

Poverty on the rise as economy stagnates

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

This holiday season will be a dismal one for working people. Unemployment is rising while wages continue to slide. The U.S. economy is dead in the water, and the politicians—Democratic and Republican—are unable to say how to get it moving again.

For 28 months in a row, the economy has grown very little or not at all. That's the longest period of stagnation since at least 1947. President Bush has declared that "the recession is over," but few people find cause to believe him.

On Nov. 15, the stock market plunged 120 points. Contributing to the panic on Wall Street was the Commerce Department's announcement of a rise in business inventories while retail sales were going down. This indicated that manufacturers were producing more than people were able to buy.

As a result, more employers will seek to close down their production lines. Layoffs will increase. Unemployment lines will get even longer.

The effects of the economic downturn are startling: Median family income declined 2 percent (\$709) last year. According to the Labor Department, hourly wages for non-supervisory workers, adjusted for inflation, were lower in 1990 than in any year since 1964.

The Census Bureau reports that 2.1 million more Americans, including 840,000 children, fell below the official poverty line last year. This was the first annual increase in the poor since 1983. Ten percent of the population is forced to rely on government food stamps.

Some regions of the country have been hit even harder by economic stagnation. In Georgia, for example, applications for food stamps have gone up 47 percent in three years. In New England, people considered to be living in poverty rose 28 percent from 1989 to 1990.

The situation for working people promises to get much worse. Robert Greenstein, director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, points out: "Weak government policies to assist the recession's victims, including the weakest level of unemployment insurance protection in any recession since World War II—along with budget cuts aimed at the poor that were passed earlier this year in a number of states—add to the likelihood of a substantial rise in poverty in 1991." (*TWU Express*, Oct. 25, 1991.)

The debt crisis

Economic recessions are a normal periodic development under capitalism. They come about because competing capitalists cannot tell when markets are saturated, and thus over-invest and over-produce. But the current recession has been prolonged by the mounting spiral of debt, which affects manufacturers, consumers, and the government.

During the last decade, U.S. corporations have gone on a borrowing spree, piling up

(continued on page 5)



Brenda Bishop

Bush vetoes women's rights



President Bush's veto of the bill that would have lifted the gag rule on mentioning abortion at federally funded family planning clinics is one more indication of the seriousness of the drive by the ruling rich to roll back abortion rights.

The failure of the Democratic Party-controlled Congress to override the veto is another indication of the same thing.

Both parties of the rich are moving to the right, as are their liberal and conservative wings. Moreover, the conservatives have the initiative, with the liberals being dragged along in tow.

Bush, for example, took the issue head on, asserting that what was at stake was the right to abortion, which he opposes. The liberals tried to fudge the issue, claiming that what was at stake was not abortion but the right of free speech, which was "more fundamental." That way they hoped to get opponents of abortion to vote against the gag rule.

Of course, the right to free speech and the freedom of doctors to give all necessary information to their patients were involved. And although Bush claimed that free speech

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was not involved because the Supreme Court had already decided that it was not, it would be wrong for us to accept the liberals' counterposing of the rights of free speech and abortion. We need both.

If we were to rely on the Supreme Court to define what our rights are, we would be in sad shape indeed.

All our rights have been won in revolutions (War for Independence and the Civil War) and in great mass actions and mass-supported defense cases. The same is true of the right to abortion, given a grudging OK by the Supreme Court in 1973 in the face of mass movements against the Vietnam War and for Black and women's rights

in the 1960s and '70s.

That the initiative is now in the conservatives' hands was graphically shown by the Thomas hearings. While the conservatives took the offensive against Anita Hill (remember the viciously misogynist Sen. Specter shouting "perjury" at her), the liberals politely bleated. Then came the appointment of Thomas, who is against abortion rights and affirmative action, who was approved by the Democratic Senate.

Another example is the debate over affirmative action. Bush blasts "quotas." But without quotas there is no affirmative action, just pious sentiments. What have the liberals done? They run from this truth and capitulate, swearing they are not for quotas either.

This move to the right by the two capitalist parties encourages the extreme right. David Duke talks about being a mainstream Republican, and he's not far off.

After Bush's veto, the extremists of Operation Rescue got a new shot in the arm and launched a new wave of attacks on clinics.

Placing any confidence in any of the politicians of the rich—either men or women—to defend abortion rights or any other of our hard-won rights is self-defeating.

Unfortunately, there is no mass party of working people we could vote for. Even if there were, we would still have to defend our rights with the same methods through which they were won—through independent political action in the streets.

The next step for abortion rights fighters is to build massive, visible actions. The rich have to be forced to accept our rights.

Let's start now to make the April 5, 1992, action in Washington, D.C., for abortion rights as big as possible. Let's act now to defend our abortion facilities from the violence of Operation Rescue. ■

Memories of racism in the 1930s



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

Watching David Duke brought back some of the earliest memories of my childhood in Lexington, Kentucky. These were marked, indelibly, by racism and the Great Depression. It was not a pleasant memory.

What jogged my mind was the pictures of David Duke's blue-collar followers, both men and women, carrying his campaign placards—laying bare their hatred of Blacks. What was revealed was that just below the surface lay all of the rotten racist crap, and all that was needed was the likes of David Duke to bring out the worst in them and make them feel it's okay.

But David Duke is just a symptom of the decay of an economic system that is founded on racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism. Capitalism couldn't exist if it did not divide white against Black, Christian against Jew, male against female, etc.

What always amazes me is how often it works. Some big mouth KKKer will run for office on the issue of white against Black and

there are all of those poor-white suckers, being pounded into the ground by their bosses and the capitalist class, carrying around David Duke signs. What's the secret? How does it work? It's not such a mystery.

It was 1936 in Lexington, Ky. There were no jobs or money. My father had read in the paper that the tobacco warehouses were hiring tobacco strippers. The tobacco had been hanging up in the warehouses and was now dry and ready for stripping. My mother was working, and so my father took me and my older brother, Glen, to the job-site. Glen stayed in the car, but I insisted on going to the line-up with my father.

It was a hot morning and when we got to the loading dock of the warehouse, there were already two lines of men. One line for Black men and one for whites. The men stuck to their line and talked in low tones to each other. There were no exchanges of either words or glances between the two lines.

Finally, after what seemed hours, a white man wearing a

large straw hat came out onto the loading dock. "All right," he said, "this is how it is. We're willing to pay 37 cents an hour to you white men. And if you don't want to work for that, we have plenty colored boys here that will work for 27 cents an hour." And with that the lines begin to shuffle forward and hopeful workers gave their names.

My father didn't get the job. He was too far back in the line. As my father walked back to the car, he said that the problem with "niggers" is that they would take the bread out of his children's mouth for 10 cents an hour.

His anger was not directed toward the boss who was offering 10 cents an hour difference. After all, in his mind, that's what bosses were supposed to do, pay the lowest possible wage. He was just doing a boss's "job." No, my father blamed the Black men who had to accept 27 cents an hour to get the job.

Actually, stripping tobacco was usually a job done by Blacks. It was low-paying, back-breaking work. But this was a depression, and whites had showed up for these lousy jobs. In fact, it would be closer to the truth to say that it was the white men who were taking the bread out of Black children's mouths. This thought never occurred to my father.

After I grew up and became a socialist, I rearranged that scene in my head a dozen times. First, I pictured the white men yelling back to the boss that all of them,



Black and white, would get equal wages or no one would work. Then I pictured the Blacks walking off and saying to the white workers that if you want to work for a dog's wages go ahead—but we won't.

And then I pictured the white men joining the Black men and both groups laughing and shaking hands. And, of course, I pictured the boss caving in and saying he was only kidding—everyone would really get 47 cents an hour.

During the organizing drive of the CIO in the 1930s, Black and white workers did join together to create industrial unions—but mostly in the North. It was self-

interest that spurred white workers to hold out their hands to Blacks.

Divide and conquer, the tactic bosses used to keep wages down in the South, was smashed up North by an industrial union movement based on real solidarity.

Those unionized workers refused to be suckers for the capitalist class. They kept their eyes on the real enemy and organized a united struggles by all workers to raise their living standards—Black and white, women and men, and irrespective of creed. That's the only answer to all forms of bigotry. ■

Young feminists gather in San Jose, Calif. to discuss action perspectives

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

SAN JOSE, Calif.—Over 550 women gathered here over the weekend of Nov. 15-17 for the Young Feminist Conference, sponsored by the California National Organization for Women (NOW). Although the conference was open to all feminists regardless of age or sex, the majority of participants were young women from campuses up and down California.

The young women in attendance appeared overwhelmingly to be new feminist activists looking for direction and ideas on how to organize. Many were the founders of independent pro-choice groups on their own campuses.

For example, Kami—a University of California, Berkeley, freshman and founder of Berkeley Students for Choice—came to the conference to "get educated." She explained, "It's a good experience to get around women whose main goal is the fight for women's rights." She said that she hoped people would leave the conference "ready to do something."

One of the conference organizers, Cookie Pemberton of Los Angeles, argued strongly that young women need to get involved in the women's movement to broaden the feminist agenda and bring back an activist orientation.

Conference planners must have envisioned the event as simply an

educational conference, however, because no single issue was emphasized and no sessions were set up for the adoption of resolutions.

The conference featured general sessions with a variety of speakers and dozens of workshops running the gamut of feminist issues.

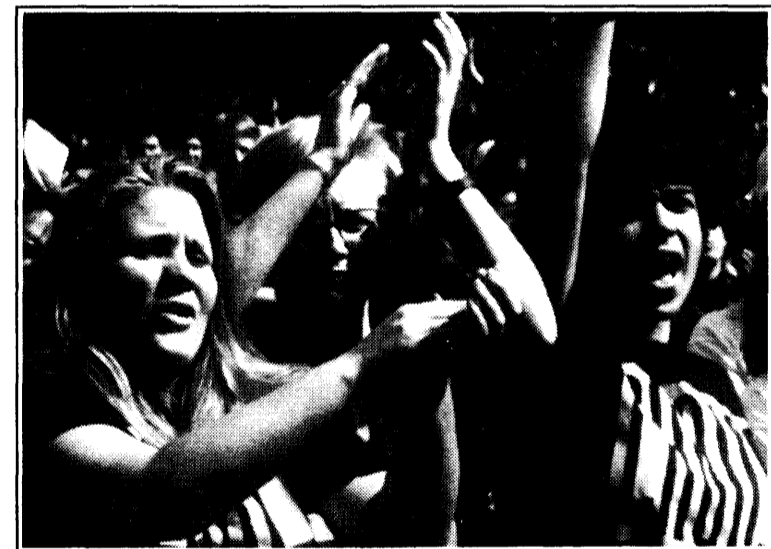
NOW Executive Vice President Patricia Ireland's featured speech was a general talk on the state of the women's movement today. She quoted a poll stating that 88 percent of women between the ages of 19 and 29 believe the women's movement has helped their lives, and two out of three of these women believe a strong women's movement is necessary.

