laws. It allowed insurers, in 1984, to offer less coverage for more money, keep certain kinds of insurance off the market, and boycott insurance companies that did not participate in their cartel.

This resulted in the insurance crisis of the 1980s, when both cities and citizens were refused liability and other forms of insurance. A California deputy attorney general condemned the conspiracy as "a gross effort by the insurance companies to mug the American economy."

A suit has been filed against 32 companies, including prestigious Lloyds of London. However, it will be years, if ever, before the insurance conspiracy can be ended.

"Belly up"

The citizen who overcomes all obstacles and holds a health insurance policy still has

little cause to relax. The insurance company may go belly. One of the biggest companies, Executive Life Insurance, recently collapsed after over-dosing on junk bonds. A shell-shocked audience of policy holders was warned not to expect full recovery of the money owed them.

"I think I will be lucky to get 10 percent," lamented one victim. A number of companies cut costs by transferring their group health insurance to Executive Life without letting their employees know. They wanted to save money with a cheap outfit. Now they are trying to squirm out of responsibility for their employees' losses.

California regulators are telling victims to sue in court. But a sceptical policy holder asks, "Who is going to end up with all the money? The lawyers? The accountants?"

The possibility of federal mandates has led a number of states to consider healthcare schemes. Again the insurers are on the State House steps making sure they get in the act. They are offering "bare-bones" insurance policies that would just meet state requirements.

They argue that a little insurance is better than none. An "insured" worker in Kansas might not agree. Under that state's plan the employee pays the first \$5000 of his medical bill as well as monthly premiums.

Concern over the health crisis has been expressed in all political quarters except the White House. President Bush has no program. He has not even mentioned the topic in a major address. Secretary of Health Louis Sullivan says he is waiting for a "consensus." A consensus among the multi-nationals, he means. A White House spokesman said no program could be put together before the end of this year.

Meanwhile, members of Congress are fielding a number of plans. Nearly all carry a fatal flaw. They call for buying more insurance. The plans differ in detail but all essentially continue the present system of health insurance for private profit.

The American Medical Association (AMA) would give employers tax incentives to buy health insurance. They would cut costs by limiting awards for malpractice injuries. Let the patient bear the burden!

The conservative Heritage Foundation would tax workers on their health insurance benefits, and mandate that all families buy basic insurance.

Need socialized medicine

The AFL-CIO has been remiss for not organizing an aggressive campaign for national health. Labor leaders have been content to echo the bosses' call for more private insurance. It is said that the plan proposed by the United Auto Workers could have been written by Lee Iacocca.

An adequate national health plan must bypass the insurance industry completely. It must be financed by taxes on the rich, and involve no co-payments by the patient. It must cover every citizen and resident from the cradle to the grave. No week-old babies, or homeless falling through the cracks.

Many healthcare plans embodying these principles are being formulated by unions and consumer groups. They have the principal merit of cutting out the profiteering insurance industry, and putting the patient first.

On the weaker side, health planners are inclined to limit their plan to "what the country can afford." This means limiting healthcare to the amount the ruling class is willing to spend. They look to Britain, where the National Health Service is starved of funds.

It would be better to look to Cuba, where an impoverished Third World country offers its people the most complete healthcare service at no cost to the patient. One reason for Cuba's success is that the new government gave education and healthcare the first priority in building the new society.

Their plan embraces all aspects of medical care, from training doctors and building hospitals and clinics, assuring medical supplies, to seeing that the remotest village has a clinic and transportation to a hospital.

The Cubans had to push aside their local and foreign exploiters before they could lay the foundations for "socialized medicine." We, in America, have an equally formidable obstacle. ■

World news briefs

Apartheid regime's bag of 'dirty tricks'

Last month, a page was opened on the cloak-and-dagger operations of the South African Defense Force, which is working to preserve white control in the era of "post-apartheid."

Nico Basson, former chief of propaganda for the SADF, told the British newspaper *The Independent* that his department had "managed to infiltrate the South African media across the board." One of his tasks was to bolster Gatsha Buthelezi's conservative Black party, Inkatha, by getting "their name known and fixed in the public consciousness."

Basson said that millions of pounds of secret government funds had been spent to arm Inkatha and to "orchestrate their entire strategy" of fomenting violence in the Black townships. In addition, he said, the SADF is steering money toward conservative Black churches that stress anti-communism in their preachings.

The government's objective, according to the *Johannesburg Star*, is to shepherd the churches, Inkatha, and leaders of the Black "homelands" into a "Christian Democratic Alliance," which could compete with the African National Congress in any future elections.

Unemployment rises in E. Europe

July 1 is Black Monday for workers in eastern Germany. On that day, a one-year work protection scheme expires. Up to one-half million people will lose their jobs.

Economists predict that unemployment in eastern Germany will reach 2.4 million this year, with another 2.2 million jobs supported by government support schemes.

Meanwhile, unemployment is soaring in the other countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The Czechoslovak jobless figure has tripled since January, rising 14 percent during the last month. According to the Labor Ministry, the amount of unemployed workers stands at over 250,000 (2 percent) and could reach a million in six months.

Hungary's unemployment rose 13 percent in April to 3.5 percent of the workforce. Its Economic Research Institute said that 400,000 were likely to be jobless by the end of the year.

Poland now has over 1.4 million unemployed, or about 7.5 percent of the workforce. It is predicted that December's figure will be over 2 million.

Thousands more will die in Iraq

In the wake of the U.S. bombing of Iraq, deaths from malnutrition and poor sanitation continue to mount.

The bombing attack severely disabled Iraq's electric power grid, including its water-purification and sewage systems. As a result, epidemics of cholera, typhoid, gastroenteritis, and other diarrheal diseases have been raging.

In May, a Harvard University medical team concluded that the mortality rate of Iraqi children under five



Nearly 175,000 Iraqi children will die as a result of U.S. bombing.

George Baranki Azar

could double because of disease compounded by malnutrition.

More recently, relief agency officials have begun to speak out against the U.S.-enforced trade sanctions, which, they say, make the situation far more precarious. The ban on Iraqi sales of crude oil and the embargo on foreign financial transactions have made it difficult for the government to import sufficient food and medicine. Even in hospitals, most patients are only receiving half the normal ration of food.

Mexican Ford workers need solidarity

After four years of intermittent strikes and mass demonstrations against brutal repression at the Mexican facilities of the Ford Motor Company, workers at the Ford plant in Cuautitlan have finally won a court decision.

The court ruled in favor of recounting votes in an election to allow the workers to replace the gangster-style control of their union and to affiliate to a different union federation. However, the danger remains that the union bureaucracy and Ford management might still conduct the recount in a fraudulent manner.

"This is a matter of interest to all North American working people," the magazine *Labor Notes* reports. The auto workers' present federation, the CTM, "is the

only labor federation in North America that supports the free trade agreement. If the Ford workers at the Cuautitlan plant are able to gain their own democratic union, they will open the possibility of working with other non-CTM unions in the Mexican auto industry to establish genuine collective bargaining."

Messages of solidarity should be sent to CILAS, Dr. Liceaga 180 A-5 1001, Col. Doctores, Mexico, D.F., Mexico. ■

Free Palestinian political prisoners

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

On May 15 and 27, closed-door military tribunals in Lod, Israel, sentenced four Palestinians to prison for terms of one-and-a-half to over four years. Since then, Malik Shenwai, the fifth defendant, has been given a five-year sentence. The five defendants were accused of having organized a cell of Fatah, a member group of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Israeli authorities claim that defendant Munir Mansur, who was sentenced to 50 months, had confessed to being a member of the PLO. None of the defendants' attorneys or supporters believes that there is any basis to the "confession."

It appears that the real "crime" of Mansur, Shenwai, and the other three convicted Palestinians—Aref Abu Romhein, Nasser Mossa, and Ahmed Abed el Aziz—was participation in the Prisoners' Friends Association. This association helps prisoners' families get permission to visit their jailed relatives, as well as sending food and clothing to prisoners. They seek political-prisoner status for Palestinians imprisoned for their convictions and sympathies, a status denied by the Israeli government.

In an appeal to the Israeli Knesset, the world-renowned violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, joined in the call for a civilian trial, in which the evidence against the five could be made public. A campaign is underway to get the charges dropped, release the prisoners, and support a legal appeal for a civilian trial.

Letters of support and contributions can be sent to The Munir Mansur Defense Campaign, P.O. Box 90609, Santa Barbara, CA 03190. ■

Another case of Zionist 'justice': Free Mahmoud Massarwa!

Mahmoud Ahmad Massarwa is a Palestinian and a citizen of the state of Israel. His home is the village of Baka al-Gharbiyya, near Hadera. He is the husband of Wafa and the father of Zatur (age seven) and Majdalene (age four). He is a political prisoner.

Before his arrest in July 1988, he worked in Tel Aviv as a carpenter by day and a factory guard at night. His employers were satisfied with him. He had good relations with his coworkers, Jews as well as Arabs.

Mahmoud Massarwa was arrested on the day before he was to leave for England to attend a conference of European socialists. He was held incommunicado for 15 days, during which time his lawyer was denied access to him. While in police custody, Mahmou was systematically denied sleep. He was beaten in the course of interrogation, and his life was threatened.

All charges against him stem from his public political activity—his commitment to the cause of Palestinian freedom, and his loyalty to the international workers movement. Charged with arson, espionage, and possession of a firearm without a license, the only evidence against him at his trial was a confession that had been beaten out of him. (This was admitted by the judge who sentenced him.) He was convicted and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

Mahmoud is a prisoner of conscience. He neither advocates nor engages in violence. Mahmou is opposed to racism. He is convinced that freedom for Palestinians from national oppression is a fundamental right. Mahmou believes in the possibility of peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Jews. He advocates and participates in united-front organizations, activities, and



struggles of Arabs and Jews.

Mahmou is a socialist. His goal is for workers to re-organize society in the interests of the majority. His efforts are directed to the political organization and education of workers.

The state of Israel makes great efforts to present itself as "the only democracy in the Middle East." But in Israel, Mahmou Massarwa is being denied basic democratic rights. He is being denied the right of freedom of expression, and the right to engage in peaceful political activity. He is being persecuted for his consistent advocacy of

democratic principles. He is a political prisoner.

Mahmou is appealing his conviction. The appeal is scheduled for Aug. 8. International support for Mahmou's rights succeeded in forcing Israeli authorities to move his first trial from behind closed doors to a public proceeding and forced the government to back down on its ban on press coverage of the trial.

An International delegation composed of British Labour Party Members of Parliament, former hostage in Lebanon Brian Keenan, former Irish political prisoner Paddy Hill (of the Birmingham Six), and others will be traveling to Israel to demand an open and fair trial. International support from labor federations and union locals is building, including support from the French CGT and the Brazilian CUT.

Letters of protest and support for Mahmou's democratic rights are urgently requested. They can be sent to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Prime Minister's Office, 3 Kaplan Street, Jerusalem, Israel 91919.

Donations to the defense effort can be sent to The Mahmou Massarwa Defense Campaign, P.O. Box 10614, Oakland, CA 94610.

Mahmou can receive mail at the following address: Mahmou Ahmad Massarwa, Ayalon Prison, P.O. Box 16, Ramleh, Israel.—C.S.

The information in this article was obtained from *Canadians Concerned for the Middle East (CCME)* in London, Ont., and the *Mahmou Massarwa Defense Campaign*.

Roots of the civil war in Sri Lanka:

A revolutionist explains Tamil struggle for self-determination

By MALIK MIAH

In February, I had the opportunity to interview Vickramabahu Karunaratne, general secretary of the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP, New Socialist Party) of Sri Lanka, a country of 17-million people off the southern coast of India. "Bahu," as he is called, was in Europe attending the world congress of the Fourth International (FI), the world revolutionary socialist movement founded by Leon Trotsky. The NSSP had applied to join the FI, and was granted sympathizing status by the delegates.

I visited Sri Lanka twice in the mid-1980s. It is a beautiful island, and was once a popular tourist spot for Europeans. That all changed in the early 1980s when the oppressed Tamil minority stepped up its agitation for self-determination. Armed Tamil groups began to grow and a full-fledged civil war developed.

There are approximately 3 million Tamil people on the island, divided between Ceylon Tamils (12 percent of the population) and Indian Tamils (6 percent of the population), who mainly work as farm workers on large agricultural plantations.

Until a 1987 agreement between the Sri Lankan and the Indian governments, most Indian Tamils were denied citizenship rights even though they were born on the island. The British first brought Indian Tamils to Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon) in the 19th century to work the fields.

After political independence was won from the British in 1948, the new government of Ceylon adopted an anti-Tamil policy. The mostly Sinhala (74 percent of the population) capitalist class controlled parliament and passed laws making the Tamil people second-class citizens. Sinhala became the official language even though, under the British, Tamil and Sinhala had equal status along with English.

The national oppression of the Tamil minority is the origin of the current civil war. Tamils of all classes have been fighting for full equality since independence.

"The national problem is one of the most important problems in Sri Lanka," Bahu explained. "There are two nationalities in Sri Lanka, the Sinhala and Tamil people. These two communities have been living in Sri Lanka for over 2000 years. But under capitalism they are now emerging as two distinct nationalities.

"After the British left, the country was in the hands of the Sinhala bourgeoisie who resorted to repression against the Tamil people to consolidate their racist capitalist government. The Tamil people have been fighting against this oppression."

"Our position," Bahu continued, "is support for the right of self-determination for the Tamil-speaking people. We believe that if we can bring democratic unification on the basis of the right of self-determination, there will be peace in Sri Lanka."

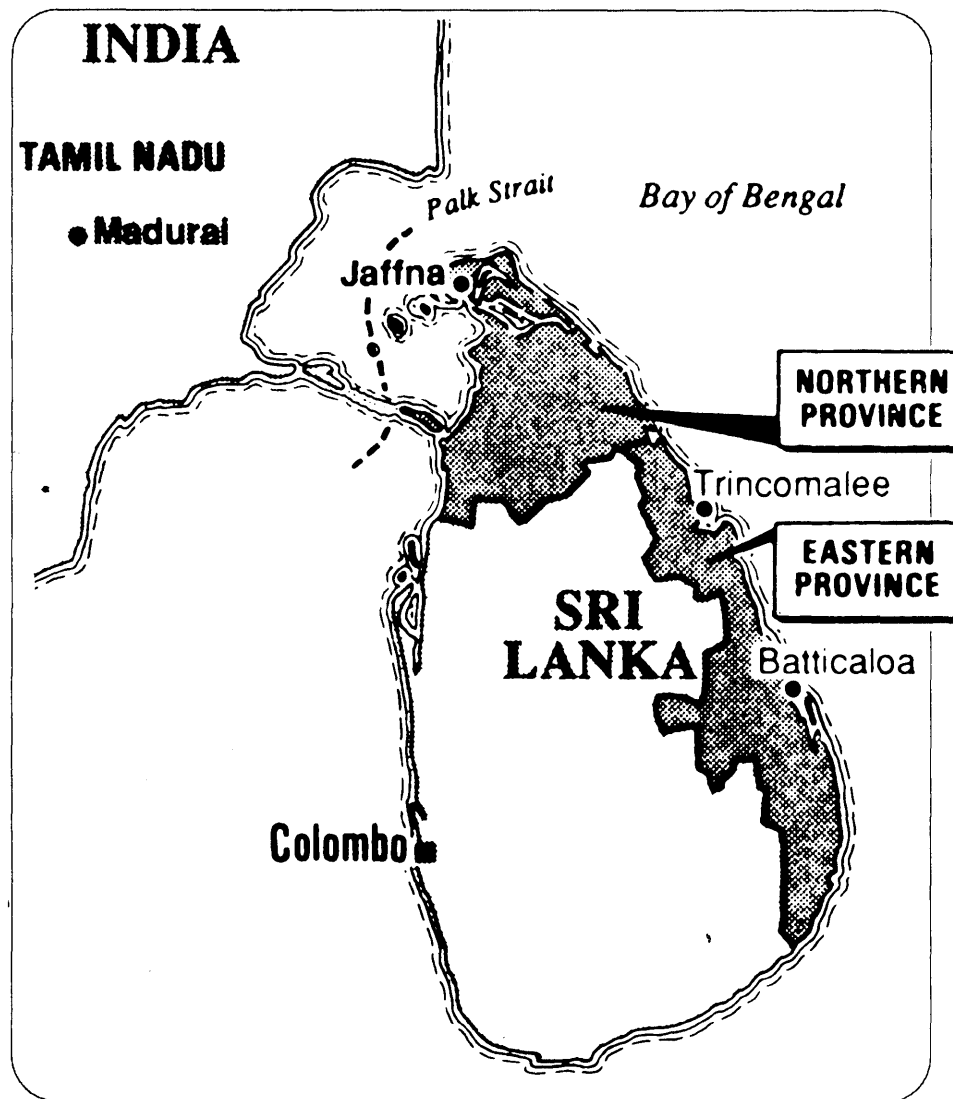
Since the civil war began in the early 1980s, more than 40,000 people have died. This includes some 25,000 Tamils—mostly by indiscriminate bombing of the northern and eastern parts of the island by the Sri Lankan army. The military has also attacked Sinhala-chauvinist groups in the south seeking to overthrow the government for granting a few concessions to the Tamil people.