Ireland emphasized the need for young women to join and lead the women's movement. She spoke of the need to organize women and the majority of Americans to fight for a common program of social justice. She did not mention NOW's position in favor of a third party, however—only the need to elect women to office.

Independent politics were mentioned by at least one other speaker, Josie Miranda, a past coordinator of the University of California, Davis, NOW chapter.

Miranda described the Democratic and Republican parties as "two hands attached to the same body," and listed the alternatives to two-party politics—including voting for socialist and other parties or the formation of a feminist party.

Her call for the April 5, 1992, demonstration for women's lives



was met by enthusiastic applause. She also mentioned that NOW planned to organize a pledge-of-resistance campaign to be ready in the event that *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.

Bay Area activists who worked together on the Oct. 5 pro-choice demonstration in San Francisco circulated a petition calling upon NOW to sponsor a West Coast action sometime before April 5. It is hoped that a West Coast action will build publicity and support for the April 5 march in Washington, D.C. And it will also mobilize tens of thousands on the West Coast who want to demonstrate their support for women's reproductive rights.

Two hundred signatures for the petition were gathered at the conference alone. Because the conference was not set-up for decision-making, the petitions and the call for a NOW-sponsored West Coast action were presented during the open-mike period at the closing session by Mary Doran of the San Francisco State University DARE (Defend Abortion Rights Emergency Coalition).

The sentiment for a march was so strong that Doran was interrupted at least twice by applause. Proposals for action were made by other speakers and were well received, although no voting could take place.

The California Young Feminist Conference served to bring together many women new to feminism and mass-action politics to share experiences, ideas, and their commitment to fight the current backlash against women in this country. ■

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By TINA BEACOCK

Women march in Chicago to defend choice

CHICAGO— Over 700 women and their supporters participated in a demonstration and rally Nov. 18 in defense of abortion rights.

Several major pro-choice groups had initially called the rally for Oct. 2. But it failed to take place because Planned Parenthood and others withdrew. As a result, the Pro-Choice Committee came together to call the Nov. 18 event.

The chair of the rally was Alison Carston, secretary of the Illinois National Organization for Women (NOW). She explained that the Pro-Choice Action Committee was a diverse group of organizations and individuals that came together to demand that abortion be safe, legal, accessible, and funded.

Colleen Kelly Johnson from Wichita NOW described how Operation Rescue (OR) laid siege to that city during the summer. She said that OR's aims were to force women into compliance with their own biblical model; to eliminate abortion, contraception, and sex education; and to make a "form of their religion the state religion."

Operation Rescue's clinic blockaders, Johnson said, were invited by a few fundamentalist ministers, and "expected that, because the mayor and vice mayor were anti-choice, they would be welcomed with open arms. No one mentioned to them that 67 percent of Wichita was pro-choice." By the time they left, she pointed out, that number had risen to 75 percent.

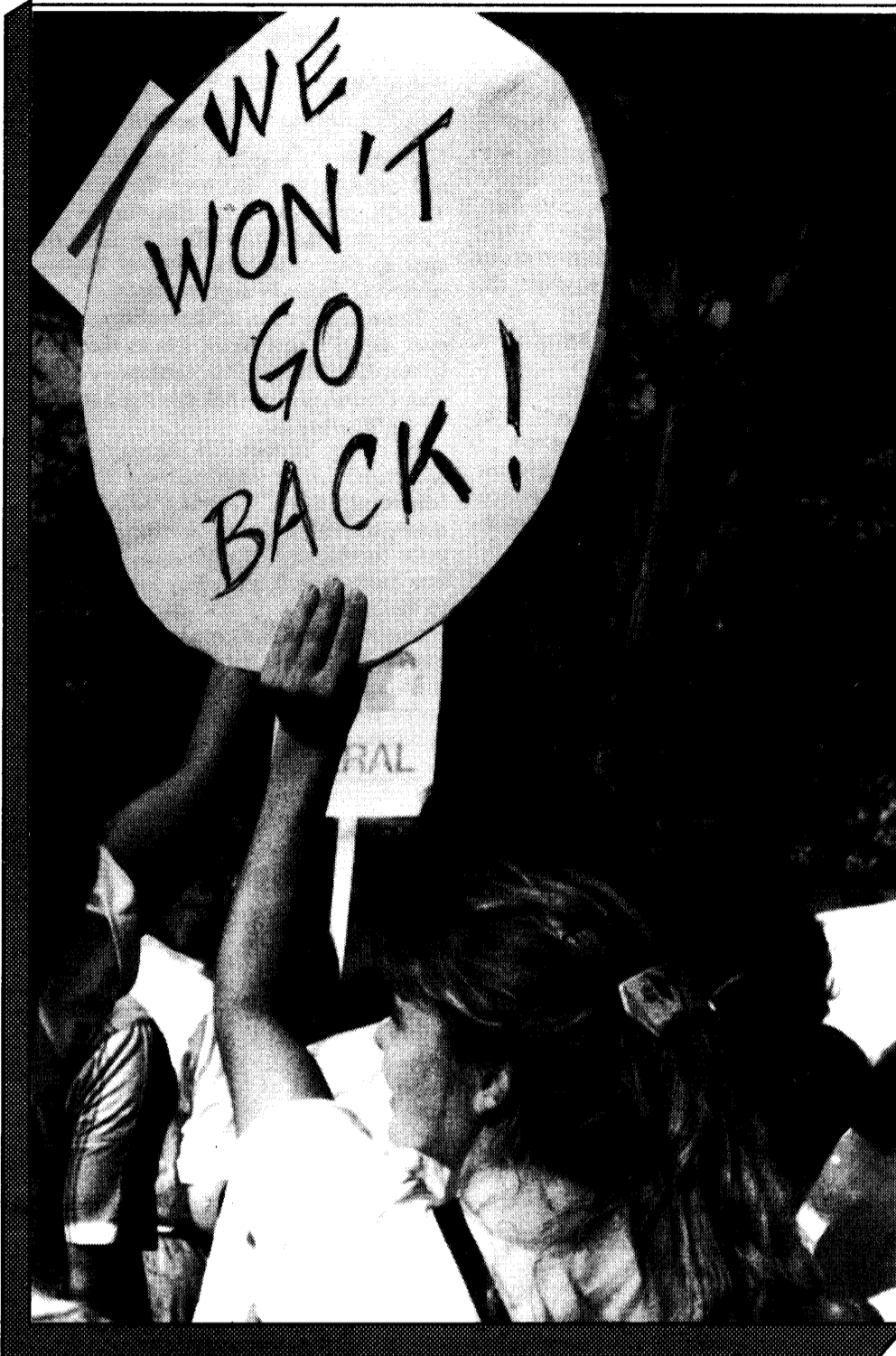
Many speakers and signs linked the abortion rights struggle with other struggles. Helen Ramirez, a Chicago teacher and member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), explained why unions should support the right to choose:

"Now some people say reproductive rights are not a union issue. I'm here to tell you it *is* a union issue. Working women lack adequate healthcare. We don't have parental and family leave policies; we don't have adequate child-care." "Every time we get pregnant," she said, "our ability to hold on to our job is affected."

"Labor had stood up against the gag rule and for the right of privacy when it comes to lie-detector tests, personal property and drug testing. ... We expect labor to also stand up when it comes to reproductive rights."

Illinois NOW President Gay Bruhn got a rousing response when she urged people to go to Washington, D.C., on April 5 for the national march called by NOW.

The crowd was overwhelming young, with contingents from Northwestern University, De Paul University, and campuses from Peoria to Indiana. There



Tina Beacock/Socialist Action

was a great response from people along the route. Young women ran out of stores and restaurants to cheer us.

The coalition that organized the rally included activists from Illinois NOW, local NOW chapters, the Emergency Clinic Defense Coalition, pro-choice student groups, CLUW, Queer Nation, Health Workers Pledge, Solidarity, Socialist Action, and several other groups.

While Chicago NOW eventually endorsed the action, it was reluctant to

build it. Other groups, like the Pro-Choice Alliance, NARAL, and Planned Parenthood would not even lend their names. Apparently, they feared it would undercut efforts to work on local electoral campaigns against anti-choice incumbents. ■

O.R. repulsed In Cincinnati & Chicago

CINCINNATI—For four days—from Wednesday, Nov. 20, to the following Sat-

urday—pro-choice forces turned out to defend women's clinics against Operation Rescue's attacks.

For the first time, the Cincinnati chapter of NOW, in conjunction with the University of Cincinnati-based Coalition for Choice, called on all pro-choice individuals and groups to link arms at the targeted clinic sites in order to keep them open and providing services vices to all their patients.

Earlier in the week, the anti-abortionists held a well-attended Tri-State Rescue rally to launch their National Days of Rescue. One of the organizers noted that at their last "rescue effort," they had encountered something new—a wall of "homosexual activists" calling themselves the "Coalition for Choice."

Indeed, on that occasion, the campus-based Coalition for Choice defended the clinic singlehandedly. The clinic directors had publicly asked people to stay home, and the Freedom of Choice Coalition, based in the city, had concurred. Seeking a compromise, NOW only called on trained members to stay on the opposite side of the street from the clinic and act as official observers.

At the conclusion of the recent round of attacks student leaders were enthusiastically received at a rally sponsored by NOW. The students had provided an example of the kind of mobilizing effort that is needed to stop Operation Rescue.

At the onset of the latest clinic attacks, NOW voted to mobilize pro-choice supporters into an effective clinic defense team, despite the fact that the clinic directors again called on people to stay at home (as did all the other city-wide pro-choice organizations).

NOW and the Coalition for Choice have together taken the lead in educating pro-choice supporters not to rely on the police or court injunctions to defend our abortion rights, but instead to out-mobilize the right wing at the clinic sites.—Margaret O'Kain

CHICAGO—Operation Rescue (OR) targeted the week of Nov. 17-23 as part of their nationwide campaign to shut down women's clinics. Reports from several regions indicate that their attempt fizzled. In the San Francisco Bay Area, for example, the OR zealots didn't even show up at the clinics.

Here in Illinois, women mobilized to defend the clinics throughout the state. In Chicago, where two clinics were attacked on Nov. 23, the Emergency Clinic Defense Coalition successfully kept the clinics open. The Coalition brought out well over 300 people to outmobilize OR.

OR also hit a number of clinics in suburban Chicago during the week, where they were met by clinic escorts organized by the Pro-Choice Alliance and local NOW chapters.—T. B.

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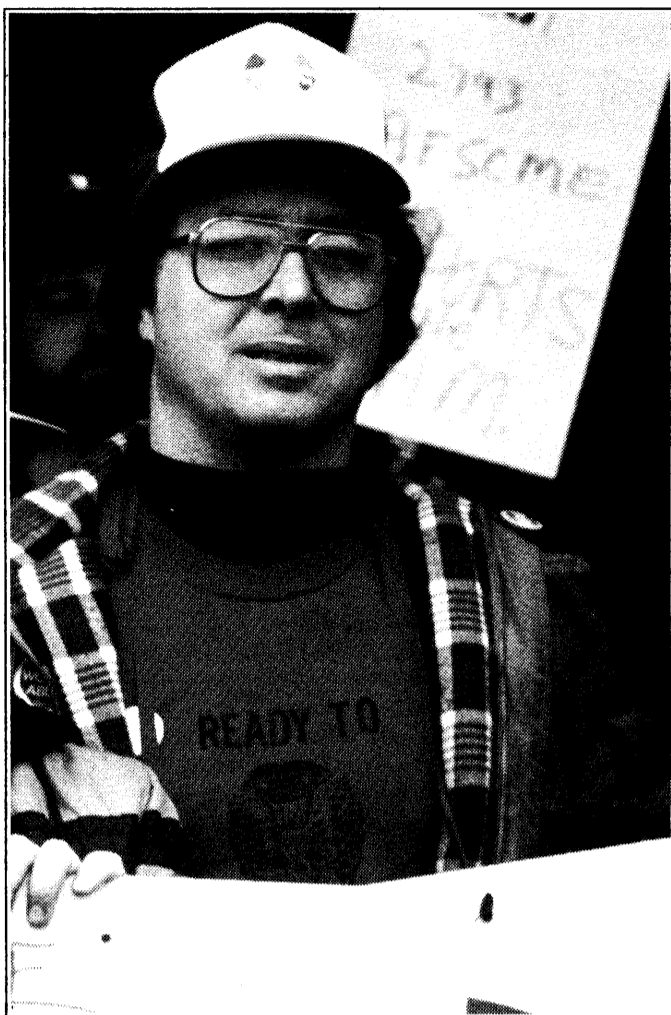
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Strike deadline nears at United Airlines



BY CARL VINCOLISI and MALIK MIAH

SAN FRANCISCO—The hand clapping and foot stomping by 250 Bay Area union stewards began immediately after Jerry Nelson, president of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Lodge 1781, promised, "We'll be on strike by Christmas if the company refuses to work with

us." Nelson blasted the latest contract offer by United Airlines.

Local Lodge 1781 comprises almost half of the 27,000 United Airlines IAM-represented mechanics, baggage handlers, cleaners, and kitchen workers at major airports throughout the country.

The old agreement expired on Nov. 1, 1989. In effect, United has "borrowed" hundreds of millions of dollars of deferred wage increases (interest free) which should have been negotiated two years ago.

Yet, airline management is still balking at providing a decent improvement over the last contract. While details of negotiations are not made public, most informed union sources believe the latest company wage offer amounts to a 2 percent annual wage increase for three years, with a retroactive wage increase of 1 percent for 1989 and 1990.

This, of course, is well below the inflation rate of 4.5 percent annually and is totally unacceptable to the union.

Two of the most serious company proposals involve reducing the starting pay of the baggage handlers to under \$8 per hour and extending the five-year staggered wage progression that it now takes to reach the full rate of over \$16 per hour.

The company is also demanding that the work day be lengthened by one-half hour without pay. This would also almost certainly trigger a strike.

In the 58-day 1979 strike, the IAM won a seven-and-a-half-hour work day with an additional half-hour lunch period paid by the company at the applicable hourly wage rate. The company now wants to eliminate this gain by extending the work day to eight hours—meaning a dramatic 16 percent increase in hours.

Cut-throat competition

Government regulation of airline fares and competition ended over 12 years ago. The attractive immediate effect to the consumer was much lower fares, as numerous start-up companies like Peoples' Express entered a previously restricted field.

The real objective of deregulation, however, is only now being felt as the three larger, financially stable carriers—American, United, Delta—are driving out their weaker competitors.

This year, Eastern and Midway folded. Meanwhile, four major carriers declared bankruptcy, with TWA and USAir left teetering on the brink of insolvency.

Of course, re-monopolization of the airline industry will ultimately mean an end to the low-fare wars that have periodically appeared over the last decade. It's the anticipation of tremendous profits—through higher fares and less competition—that keeps the larger airlines playing the game, matching the low fares of the smaller carriers until they go under.

Jockeying for position in this way is expensive, so each airline seeks to extract more concessions from its workforce to recover the lost profits for its wealthy stockholders.

Thus, financially struggling USAir is now demanding \$400 million in concessions from its workers while simultaneously launching a substantial fare reduction.

But even the most financially stable airlines demand that their workers pay the cost of capitalist competition. United Airlines' demands for significant concessions from the IAM is the best example. This year alone, the airline has placed a multi-

billion dollar order for Boeing aircraft and paid over \$400 million for Pan Am routes to London.

Strike preparations

Labor relations between the airlines and the unions are governed by the Railway Labor Act. A series of prolonged stages of negotiations must be conducted before the union has the right to enter what is called a "30-day countdown," after which the union can legally strike.

The IAM workers at United Airlines are at this point. They can strike anytime after 12:01 EST, Dec. 13. According to union officials, it is likely that the airline will present a final offer just before the deadline.

The union will print the proposal and present it to the membership in meetings held throughout the country. If the union negotiators recommend a rejection of the company offer, a strike authorization vote will also be taken. (A two-thirds vote is necessary.) Union officials would then use the anticipated large strike vote to obtain a better offer from the company before actually calling everyone out "before Christmas."

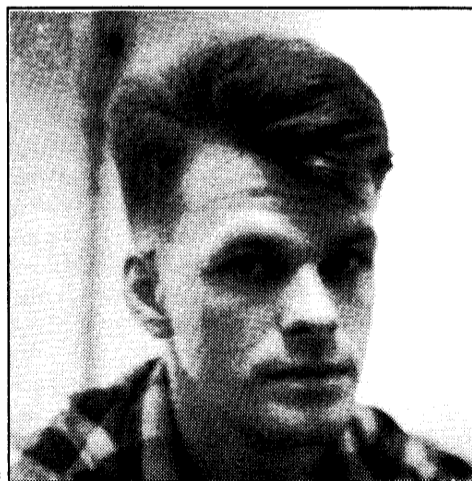
In the meantime, workers at United have indicated their dissatisfaction with the company in numerous ways. Hundreds of workers at the San Francisco Airport Maintenance Operations Base were so upset that they became sick and stayed home on Nov. 1, the second anniversary of the contract expiration.

The union has also urged its members to "work safe." In some cases—to make sure the aircraft parts are extremely safe—workers inspect them not only once, but twice, and even three times. In other cases, faulty company equipment is being taken out of service by alert workers interested in maintaining an acceptable level of safety.

With the busiest travel season of the year occurring between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and with the expansion plans of United to international airports in full swing, the workers have the possibility to exert tremendous leverage against the United Airlines management. ■

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

Erik Larsen wins reduced sentence



By JEFF MACKLER

Handcuffed but unbowed, former Marine Corps reservist and antiwar fighter Erik Larsen saluted his parents, friends, and supporters with the familiar peace sign, as Camp Le Jeune, N.C., military authorities led him off to begin serving a jail sentence for opposing the genocidal Gulf War.

Last month, a six-member Marine Corps panel of Gulf War veterans reduced the term of Larsen's confinement to the Camp Le Jeune brig to six months. A pre-trial agreement had previously limited Larsen's incarceration to eight months. Standard "good behavior" time is expected to further reduce Larsen's term by an additional month.

Larsen will receive a "dishonorable discharge" for intentionally missing a troop movement and for his 32-day absence without leave (AWOL).

Larsen was originally threatened with the death penalty for "desertion in time of war." But widespread public support, the unceasing dedication of his family, and the capacity of attorney Rivkin to expose the stream of lies and patriotic hyperbole

launched by the Marine Corps, resulted in the step by step dropping of charges and threats as Larsen's case proceeded.

In the face of threats to sentence Larsen to death, then life imprisonment, then a seven-year term in the military brig, the pre-court martial agreement reached between Larsen and Marine Corps representative Major General Vermilyea represented a stunning victory.

Larsen's sojourn has ended for the moment, although his attorney, military specialist Robert Rivkin, told Socialist Action that appeals are in progress at three different levels of the military "justice" and federal court system.

One appeal is in response to the denial of conscientious objector status for Larsen. Another refers to the introduction into the sentencing hearing of a videotape in which an Army captain stated that Larsen was "an embarrassment to the military."

The judge at the hearing ruled that the panel should "ignore" the political contents of the videotape. But Rivkin charges that the judge's ruling was insufficient. The video was introduced, he explains, "to inflame and prejudice the panel against Erik Larsen for having exercised his first amendment rights."

None of Larsen's appeals are expected to be concluded before the end of his sentence is served. Rivkin noted, however, that success in either effort may result in a further reduction of the "dishonorable discharge" part of his sentence.

Erik Larsen, and his friend and fellow Marine Corps resister Tahan Jones, were the nation's leading Marine Corps antiwar fighters. Their courageous stand was an inspiration to the hundred of thousands who mobilized against the Gulf War.

Their continuing defense is our elementary obligation. Jones's trial is expected to begin in early December. ■

Anti-abortion zealots get the heave-ho in Boston & Rhode Island

By ALEXEI FOLGER

BOSTON—On Nov. 2, some 2500 pro-choice activists turned out to defend Boston-area women's health clinics from a planned attack by the notorious anti-abortion group, Operation Rescue (OR).

For the first time, leaders of Operation Rescue had announced publicly—and well in advance—their intention to attack unnamed clinics in Boston and nearby Brookline. But despite the publicity, they were outmobilized and set back by the pro-choice movement.

Two weeks before the planned event, a Massachusetts Superior Court judge made permanent an injunction ordering Operation Rescue to cease blocking the clinics. OR responded by organizing for what they projected as possibly the largest clinic attack in the area's history.

By Nov 1, the day before the attack, unprecedented advance reports of Operation Rescue's plans were on the front pages of both of Boston's major dailies and at the top of most local television news reports.

In response to all of this, the Boston chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and other local pro-choice groups mobilized activists to defend all four of the most commonly targeted clinics. By the time OR scouts arrived on the scene, they quickly realized that they had been completely

overmatched, and that there was no clinic where they could hope to challenge pro-choice forces.

Pro-choice supporters stayed at the clinics for several hours to ensure that there would be no attack; and in the absence of any anti-abortion protesters, a feisty celebratory spirit prevailed, with activists chanting and cheering at supportive motorists and passers-by.

Slightly more than 100 OR members were arrested at a clinic outside of Cranston, R.I., later that morning, but even they had been met by some 800 pro-choice activists (many of whom had traveled there from Boston), and were unable to shut down the clinic.

That afternoon, Boston NOW held a press conference with nearly 100 activists in attendance to discuss the important pro-choice victory. Ellen Convisser, president of Massachusetts NOW, emphasized that OR had intended to kick off a national campaign in Boston and that activists here had set a precedent for the pro-choice movement in the rest of the country by successfully running OR out of the state.