Moors (7 percent of the population and Tamil-speaking) have also suffered. Nearly 700,000 people have been displaced by the civil war. Tens of thousands more have fled abroad.

Tamil Tigers

The main armed organization of the Tamils is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Eelam is the Tamil name for an independent homeland. The Tigers have used their base of support in the north not to only fight the government but also to eliminate different Tamil groups and others who don't support their tactics to win self-determination.

"There have been divisions among the armed national liberation groups," Bahu explained. "The Tamil Tigers have resorted



'There are approximately 3 million Tamil people on the island, divided between Ceylon Tamils (12 percent of the population) and Indian Tamils (6 percent of the population), who mainly work as farm workers on large agricultural plantations.'

to terror against other Tamil organizations, including left-moving Tamil currents, in order to establish hegemony among the Tamil people. They have attacked our organization, which has a substantial backing among the Tamil people in the north and the east. They killed one of our most important Tamil leaders, a member of our political bureau."

The hegemonic terror policy of the Tigers is one reason the Sri Lankan government is able to maintain its aggression against the Tamils without a major response in the Sinhala areas. At the same time, the army's terrorism has made a military solution impossible. The Tamil people prefer the Tigers over the Sinhala chauvinists in control of the state.

The Tigers' policies, however, have led to an erosion of support among the 55 million Tamils living in the state of Tamil Nadu across the Palk Strait in India. Tamil Nadu has historically provided a safe haven for Tamil militants, and pressured New Delhi to back the Sri Lankan Tamils.

India's intervention

In 1987, the Indian government brokered a deal with the Sri Lankan regime to grant Tamils a degree of regional autonomy in the north. The Tigers and other groups initially accepted the pact, which included the stationing of Indian troops on the island to enforce the "peace." The Indians were at first greeted as heroes by the Tamils. Several armed Tamil groups disarmed and joined a regional government.

But not the Tigers. They broke the truce and relaunched the national liberation war against the Indian and Sri Lankan armies to win Eelam. They assassinated leading Tamil capitalist figures as well as former Tamil militants who had backed the Indian-Sri Lankan pact and joined the regional government.

Opposition among Sinhala people against India's troops began to grow. Anti-Indian and anti-Tamil chauvinists took up arms against the regime. Finally in early 1990, the Indian troops withdrew. Armed Sinhala chauvinists opposed to the govern-

ment's concessions to India were brutally crushed, and the Tigers and the government then agreed to peace talks. This lasted for 14 months. The civil war was once again relaunched by the Tigers in June 1990 to win full independence.

All Tamils did not agree, Bahu explained. Those Tamils became targets of the Tigers. An organization, University Teachers for Human Rights at Jaffna University (the main city in northern Sri Lanka and controlled by the Tigers), recently came out against the Tigers policy. They issued a statement saying the militants "calculatedly left the Tamils at the mercy of enraged Sri Lankan forces." They also attacked the Tigers' heavy-handed treatment of people in their areas of control.

"We only appeal that the LTTE should abandon its program of attacking other Tamil liberation fighters and also our party members, and on that basis, to establish a common front against the government," said Bahu. Nevertheless, Bahu added, the NSSP policy is complete support for Tamil self-determination despite their criticism of the LTTE's policies.

This position of defense of the Tamil people has resulted in murderous attacks on the NSSP by armed Sinhalese chauvinist thugs. Over a dozen members of the party have been assassinated by such groups, which have links with the police and army.

Origins and perspectives of NSSP

"We are basically a proletarian party," Bahu explained. "We are based on the organized working class, active in the trade unions. About 200,000 workers are organized in the urban trade unions and in that milieu 25 percent are in our trade unions."

In Sri Lanka, most trade unions are affiliated to, or led by, political parties. The NSSP has about 2800 active and associate members, with the majority being Sinhala. It leads two trade-union federations with about 40,000 members. Although there is government repression and attacks on democratic rights, unions are still allowed to meet and function. In addition to the issue of Tamil rights, NSSP-led unions

focus their activity around declining wages and living standards. Per capita income in Sri Lanka is about \$360.

The NSSP was formed in 1977 after a split from the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP). The LSSP is the oldest working-class party in Sri Lanka. It was the Ceylonese section of the Fourth International until it was expelled in 1964 for joining a capitalist coalition government. FI supporters set up another group.

Leaders of the NSSP, however, stayed in the LSSP. "We were fighting inside the party against the coalition politics. After 1976, when the coalition government of Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike [Sri Lankan Freedom Party, SLFP] collapsed, many of the rank-and-file members turned toward us," Bahu said. "We had six supporters on the central committee. At the December 1977 party conference, we declared ourselves the Nava Sama Samaja Party" and began open activity.

The NSSP, he added, soon affiliated with the international political current in solidarity with the "Militant" tendency inside the British Labor Party. They broke with that formation in 1988 after sharp debates on what policy they should follow in Sri Lanka.

The NSSP was active in the 1980 general strike, which was defeated, and other agitation against the United National Party (UNP) government. As a result of its activities, one of its members was elected to parliament, and other members to local provincial councils.

Electoral policy

I asked Bahu about their evaluation of the LSSP's coalition strategy and electoral policy. The main bourgeois opposition party to the UNP is the SLFP. It claims to be populist and socialist, and has been out of governmental power since the late 1970s.

"We are opposed to coalition politics," Bahu explained. But he then added, "While we criticize the SLFP and put forward our own program, we campaign to defeat the government. We are not in programmatic alliance with the SLFP. But we voted for them [in the 1982 elections] to defeat the UNP. It is tactical. Unless you take up the question of complete opposition to the murderous government, you can get alienated from the people."

"You have to show that you are prepared to give every blow to the present government, but not participate in any bourgeois government. There is no trust in the bourgeois leadership. That is the line we are following at the moment. It is by fighting together but marching separately."

In a speech Bahu gave in December, he elaborated on why he believes this policy is even more important today when presidential elections may soon be called: "Defeat of the UNP presidential candidate will open up the flood gates of mass intervention. The degree and quality of mass action will depend on the perspective given to the masses. If chauvinism and communalism take the upper-hand with individual revenge in place of socio-economic tasks, an era of anarchy and unrest may result, at least for a period."

"We Sama Samajists are duty bound to do everything in our power to arrest such a situation. Hence we cannot just settle down for the defeat of the UNP, without positively intervening to direct the masses for a non-racist democratic, social goal."

I pointed out that such a policy, in the opinion of Socialist Action, is not a tactical question. While it is correct to outline a general strategy for the masses to move towards political power through mass agitation, to do so by linking it with even critical support for capitalist candidates is a trap. It can miseducate and mislead the masses.

In 1960, the LSSP adopted a similar "tactical" course that eventually laid the basis for the LSSP's slide into a capitalist government in 1964. The issue, I explained, is one of principle, not tactics.

Bahu countered that the situation in Sri Lanka makes such a complicated tactical course necessary. It is the most effective way, he said, not to become isolated from the masses who are opposed to the 13-year rule of the UNP. The NSSP, he explained, will never join a coalition capitalist government. But he repeated that the number-one task today is the defeat of the right-wing regime.

This question of class independence is a central one of Marxist strategy. We agreed on the need to continue the discussion. ■

... Masses tried to vote out hated Stalinist bureaucracy

population of the Russian Federation. National democratic movements have developed among many of them—most notably the Tatars, historically the most advanced of the peoples of Islamic tradition.

At the same time as the Russian presidential vote, mayoralty elections were held in Moscow and Leningrad, where the Communist Party's bêtes noires, Gavril Popov and Anatoli Sobchak, were reelected by 65-percent majorities.

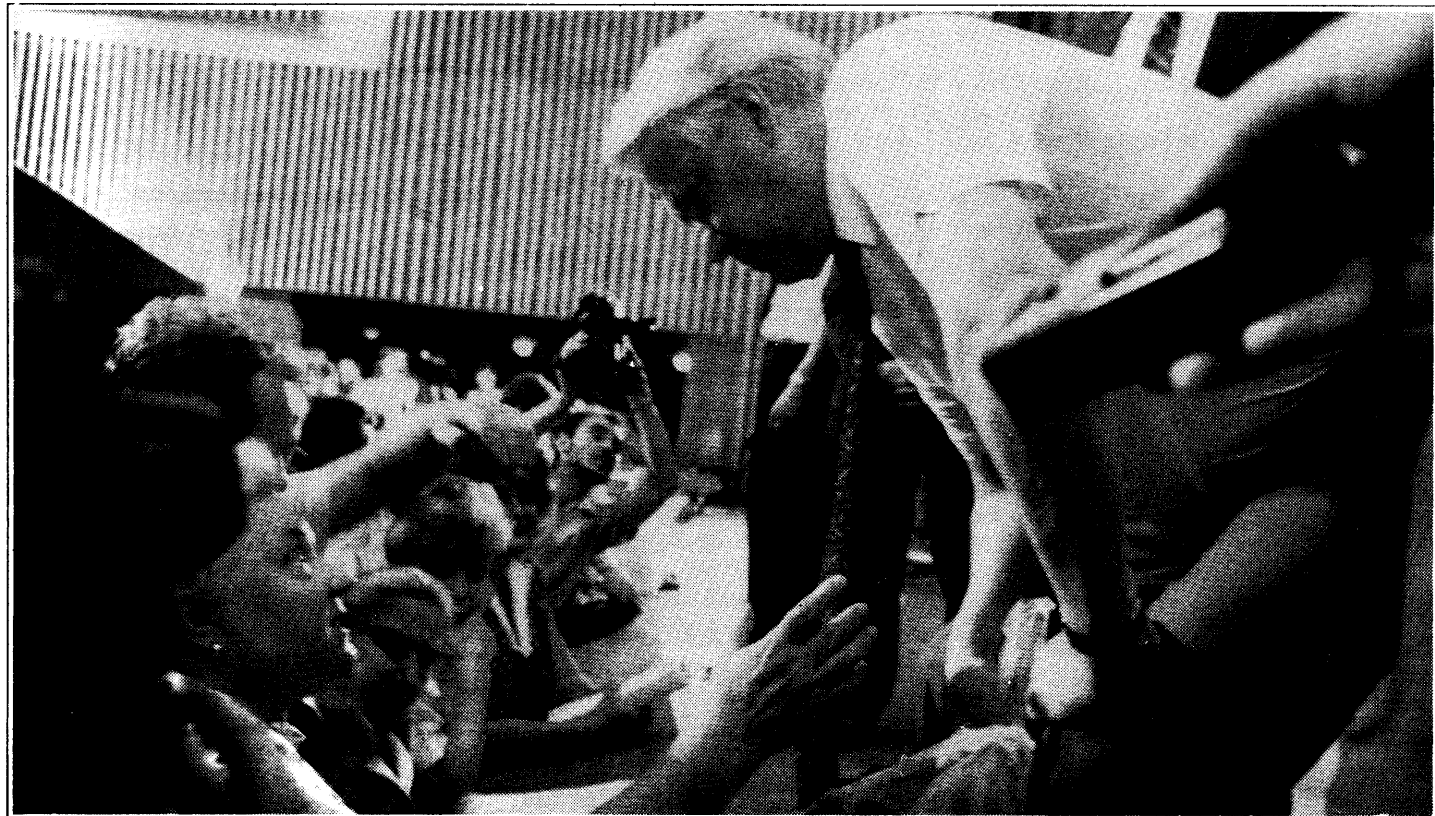
The proposal for changing the name of Leningrad back to St. Petersburg also won a referendum in the city. All these results show that the majority of citizens will take any opportunity to cast what they think is a vote against the bureaucracy and its tradition.

What such votes are actually for is another matter. The U.S. media has played the Yeltsin victory as an indication that the Soviet voters are for a faster restoration of capitalism. In fact, the attempts to carry out what the U.S. authorities have clearly stated over and over again as an essential first step for "real reform," the establishment of "real prices," touched off a wave of strikes in April that threatened even to explode into an all-Union general strike.

It was this strike wave that forced Gorbachev to make the April 23 agreement with Yeltsin, an agreement, by the way, that made promises of automatic cost-of-living raises, cancelling some price rises, and "reconsidering" others.

If confronted by such a demand from workers in the West, any capitalist or capitalist economist would be quick to explain that automatic cost-of-living raises are in direct contradiction to the principles of the market.

Yeltsin promises that his market reforms will not impose any sacrifices on working people. Moreover, he offers a number of social benefits more advanced than any that have existed in the Soviet Union, such as a minimum consumer budget for disadvantaged parts of the Russian republic, as well as the allotment of 20 percent of new housing for the underprivileged.



While playing on anti-Stalinist sentiment, Yeltsin made many promises he can't keep. Now, the two-some of Yeltsin and Gorbachev have only one goal: Get the workers to make gigantic sacrifices in the interest of "market reforms."

Moscow mayor Popov's program also called for automatic cost-of-living raises. That is enough to make any self-respecting capitalist sick.

Of course, the likes of Yeltsin and Popov are unlikely to keep any such promises. On the other hand, they are just as unlikely to be able to get the workers who vote for them to accept sacrifices for the sake of the market, which in fact

explains why they made these promises in the first place.

"Endless mass meetings"

Symptomatically, in the case of the Leningrad referendum, it seems that the proposal of the local soviet to change the city's name was a reflection of the liberal opposition majority's inability to bring about any real improvements in the living conditions of the population. To make up for that, it offered the people a chance to deal the Communist Party a symbolic slap in the face.

The tactic seems to have worked, at least in one sense. *Pravda* did more huffing and puffing over the proposed name change than it did over the Russian elections, even though the referendum could not even definitively decide the question.

The Soviet CP organ was roused to draw the most dreadful picture of the city of Lenin under the rule of a renegade city council: "Women are afraid to give birth—lines, the lack of products for children, social tension ... the endless mass meetings prevent them from taking responsibility for the lives of more children. ... Are Leningraders going to die out like the mammoths?"

Since lines in front of shops are nothing new, it seems that the writer thought that it was the mass meetings in particular that were so frightening to women that they felt they had to forego motherhood.

Regardless of the deal between Yeltsin and Gorbachev, the Russian presidential elections represented a big new widening of the area in which the Communist Party has lost its control of elections, as it has for some time in Leningrad and Moscow. Presumably then, from the point of view of CP propagandists, the entire Russian people is now threatened with extinction.

However, a correspondent writing in the *Pravda* of June 17, found a more immediate worry than the possibility of a decline in the birth rate owing to a fear of democratic tumult.