Contrasting the situation to the massive clinic attacks that took place during the summer in Wichita, Kan., Convisser said: "Operation Rescue was going to bring the flame of Wichita to Boston. At that point, the room erupted in hisses, and she continued, "I think I just heard that flame go out. They didn't bring their flame here, and they certainly didn't bring it to Cranston."

...Economy

(continued from page 1)

\$1.3 trillion in new debts. Under a profit squeeze, many corporations are compelled to sell off their assets simply to pay the interest on their loans.

In the 1950s, companies invested \$3 billion in new manufacturing plants and equipment for every \$1 billion they paid out in interest. By the 1980s, the pattern was reversed. They paid out \$1.6 billion in interest for every \$1 billion put into plants and equipment.

Such behavior has been encouraged by the government's tax policies that allow the corporations to deduct their interest payments. This tax write-off for capitalists costs the government nearly \$100 billion each year.

Thus, while factories, schools, and whole cities fall into decay—and while millions of people enter the ranks of the unemployed and the homeless—the rich are getting much richer. The richest 2.5 million Americans now have almost as much income as the bottom 100 million, and the percent of the country's wealth that they own is even higher.

Between 1980 and 1989, the salaries of Americans earning over \$1 million increased an average of 2184 percent. The salaries of those earning \$200,000 to \$1 million increased 695 percent. But the combined wages of people earning less than \$50,000 a year increased only 2 percent (adjusted for inflation).

For large numbers of working people, living standards were already falling before



William Viggiano

the recession began. Now they are worried about paying off their mortgages, car payments, and credit card debts while they still have any money in hand. There is little left over for new consumer items.

In previous recessions, the government stimulated the economy by cutting taxes or increasing spending. But this time, Washington is stymied by a budget deficit that is already projected to reach a near-record 5.8 percent of the Gross National Product. More government borrowing would balloon the national debt and could trigger a rapid rise in inflation.

Bush sidesteps the issue

Bush has done his best to sidestep the issue of the economy. Any major decisions on the economy, the president says, will be deferred at least until his State of the Union address in late January (when his re-election campaign gets underway).

In the meantime, the Democrats are circling around Bush's leaky ship like sharks who have tasted blood. At the national AFL-CIO convention last month, delegates were greeted by no less than six Democratic Party candidates for president, who each did his utmost to speak to "labor issues." But the Democrats could offer few economic proposals other than the call for tax cuts—which is little more than an election-time stunt.

And how would a tax cut (designed mainly to appeal to middle-income voters) be paid for? Some Democrats have suggested financing it by raising taxes on the wealthy. But such a step is "impractical," retorts Senate Finance Chairman Lloyd Bentsen (D-Texas). Instead, he proposes a measly 5 percent cut in the \$240 billion military budget.

Much more must be done. The entire military budget should be abolished in order to fulfill our social needs; a massive public works project is needed to rebuild our towns and cities, and give people jobs at union wages.

To solve unemployment, the workweek should be cut from 40 to 30 hours with no cut in pay.

When employers want to close plants their books should be open to inspection

"...while factories, schools, and whole cities fall into decay—and while millions of people enter the ranks of the unemployed and the homeless—the rich are getting much richer."

by the trade unions.

The last decade has witnessed the largest transfer of wealth in history from working people to the capitalist class. This process must be reversed. Working people produce all the wealth; they should also own and control it.

To make these necessary changes, workers need a political movement that's devoted to their interests. We need a labor party.

Life is getting hellish for workers and poor in Detroit

By KEVIN FITZPATRICK

DETROIT—In January 1991, John Engler took office as governor of Michigan. He won a close election largely due to abstention by Black voters disenchanted with the already conservative policies of Democratic governor James Blanchard.

Engler embarked on a mission to attack the poor and cut the so-called social safety net right from under the feet of the unemployed workers. This was done in the name of "cutting the budget deficit" and "lowering taxes."

All this reached a crucial point on Oct. 1, when the complete ending of General Assistance went into effect. General Assistance is the name in Michigan of the welfare program for single, supposedly "able-bodied" adults. This meant that 90,000 people were immediately without any means of support.

And this was merely the spearpoint of the attack. The Emergency Needs Program, a stopgap measure, was eliminated. Aid to Families with Dependent Children was cut back. Medical assistance was cut back, at the same time no provision was made for any of those on General Assistance to shift to programs for the disabled—where many really belonged in the first place.

As a final touch, Engler proposed that physicians treating Medicaid patients be made immune from malpractice suits—to lower Medicaid costs!

Engler also cut the budget allocation for institutions such as the Detroit Institute of the Arts (which he demagogically denounced as "elitist") and the Detroit Science Center, leading to the latter's closing. Both institutions are, in fact, known for offering working people and their school-age children a chance at a broader vision of life.

And, with deliberate timing, Engler completely eliminated—while Anita Hill was being attacked by his fellow Republicans—the Michigan Office of Women in Work, which was the agency that most directly assisted women in dealing with sexual harassment.

All these steps and others have taken the already large homeless population in Detroit (and other cities in Michigan) and

made it massive.

Recent weeks have seen a variety of militant actions aimed at opening up public housing. This is particularly appropriate in Detroit, where the mismanagement and pro-business politics of Mayor Coleman Young, a leading Black Democrat, have resulted in a 40 percent vacancy rate!

Faced with these actions, Young, Engler, and HUD secretary Jack Kemp have engaged in a series of promises and half-measures—coupled with large-scale police action against protesters.

All I want for Christmas...

Ebenezer Scrooge came to Midway Airlines last month. On Nov. 14, with no warning, Midway's 4300 employees were told to clean out their lockers because the company was shutting down.

Midway shifted the blame to Northwest Airlines, which had reneged on a scheme to buy them out. Court action is threatened.

A legal settlement might provide a golden parachute for the Midway bosses. But it will do little to help the workers. They'll have to search hard to find work in the recession-shocked airline industry. And most of them have already lost their health insurance.

"I'm a single parent with a 13-year-old boy," flight attendant Judy Carlson told reporters as she arrived at Chicago's Midway Airport on the airline's last flight from Los Angeles. "You tell him why he can't get braces for a Christmas present this year."

On Nov. 15, about 100 Midway workers carried signs as they gathered outside the airport terminal. One sign read: "All I want for Christmas is a job."—M.S.

In Memoriam

Ann Snipper and Henry Snipper, two long-standing fighters for socialism, recently passed away. Ann Snipper died of cancer on Oct. 3 in Los Angeles. Her brother, Henry, died on Oct. 25 in Oakland, Calif. Next month's *Socialist Action* will contain tributes to these two lifetime fighters.

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Dialectics: the method of logic which understands ever-changing reality

By CLIFF CONNER

This is the fourth in a series of articles on dialectical materialism—the philosophical foundation of Marxism. The articles are based on classes given by Cliff Conner at a Socialist Action national educational conference in August 1989. In the previous articles, the author traced the history of philosophy from the time of the ancient Greeks, contrasting the outlook of materialism to that of idealism.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the age of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way ..."

The opening lines of Charles Dickens' great novel of the French Revolution, "A Tale of Two Cities," captures the highly contradictory nature of those events. Some people might find this unsettling: "Which one was it? Was it the best of times or the worst of times? You can't have it both ways!"

But that's just the point: To understand the French Revolution you must have it both ways. And it's not simply a matter of saying that it was the best of times for some people and the worst of times for others. Not at all! For the aristocrat, it was the best of times because he was winning his political independence from the monarchy, but the worst of times because he was losing his dominant social position. For the *sansculottes* [the plebian supporters of the radicals] it was the best of times because they were struggling against their oppressors and winning, but the worst of times because they were being subordinated to the domination of a new ruling class, the bourgeoisie.

For the petty-bourgeois revolutionary leaders like Robespierre, it was the best of times because they were turning the world upside down, but the worst of times because they couldn't sustain the radical revolution they had initiated.

So if Dickens seemed to be contradicting himself, the paradoxes did not originate with him; the contradictions were in the material reality of the revolutionary events themselves. It is the nature of revolutions to be contradictory.

Dialectical logic

As Marxists, we are interested in understanding the processes of social revolution. To do so, it is necessary to utilize a form of logic that can take contradictory phenomena into account. And that is the topic of this article: dialectical logic, the logic of revolutionary change.

In previous articles, we talked about materialism and noted that bourgeois philosophy had culminated in the development of mechanical materialism. "Give me matter and motion," Descartes exclaimed, "and I will construct the universe."

As a general statement, there is nothing to object to here; the universe can be thought of as essentially matter in motion. The problem with mechanical materialism lies in the narrowness of its conceptions of both matter and motion. It considered matter to be made up of tiny little inert bits of material; in the words of Isaac Newton: "solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, moveable particles."

Motion was considered to be nothing more than displacement—that is, a change of location from one position to another. The mechanical materialists believed that all phenomena could in principle be explained in terms of this kind of matter in this kind of motion. Another way of saying the same thing is that everything from the stars above to the human body func-



Hegel: "Everything that exists is changing into something else."

"Hegel found that the old way of thinking based on Aristotle's logic was inadequate for comprehending a changing reality, so he devised a new system of logic that he called dialectics."

tions in the same way that machines do.

In the 17th century, this was a revolutionary and highly progressive way of thinking. The narrowness of its conceptions, however, left it vulnerable to criticism. The machine analogy requires that all motion be initiated by an impulse; that is, by the physical contact of two bodies. Such a concept makes it very difficult to explain why heavy bodies fall to the earth and why magnets make iron move from a distance.

Moreover, using the machine as a model of the universe and everything in it produced a static picture of reality. The mechanical materialists recognized the existence of motion, of course, but it was the repetitive motion of a machine that simply moves things around from place to place. What is missing, above all, is any explanation of development. Many processes of change cannot be reduced to displacement.

How does fire turn wood into charcoal? How does water harden into ice in cold weather? How does gunpowder explode? And, most importantly, how do living things reproduce and grow?

From Heraclitus to Hegel

The German philosopher George Hegel looked at the world and saw continuous change. Like all philosophers, Hegel pondered the question "What is? What is it that exists?" This had always been understood as the question of being, but in Hegel's reformulation it was a question of becoming.

According to this way of looking at things, nothing exists in a static sense;

everything that exists is changing into something else. Hegel found that the old way of thinking based on Aristotle's logic was inadequate for comprehending a changing reality, so he devised a new system of logic that he called "dialectics."

Hegel found a precedent for his dialectical outlook among the first philosophers—among the Ionian Greeks who we talked about in preceding articles. There was Heraclitus, who held that the universe is fire. But what qualified Heraclitus as the discoverer of dialectical logic was his statement that "everything is in flux." Everything is changing. Nothing is standing still; nothing is staying the same; everything is in the process of becoming.