O. Odinets wrote that in the Ukraine, "thoughts have been expressed of uniting the strike committees in order to convert them into a new political party that would oppose the Communist Party. Certain organizational and political conditions for this already exist—leaders, structures, a

The scowl on the other side of Gorby's face

In the last months, in its coverage of events in the Soviet Union the Western press has concentrated on extolling the merits of Gorbachev and considering the arguments for giving him vast amounts of aid to sweeten his capitalist restorationist reforms.

The fact that Moscow is continuing repression and threats against the national democratic movements has become, at best, a second-rate issue. Although the attempted Unionist coup d'état in Vilnius in January failed, the pressure on the Lithuanian national democratic government has not been relaxed.

On June 3, Soviet forces surrounded the Lithuanian parliament building. The Lithuanian president, Vitautas Landsbergis, had to go on TV to appeal to the population to protect the government. Ten thousand people continued guarding the building into the early hours of the next morning.

On May 30, Landsbergis received a letter from the head of the Soviet General Staff, M. Moiseev, warning that the army had "the right to resort to any measure" if Lithuanian youth refused to accept conscription into the Soviet army.

Far worse pressures have been brought to bear on the long suffering Armenians. The Kremlin has stuck by its decisions to turn over the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to the tender mercies of the Azerbaijani chauvinist government in Baku, which is totally controlled by the Communist Party.

At the end of May, Soviet special forces began deporting thousands of Armenians from the Shauimian district bordering Nagorno-Karabakh and from some villages in Nagorno-Karabakh also. This marks the first direct all-Union collaboration in the genocidal policies of the Azerbaijan Stalinist bureaucracy.

These actions have been interpreted by many observers as retaliation for a law passed by the Armenian parliament calling for the confiscation of the Communist Party's property. This measure was declared "unconstitutional" by the all-Union authorities. — G.F.

Demand increases in Soviet Union for access to Trotsky's writings

By ALEX CHIS

The banned writings of Soviet revolutionary Leon Trotsky, who was exiled and later assassinated by the Stalinist police state, are once again becoming available to readers in the USSR.

A second edition of "Stalin," the dictator's biography written by Trotsky, has just appeared. The two-volume work was published in an edition of 150,000 jointly by Terra and Izdatelstvo Politicheskoi Literaturi—more commonly known as Politizdat, the Communist Party Central Committee publishers.

The way was prepared for the publication of this second edition by the first Terra edition of 100,000. This printing had been assisted by people in the United States who contributed to Walnut Publishing Company's Trotsky Fund. [See *Socialist Action*, May 1991.]

Previously, the four-volume "Archives of Trotsky: The Communist Opposition in the USSR 1923-1927," was published in an edition of 100,000, also by Terra publishers and again assisted by Walnut's Trotsky Fund [See *Socialist Action*, August 1990.]

Two other volumes of Trotsky have also appeared in the USSR. "Toward a History of the Russian Revolution," an anthology of Trotsky's writings, was published in an edition of 150,000 by Politizdat, and "The Stalin School of Falsification," a facsimile of the 1932 Berlin Russian language edition, was published in an edition of 200,000 by Nauka, the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

This makes a total of one-and-a-quarter million individual volumes of Trotsky published in the space of one year and now circulating in the USSR.

Walnut has also just learned from Yuri Felshtinsky, a Trotsky scholar, that Trotsky's "My Life" is in the pro-

cess of being published in a two-volume edition of 150,000 in the USSR. This autobiography, first published in 1930, covers Trotsky's life and revolutionary work from his earliest days until his foreign exile to Prinkipo in Turkey.

Other volumes wait to be printed, although the process is sometimes torturous. The Communist Party apparatus still controls the supply of paper and the printing presses, so the actual realization of a publication requires much work.

And there is a larger complaint. Although the Nauka edition and the original Terra editions that the Walnut Trotsky Fund assisted have no weakening introductions or notes, the Politizdat editions have introductions that are certainly not consistent with Trotsky's ideas. The second edition of "Stalin" even deletes the appendix, "Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution," a succinct explanation of the process of permanent revolution in Russia.

The most important thing, however, is that there is clearly a hunger in the Soviet Union to find out the real truth about Soviet history and the Russian Revolution. The feeling of empowerment that comes when the truth is learned, especially by the working class, will have an impact on everything that happens in the Soviet Union.

Walnut Publishers is excited about the thirst for Trotsky's ideas in the Soviet Union and would like you to help. We think it is especially important that editions of Trotsky are published that contain nothing to weaken or distort his ideas. We have set up the Trotsky Publishing Fund to help with this effort. Please give generously.

Checks can be made out to Trotsky Fund and sent to Walnut Publishing Co., 3435 Army St., Room 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. ■

editorial

Women and the military

Should the women's movement organize to change society, or should it limit itself to seeking equal rights and power within the existing social order?

This debate has been fundamental in the women's movement since its first wave beginning one century ago. At no time in the history of the movement has the debate revealed such a sharp divergence between these two frameworks.

Should the movement champion all women's rights here and internationally, or does this stance conflict with the goal of attaining rights and privileges for some at the top of American society—including its deadly war machine—at the expense of others here and especially abroad?

There is a public debate going on in the media and congressional committees over women's role in the military. Should women be allowed to participate in combat?

The stark reality of this debate is revealed in the wake of the Gulf war. We should call it the Gulf massacre. Some women are demanding the right to fly combat missions in future wars and participate in other forms of military combat. Given the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths, military and civilian, caused by the bombs dropped by U.S. planes, this demand is nothing more than the demand to participate equally with men in the slaughter.

Those caught up in the jingoistic fervor whipped up by the capitalist class as it savors its victory over Iraq can be found on both sides of the debate. The real issue, however, is: Should any American participate in wars against other countries?

The U.S. armed forces are the instrument of the ruling rich to secure their profit system by any means necessary. Their purpose is certainly not to defend the American people, who are not under attack from any other country.

We must consider the Harvard University medical team's study which predicts the postwar deaths of 175,000 Iraqi children. These children are dying because of the U.S. bombing raids on water supplies, sanitation and electrical generation systems, and the U.S.-initiated embargo against shipments of crucial supplies to Iraq. The demand to participate in combat with U.S. armed forces is the demand to kill children.

When we organize for our equal rights, we need to refuse to participate in the oppression of others, such as equal participation in the American war machine.

Abortion Rights

The largest women's rights organization—National Organization for Women (NOW)—picked a good time to hold its national conference in New York City, July 5-7. Coming on the heels of the two violent political attacks on women by all three branches of government, this conference has an historic opportunity to make a stand that can push these attacks back and secure a firm victory for abortion rights.

The response of NOW, as either a loyal opposition, or a militant and uncompromising organizer of women in the life and death struggle for reproductive freedom, can be decided this month in New York.

The Reagan administration initiated the rules for federally-funded family planning agencies, denying them the right to counsel women on abortion as an alternative to unwanted pregnancies. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld (in the *Rust v. Sullivan* case) this retrograde policy.

And now, the Louisiana legislature has just passed the most reactionary anti-woman law, outlawing and restricting abortion to the extent that makes it impossible for women to exercise that right established with the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision.

All observers, left and right, agree that the court is moving in the direction of overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Each of its abortion-related decisions chips away more and more of the fundamental right of a woman to control her own body.

Yet these attacks come at a time when national polls indicate broad popular support for legal abortion in the United States. Obviously, the administration, the Supreme Court, and these legislatures are completely unresponsive to women's rights and the fact that women's lives have been saved by the legalization of abortion.

What should we do about this grim situation? Let's resolve to turn it around. NOW has proven that it is capable of mobilizing on a grand scale. It sponsored two massive demonstrations in Washington, D.C. in 1989—one of 630,000 and one of over 300,000.

The time to mobilize again is long overdue. Power is the only language understood in the government and our power lies in mobilizing the great numbers of people who support women's rights, and mobilizing them independent of the governmental agencies and political parties controlled by those who profit from the capitalist system of inequality.

Independent political action

Independent politics will be discussed and debated in New York, as it has been during the two years since NOW decided to explore the establishment of a third political party. After a year of public hearings on the issue and a whole history of betrayals of women by the two capitalist political parties there still does not appear to be a consensus within NOW on this issue.

But we in Socialist Action have a proposal.

NOW is not prepared to strike out on its own in the electoral arena. A new political party that could successfully challenge the capitalist parties must be based on workers—male and female—and their unions, the organizations with the resources to launch a serious challenge to the Democrats and Republicans. While such a party is long overdue, the forces which could bring it to fruition are not yet resolved to do so.

In the interim, we propose that NOW act boldly and announce publicly its refusal to support any candidate of the Democratic or Republican parties. Instead, NOW should utilize the strategy of independent politics outside the electoral arena in mobilizing demonstrations and other tactics of mass action in defense of our right to abortion and all our other demands.

This approach could help establish the conditions for the development of a truly independent party and at the same time set into motion the kind of movement to which abortion rights cannot be denied. ■

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

What has the women's movement accomplished since its second wave crashed on the barren shores of American sexism in the late 1960's? A lot.

The most profound effect of the women's rights movement has been the revolution in consciousness of the millions of females who have been born in the last 30 years. Girls of elementary school age believe they can do what boys can do, and furthermore, that they have rights.

When the second wave of feminism burst

been forced to make RU-486, a non-surgical means of abortion, available. Eastern European nations, coming under renewed influence of world capitalism and its agent, the Catholic Church hierarchy, are forcing women to re-win the rights to control their own bodies.

The best hope for turning the tide is in mobilizing ever-larger militant street demonstrations that are independent of all government power. That means that the demonstrations must be organized above and against the politicians who have succeeded

'Beholden to no one, champion of all the oppressed'

onto the American political landscape in the early 1970s, some of the issues which mobilized the greatest numbers were:

1) Abortion—the right to control one's own reproduction;

2) Childcare—the right of children to have quality care while their mothers entered the workforce;

3) Legal rights—the right to equal access with men to jobs, property, access to all institutions and professions, and freedom from all forms of sex discrimination.

Each of these goals remain unachieved despite some important victories in the decades since the struggle re-emerged. Let's look at one demand that the vast majority of women consider to be a right.

In 1973, right in the beginning of the second feminist wave, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion by outlawing the hundreds of state laws which placed restrictions on abortion. The Court claimed that the decision to terminate a pregnancy fell within the private domain of the patient-doctor relationship, and that this right to privacy was guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. This was a major concession to the fledgling women's rights movement.

But this concession was not solely due to the power of the movement; it also met the needs of the employing class to move women into the workforce with greater ease.

Reproductive Rights

Since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, however, U.S. women have considered the right to control our own reproductive lives to be a fundamental human right. In fact, defense of the right to abortion has generated more powerful mass actions than any attempts by women to win new rights, such as the Equal Rights Amendment.

The right to abortion has been steadily eroded since the *Roe v. Wade* decision was handed down. The first and most serious erosion was the denial of public funds for abortion—the Hyde Amendment passed by a Democratic Party-controlled Congress in 1977. Effectively, this removed abortion as a choice for those women, the unemployed, who rely on publicly subsidized health services.

Abortion has gone the way of other "rights" in this inherently unequal capitalist society. That is, if you've got the bucks, you've got the rights. For the rest of us, rights are transitory and must be won and re-won in hard struggle.

Since the funding restriction was enacted by Congress, a plethora of other restrictions have taken away the right to abortion from young women (who in many states are required to attain parental permission before getting an abortion) and others. The women's movement has explained the life and death nature of all the restrictions on abortion.

Illegal, or highly restricted, abortion simply means women will die. The movement has documented the case of the first woman to die as a result of the Hyde amendment (Rosie Jimenez) and the first death from a newly enacted parental consent restriction (Becky Bell).

The Supreme Court has allowed so many of these new restrictions to stand that most women's rights groups and court observers are convinced that the Court will overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision altogether when they see the opportunity to do so.

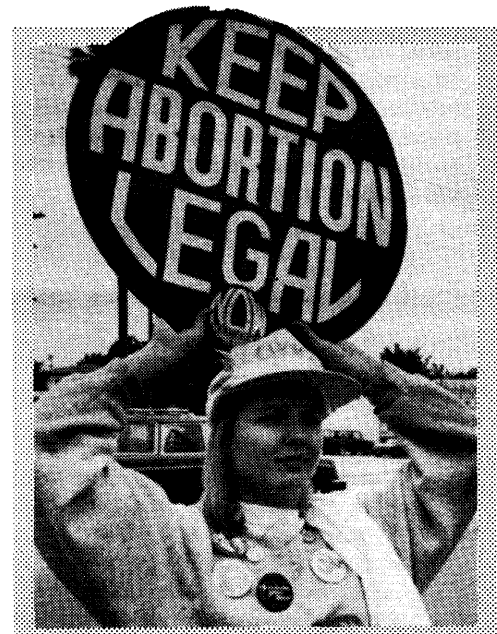
Around the world, abortion rights has also been a cornerstone of the women's movement. Catholic countries have been forced by the women's movement to legalize abortion or modify harsh restrictions. France has

in tying the leadership of the women's movement to their coattails in exchange for promises to support some of our pressing issues.

What is needed is a radical rupture of the bonds between the women's movement and the Democratic Party. The movement has already broken with the Republicans in order to move closer to the Democrats. This has not advanced women's rights one iota. The only victories we have achieved have been the result of our independent action.

The politics of abortion rights

The leadership of the women's movement has allowed itself to be fooled by the tokens who now adorn the Democratic Party apparatus. The unwillingness of the National Organization for Women and other major national women's rights organizations to decisively break from their alliance with



capitalist politicians is a major stumbling block in the road of effective action that can win victories.

Yes, during the 1970s and '80s women did win some access to jobs, professions, and institutions from which they had been excluded. But in the present economic situation all these gains are as transitory as our vanishing rights to abortion. The recession-driven rise in unemployment is wreaking havoc on women's economic well-being.

A reasonable solution to unemployment is to distribute the available work to all who want to work with no pay loss. This means shorter hours for all. The employers would have to absorb the additional costs.

In order to advance this reasonable plan, however, anyone who claims to represent women workers would have to break from the representatives of the bosses—who have no qualms about imposing the harshest of economic conditions on working people and their children.

Billions of dollars were spent on a moment's notice to terror bomb the Iraqi people, including their children. Where is the call from the women's leadership to stop all war spending and start feeding, sheltering, caring for, and educating our children?

Of course, some reforms can be won without the revolutionary changes we ultimately need to build a world of equality and justice. But we must stake out our own ground on which to struggle for reforms such as abortion, childcare, and legal rights.

The stance of women's rights fighters must be one of "beholden to no one, champion of all the oppressed." ■

Shocking report documents extent of hunger in America

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

Twenty-five years after President Lyndon Baines Johnson kicked-off the so-called "war on poverty," more people than ever are living in hunger.

"In a nation whose wealth and resources are the envy of the world, literally millions of children do not get enough to eat on a regular basis." This is the finding of the Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP)—called the most rigorous and comprehensive study of childhood hunger ever conducted in the United States.

The \$1 million study, conducted by a private organization, the Washington, D.C.-based Food Research and Action Center, concludes that 28 percent of families with children under the age of 12 in the U.S. are either going hungry or at substantial risk of hunger.

The fact that people go hungry in this country may not be shocking to many, especially when we see people living in the streets of all our major cities. But the extent of hunger amidst plenty, and the refusal of those who control the resources to eliminate it, are shocking.

In 1984, the President's Task Force on Food Assistance concluded that it could not "report definitive evidence on the extent of hunger" because an "acceptable" measure had not yet been developed. For the purpose of the CCHIP study, however, hunger is defined as "the mental and physical condition arising from not eating enough food due to insufficient economic, family, or community resources."