Heraclitus illustrated his contention with a famous example: "You can never step in the same river twice." Now, you could go step in the Mississippi River today and probably go back 10 years later and step in the Mississippi River again. But Heraclitus would argue that if you did, you would not be stepping in the same river twice. The name of the river would have stayed the same, but the river itself would have changed—all the old water would be gone and replaced by an entirely new quantity of water.

Even if you put your foot in, pull it out, and stick it right back in again—even then you have not stepped in the same river twice, because it is continuously flowing.

Aristotle's "formal" logic

So dialectics began with Heraclitus, but his great insight into the ever-changing nature of reality remained a philosophical

curiosity for more than 2000 years until Hegel developed it into a system challenging Aristotle's logic.

Aristotle attempted to formulate the laws of thinking. He attempted to reduce the complexities of human reason to a set of formulas, and what he came up with is known as formal logic.

Aristotle did a brilliant job of it. The laws of formal logic that he derived were valid and they still retain their validity today. But they are only valid up to a point—they are not sufficient for comprehending reality insofar as it is in flux—and as Heraclitus said, everything is in flux. Dialectical logic does not invalidate formal logic, but assigns it to a limited sphere of applicability.

The central principle upon which formal logic is built can be expressed in a simple formula that at first glance appears to be a self-evident truth: "A=A."

This is the law of identity that says that every individual thing is identical to itself. I am identical to myself. You are yourself. A building is identical to itself.

Beginning with this law of identity, you can derive all of formal logic. One important corollary is the law of the excluded middle. That is, if "A equals B" is a true statement, then "A is not equal to B" must be a false statement. A is either identical to B or it is not. It is one or the other; there is no middle ground.

It follows from this that when we sort things into categories, we can do so precisely. We can sort fruit into separate baskets of apples, oranges, bananas, and so forth, because an apple equals an apple, but an apple does not equal an orange or a banana.

In formal logic, then, the lines dividing categories are sharp and distinct and allow for no ambiguity.

The law of identity and the law of the excluded middle are so intuitively appealing that it is no wonder that they went virtually unchallenged for more than 2000 years. But wait! What about Heraclitus's point? Is the Mississippi River identical to itself or not?

Well, if you specify a given instant of time you might say, "The Mississippi River at exactly midnight last night was identical to the Mississippi River at exactly midnight last night," but that is a rather trivial case and it begs the question of whether there is such a thing as an amount of time so small that all motion is frozen within it.

But not everything flows like a river; some things are solid, like the chair you're sitting on, for example. Nevertheless, if you were to examine its microscopic structure you would find that it, too, is continuously changing.

For all practical purposes, it might be acceptable to apply the law of identity to the chair—the chair is identical to itself. Lock the chair up in a storeroom and go back next year and it will probably still be, for all practical purposes, the same chair.

So the law of identity can be useful and can be considered provisionally valid when applied to things that change relatively slowly or over relatively short time spans. But it is important to remember that in no case is it ever absolutely true.

This law of non-identity is the foundation of dialectics, but it is a very shaky foundation. You can't build a solid, eternal, unchanging structure on it. You can find recipe books that provide all the rules for using formal logic, but dialectical logic does not lend itself to that. It is built on the explicitly self-contradictory basis of the law of non-identity.

Why would anybody want to build a system of logic on a self-contradictory axiom? The point is that dialectics is not only a system of logic; that is to say: dialectics is not only a depiction of the way human beings think about things. When Heraclitus said "Everything is in flux," he was talking about the way things really exist in the material world.

This was the point Engels made in his "Dialectics of Nature"—that Hegel's laws of dialectics describe the processes of change and development as they really occur at all levels of the natural world—subatomic as well as the intergalactic

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...Dialectics

(continued from previous page)

level—at the physical, the biological, the psychological, and social levels.

New developments in science

In his "Dialectics of Nature," Engels cited the most up-to-date scientific research available to him. Since his death, of course, there has been what some have called "permanent revolution" in science. In fact, scientific developments after Engels have continued to support his contention that nature is dialectical.

Dialectical logic is the logic of changing phenomena; the logic of motion. It has been said that formal logic is to dialectical logic as a still photo is to a motion picture. The metaphor is an appropriate one. The roots of contradiction lie in change, or motion, itself.

I mentioned earlier that organic development—the growth of living things—is a more complex form of motion than mere displacement of a solid body from one place to another. A mechanical materialist might argue that even organic development can be thought of, in the final analysis, as a composite of very many small particles moving around from place to place.

But even the simplest form of motion—movement from point A to point B—embodies contradiction. To update Engels' "Dialectics of Nature," we could point to the findings of quantum mechanics that show that, on the subatomic level, particles move from place to place in a very complex way. The laws of classical mechanics cannot describe the motion of electrons and neutrons and the like. These particles don't have trajectories in the classical sense.

And if you ask: "Is the electron at point A or is it not?" the answer can't satisfy the requirements of formal logic. You can't answer that question with a definite "yes" or "no;" the best you can do is give a statistical estimate of the probability of the electron's location.

And it's not just a question of the limitations of measurement, either. The electron is and is not at point A. In other words, the electron violates the law of the excluded middle. Every subatomic particle in the universe is continuously violating the law of the excluded middle.

Physicists have also finally resolved the age-old dispute over whether light is a continuous wave or made up of discrete particles. The answer is: Both!

Furthermore, it was discovered that all of the subatomic entities are also characterized by this wave-particle duality. How can anything be both continuous and discrete at the same time? This is so contradictory that it's almost impossible to conceive of what it means. We find, therefore, a profound violation of the law of the excluded middle built into the very fabric of the material world.

Quantum mechanics, then, has given a new dimension to Heraclitus's statement that everything is in flux. Motion is inseparable from matter; all matter is in a perpetual process of change. In other words, matter itself is inherently contradictory: every object is both one thing and becoming something else at the same time.

Zeno's paradoxes

The contradictions of motion were not unknown to the early Greeks. In the 5th century B.C., Zeno of Elea formulated a number of paradoxes of motion. He illustrated one with a story about a race between Achilles and a tortoise. Achilles is much faster than the tortoise, so he gives him a 100-yard head start. They take off and after Achilles has run 100 yards, the tortoise, of course, is still in the lead, because he has run a short distance while Achilles covered the 100 yards. So let's say that the tortoise is now at point X, and they're both still running. By the time Achilles gets to point X, the tortoise has moved ahead to point Y. Then, by the time Achilles reaches point Y, the tortoise has moved on again. You can repeat this an infinite number of times, so it would seem that Achilles can never catch up to the tortoise.



Frederick Engels: His "Dialectics of Nature" used Hegel's method.

In the real world, of course, Achilles would catch up to the tortoise and blow right by him. But if you apply certain very well established rules of arithmetic to this problem, you find that Achilles never catches up.

These rules of arithmetic are based in formal logic. Zeno showed through his paradoxes that formal logic and the material world are not in agreement. So he and his followers decided to keep the logic and discard the material world. They adopted the idealist view that the material world is only an illusion.

The other conclusion that could be drawn from Zeno's paradoxes is that if mathematics doesn't adequately describe the real world, the fault must be with the mathematics. The problem, then, would be to develop new mathematical techniques that would be able to describe motion.

Zeno's paradoxes involved problems having to do with the concept of infinity, and especially with infinitely small times and distances, or "infinitesimals." To describe most forms of motion, it was necessary to develop a mathematics of infinitesimals, and that was accomplished in the 17th century by two people, independently—Newton and Leibniz. They formulated the branch of mathematics we call calculus. But this calculus proved to be very troubling to philosophically minded people who noticed that, although arithmetic seemed to be based on formal logic, calculus seemed not to be.

The best-known critique of the logical foundations of calculus was that of the idealist philosopher George Berkeley. Berkeley showed that calculus manipulated infinitesimal quantities in an ambiguous way, treating them sometimes as if they were very small but real quantities, and other times as if they were zero. He called them "ghosts of departed quantities," and demanded that the mathematicians decide whether they are something or nothing. According to the law of the excluded middle, these infinitesimals cannot be both something and nothing at the same time.

Nevertheless, mathematicians, scientists and engineers continued to use the calculus to great advantage. Although it wasn't formally logical, it could very accurately describe physical processes involving matter in motion.

Mathematicians and philosophers put a great deal of effort into trying to put mathematics on a solid, rigorous formal logical

foundation. They started with arithmetic, which they thought would provide the basis for all the rest of mathematics.

Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead believed they had accomplished this feat with their "Principia Mathematica" in 1913. But in the 1930s, Kurt Godel proved that they had not succeeded and showed, in effect, that not even arithmetic, let alone calculus, can be reduced to formal-logical rules. Or, to put it another way, even arithmetic cannot be considered to be entirely free of contradictions.

The logic of computers

What I have been trying to show here is that the limitations of formal logic can be demonstrated even in those fields of science usually considered most exact and most immune to contradiction. If formal logic is inadequate as a basis for physics and mathematics, how much less adequate it is for the biological, psychological, and social sciences.

But by saying formal logic is inadequate, I don't intend to give the impression that I mean it is obsolete or useless. Not by a long shot.

For formal logic, the 20th century has been the best of times and the worst of times. George Novack, in his book "The Logic of Marxism," makes the point that formal logic not only still has an important role to play in human thinking, but is still capable of further development.

Novack wrote that in 1942, and he couldn't have been more prophetic if he had seen the future in a crystal ball. Within a few years, one of the great technological revolutions in human history began to unfold—and it was based precisely on the development of formal logic. I am speaking of the formal logic machine, better known as the digital computer.

The basis of computer logic is purely formal. To a computer, "A equals A." If it tries to contemplate "A is not equal to A," it generally goes into an endless loop. The fundamental unit of computer logic is the "bit" of binary information, which is capable of only two mutually exclusive states. In binary terms, it must be either zero or one. It has been described as a sort of tiny switch that can be turned off or on. It must always be one or the other; it can't be halfway in between. In other words, it obeys the law of the excluded middle.

There are other kinds of computers, but

the computers that we are familiar with today are binary digital computers, and that makes them formal-logic machines. As powerful as they are, their formal-logic limitations are evident. That is most clearly indicated by work carried out in the field known as "AI"—artificial intelligence.

Contradictions confuse computers

Just a few years ago, some artificial intelligence researchers believed they were on the verge of a breakthrough that would produce computers capable of genuine thinking; capable of carrying out human mental tasks better than we could do ourselves. This has long been a major theme of science fiction, the best known example probably being HAL in the film "2001."

Today, that optimism has been considerably muted. It has proven very tricky to construct a machine that can routinely accept the proposition that "A is not equal to A"—that is, a machine that can handle contradiction.

The first attempts to deal with this problem were strictly mechanical. If the machine were confronted with a contradiction, rather than going into an endless loop its program would instruct it to stop and move to a second level, wherein it might reexamine the same problem from another angle. If it runs into a contradiction on the second level, the program would "pop up" to a third level, and so on.

The ability of such a machine to resolve contradictions is limited to the number of levels built into its program. It is still, in principle, a formal-logic machine.

Other attempts have been made in a different direction. Rather than increasing the raw power of the standard program, the aim is to mimic human thought processes. The most interesting attempt so far has been the development of "fuzzy logic."

An article in the *New York Times* in 1989 reported: "The idea behind fuzzy logic is to allow computers to behave more like people. And people, unlike computers, are not precise." The point is to give computers the "ability to handle ambiguity." The main advocate of fuzzy logic says: "We have to come to terms with the pervasive imprecision of the real world."

The concept of fuzzy logic illustrates the key difference between human logic and digital computer logic. The computer organizes its information into absolute categories with rigid boundary lines; the human mind is capable of processing a great deal of contradictory information without breaking down. It is somewhat ironic that the human mind's capacity for fuzzy thinking is its greatest asset.

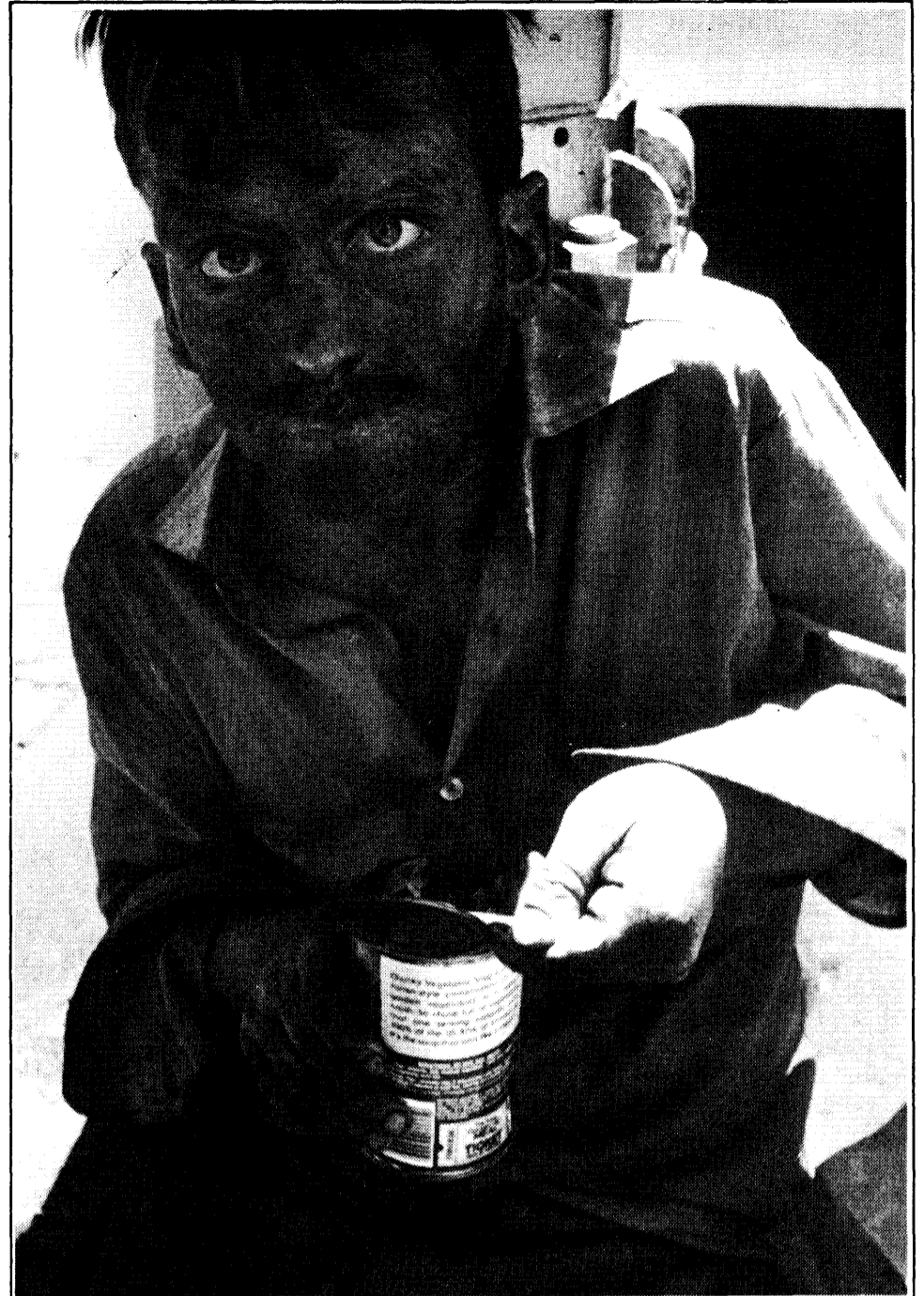
Let me hasten to assure you that I'm not recommending fuzzy thinking as a general method. But it is important to guard against overly formalistic thinking, especially in politics. Those who demand absolutely unambiguous political situations before they will take action will wind up never taking action. That is a characteristic of sectarians, and it illustrates the link between formal logic and sectarian politics.

The experience of the past decade or so has shown that no matter how powerful a computer is, no matter how fast it can crunch numbers, there are certain kinds of problems that humans can handle better. The difference is that humans are capable of dialectical logic.

Computers can be programmed to play a pretty good game of chess. But when someone once compared political strategy to a game of chess, Trotsky pointed out the weakness of the analogy. In chess the rules always remain the same and the pieces maintain stable identities, whereas in political struggles the strength of contending forces varies and the rules change continuously.

A computer does well in chess because its strongest virtue is its consistency. But in a rapidly changing political situation, absolute consistency can be too much of a good thing. I think that is what Emerson must have meant when he said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."

(To be continued next month.)



Abraham Menashe

By JOSEPH RYAN

Many of them marched off to fight for their country. Others enlisted to improve their job skills. Today, hundreds of thousands of them are homeless.

A report just released by the National Coalition for the Homeless, titled "Heroes Today, Homeless Tomorrow: Homelessness Among Veterans in the United States," presents a devastating account of

veterans, are Vietnam-era veterans. But increasingly, those who joined the armed forces after the Vietnam War are becoming a sizeable proportion of the homeless population ... The two largest groups of homeless veterans are those who served in Vietnam, and, increasingly, men and women who have served in peacetime since then."

In general, Vietnam-era veterans constitute roughly 40-60 percent of the homeless

Heroes yesterday, homeless today: Hundreds of thousands of American vets are now homeless

how the ranks of homeless veterans has grown over the last 20 years.

The report states: "The federal government estimates that between 150,000 and 250,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and that possibly twice that many experience homelessness over the course of a year. The National Coalition believes the number is higher than that."

The report pulls no punches as it presents statistics that show how veterans have become victims of the ruling class's attacks on the living standards of American workers.

"The increase of homelessness among veterans can be traced to the same cause as homelessness in general: Veterans become homeless for the same reason that other Americans [over 3 million] become homeless—they can't afford to pay their rent."

One third of all homeless men in the United States served in the armed forces. Veterans from every peacetime era and war since and including World War II are represented in the homeless population. Even a handful of World War I veterans, the report states, have been made homeless in the last few years.

During the course of their survey the Coalition discovered that a number of veterans of the Gulf War have become homeless. The coalition received reports of homeless Gulf War veterans in Boston, West Virginia, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. One reservist's family lost their apartment while he was in Saudi Arabia and are now homeless.

The report states: "Hundreds of veterans who paraded in cities across the United States in celebration of the U.S. victory in the Persian Gulf War ended up marching right into the ranks of the homeless."

"The single largest group of homeless

Joseph Ryan is a Vietnam vet who served in the U.S. Navy from 1962 to 1966.

"The VA is currently spending millions of dollars in ways which increase the likelihood that a veteran and his or her family will become homeless..."

veteran population, with post-Vietnam-era veterans constituting 20-40 percent.

Some of the report's facts are shocking: "It has been alleged that more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since the war than died during the fighting. ... Even using the most conservative estimates of the homeless population, it is clear that more Vietnam veterans are homeless today than died during the entire Vietnam War."

A survey conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that 26 percent of the homeless population are veterans. Other studies indicate that approximately 10 percent of homeless veterans are homeless with their families.

The Coalition's report says that federal programs serve only a fraction of those in need, stating that the "performance of the Dept. of Veteran Affairs (VA) in assisting homeless vets has been poor."

"In fact," says the report, "many homeless veterans no longer try to use VA services because of verbal abuse, insensitivity and inflexibility on the part of VA. ... Many VA hospitals regularly release veterans who have completed residential treatment programs to the streets or shelters."

While the government is currently on a campaign to close VA hospitals, alleging that they are underutilized, thousands of vets with substance abuse problems and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are forced to wait for weeks or even months for a bed in a VA residential treatment program.

"Funding for programs specifically targeted to homeless veterans at the VA constitutes only one-tenth of one percent of the VA's total budget. Funding for job training programs for homeless veterans through the Dept. of Labor is \$1.9 million annually for the entire country. The program is only able to serve approximately 5800 of the approximately 150,000 to 250,000 homeless veterans."

Furthermore: "The VA is currently spending millions of dollars in ways which increase the likelihood that a veteran and his or her family will become homeless. When veterans default on mortgages backed by the VA through the Home Loan Guaranty Program, the VA usually forecloses on the property instead of working with the veteran to restructure their payments."

Foreclosures on veterans' homes increased from 12,490 to 40,336 between 1981 and 1989.

As in the homeless population in general, minorities are over-represented in the ranks of homeless vets. A Washington, D.C., survey found that Black vets represented 86.6 percent of the local homeless vet population versus 69.7 percent of the non-vet homeless population.

The majority of these homeless veterans have lost their jobs recently and are unemployed or working only sporadically.

Complicating the situation further are the special problems of illness, stress, and substance abuse that afflict many veterans.

The Coalition's recommendations include the need for more adequate funding

and more involvement by the VA in finding housing for displaced vets.

One of the recommendations the report makes is "the VA should immediately stop spending taxpayers' money to foreclose on veterans and their families who have defaulted on their mortgages. These funds could be better spent on helping veterans who are currently homeless get off the streets."

The Homeless Coalition's report correctly points to the economic situation as the main cause of homelessness in general, and cites some powerful statistics that demonstrate why millions of working people and veterans, in particular, now find themselves on the street.

Over the last 20 years, the report states, "shelter poor" households have increased by 42 percent. "Shelter poor" are those households that don't have enough money left over after paying rent for other necessities. There are nearly 27 million households—one-third of all households—in this category.

The lack of affordable housing, unemployment and low-wage jobs have all contributed to pushing vets into the homeless population—the fastest growing population today in America.

The facts contained in the Coalition's report are a ringing indictment of an economic system that puts profits first and people last.

America's veterans marched off to wars thinking they were fighting for "democracy," in reality they were fighting for the right of America's capitalists to make profits.

The reward for veterans is much less than they expected or deserved. Allured by "calls to patriotism" and the promise of acquiring job skills for the labor market, thousands of men and women who served in the armed forces have been abandoned to the vicissitudes of the "free market" and the street.