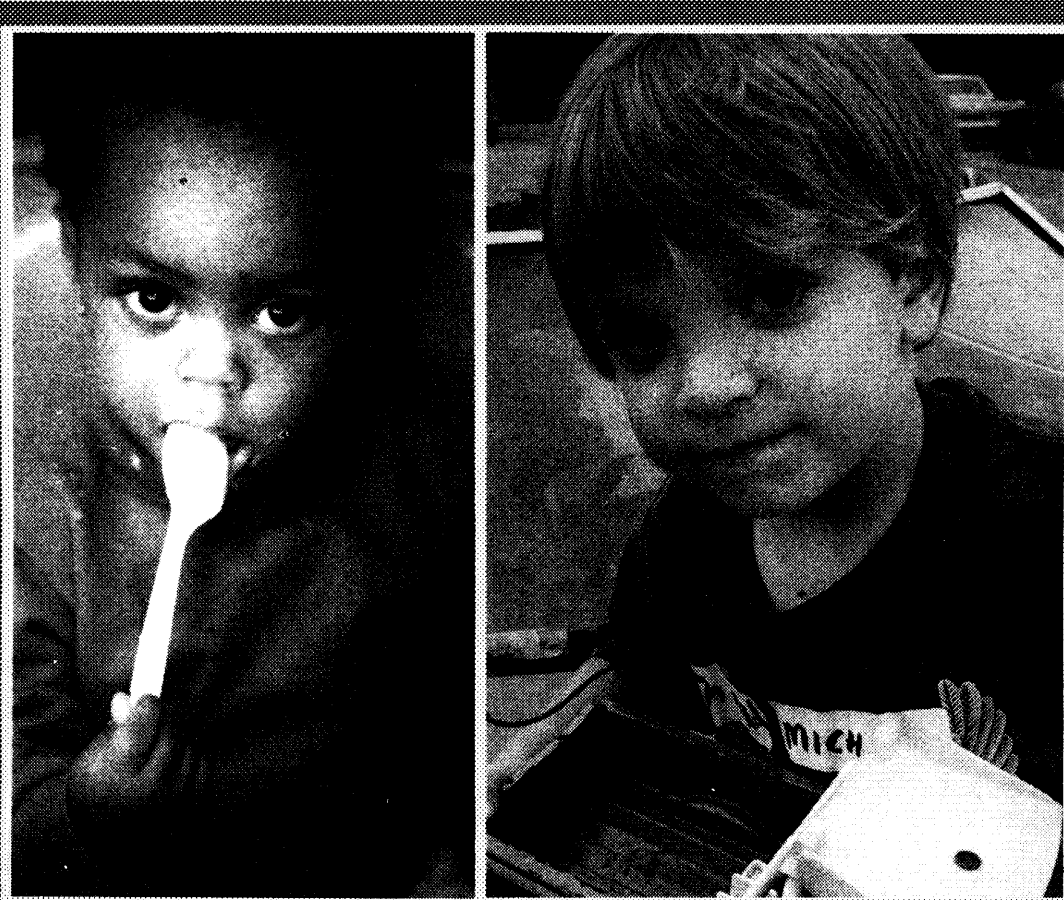
The study was conducted over an 18-month period from February 1989 to August 1990 by surveys in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Florida, Minnesota, Michigan and New York. A total of 2335 families were surveyed.

Eight key questions were asked, and an affirmative answer to five or more classified a family as "hungry."

Many families answered "yes" to questions like, "Do any of your children ever go to bed hungry because there is not enough money to buy food?" or "Do members of your household ever cut the size of meals or skip meals because there is not enough money for food?"

Children suffer most

According to the study, an estimated 5.5 million children under the age of 12 are hungry. This means that one out of every



eight children under the age of 12 living in the U.S. is going hungry. An additional six million children live in homes experiencing food shortages. With these children taken into account, one out of every four American children is likely to experience "going hungry" at some time in their childhood.

Hunger is causing children to suffer from health problems including weight loss, fatigue, irritability, headaches, dizziness, and inability to concentrate. Lack of food makes children more likely to suffer from infection-based illnesses, such as colds and ear infections. As a result, hungry children miss twice as much school as other children. According to CCHIP, just receiving breakfast at school decreases children's absences.

Although unemployed households are more than one and one-half times as likely to be hungry as employed households, many working families (even those with a member employed full time) cannot escape hunger.

The cost of shelter dominates the budgets of most low-income families. Participants in the CCHIP study spent an average of 54 percent of their gross monthly income on

housing costs. The poorer the family, the greater the proportion of income that is spent on shelter.

The poorest households spent over 60 percent of their income on shelter, while the median-income American household spent 22 percent of its income on housing in 1987.

While hungry households spent nearly a third of their gross income on food, they were able to spend an average of only 68 cents per person per meal [!]."

After paying for food and shelter, poor families were left with an average of only \$39 per person to cover all their other monthly expenses, such as transportation, shoes and clothing, medical costs, phone bills and other basic needs.

Profits before human needs

Despite federal programs to help address hunger, such as the Food Stamp Program; the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program; and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, children continue to go hungry.

In fact, the hungry families surveyed

were more likely than non-hungry families to receive Food Stamp benefits. Many hungry families surveyed were not receiving benefits, often because they didn't believe they were eligible or they felt it was too humiliating to apply. The WIC program serves only half of those eligible for benefits.

The Thrifty Food Plan, a list of foods developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the lowest-cost grocery list meeting minimum nutritional requirements, is used to determine Food Stamp Program benefits. The average allotment per qualified household is \$182 worth of benefits per month. Yet according to CCHIP, the average poor family was able to afford only 77 percent of the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan on food, even using food stamps and other benefits.

Obviously, federal government standards of poverty are far below people's basic needs. In Pontiac, Mich., for example, CCHIP estimates that all families would have to have incomes of at least twice the poverty level to ensure 95 percent of the household would no longer be classified as hungry.

What is the solution?

The CCHIP study calls the extent of hunger in the United States a "national shame."—a shame because, in a society with no scarcity of food and no lack of resources to provide nourishment for its members, millions of children go hungry.

The CCHIP report is limited to citing poverty and insufficient social programs as the reason hunger exists. It doesn't approach the underlying private profit system—the logic of which determines that people will go hungry while fields lay fallow and surplus food goes to waste.

The CCHIP study concludes: "The long term solution lies in quality education and training, jobs with living wages, affordable and available housing, childcare and health-care, and adequate income support for those who need it." These are fine goals, but in truth an even more far-reaching solution is necessary.

Hunger is the result of the anarchic production of food for profit rather than to satisfy the most basic human needs.

Conscious intervention and cooperation would begin with the nutritional needs of all the people and translate them into a comprehensive agricultural plan, instead of the cruel chaos of the free market. Prices of staples could be fixed and their production subsidized to guarantee them to all.

If the majority of people, the workers and farmers, were in control of the government and production, there would be no hunger. Food production would be socially planned and based on human needs. Working for these changes is part of the struggle for socialism. ■

... Louisiana

(continued from page 1)

10 years in prison. There are no penalties against women seeking abortions.

Gov. Roemer—an anti-choice Republican—vetoed the bill because its exceptions were not broad enough. But other Louisiana legislators don't think the bill is harsh enough! Woody Jenkins (D-Baton Rouge) plans to introduce a resolution to suspend the exemptions for rape and incest victims. Jenkins expressed concern that women may falsely report rape and incest in order to obtain abortions for unwanted pregnancies.

The law will not take effect until sometime in August, pending a hearing in federal court on July 23 on its constitutionality. Whatever the outcome of that hearing, the bill is already in the pipeline to be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Louisiana bill is the latest result of the Supreme Court's 1989 decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which allowed states to place restrictions on women's right to choose abortion. So far, Pennsylvania, Guam, and Utah have

passed anti-choice bills. The Louisiana bill—by far the most restrictive—was specifically designed to be a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*.

Test case for abortion rights

Unlike the other states' measures, the Louisiana bill is seen by experts on both sides of the abortion debate as the test case for women's constitutional right to abor-

tion.

For instance, the Pennsylvania law deals primarily with procedural obstacles to abortion, such as spousal notification, 24-hour waiting periods, and counseling about fetal development. The Supreme Court could rule narrowly on these provisions and sidestep the issue of whether the right to abortion is protected by the constitution.

However, given the broad restrictions

contained in the Louisiana bill, it will be impossible for the Court to rule on the bill without taking a stand on abortion itself. The Court must decide whether the state has a compelling interest to protect the fetus, or whether abortion is a fundamental constitutional right.

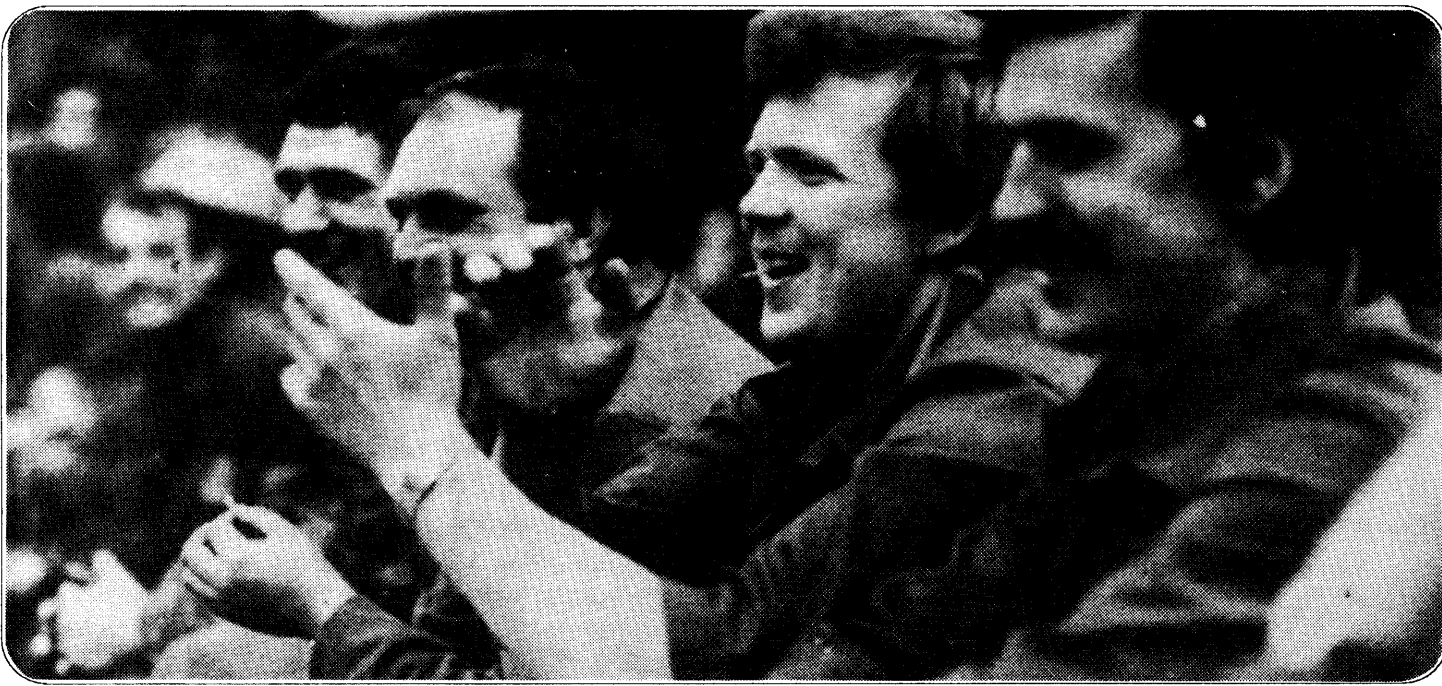
In the meantime, however, the law has already devastated women's lives. A family planning clinic in Shreveport, La., closed immediately after the override vote and sent home women scheduled to receive abortions. After clarification about when the law takes effect, the clinic opened for business the next day, but confusion and frustration continued.

"We actually had one patient in tears asking us how she could abort herself," said Esther McGuire, director of the Delta Women's Clinic in Baton Rouge. "That is what this law is all about, intimidating women and driving them to unsafe actions."

The immediate response from pro-choice advocates has been outrage mixed with pessimism. Nancy Strossen, president of the American Civil Liberties Union, predicts *Roe v. Wade* eventually will be overturned.

"I think it has, in practical effect, been overturned for poor women, women of color and young women," Strossen said. ■

'... other Louisiana legislators don't think the bill is harsh enough! Woody Jenkins (D-Baton Rouge) plans to introduce a resolution to suspend the exemptions for rape and incest victims.'



Polish workers begin to reject both pro-Stalinist and pro-capitalist policies

Frustrated and angered by ravages of 'market reforms' and no voice in gov't

By GERRY FOLEY

The East European country that has carried out the most radical procapitalist reforms is Poland. (The former East Germany, having been incorporated into a capitalist state, is in another category.) It is seen generally as a model of rapid transition to a market economy. So, it is constantly under the eye of those most interested in the process of capitalist restoration in the countries that have had a collectivized economy run by Stalinist bureaucracies.

The capitalist media in the West have not had much to say about Poland in the past few months. But in its May 31 issue the Russian-language weekly *Russkaya Mysl'*, published in Paris, described a snowballing crisis. Prominent ex-dissidents write for this paper, and it has generally been one of the best informed and objective of East Europe watchers. Its headline was "Poland wracked with fever."

The "fever" was a wave of strikes against deteriorating living standards, a wave so extensive that it was threatening both the government and its program of market reforms.

Twenty thousand miners struck in the Lublin copper mines, demanding 200 percent pay increases. The municipal transport workers in Bialystock and Warsaw went out. The Warsaw sanitation workers waged a prolonged fight that led to near catastrophic conditions in the Polish capital. "In the course of the strikes and protest actions," *Russkaya Mysl'* reported, "the demand for a general strike was often raised."

Most of the strikes were conducted without the leadership or even support of Solidarnosc. Nonetheless, Solidarnosc leaders were forced to conduct a national day of protest on May 22 to try to maintain links with the discontented workers. About 80 percent of the rank-and-file units of Solidarnosc took part, that is about 2 million people.

The month of May saw the third round of price increases this year. Rates for gas and electricity were increased by 140 percent and 110 percent respectively. Before that, at the end of March, unemployment had reached 1.3 million persons, or 7.1 percent of the economically active population. It is expected to go over 2 million by the end of the year, and some economists predict an even higher rate.

A strike against its own policies

According to the chair of Solidarnosc, Marian Kszczakowski, the protest was "against mistakes in social and economic policy, against leading posts remaining in the hands of the old *nomenklatura* [bureaucracy], against mistakes in the process of privatization leading to the transfer of property into the hands of the *nomenklatura*."

The Solidarnosc leader said that the national protest had been intended to head

off the growth of wildcat strikes, which he suggested were being manipulated by elements of the old Stalinist bureaucracy: "Solidarnosc has proof that some such strikes, for example in the copper mining area, were exploited by post-Communist forces."

Here the threads of responsibility seem to get tangled indeed. In fact, the Stalinists continue to hold 65 percent of the seats in the national parliament on the basis of a deal with the Solidarnosc leadership, and

"The majority of the society, those who live solely from their own labor, were supposed meekly to follow a program of rebuilding capitalism that was in contradiction to their most vital interests. They did not...."

they have consistently supported the capitalist restorationist policies of the two successive "non-Communist" governments.

Adam Michnik, one of the principal ideologues in the milieu of the Solidarnosc leadership, pointed to the contradiction of Solidarnosc leading a protest against a government and policies it supports:

"The national protest led by Solidarnosc represents helplessness, a lack of any notion of an alternative program of reforms, a lack of understanding of its own role in the process of change going on, a return to the behavior it learned in the period of conflict with the Communist government in 1980-1981, an aggressive tone of demands. All these actions were directed against a government that enjoys the support of the parliament and the president of the Polish republic [Lech Walesa]."