50 years ago Trotskyists were put on trial by Roosevelt gov't

Fifty years ago, on Dec. 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor, 17 men and one woman were sentenced to terms in the federal penitentiary. They were convicted of conspiring to "advise, counsel, urge," and of distributing "written and printed material to cause insubordination in the armed forces" and of advocating "the duty, the necessity, desirability, and propriety of overthrowing the government by force and violence."

They hadn't assassinated anyone or robbed or swindled people. Such crimes—if of sufficient magnitude—often go unpunished. No, these 18 revolutionary socialists, Trotskyists, had committed even greater crimes:

1) They advocated the replacement of the decaying, humanity-destroying capitalist system by a workers and farmers government, by socialism;

2) They opposed imperialist war. This brought them into conflict with the federal government and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

3) They were very active in building the power of the trade-union movement.

Under Trotskyist leadership, Teamsters Local 544 in Minneapolis—after a series of battles, including the nationally famous 1934 general strike—grew from 200 to 6500 members and organized 200,000 over-the-road truckdrivers throughout the Midwest. The growing influence and prestige of these militant leaders earned the enmity of the bosses, of course, but also that of International Teamster president, Daniel Tobin.

Who were "The Eighteen?" James P. Cannon, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP); Grace Carlson, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate; Felix Morrow, editor of *The Militant*; Farrell Dobbs, SWP National Labor Secretary; and Albert Goldman, a labor attorney who had represented Leon Trotsky in Mexico City before the Dewey Commission's hearings into the Moscow Frame-up trials three years before Trotsky was assassinated in 1940.

All the other prisoners were activists and leaders in the union movement in Minneapolis. Among them were SWP members Vincent R. Dunne, Carl Skogland, Harry DeBoer, Max Goldman and Jake Cooper.

Why put them on trial?

Before 1934, the average wage of the Minneapolis truckdrivers was 18 cents an hour. By 1939, the average was 70 cents an hour (at that time, a living wage). From 1934 on there had been constant friction between Local 544's leadership and Tobin, who had red-baited the local leaders during the 1934 strikes.

Things came to a head in June 1941 when Tobin tried to appoint a dictator-receiver over the union who would have absolute powers, including the power to expel anyone.

At a Local 544 membership meeting on June 9, the 4000 members present voted almost unanimously to reject Tobin's scheme and to disaffiliate from the AFL and join the CIO. The CIO welcomed them.

Tobin, a personal friend of President Roosevelt and head of the Democratic Labor Committee in the 1940 presidential election, immediately wired Roosevelt for help. Roosevelt's secretary, Steve Early, told the press: "When I advised the president of Mr. Tobin's representations, he asked me immediately to have the government departments and agencies interested in this matter notified."

Within a few days after this pronouncement, FBI agents raided the SWP headquarters in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn., and carted off a carload of books, pamphlets, leaflets, and office records—including photographs of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, etc.

Only five days had elapsed since Local 544 had voted to disaffiliate. Why the haste?

The United States was poised to enter World War II. These anti-imperialist-war Trotskyists—although not yet a major obstacle—were in the way. So, put their leaders, especially their influential trade-union leaders, in prison! This would solve Tobin's problem and at the same time help the war effort. Thinking became a "crime."

The trial began on Oct. 27, in the Feder-



Minneapolis defendants on their way to prison on New Years Eve—Dec. 31, 1943.

al District Court in Minneapolis just six weeks before Pearl Harbor. Twenty-eight defendants faced the court.

One defendant was absent; Grant Dunne, union organizer, a shell-shocked and crippled World War I veteran, committed suicide a few days before the trial began.

The indictment contained two counts, each charging a conspiracy.

Count One was based on a statute enacted in 1861 which makes it a federal crime to commit overt acts against the government. This law was passed during the Civil

Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. All these publications could be found in reputable libraries and had been openly distributed and sold for decades.

The defense strategy

The defense took only four days. Cannon, in his pamphlet, "Defense Policy in the Minneapolis Trial," outlined the carefully worked-out courtroom strategy: "The prosecution was designed to outlaw the party and deprive it, perhaps for a long time, of the active services of its most

"...as I heard Mr. Anderson deliver his argument, my thoughts drifted far afield. What are we on trial for, I asked myself. Certain men wrote books many years ago and we are on trial because these men had ideas and wrote about them ... books that have been read by tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands. ... My mind wandered back into the Middle Ages, and I saw before me inquisitors, prosecutors ... with a heretic standing before them, and these inquisitors were stern and merciless. Lifting a finger of accusation, the prosecutor said "He does not believe our doctrine ... I accuse him of heresy."

A very peculiar conspiracy

On the question of conspiracy, Goldman said, "What kind of a conspiracy is it when we publish a weekly newspaper and a monthly magazine, when we ask people to come to our meetings, to listen to us, and to join our party? Our conspiracy is indeed peculiar; it is a conspiracy that attempts to get the vast majority of the people of the U.S. to become members of it. Political propagandists, yes, but don't call us conspirators. Tell the truth, Mr. Anderson, and say that our ideas are distasteful to you."

The trial concluded on Nov. 28. Five of the defendants were dismissed for lack of evidence. After two and a half days of deliberation, the jury acquitted all the defendants on the first charge and cleared five of all charges. Eighteen of the defendants were found guilty on the second count alone. But the jury recommended leniency. Twelve were given 16-month prison terms and six were given 12-month terms. All were released on bail.

A two-year fight to free the 18 was launched by the Civil Rights Defense Committee (CRDC), an organization of prominent liberals and labor leaders. More than 600 labor, civil liberties, and Black organizations backed the Minneapolis Case victims.

The "War For the Four Freedoms" had created an intolerant attitude towards dissenters in the United States. But the CRDC, assisted by the American Civil Liberties Union, persisted. It took the case to the "liberal" Supreme Court, a majority of whose members had been appointed by Roosevelt. Three times the court refused to hear the case, although basic constitutional rights were involved.

On New Years Eve—Dec. 31, 1943—the 18 entered federal penitentiaries. At the farewell banquet, Cannon said, "Our party didn't sell out, didn't lie. We told the truth. That is why we are being railroaded to prison."

Afterword: Jake Cooper, who was the youngest of the 18, died on Sept. 8, 1990. Jake, a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party, was expelled from the SWP by the clique around National Secretary Jack Barnes. Jake became a founding member of Socialist Action in 1983. Socialist Action lives proudly in the traditions of the Minneapolis defendants. ■



From left: Felix Morrow, Albert Goldman, and James P. Cannon.

War for use against the armed rebellion of the Confederacy.

The prosecution charged that the Union Defense Guard of Truckdrivers Local 544 had concealed arms and ammunition with which to overthrow the government by force and violence. The Union Defense Guards had been formed in September 1938 to defend the union's picket lines, headquarters, and members against threatened anti-labor violence from fascist gangs known as Silver Shirts.

But the trials proved that no arms or ammunition were concealed. This count was thrown out by the jury.

Count Two was based on a new law, the 1940 Alien Registration Act, popularly known as the Smith "Gag" Act. This law was the first since the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798 to make thinking and the expression of opinion a federal crime.

In his opening statement to the jury, Prosecutor Anderson explicitly declared that even if it could not be proven that the defendants had taken up arms against the government, they could nonetheless be found guilty.

The government took three weeks to present its case. The evidence against the defendants consisted only of certain statements alleged to have been made before witnesses—the majority of whom were on the payroll of Daniel Tobin.

Also introduced were over 150 exhibits, consisting of official documents and articles published by the SWP, together with many of the best known works of Marx,

experienced leaders. At the same time, it was obvious that the mass trial, properly handled on our part, could give us our first real opportunity to make the party and its principles known to wide circles of workers and to gain a sympathetic hearing from them."

"We decided to use to the fullest extent every legal protection, technicality, and resource available to us. ... On the other hand, we planned to conduct our defense in court not as a 'criminal' defense but as a propaganda offensive ... to popularize the principles of our movement."

And this was done through the testimony of the defendants, especially that of Cannon (to be found in the pamphlet "Socialism on Trial," published by Pathfinder Press) and the masterly application of the defense tactics by the defense lawyer, Albert Goldman, himself a defendant.

James P. Cannon was the chief witness for the defense. In his testimony he explained carefully what the socialist society of the future would look like, and that it could only come about if the majority of the people wanted it. He pointed out that violence would be initiated by the deposed capitalist minority. In that case, the new Workers and Farmers Government would take action against the rebels.

Question by the prosecution: "Well, how would you resist this uprising, this uprising against you?"

Cannon: "The same way Lincoln did in 1861."

Goldman, in his opening statement said:

Chechen-Ingush defeat Yeltsin's first attempt at crackdown

Der Spiegel

In the first clear test of its ability to take over the defense of the Soviet bureaucracy's essential interests, the Yeltsin regime revealed fundamental weaknesses. Its attempt to "restore order" in the small autonomous republic of Chechen-Ingushetia blew up in its face.

Of course, the Chechens and the Ingush have a combative tradition. During the Russian civil war, in which the Leninist national policy attracted them to the side of the Bolsheviks, they alone tied down a third of Denikin's counterrevolutionary army.

During the Second World War, these small Caucasus mountain peoples were expelled from their territories *en masse* by Stalin. In 1957, they were formally rehabilitated as a people. The Chechen-Ingush autonomous republic was reconstituted, although with less land, in the framework of the Russian Federation.

Nonetheless, these stubborn mountaineers, with their Islamic tradition, are few in number. There are about 611,000 Chechens and 134,000 Ingush. The total population of the autonomous republic is 1,227,000, of whom about 336,000 are Russians. It includes an area of about 19,000 square kilometers in the northern Caucasus.

A national movement of these mountain peoples took advantage of the disorganization of the Communist Party and the bureaucratic authorities after the failed neo-Stalinist coup in August to carry out a veritable armed uprising against the local CP. Its leader was the only Chechen general, now retired, Johar Dudaev, who was stationed in Estonia, which set the pattern for the mass national-democratic movements.

Although official scribes in the USSR are fond of recalling that Lenin said that the high point of the revolution of 1905 was in Latvia because armed insurgent units appeared there, none of the official writers have cared to speculate whether Chechen-Ingushetia might be in the vanguard of the revolution against the bureaucracy for the same reason. But many have deplored its example as pointing to a breakup of the Russian Federation similar to that of the current breakup of the USSR.

A wide spectrum of small nationalities are included in the Russian Federation, representing about 17 percent of its population and holding titular sovereignty over vast and valuable parts of its territory. *Pravda*, which has been trying more and more openly to get a knife into Yeltsin, ran a headline Nov. 12 on the Chechen-Ingush crisis that seemed to be savoring the Russian president's discomfiture: "The Soviet Union has been destroyed. Is it Russia's turn?"