The Entente of the Center (Walesa's party) tried to ride with the wave: "The society is losing patience. Solidarnosc conducted itself in accordance with its members' expectations. Otherwise, it would have lost their confidence. The action of Solidarnosc should have shown the government the need for changing the mechanisms of running the post-Communist economy."

But what different mechanisms are there for capitalist restoration? The Western capitalists apparently do not think there are any. The pressure of the IMF and the World Bank kept Leszek Balcerowicz in his post as minister of economics in Walesa's government, despite the voters massive rejection of the first so-called Solidarnosc government headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, which originally adopted this course.

Aleksandr Gal', chair of the Democratic Union, the party of former premier Mazowiecki, said:

"Support for the reform line is weakening. ... I am more and more afraid of

phenomena I call nostalgia for a state that must give everything and solve everything."

The Liberal Democratic Congress declared: "Such protests, demands for a general strike, are not going to speed up the reforms. To the contrary, they seriously obstruct them."

In parliament, Balcerowicz warned that the protests were presenting the government with a "tragic" alternative—"Will we go forward to a better economy ... or will

we lose what has been gained with such difficulty and return to a race between wages and prices, to economic chaos."

Ryszard Bugaj, head of the parliamentary group, Labor Solidarity, a moderate left formation, warned of economic disaster and political explosion if the present policies were continued: "Some 40 percent of state enterprises are facing bankruptcy."

Nonetheless, parliament voted confidence in the government and its policies. Walesa's premier, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, trumpeted that the vote had shown that there was really "no alternative to the government's policies, and it is necessary to give the cabinet the means for carrying them out."

In fact, Balcerowicz has claimed that his policies are "scientific," and therefore above politics.

The fraud of the "Third Republic"

So, why bother to protest, or even vote? Everything will be decided by procapitalist "experts," supported by a built-in majority of Stalinist deputies, under the pressure of the Western capitalist institutions. But this situation could make the working people wonder why they struggled for the right to protest and free elections in order to put in a government that says quite openly that it need not, and cannot pay attention to them, and has nothing to offer them.

In fact, there are signs of an explosive growth of disillusionment and alienation among workers. In the April issue of *Dalej*, a paper published by Polish members of the Fourth International, the revolutionary organization founded by Leon Trotsky, Zbigniew Kowalewski took up these contradictions in a major article entitled "The Crisis of Polish Democracy."

Kowalewski began by denouncing the fraud of the proclamation when Walesa was inaugurated president of the "Third Polish Republic," which is supposed to represent

the restoration of an independent democratic Polish state.

Kowalewski wrote: "No one thought it appropriate to point out that this so-called Third Republic was based on false credentials, not on the force of a decision made in free elections for a Constituent Assembly. It appeared rather in the form of a National Assembly, the majority of whose members do not sit there in accordance with the will of the society, but only on the basis of a deal established by the Magdalenka Pact [an agreement between Solidarnosc and the Stalinist military junta of General Jaruzelski]."

"There was an attempt to cover this up by organizing a big ceremony in which Walesa assumed the symbols of the presidents of the [interwar] Second Republic, which it should be remembered was established by a Constituent Assembly. ... The proclamation of the Third Republic, in violation of all principles of the constitutional democratic process, is a bad omen for Polish democracy."

Kowalewski pointed to the failure of the supposedly democratic governments to represent the will of the people, in particular that of the workers. He reviewed the experience of the 1989 parliamentary elections, in which, despite the fact that the division of seats had been largely predetermined by the Magdalenka Pact, the voters took the occasion to deliver a crushing rebuff to the Stalinists.

Plebiscite against the regime

He referred also to the 1990 presidential elections, in which the voters humiliated Mazowiecki, the head of the first "non-Communist" government. Mazowiecki was outdistanced in the first round by the populist adventurer Stan Tyminiski. Walesa won in the second round. But a large proportion of the workers, especially the younger ones, voted even against him.

"A considerable part of the society turned the Nov. 25, 1990, presidential elections into a plebiscite against the Mazowiecki government, just as in June 1989 it turned the parliamentary elections into a plebiscite against the former regime. In the earlier case, it used its votes to throw out the last government oriented to keeping the Stalinist *nomenklatura* in power. In the later one, it threw out the first government oriented to restoring capitalism."

"The old political elite abdicated power when after long years it became convinced that it did not have the means for ruling the society. Only a bit more than a year has passed since the new political elite came to power, and it has already become clear that it also cannot rule the society as it would like to."

"The overconfident Mazowiecki camp thought that in order to get a mandate to govern, it needed only to invoke the Solidarnosc ethos (which had been stripped of any real content) and to get the stamp of approval for its program from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Bush, Thatcher, and Kohl. It thought also that it only needed to get the green light from the primate Glemp and the Pope in return for introducing religion into the schools and accepting a ban on abortion."

"The majority of the society, those who live solely from their own labor, were supposed meekly to follow a program of rebuilding capitalism that was in contradiction to their most vital interests. They did not. ... Over a year of the Mazowiecki cabinets, they gained painful experience of constantly rising unemployment, more and more belt tightening, the enrichment of the few and the impoverishment of the many, the dismantling of social protection, the brutal subjection of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual development of human beings to the free-market law of the jungle and to all-mighty money, the misuse of speculative capital, and the threat of a sell-off of the national wealth to foreign capital."

Such clear facts had generally been deliberately ignored by the Polish press, with some notable exceptions.

One of them is Dawid Warszawski, who wrote in the columns of *Po Prostu* (Issue No. 43, 1990): "The Mazowiecki camp lost because it lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of the society. ... The Mazowiecki team lost its legitimacy when the majority of citizens recognized that the economic program it was applying was contrary to their interests."

Warszawski also stressed that Walesa

(continued on next page)

The fury shown by the Pope in his June 3 mass/rally in Kielce, Poland, impressed New York Times correspondent Gabrielle Glaser. She wrote: "In a voice rising in anger, Pope John Paul II ... delivered an impassioned sermon against abortion and demanded that his fellow Poles make an accounting of their sins."

"His normally sonorous, pacific voice shaking with rage, the Pope departed from his prepared text and assailed Poland's moral state as if it were a personal affront."

What provoked these high priestly thunderbolts, Glaser suggested, was the failure of the Polish parliament to pass a law banning abortion. The bill, which was tabled two weeks before the Pope's visit, would have been a sort of present for the Polish pontiff on his fourth visit to his native country after his elevation to the throne of Saint Peter.

However, despite the fact that over 90 percent of the population claims to be Catholic, and despite the importance of Catholic symbolism in the mass antibureaucratic movement, the polls show that 59 percent of Poles are opposed to a ban on abortion.

Church influence in decline

The spectacle of the Polish Pope raging at his compatriots may have encouraged the *Washington Post National Weekly Edition* to look at the rapid decline of the Church's influence. Mary Battiata wrote in the June 10 issue that a survey done in March by the government (which is now dominated by Catholic politicians) showed that public support for the Church had dropped from 83 percent a year ago to 58 percent.

The Church, she wrote, is now less popular than the elected government and even than the army, which until only a few years ago ran a hated military dictatorship. She went on to point out: "The church has 'too much influence' on important social issues, said nearly 60 percent of those polled last month by a national newspaper."

The surveys have also shown that Poles think that the Church is the most powerful institution in the country.

They consider it more powerful than the government and more powerful than the Stalinist bureaucracy, which while in political disarray remains essentially in place.

This attitude represents a dramatic turnaround. Under Stalinist totalitarian rule, the Church was seen as the defender of the helpless, the bulwark of the human values trampled on by the pseudoscientific totalitarian bureaucracy. The sudden cooling of affections for the Church gives a good indication of the source of its influence and of the limitations of this influence.

I remember listening to a sermon broadcast outside a church in the Carpathian town of Zakopane in the summer of 1981. It was probably a good example of what made the Catholic religion so strong under the Stalinist dictatorship. "We cannot let them destroy our humanity,"

"Many date the beginning of a secular backlash to last summer, when the church persuaded the government to reinstate religious education in the public schools," Battiata wrote. The reaction was probably aggravated by the fact that this measure was imposed by governmental decree, without even a vote in parliament.

Limited social roots

The power of the Catholic religion in Poland since the abolition of capitalism in the late 1940s, has been in fact more sentimental than institutional. The expropriation of the landowners and capitalists deprived the reactionary religious institutions of their social roots.

The effect of this situation could be seen in the general strike that built Solidarnosc in August 1980. The minute the hierarchy started trying to push for a compromise with the bureaucracy, the Church and the faithful went into crisis. There was a wave of questioning of the ecclesiastical authorities.

By way of comparison, in Ireland, the Catholic church has set its face against the mass movement time and time again and hardly suffered a scratch. That is because there it has social roots. The clergy comes from the strong farmers, and the hierarchy throughout modern times has been entangled in an alliance with the rulers of the state, both before and after the Irish war of independence.

Moreover, in Poland religion was a refuge. It was the one independent institution the regime tolerated precisely because it preached resignation. Accordingly, when the mass movement has been on the rise, the

attractiveness of Catholicism faded. That was notable in 1981. In the years of the military dictatorship, the Church regained its power. Now with the defeat of Stalinism, it is logical that the influence of the Church should once again begin to ebb.

But the power of the hierarchy will only be broken if the masses see a political alternative that will enable them to gain effective control of their fate, one that can assure both economic and political democracy.—G. F.

Church's declining influence in Poland



Der Spiegel

the priest said, "we must not let them get us to fight each other in the lines in shops, or inform on each other, or turn Pole against Pole." It should be remembered also that one of the most popular Polish hymns is "God who has preserved Poland throughout the ages."

However, once the hierarchy started to try to take personal decisions out of the hands of the people, it began to appear in quite a different light—as an obscure and threatening power. That is what the polls and surveys show.

...Poland

(continued from preceding page)

was no longer trusted by the workers, after he ended up, after some initial criticisms, supporting the Balcerowicz Plan.

Kowalewski commented: "I would add that the new president [Walesa], consistently yielding to the demands from Washington and other Western capitalist capitals, has supported the Balcerowicz plan to the hilt, and adjusted the composition of the new government in accordance with these demands. Thus, the new government in Poland has exchanged the dictates of the Kremlin for those of the White House."

Kowalewski pointed to evidence that the "non-Communist" governments' policies were totally out of line with the views of the majority of the society.

"The truth is that the majority of workers and workers' leaders in the factories are against turning the plants over to private ownership.

"Clear testimony to this are the results of a sociological study done in March and April 1990 under the auspices of the PAN Economic Institute. These findings were brought to public attention by Professor Maria Jarosz (*Polityka*, No. 36, 1990).

"Those questioned could choose among three forms of ownership—private, state and collective ownership by the workforce. Unfortunately, they were not given a possibility to opt for 'social enterprises enterprises,' that is, state enterprises run by their workforces and a democratically elected Workers' Council. We should recall that in 1981, Solidarnosc backed precisely this sort of 'social enterprise' as the main form of ownership in the national economy.... Despite this, the results of the study speak for themselves.

"It turned out that only 13 percent of industrial workers supported privatization, while 72 percent were for maintaining state ownership of the workplaces or turning them over to the workforce (36.3 percent for the former; 35.3 percent for the latter form of ownership). Some 67 or 68 percent of the leaders in Solidarnosc and the workers' councils [factory self-management bodies] also were for state or workforce ownership. Among the Solidarnosc leaders, 9.6 percent were for state ownership, and 56.5 for ownership by the workforces."

These results, moreover, were confirmed by a study done in October 1990 under the

direction of Professor Leszek Gilejka. Kowalewski writes: "According to this study, 13 percent of industrial workers were for privatization of the enterprises in which they worked, 46 percent for them remaining state owned, and 33 percent for them becoming the property of those who worked in them."

However, there was not a single member of parliament or a delegate to the last Solidarnosc congress who represented the views of the majority of the industrial workers. In this situation, Kowalewski stressed, it was not surprising to find disturbing symptoms of political alienation among the working people:

"The results of the study done by Professor Gilejka's team...show that industrial workers have a very strong feeling that there is a crisis as regards representation of their opinions, interests and demands. Some 62 percent thought that no one represented them...."

No representation for the workers

The study showed: "Only 13 percent—we should note that this study was done just before the 1990 presidential election—thought that the whole nation had any influence on the government. And only 28 percent thought that the National Assembly and the Senate had any influence over the government. Most thought that the Catholic Church had the biggest influence on the Mazowiecki government (61 percent). And the second largest number (43 percent) thought it was the Jews who had the biggest influence on the government."

Most of the workers questioned for this study, although 97 percent of them declared themselves believers, took a negative attitude to the influence of the Church in politics.

The idea that Jews, who have been reduced by persecution to a tiny minority, have a big influence on the government reflects an astonishing disorientation. Kowalewski wrote that it "attests to the fact that the disturbing growth of anti-Semitic moods in the working class stems primarily from a dramatic feeling of political alienation."

In this situation, Kowalewski wrote, "I have to agree with the opinion expressed by Senator Karol Modzelewski, a leader of the moderate left political group called Labor Solidarity, that the fear of the future that is growing among the workers, arising from the threat of capitalist restoration, combined with a lack of confidence in the democratic institutions, is creating a recep-

tivity to the idea of authoritarian governments."

This was another bitter irony, because it was the workers who won the fight for democratic rights and free elections.

"[The workers] gave impetus to the process of democratic revolution, and the fate of this process depended primarily on them. However, when, thanks to the working class, the rule of the old *nomenklatura* broke down, and the hour of democracy struck, the workers were robbed of their democratic gains by a new political elite.

'The workers cannot win representation of their own interests without a party of their own that consistently represents those interests.'

The course chosen by this elite was to get the democratic institutions to represent the interests and the ideological and political aspirations of the champions of capitalist restoration in order to foster the private appropriation of the means of production in the interests of a minority."

Workers need political democracy

In fact, it is the workers who need democracy, and not the new political elite, made up of ambitious intellectuals and politicians fostered by the Church and subsidies from the West, as well as of reconverted Stalinist bureaucrats.

Kowalewski wrote: "Political democracy is not a vital need of the political elite. To the contrary, as already said, even when the democratic institutions are so constructed that they deprive the working class of representation, there is a danger that the masses will use their ballots to bring down a government acting against their interests. Democracy, however, is a vital need—like bread and work—for the working class and for the masses in general. It is in their vital interest above all to restore the independence and credibility of the trade-union movement and hence its capacity to democratically represent their opinions and aspirations, as well as to defend their rights and honor. The same holds for the Workers' Councils."

In the interests of democracy and the workers, it was essential to begin to estab-

lish the principle of the need for some form of direct representation of the workers at the governmental level. Kowalewski referred to the scheme for a house of parliament representing workers' self-management bodies that was supported by Solidarnosc in 1981.

Kowalewski concluded: "One might agree or disagree with this, but that is not the fundamental thing. At the present time, there are no constitutional possibilities for setting up institutions of workers' democracy. What is possible, on the other hand, both in the context of election campaigns for the National Assembly, as well as in the course of extra-parliamentary actions, is building mass organs of struggle for workers' self-management in the factories and for workers' democracy in the state.

"It is necessary to convince circles of workers who are conscious and ready for action of the need for building such bodies, as well as to convince all currents of the left that have grown up in the struggle with the Stalinist regime, and which...declare their determination to defend the interests of the working people.

"The fate of Polish democracy depends on whether democratic institutions assure representation for the working class in accordance with its position in society and its needs, or whether they make such representation impossible. The fate of the working class depends on whether the democratic gains it made through its struggle benefit it and the majority of the society, or whether they are expropriated by a minority, used for the latter's own ends, and then inevitably destroyed."

The workers cannot win representation of their own interests without a party of their own that consistently represents those interests. The publication of a newspaper such as *Dalej* is a first step toward that. It has begun to systematically expose the conflict between the policies of the governments of the new elite and the needs of the working people and to offer alternatives.

The explosive contradiction highlighted by Kowalewski, between the democratic aspirations of the workers and the antidemocratic capitalist restorationist policies of the new so-called democratic politicians, exists not only in Poland. It is key to all the processes of change going on in the countries that have had a collectivist economy run by Stalinist bureaucracies. ■

Cuban Revolution confronted by 'A period special in peacetime'



The Cuban Army is the second most powerful in Latin America, but what Cuba needs most now is to break out of the economic isolation imposed by the collapse of Eastern European regimes.

After the collapse of the Soviet-led Comecon trading bloc, Cuba has inevitably found itself in a profound crisis. Since August 1990, it has been in a "period special in peacetime," to employ Fidel Castro's euphemism for the most difficult period in the 30 years since the revolution.

This article is reprinted from the April 29, 1991, issue of *International Viewpoint*, a biweekly magazine published under the auspices of the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

By JANETTE HABEL

The plans for the country's economic development for this decade, worked out in the framework of the so-called "socialist division of labor," have been rendered more or less redundant.

Based on guaranteed Soviet oil supplies, industrialization was to be centered on narrow specializations; in particular sugarcane products, which have a very important industrial potential; bio-technology stimulated by the successes of Cuban healthcare, indicated by the discovery of the vaccine against Meningitis B; the undertaking, in liaison with East Germany, of the manufacture of parts for computer technology; the modernization of the sugar plants; and the technological updating of the nickel refineries.

Oil prospecting and the building of a nuclear power plant were to prepare Cuba to overcome its greatest handicap—the almost total absence of energy resources, leading to chronic external dependence for which, given the volatility of raw material prices on the world market and their manipulation according to events, sugar production cannot compensate.

The Gulf war has shown the fragility and speculative character of the oil market, and Iraq's offer after the imposition of the UN embargo to provide free oil to the world's most impoverished countries struck a chord. In fact, most Third World oil-importing countries buy in small quantities and at the highest prices since they do not have the money to finance long-term purchasing.

Until 1989 Cuba was free from this constraint, and this was without doubt the main advantage of "fraternal" aid, which in other respects was much less of a one-way business than is generally supposed. Any drop in oil deliveries means immediate chaos in transport and at work, affecting industry, food production and supplies to a population two thirds of which lives in urban areas.

The country's defense is in the hands of what is considered the most powerful army

in Latin America after that of Brazil.

In one form or another, 15 percent of the population is under arms, and its military potential is often presented as a direct threat to the USA. Just recently, Jeanne Kirkpatrick has spoken of the danger of the destruction of the nuclear power station at Florida's Turkey Point by Castroite commandos. Such assertions, whose political function is to put pressure on the Soviet government to further turn the screw on Cuba, overlook the fundamentally defensive character of the Cuban army, whose scope is in any case limited by its almost total dependence on external sources of oil and oil products, as well as for spare parts.

Survival of revolution at stake

It is thus no exaggeration to say that it is the survival of the revolution that is at stake. For the first time, it is not the risk of direct intervention that is to be feared but the more insidious combination of an extremely serious economic crisis, a reinforcement of the American blockade, extreme difficulties in daily life and, on top of that, real but too superficial political changes. Such a combination can lead to explosions in the most demoralized parts of the population—with an unforeseeable dynamic.

The result of eight months of discussions at a time when Cuban fears were at their height, Soviet-Cuban negotiations that began in May 1990 provisionally concluded in December with the signing of a new agreement. Provisionally, because the new structure of bilateral trade for the new epoch that has opened has not yet been fully defined. The final statements only concern 1991, and further negotiations will be needed to fix the new mechanisms of future economic and trade relations.

The uncertainty stems in part from the fact that, according to Cuban foreign trade minister Ricardo Cabrisas, the negotiations took place when neither the 1991 plan nor the Soviet budget had yet been approved. Their completion is all the less certain in that the negotiators have yet to determine important details, including certain prices; but above all the economic and political crisis in the USSR does not permit any certainty about the future of any agreement.

The old bilateral clearing system will continue to apply until March 31, but after

that trade must be conducted in hard currency, with prices being worked out on the basis of those on the world market. Even at this price, and whatever the quality, Cuba will not have a choice as far as spare parts are concerned, since much of industry has of necessity been Soviet equipped.

Calculating the price of sugar

The taking into consideration of world market prices is not straightforward as far as the price of sugar products (for example) is concerned. As Cabrisas has pointed out, this price reflects neither trade between the European Community and the ACP (Africa-Caribbean-Pacific) countries, on the one hand, or between the USA and its traditional suppliers on the other, which takes place at prices significantly higher than those on the world market.

The Soviet Union finally agreed to buy four million tons of sugar in 1991 at the preferential price of \$0.24 per pound, a lower price than under the previous agreement but twice the current market price.

Ten million tons of oil and oil products are to be delivered—three million less than previously—at a price of \$20 a barrel; slightly higher than the current world market price. Cuba will have to pay transport costs in hard currency. There are also numerous restrictions on other important deliveries.

Agreements had previously been negotiated with 62 Soviet institutions permitting 25,000 establishments to trade with the island. These accords have collapsed, creating supply problems which have had to be met with emergency oil deliveries in January in order to avoid catastrophe.

The most surprising political measure concerns the payment of Cuba's debt to the USSR, on the abolition of which Castro has been counting for years. It is estimated at (approximately) 15 billion roubles, which will be made out in hard currency from next year at a rate of interest that is not yet known. Given the severe shortage of hard currency which the Cuban economy is suffering from, made worse by the fact that it will no longer as in the past be possible to re-export Soviet oil, the 1990s are opening on a somber note.

Feed the population

Cuba has big agricultural potential. However, neither crop production nor livestock are sufficient, despite the progress achieved, to feed the population. This is due to the priority given to export crops, and in the first place to sugarcane and citrus fruits at the expense of output, in particular on the state farms; [that is,] the importance of imports (fertilizers, seeds, spare parts); without forgetting the cost in energy of the mechanization of cane cutting, which is seen as a way of compensating for lack of labor in the countryside. In this field as well, external dependence and economic-political decisions have a big impact.

Food imports are being sharply cut back, with a big impact on supplies above all in Havana, where some 20 percent of the pop-

ulation live. The central importance assigned to the Food Plan is explained by the current necessity to ensure the country's self-sufficiency in food after the alarming shortages of 1990, which put the whole country on the alert.

Delays in Soviet grain deliveries have provoked bread shortages, while the lack of grain to feed poultry has led to a spectacular fall in the production of eggs, which were previously freely available but are now strictly rationed at four or five a week. Bulgarian chickens and Czechoslovak beer have not arrived and it has been necessary to reduce the quantities of imported rice, although this is a basic foodstuff on the island.

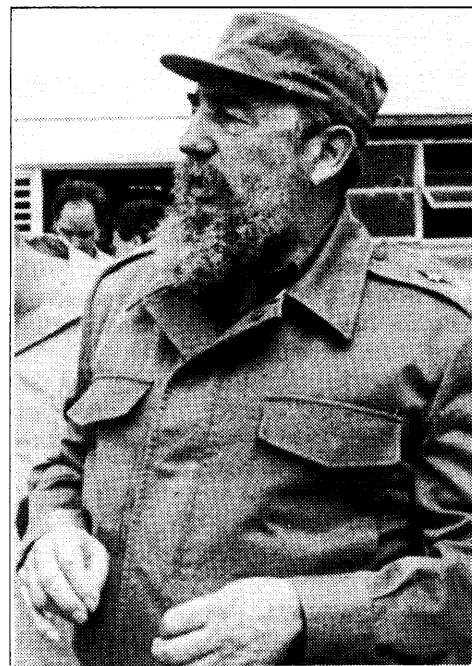
Cubans are not on the edge of famine, partly because the "libreta" (rationing card) guarantees basic nourishment for all and above all because Cubans eat once a day in the collective structures, work centers, schools and so on, which have their own food supply networks.

The situation nonetheless is all the more difficult insofar as the restrictions combine with acute distribution problems which make daily life an unbearable headache. Queues can be hours long and require complex organization; the whole family is mobilized (notably the grandparents), "rotations" are organized with numbered tickets; absenteeism from work has risen.

Since the end of 1990 the list of rationed items has lengthened. It includes 242 items of daily use such as shoes, clothes, furniture, toys, and hygienic products. Recently detergent, soap, shampoo and razor blades have been unobtainable in some areas.

The sale of electrical goods has also been severely limited for reasons of energy economy and because there is not the money to import them. Thus in Cuba, a tropical country, no refrigerators will be sold in 1991, while air conditioning appliances, an urban inheritance of the American epoch, will be replaced by Chinese ventilators and only the newly weds will have irons.

The bicycle age has arrived (the bicycles also being Chinese) at the cost of several serious accidents, since this form of travel



Castro faces biggest dangers in 30-year history of revolution.

is unknown in a country accustomed to using cars in the towns and horses in the countryside. As for the press, the number of journals, the number of pages and their circulation have all been reduced (without any compensating improvement in the quality of the information!).

Crisis in book production

The shortage of paper has also caused a big crisis in the book industry. According to *The Economist* (February 9, 1991) until last year around 500 new titles were published annually for "the island's inhabitants are avid readers and books sell so well that the Cuban Book Institute keeps a weekly list of the 10 bestselling titles."

It is worthwhile recalling at this point, as *The Economist's* Havana correspondent does, that "in 1959 a quarter of the population was illiterate."

This shows both the dimensions of the cultural revolution in the past 30 years, but also the gravity of the present shock. Cuban scientists have been trying to find a way of using sugarcane husks to make paper, but meanwhile no more books are

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being printed and, despite a 50 percent price rise, the remaining stocks are disappearing from the bookshop shelves.

But the most significant symptom of the worsening situation is the strict control on the sale of medicines announced by the government in March.

From now on, the sale of a wide range of medicines in public chemists' shops will be reduced, individual medical prescriptions are being controlled and essential prescriptions are filled in the hospitals. The price of certain medicines is to be raised so as to inhibit any unnecessary consumption.

Given how proud Cuba is of its healthcare system, one of the most advanced in the Third World, these measures are a striking sign of the gravity of the situation.

Cuba must make itself ready for "the worst of economic situations," Fidel Castro warned on February 17, 1991. "We must gain time in this first stage of the 'special period' and prepare ourselves for the second and third stages."

This third period could lead in the worst case—that in which even the current agreement with the USSR is not respected—to the establishment of a sort of war communism in peacetime.

To avoid this, the leadership is relying on an increase in trade with China and Latin America, on increased tourism, on the setting up, under as yet unspecified conditions, of joint ventures with European countries and on the end—entirely hypothetical, alas—of the American blockade. It is necessary to find an economic policy—or simply a policy—which will permit the Cuban people to hold on until the end of the tunnel and until international solidarity shows itself.

Joint ventures multiply

In the meantime, it is necessary to prepare for the worst, make economies [savings] in all fields, in particular in energy, and play for time. The government has already changed its line on mixed enterprises. There are already many joint ventures in tourism. Spanish and Canadian firms have taken part in the building of new hotels and employ and fire staff according to their requirements. But there has until now been no recourse to foreign capital in industry.

For the first time, the government has broken with a 30-year tradition and allowed a French consortium consisting of the Total Enterprise and the Compagnie Europeenne des Petroles (CEP) to undertake off-shore oil exploration on Cuba's north coast.

The six-year contract signed in Havana in December 1990 with Cuba's Union del Petroleo, on financial conditions that have not been revealed, implies according to a Cuban diplomat, that if commercially viable oil supplies are discovered "the income will be shared between the Compagnie and the Cubans."

Cuba is also considering permitting foreign buyers to have 49 percent participation in certain enterprises, the limit being fixed in the law on foreign investment in 1982.

According to the president of the Association of Cuban Economists, Luis Cardet Henando: "Foreign investment would permit the elimination of economic dependence on one market" from which Cuba suffers, which at the same time favored investment in the sugar industry, sugarcane products, biotechnology and word processors in the Comecon framework.

Furthermore, another significant event took place at the start of 1991: on Jan. 16, a five-year trade agreement was signed for the first time with China. Since the disappearance of the GDR [German Democratic Republic], China has become Cuba's primary trade partner.

The joint inter-governmental commission, which was set up in 1988, a year when trade increased by 50 percent, met for the third time in Beijing in January. In 1990 trade between the two countries reached \$578 million.

A five-year agreement has been signed along with a trade protocol for 1991. The Cubans will deliver sugar, citrus fruits, nickel and, for the first time, Cuban biochemical products.

But, according to the Cuban Communist Party paper *Granma*, the best hopes are in

cooperation; the Chinese have granted credits permitting the construction of bicycle and ventilator factories and there is also collaboration under way in clothing, shoes, ceramics, motors, machine tools, tractors, the food industry, electronics and more.

The Chinese foreign trade minister, Li Lanqing, has emphasized that the reasons for Cuban-Chinese trade are economic—China is hoping to expand relations with Latin America, while Cuba is seeking outlets for products that it used to sell to Eastern Europe.

But he also identified a political aspect which may refer to the means of payment

the breaking of its links with Eastern Europe to return to its natural geo-political framework: the Latin American continent. In practice, the country is no longer totally isolated, and trade has developed. However, this is limited by the fact that the Latin American countries are themselves too heavily in debt, and the pressure of the American blockade is strong.

Bad neighbors

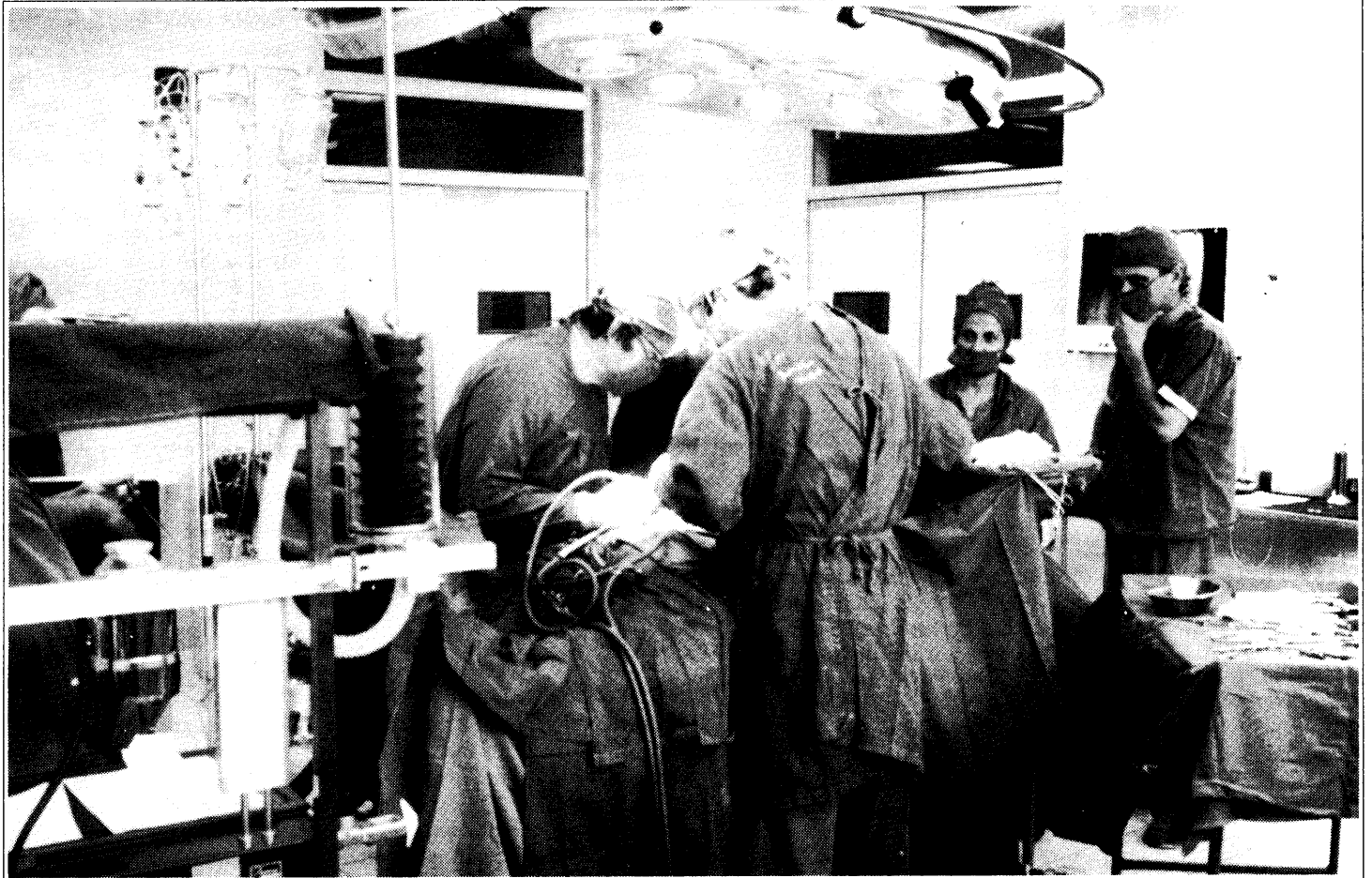
The group of three Latin American producers of hydrocarbons (Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia), from which Cuba could buy oil with much reduced

ing commercial profits."

The serious problems in distribution are an additional headache, and there are countless *chistes* (jokes) deriding the inefficiency and waste of the state sector, from which corrupt functionaries, whose *teque-teque* (jargon) hides their "*doble moral*," are nonetheless able to profit."

The danger of the criminal classes

In a report entitled "Mercantilism and Crime in Cuba: Present Effects and Future Consequences," Fernando Barral notes "the constant growth in delinquency in the country, whether there is a severe penalty



'Given how proud Cuba is of its healthcare system, one of the most advanced in the Third World, these measures are a striking sign of the gravity of the situation.'

envisaged in the five-year agreement, which are not known. Traditionally, trade between the two countries has been conducted in dollars, but it can be supposed that the Chinese government has made concessions in this respect, given Cuba's lack of hard currency; since March 1990 China has granted preferential payment and credit facilities to Cuba. But, although trade with China is going to expand, this will far from compensate for the losses Cuba has suffered elsewhere.

Big expansion in tourism planned

The third possible way to alleviate the economic tensions is tourism. More than 320,000 tourists visited the island in 1989 and there has been an average 10 percent growth over the past six years.

The government is looking to quadruple the number of hotels in 1992, which also means more mixed enterprises with Spanish, Italian, Austrian, French, and Finnish firms. Nonetheless, even if the number of tourists from Canada and Europe is already on the increase, owing to the cheap prices, a more thoroughgoing expansion requires visitors from the nearest neighbor, that is, American tourists.

However, American trips to Cuba are strictly regulated (apart from journalists, Cuban-American families and researchers), and the penalties can reach \$250,000 or 12 years in prison. Even if these sanctions are largely theoretical, they are enough, in the framework of the embargo, to dissuade most potential visitors.

Finally, the resentment aroused in the Cuban population by what some have described as "touristic apartheid" should not be underestimated. The contrast between this privileged and protected sector and the difficulties of people's everyday life bears the seeds of conflict.

In theory, Cuba could take advantage of

transport costs, are refusing to make the slightest financial concession to Cuba at a time when they are involved in negotiations with the United States. The re-negotiation of the San Jose accord on oil deliveries in the region does not apply to Cuba, except to impose on the island conditions that Castro does not seem ready to accept.

Given the drastic international constraints and an unfavorable immediate political environment, economic policy is made up from day to day. The tendency seems to be towards decentralization, with the Cuban foreign trade firms enjoying greater autonomy from the ministries, while Cuba's Chamber of Commerce is to play a more important role in foreign trade. The Arbitration Tribunal for Foreign Trade is being re-organized to resolve the likely conflicts between Cuban and foreign firms doing everything they can to circumvent bureaucratic controls.

But the main problem is to know whether decentralization will also take place on the social and political levels, that is to say whether real powers of control and management are devolved both to the enterprises and localities at a time when bureaucratic chaos can only aggravate the poverty and infuriate the population.

The idea of the need to re-establish a free market in agriculture and stimulate the peasants to improve food supplies seems to be widely shared, at least in Havana.

The suppression of the free markets was justified by the inequalities they caused, but it is not clear that inequalities resulting from the black market are better. The aim was to prevent profiteering by the peasants and intermediaries but the development of an underground economy favors, according to an official report, "a process of capitalization" through "grow-

ing policy, or whether some crimes are depenalized," and the danger of using the criminal law to "reduce social phenomena to individual deeds."

Barral estimates that three sectors of the population are involved in seeking illegal profits: "a marginal or anti-social group...which penal repression tends to strengthen; a layer of corrupt employees and functionaries, who are criminals by virtue of their office"; and a neo-bourgeois layer formed of intermediaries and illegal traders and what remains of the former petty bourgeoisie," their common characteristic being that they are not prepared to renounce their own interests.

"Insofar as these interests are contrary to those of the revolution, they constitute a social group with a very dangerous potential, and who in a favorable conjuncture could provoke a spontaneous political movement with considerable counter-revolutionary dynamism.

"In our opinion it is by no means excluded that the whole of the criminal classes all may adopt negative political attitudes that could lead to spontaneous counterrevolutionary movements, whose danger is all the greater at a moment when groups of intellectuals are helping them to become aware of themselves, of the identity of their interests, if the latter persuade them that the revolutionary institutions incarnate their enemy, if they succeed in giving them platforms and leaders."

This is the explosive context in which the fourth congress of the Cuban Communist Party will take place. This is supposed to be a "refoundation" congress according to some Cubans, but the date is yet to be fixed. ■

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On Gay Freedom Day: A salute for the Bills and Dorothys of this world

By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

I met Bill in New York City in the fifties. In the middle of the McCarthy witch-hunt. He would come to socialist forums and he helped me put out our socialist newspaper. He was a sweet, quiet man from a rural part of some Western state. He was tall, shy, and had a great sense of humor.

But Bill happened to be gay; so periodically we would get a call from a friend of his saying that he was in jail and could we pay his bail and get him out. Someone would always go and bring him back.

Bill would be arrested, really, for only one reason. He certainly never robbed, beat, or killed anyone. Nor did he so much as get drunk, fight, or be mean to anyone. He was arrested for being gay (he liked to wear make-up). That's it, that's all.

I'm sure that Bill never argued back. What was so amazing is that he must have felt too guilty to cuss out the cops even

when alone. In those days the closet was deep, dark, and locked. When we were working together, I would call the cops every dirty name I could think of and demand that Bill not put up with their harassment.

How could he stand it, I would demand? He quietly just said that that's the way cops are and there was nothing you could do about it.

Dorothy, was beautiful, smart, a good artist, and a first-rate socialist. She would go on sales of our paper, provide help in the office, and compose leaflets for us that were short and made sense. (She did not try to get the first chapter of Karl Marx's "Capital" on the leaflet—plus she could spell.) Believe me, in a small socialist organization she had unusual gifts.

Dorothy ended her own life because she was a lesbian. Life in this capitalist society was cruel to her. The powers-that-be didn't know the wonderful contribution she made to humankind. Worst of all, if they knew,

they would have harmed her more.

She just ended it one day because she couldn't take being a phony and trying to live up to the Barbie Doll image America tried to impose on its gifted women.

In those days, if you walked down New York's Christopher Street, it was usually quiet and clean—and the only time there were disturbances was when the cops came around. They would stride into a bar, line everyone up and just jab their billy clubs at this one and smack that one. No good reason, just hate. Then the police paddy-wagon would pull up, and out they would go, one by one, handcuffed and heads hung down.

But one day, the cops walked in just once too often at a neighborhood bar called Stonewall. All hell broke loose and the gays began to fight back. They gave the cops as good as they got. It was not an easy arrest. No one knows who the leaders were; perhaps there weren't any leaders.

The word got out that gays had put up a

fight for justice; they had refused to accept the unjust attacks against them. They had the effrontery to believe that the Bill of Rights applied to everyone.

At first, hundreds and then thousands of gays came to Christopher Street to discuss and praise the fight-back. The story went from city to city. Many hundreds of thousands of gay men and lesbian women stood a little taller and looked a whole lot prouder. "We are as good as anyone and we have our rights too."

You just can't keep this kind of feeling down. You can't keep the human race down for long and get away with it. You cannot keep masses in bondage and oppressed—and get away with it.

June 30, 1991, is Gay Freedom Day. Hundreds of thousands will march in several cities and say, "Here we are. We're gays and lesbians. We're fighting for our lives and our human rights—and we will not stop until we win."

I lost track of Bill when we moved from New York to California. But I know that he will be marching wherever he is. As for Dorothy, she lives in the spirit of every fighter for justice and human rights. If she were alive today she would certainly be a part of Gay Freedom Day. ■

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

ST. PAUL, Minn.—On June 15, police here began enforcing a stiff curfew ordinance passed by the city council. This regulation is nothing but an unwarranted attack on St. Paul's Black youth who live in the Summit-University and Frogtown neighborhoods. Young people living in the Eastside working-class and Westside Chicano neighborhoods would also be subjected to police harassment resulting from the unreasonably harsh law.

Stepped-up curfew enforcement coincides with St. Paul's rising youth unemployment and a decaying municipal infrastructure incapable of providing adequate social and recreational programs for inner-city youth.

The city politicians, mostly Democrats, refuse to tax the rich in order to maintain vital community programs and guaranteed youth employment. Instead, the Democrats have increased police powers to harass St. Paul youth who are victims of these cutbacks.

St. Paul police will issue citations to children found on the street after 11 p.m., Sunday through Thursday, unless accompanied by an adult. If a child is cited more than twice, the parents will be cited and have to appear in court on a misdemeanor charge. If the parent or parents are found guilty, the misdemeanor will be recorded permanently on their record.

Writing in the June 6 issue of the *Pioneer Press*, Lt. Robert Fletcher, commander of the police department's juvenile unit, cites two main reasons for tightening curfew enforcement. "First and foremost," he says, "it's a child-safety issue. There are a number of kids exposed to a variety of negative influences—drugs

St. Paul police step up enforcement of curfew law against young people

and violent activities that take place late at night."

Fletcher continued, "It's a neighborhood issue designed to help control some of the disorderly activity and youth grouping that has begun throughout the country."

Let us debunk Lt. Fletcher's concern for child safety. The police are issuing criminal citations. They are not acting as benevolent community guardians attempting to reduce juvenile delinquency and inadequate parenting

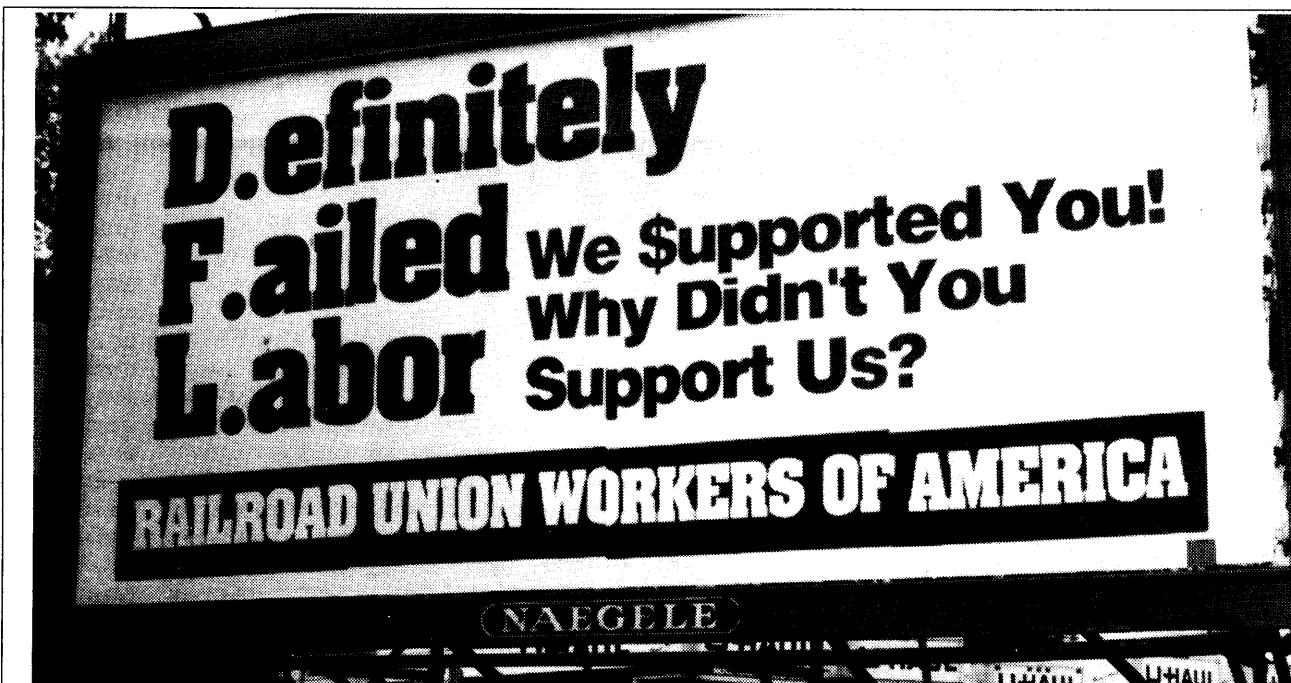
through caring dialogue—backed by a panoply of social programs they can refer parents to.

Councilman Bill Wilson, who helped author the strict curfew ordinance told the *Pioneer Press*, "People are calling in concerned ... there are kids six, seven, eight years old in the streets at 12 or 1 in the morning. That suggests there is not sufficient supervision. ... The parents are put on notice that they are the ones who'll be cited,

and they're the ones who'll have to appear in court."

But Bill Wilson must know that many of his constituents are at the beck and call of city industries operating 24 hours a day. How can parents afford childcare when their wages are \$4 an hour? Perhaps working parents would rather keep their children fed, clothed, and housed rather than have their wages swallowed up by expensive childcare vendors.

Councilman Wilson and his cops have no right to tell parents how to raise their children. Nor do they have the right to impose curfews, especially when Wilson and his city government are cheating Black youth of meaningful recreational programs and employment and denying their parents access to 24-hour childcare. ■



RAIL WORKERS EXCORIATE DEMOCRATS—Minnesota's Democratic Party is called the Democratic Farmer Labor Party (DFL). This billboard, on a major St. Paul thoroughfare, was put up by Local Lodge 593 of the Transportation Communications Union (railroad clerks employed by Burlington Northern Railroad). It decries the role of Minnesota's Democratic Party politicians in the U.S. Congress who voted for last April's bi-partisan, strikebreaking House Joint Resolution 222. The resolution ordered an end to the nationwide rail strike and sent 235,000 rail unionists back to work without a new contract.

Photo by: Lynn Henderson



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Behind debate over quotas and affirmative action

The real target of the current debate over the 1991 Civil Rights Act, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 5, is affirmative action, not quotas as charged by President George Bush.

The House adopted the bill by a vote of 273 to 158, 15 short of the two-thirds majority needed to override an expected veto by Bush. The U.S. Senate will discuss the bill next. It is likely a new bill will be forged in an attempt to either get Bush to sign it or win enough votes to override his veto.

The Bush administration attacks the proposed bill as a "quotas" bill. In fact, what Bush and his supporters mean by quotas is any use of timetables or goals to combat discrimination in hiring and promotion, education, housing, and all walks of life for Blacks, other minorities, and women. They falsely call anti-bias laws a form of "reverse discrimination"—that is, discrimination against white males, who now dominate all jobs in a disproportionate number in industry, education, and commerce as well as government.

Not a quotas bill

Unfortunately, the new bill does not do what Bush says it does. It is a retreat from affirmative action and even accepts the idea that women should be compensated less for discrimination than Blacks. (There is a cap for punitive damages women can win.) It also accepts the asinine notion that quotas are bad.

Rep. Richard Gephardt had this to say about the House bill: "We have produced a bill that makes

quotas illegal, and which gives white workers, Black workers, women and men, religious minorities, and the disabled access to the courts to enforce their rights." (My emphasis.)

Yet affirmative action is nothing more than taking the minimal steps necessary to begin to erode privileges enjoyed by white males over Blacks and women. Affirmative action was won after the victory of the massive civil rights movement of the 1960s.

It was extended to cover other minorities and women, as they fought for their rights. What affirmative action does when it is enforced is help break down divisions created among working people under capitalism.

Not surprisingly, the rich employers have sought to undermine affirmative action programs from day one. Court challenges have been frequent over the years.

The decline of the Black rights and women's rights movements and the weakening of the labor movement in the 1980s is a big reason the U.S. Supreme Court began to erode earlier rulings favorable to civil rights.

Today it is virtually impossible to win a class action suit proving discrimination based on the fact of inequality. Individual claims are still possible but only if "intent" of discrimination is proved.

Quotas, timetables, and fixed goals simply concretize the necessary steps to end historic and current discrimination. Without such hard goals little progress to end discrimination is possible.

For example, in the airline in-



Which Side Are You On?

By
Malik Miah

dustry few Blacks or women were mechanics or pilots until the late 1970s. This was true even though the Civil Rights Act was adopted by Congress in 1964. At United Airlines it took legal action by Black employees that led to a court order/consent decree in 1976 to begin to change that.

In the 1970s, civil rights groups were firm backers of affirmative action goals and quotas to remedy discrimination—to give Blacks a chance to catch up.

Unfortunately, that's changing under the onslaught of the right-wing attacks on affirmative action. Many leaders of the major trade unions, women's rights groups, and Black rights groups are now backtracking on quotas.

Retreat by rights' groups

Molly Yard, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), said this about the new bill: "By discouraging employers from maintaining discriminatory practices, the [new]

Act actually is an anti-quota bill, which can help eliminate unlawful quotas that keep women and people of color and others from receiving fair treatment."

The AFL-CIO and its affiliates have made similar statements. Most unions have always opposed quotas and rarely negotiated such clauses in their contracts.

Civil rights leaders are also jumping ship. John Jacob, head of the National Urban League, said, "Quotas were a phony issue from the day they were first raised. Long experience with anti-bias laws, regulations, and court decisions never led to quotas."

Jacobs and others charge Bush with using the quotas issue to worsen race relations. Yet none of the groups have taken the initiative to organize mass protests to defend affirmative action. Their entire campaign is around adopting new legislation. History, however, has taught us that progressive legislation is always

a byproduct of mass agitation, not the other way around.

This retreat on quotas is in fact a retreat from defending affirmative action. Discrimination is institutionalized in our society. That is why the average income of Blacks and women is considerably less than for white males.

The reason is simple: super profits are made by the employers by maintaining race and sex discrimination. The capitalist system is based on exploiting all labor. It pits worker against worker based on their race and sex. This divide and conquer policy is how they rule and control working people. We fight among ourselves—due to lack of solidarity—instead of fighting them.

The trade unions must be in the forefront of resisting these methods. The unions must defend affirmative action programs which are enforceable—that is, quotas (timetables and goals). The political high ground is to stand four-square behind affirmative action and its most effective tool: quotas. ■

Our readers speak out

A "find"

Dear editors,

I have been reading *Socialist Action* now for several years. It has turned out to be a "find." The quality of the writing is uniformly excel-

lent, and it was quite a relief for me to discover Marxist-Leninist views compatible with my own.

My one criticism of *Socialist Action* is that it has no section dealing with books and the arts. I became conscious of this lack when I read with great interest Cliff Con-

ner's splendid three-part series on the French Revolution.

Nothing quite on a par with this has since appeared in *Socialist Action*—and nothing on the arts.

F.B.,
Baltimore, Md.

A "voice"

Dear editors,

I was so pleased to discover *Socialist Action*, after being devastated by the off-hand way that the Socialist Workers Party rejected Trotsky's Permanent Revolution and proceeded to expel thoughtful, hard-working revolutionaries to enforce their reversal.

And so, thank you for being a voice against the legions that protect "U.S. business interests" and point to the roots of war on the Third World and working people in this country.

J.M.,
Albuquerque, N.M.

Bangladesh

Dear editors,

It looks to me like Malik Miah (*Socialist Action*, June 1991) dug into his theoretical toolbox looking for some proposals in the wake of the catastrophic cycle in Bangladesh and only found the equivalent of a small tack hammer, screwdriver, and pliers. It's sad that the best he could propose was debt relief, aid donations, and the construction of some raised concrete shelters.

If Malik took his blanket and pillow out on the freeway to sleep, chances are he'd wake up dead, right? The same danger exists for people who live on flood plains, and building Holland-style dikes is not a feasible or environmentally sound solution.

The disaster in Bangladesh is a symptom of environmental stress, as well as a product of the world

capitalist/imperialist system of human social organization.

There are four important observations to make with respect to human habitats: 1) They cannot displace existing ecosystems indefinitely without, at some point, triggering a qualitative change 2) Forests provide natural flood control and play a fundamental role in the carbon cycle. They must be recultivated and maintained on a sufficient scale to achieve climate stability once more. 3) Wetlands are the base for most of the earth's complex food chain and must be preserved at all costs. 4) If there are no places left to settle outside of a flood plain, the population of that area is too large.

How can we as socialists have any credibility among environmentally informed readers when Malik's article appears to be oblivious to these facts? To them, it must appear as ill-informed and intellectually

impotent as the born-againer who blames all evil on the Devil.

Peter Clark,
Cincinnati, Ohio

French resisters

Dear editors,

Your readers in the United States should know that there are also campaigns in in the French state in defense of soldiers who refused orders to participate in the war against Iraq.

One such soldier is François Wargnies, who failed to abide by a call-up notice just before the launching of the war. The Conscientious Objectors Network (Réseau des objecteurs de conscience) issued a petition for him, which is being supported by the French section of the Fourth International.

Arzhur ar Roue,
Guingamp, France

Socialists gather in Boston for educational conference

By BARRY SHEPPARD

Socialists from across the country are gathering at Bentley College in Waltham, Mass., outside of Boston, this summer to attend an educational and active workers' conference. The conference will be held July 31 through Aug. 3.

A highlight of the conference will be a presentation by a representative of the Cuban mission to the United Nations—if the State Department gives its permission. Cuban UN diplomats are under tight travel restrictions by Washington, which fears the open expression of the viewpoints of the Cuban government to the American people.

Other topics include: the political situation in the United States today, trends in the trade-union movement, the attack on the right to choose abortion, the fight for affirmative action, key debates in the environmental movement, contradictions in the world capitalist economy, the fight against capitalist restoration and for political revolution in the USSR and East Europe, the South African revolution today, and socialist election campaign strategy.

Each discussion will be kicked off by a speaker or a panel of speakers, followed by debate and

discussion from the floor.

Conference registration will be held during the morning of Wednesday, July 31, and the first conference session will begin at 1 p.m. that day. The final session will be held Saturday afternoon, and participants will then break for a barbeque and social gathering that evening. On Friday evening, there will be a public rally.

There will be lodging and meals available at the College. For those desiring lodging, total conference costs will be \$175, including meals, lodging, and a \$20 registration fee. For those commuting, the total cost will be \$125. Those attending only part of the conference will pay for those meals and lodging they use, although all conference participants will pay the \$20 registration fee.

The conference is being sponsored by International Viewpoint, with *Socialist Action* and Walnut Publishing co-sponsoring.

For more information call International Viewpoint at (415) 821-0458, or write to: IV, 3435 Army Street, Room 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. To pre-register, send checks or money orders made out to International Viewpoint to the above address. ■

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South Africa repeals apartheid laws: Black majority still denied democratic rights

By MALIK MIAH

The white capitalist rulers of South Africa are determined to maintain their economic and political domination of a country where the Black majority is denied basic democratic rights.

Since early June, major concessions have been made to the oppressed majority population in an attempt to divide the liberation forces and build a new coalition of collaborators with the white regime. The concessions have been hailed by world imperialism, led by President George Bush—who hosted the top Black collaborator, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of the Inkatha Freedom Party, at the White House on June 20.

Bush calls for an immediate end to sanctions against South Africa imposed by the United States in 1986. The Reagan administration, including Bush, opposed those sanctions at the time. Reagan's veto was overturned by Congress.

The U.S. sanctions bar the export of military hardware, computer technology, and nuclear items. They also prohibit the import of food and agricultural products, iron, steel, coal, gold coins, sugar, and oil and petroleum products from South Africa.

Apartheid laws scrapped

Four significant laws that serve as the legal basis for apartheid have been revoked by the white capitalist rulers.

On June 17, the parliament scrapped the Population Registration Act, enacted in 1950. That law classified all South Africans by race from birth. Under the new law, all babies born after June 17 will no longer be classified by race—as Blacks, Asians, Coloreds (mixed race), and whites.

On June 5, the Land Acts, which set aside 87 percent of all property for whites, and the Group Areas Act, which dictated where South Africans could live on the basis of their race, were repealed. Blacks (including Africans, Asians, and Coloreds) are approximately 34 million of South Africa's 39 million people. African Blacks (some 30 million people) are denied the right to vote and had the fewest rights under apartheid.

One year earlier, the parliament repealed the Separate Amenities Act, which allowed municipal officials to bar Blacks from parks, swimming pools, toilets, and other public accommodations. Municipal and township councils, however, remain segregated.

And on June 21, the parliament modified the 1982 Internal Security Act, which allowed the police to indefinitely hold opponents of the regime in jail without a trial. The new law allows detention for up to 10 days. Renewals require that the victim go before a judge first. Detainees are also granted access to their own lawyers, doctor, and family members.

What is apartheid?

The legal changes in the apartheid system have been welcomed by liberation forces in South Africa. All formations, however—from the largest group, the African National Congress (ANC), to unions and church organizations—add that the changes do not go far enough. Repeal of apartheid laws are not identical to ending the system of discrimination and national oppression.

The new laws do not mark a fundamental change to the capitalist apartheid system. Apartheid is more than laws on the books. It is an institutionalized social, economic, and political system based on white domination of the Black majority. It is a system based on total control of all aspects of a Black person's life.

Black life is not only made inferior by lacking the right to vote, but by having substandard housing, schools, and medical



Gill de Vlieg

After decades of apartheid, the system is so entrenched that the end of the legal basis of apartheid is not required to keep Blacks in this degrading status. Apartheid is institutionalized.

care. Blacks have been denied access to land and equal pay for equal work.

After decades of apartheid, the system is so entrenched that the end of the legal basis of apartheid is not required to keep Blacks in this degrading status. Apartheid is institutionalized. The system of discrimination continually recreates and reproduces itself. It must be rooted out to bring fundamental change.

Take, for example, the new law on race classification. Only babies born after June 17 will not be registered by race. But their parents remain classified. The old lists will not be changed until after a new constitution is written. Who will write the constitution? The white regime says it will be written by qualified people representing all components of society. Moreover, it says it will take several years to do so. Until then, the current minority regime will govern under modified laws that maintain white rule.

The ANC and other liberation forces strongly oppose this setup. They correctly point out that a Constituent Assembly based on democratic representation is required to write a constitution.

In addition, the ANC demands that an interim government be immediately formed to organize the assembly. President F.W. de Klerk rejects that demand out of hand. Buthelezi, his main Black collaborator, agrees with him.

The law changing segregated education is also full of holes. Whites-only public schools may be integrated, but only if 72 percent of the parents at a school vote to accept children of all races. So far, few schools have been integrated. And the gov-

ernment has taken no steps to equalize funding to Black schools.

Even the new amendments to the Internal Security Act are inadequate. The government still has the right to ban political groups it declares are seeking change through violence. Preventive detention is still possible.

Radical land reform needed

The key issue to move towards real equality and full democracy in South Africa concerns land ownership. Under apartheid's old laws Blacks could only own land on 13 percent of the country. Today they can legally buy land anywhere. But few Blacks have the resources to do so, even if they could get a white to sell them back land stolen from their parents and ancestors.

To achieve fundamental radical change in South Africa, the oppressed Black majority must be able to work and own land freely. This means that land must be redistributed to all those who wish to work it—backed up by cheap credit and other affirmative action measures to benefit those who want to farm or own their own home. Nationalization of major white holdings is a necessary first step to give Blacks some economic control over their lives.

What is most significant about the end of legal apartheid is the fact that it gives the revolutionary and democratic forces in South Africa impetus and confidence to step up their fight for a total dismantling of the capitalist apartheid system. It provides more political space to organize the movement and unite all progressive-minded forces—Black and white—in a determined effort to end the system.

De Klerk and his supporters in Washington, London, and other imperialist centers, understand the revolutionary dynamics of the anti-apartheid struggle for democratic rule. This is why they seek to refurbish the system without fundamentally changing it.

White domination is institutionalized. It is like racism in the United States. Many significant changes have occurred in this country since the demise of Jim Crow-segregation in the 1960s. But institutionalized discrimination in income and employment—twice the average joblessness compared to whites, for example—education, housing, and other aspects of life remain entrenched.

Not surprisingly, the ruling Nationalist Party (NP), political architect of the system, is now accepting Asian, Colored, and Black collaborators directly into the racist party. De Klerk is seeking to establish the NP as a party representing all South Africans, not just whites.

Keep international sanctions

But de Klerk's and Bush's problem remains a very big one despite all the maneuvering: the Black majority is discriminated against and not allowed the right to vote. Blacks are without real political power. Black political prisoners remain in jail. Police-organized violence against Blacks is still rampant. Segregation is still a reality.

It is in this context that international sanctions fit. They must be maintained and strengthened against the capitalist apartheid regime. The sanctions are working. That's why De Klerk, Buthelezi, and Bush want to repeal them as soon as possible.

But the liberation forces in South Africa say, "No!" Opponents of apartheid in the United States must give the same answer.

Edolphus Towns, Democrat from Brooklyn and chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus (a group that helped write the 1986 law) responded to Bush by saying, "We feel it's very important not to lift sanctions now until we're certain the situation in South Africa is irreversible."

Under the 1986 law, five conditions were set before sanctions could be lifted. They were: Ending the bans on all political parties in South Africa while insuring that groups can take part freely in politics, freeing all political prisoners, lifting a government-imposed state of emergency, eliminating the laws that formed the structure of apartheid, and receiving assurances that negotiations over a new government are under way.

The White House says four of the five conditions have been met. What's left is freeing remaining political prisoners.

Supporters of the revolutionary democratic struggle in South Africa, however, say freeing the political prisoners is not enough. The sanctions must be maintained until a new constitution is written where the right of Blacks to vote, to be full citizens, is made law.

On June 15-16, the ANC and other forces organized large rallies and meetings to mark the 15th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, which relaunched the liberation struggle.

ANC leader Nelson Mandela said that the ANC would step up its agitation until all political prisoners are freed, an interim government is formed, and a constituent assembly is established. On July 2-6 in Durban, the ANC is holding its first national conference in South Africa since it was banned in 1960.

Supporters of the revolutionary struggle against the capitalist apartheid system must step up our solidarity by demanding that sanctions be fully enforced and by backing all efforts by the oppressed Black majority and its allies to bring down the regime and move towards a democratically elected constituent assembly. ■