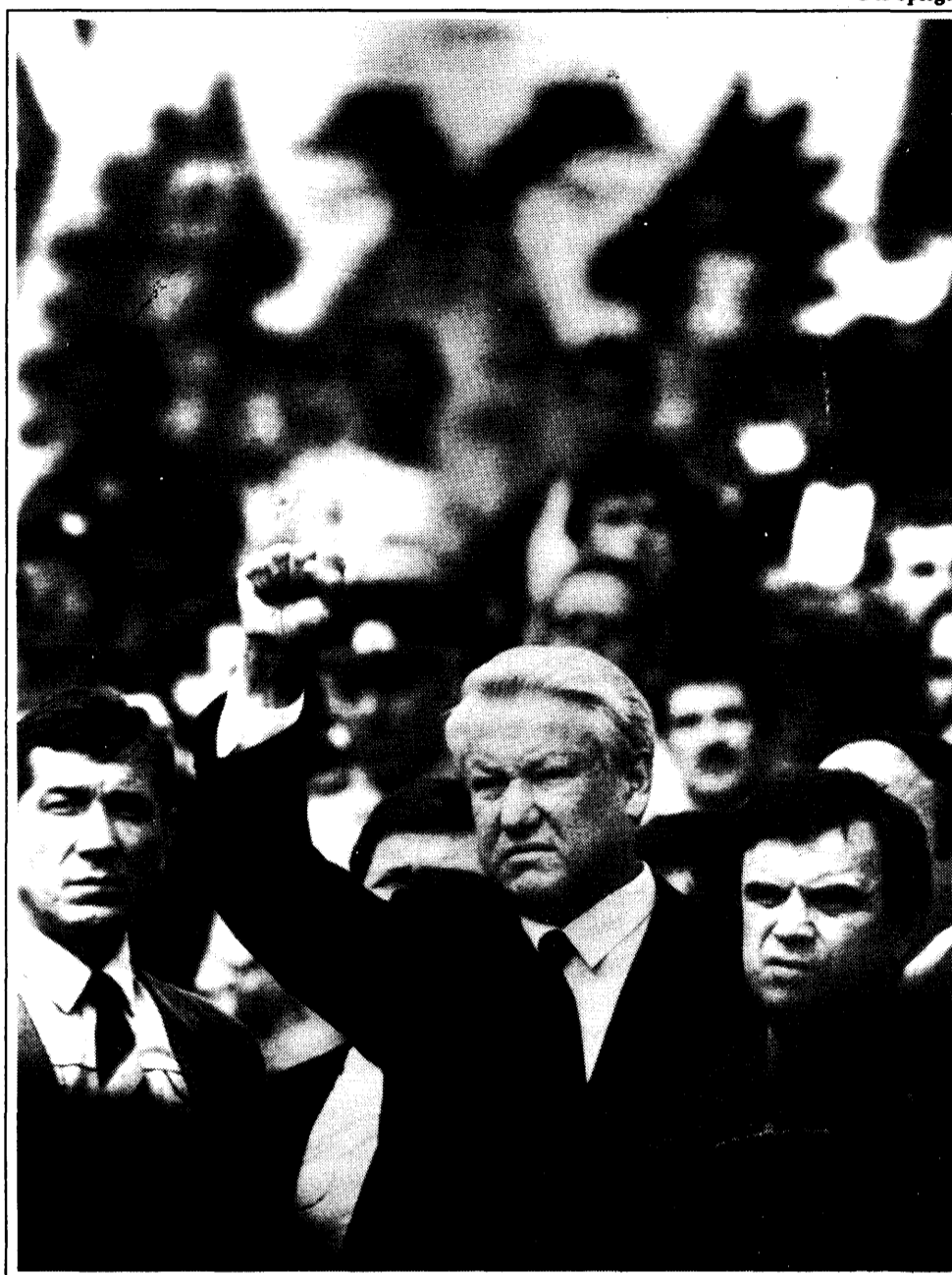
The Pan-National Congress

Like most of the governments that rule over peoples of Islamic tradition, who have been subjected to the worst national oppression under Stalinism, the Chechen-Ingush government was notoriously corrupt.

In the fall of 1989, about a year after the rise of the mass national movements in the Baltic, the Pan-National Congress of the Chechens (OKChN) was organized under Gen. Dudaev's leadership. (The smaller Ingush community has been much more passive.) It began quickly to put pressure on the old Stalinist leadership of the autonomous republic, which declared Chechen-Ingushetia a sovereign republic in November 1990.

The old leadership tried to block a vote for Yeltsin in the June 12, 1991, Russian Federation presidential elections. It failed. Some 70 to 80 percent of the population voted for the Russian leader. The conflict between the OKChN and the established government then escalated.

During the August coup, the local rulers backed the neo-Stalinist putschists. The Russian government appointed a Provisional Supreme Soviet, but a conflict continued between this body and the OKChN. On Oct. 5, forces under the command of the Executive of the Chechen organization seized the headquarters of the KGB in Grozny, the capital of the autonomous republic. At the same time, the OKChN Executive declared that it was



Yeltsin during August coup attempt. The "democrat" wanted to use an iron fist against the Islamic mountaineers of Chechen-Ingushetia.

dissolving the Provisional Supreme Soviet and assuming full powers.

On Oct. 8, the Russian Supreme Soviet adopted a resolution declaring that the Provisional Supreme Soviet remained the only legal government.

On Oct. 27, the OKChN held elections, and Dudaev was elected president. This was when Yeltsin showed his true colors.

On Nov. 2, the Russian Congress of People's Deputies declared the vote invalid. Five days later, Yeltsin signed a decree imposing emergency rule on the autonomous republic. At a press conference, his vice president, A. Rutskoi, announced that the measure had been made necessary by Dudaev's violations of legality and democratic rights.

However, the declaration of emergency rule followed the lines of previous antidemocratic crackdowns by the Gorbachev regime in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. It imposed an administration headed by Yeltsin's personal representative in the autonomous republic, A.B. Arsanov. It banned "rallies, marches and demonstrations, as well as other mass actions." It ordered the population disarmed, even of knives. It imposed a ban on travel in and out of the area under emergency rule. And it demanded "suspension of the activity of all social organizations and mass movements obstructing normalization of the situation."

There have been divisions in Chechen-Ingushetia over allegedly arbitrary and strong-armed methods used by Dudaev, but the declaration of emergency rule seems to have united the entire population—most of all the Chechens—against Moscow—and Yeltsin.

In the Nov. 15 issue of the Paris Russian-language journal *Russkaya Mysl'*, Aleksandr Nekrich, an expert on the peoples subjected to mass outlawry under Stalin, wrote "not only the population of the Chechen-Ingush republic but other mountain peoples, especially those who

suffered from Stalin's deportations, declared their readiness to give armed support to Dudaev."

"Bandits and fundamentalists"

At the press conference of Russian government leaders called to explain the measure, the chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, R. Abdulatipov, complained of "large-scale interference by the Georgian republic" in Chechen-Ingushetia: "This interference is perceptible at all levels. There is also interference by our [sic!] Baltic republics." Such statements again were reminiscent of denunciations of "outside trouble makers" by Gorbachevite and neo-Stalinist "internationalists" in calling for a crackdown on the national-democratic movements.

Nekrich expressed shock at the chauvinist tone of the denunciations by the Russian press and politicians of the Chechen leadership. "The word 'bandits,' which was already used during the Caucasian war [when the area was conquered by Russia in the 19th century] and later at the time of the forced deportation of the Chechens and Ingush by Stalin, again flashed in the columns of Russian papers. Russian leaders did not shrink from words they inherited from recent times or from the methods used in conflicts in the Caucasus and in the Baltic in the years of perestroika." (*Russkaya Mysl'* Nov. 15)

Yeltsin, for example, accused Dudaev of being in league with Islamic fundamentalism. The question of the identification of the peoples of Islamic tradition in the USSR with other peoples of similar tradition and their states is, of course, a complex question, and will likely become more so.

But it is striking that already in the USSR, as well as in Yugoslavia, any expression of national aspirations on the part of the oppressed peoples of Muslim tradition is being denounced by the rulers

as evidence of "Islamic fundamentalist" influence.

Yeltsin's team pushed hard to make the Chechens an example. Thus, in the debate in the Russian Supreme Soviet, Sergei Shakhrai, the Russian president's chief lieutenant for legal matters, argued that if the legislature refused to ratify the declaration of emergency rule, it would mean "the ruin of Russia and a chain reaction" [presumably in the other autonomous republics]. He advocated appealing to all-Union armed forces, since those directly under the Russian Federation proved inadequate, and proposed a special defense for the Russian-speaking minority in Chechen-Ingushetia.

At the press conference, the editor of a journal called *Khronika*, who is a deputy in the Russian Congress of People's Deputies, posed a question to Rutskoi that was couched in clear Russian nationalist terms: "Does the government of Russia have the means and forces to cut short these separatist inclinations, these attempts to wreck the historically constituted Russian state, and what in this direction are you doing in the former autonomous republics?"

Rutskoi did not rebuke his questioner for his Russian chauvinist outlook. He said instead: "Today, in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the question is being considered of demanding fulfillment of the decree of the Russian Federation on the transfer of the USSR internal troops to the jurisdiction of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the taking of an oath to faithfully serve Russia. Otherwise these forces will not carry out their tasks. ... And Russia has no other forces."

A dilemma for Yeltsin

This revealed a basic dilemma of Yeltsin. The Russian Federation, as such, does not have an effective repressive force, and appealing to the all-Union bodies is politically very difficult for him.

This incident also points up an ambiguity about Yeltsin's identification with Russian nationalism. Up until now, his Russian nationalism has been populist and anti-expansionist. He rejected the impersonal apparatus of the Soviet Union and the cost of maintaining a sort of empire (which the Russian people considered an unprofitable expense) and he made an alliance with the national democratic movements.

However, ever since the Second World War, the Soviet bureaucracy has more and more pandered to Great Russian chauvinism. Outright chauvinist candidates got about 10 percent of the vote in the Russian presidential elections. As Yeltsin has assumed greater power as the ruler of Russia, the darker side of his nationalism has more and more emerged.

Yeltsin's nationalism first turned openly threatening when he said, at the time of the wave of declarations of independence following the failure of the neo-Stalinist coup, that maybe parts of other republics with Russian-speaking majorities should be incorporated into the Russian state. The attempted crackdown on the Chechens and the chauvinist noises that accompanied it were further warning signs that Yeltsin's Russian nationalism is taking a sinister direction, toward the congenial Great Russian chauvinism of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

As it turned out, the few Russian troops that Yeltsin sent to Chechen-Ingushetia were overwhelmed by Dudaev's militia, and had to withdraw. The USSR troops in the republic pledged not to intervene.

The Russian leaders wept crocodile tears about the Chechen militia hiding behind civilians. That apparently reflects the fact that the Russian troops faced mass opposition, as well as determined armed forces. Only a blood bath could have "restored order." In parliament, Shakhrai explained

(continued on page 11)

With the Cold War over is peace now at hand?

By HAYDEN PERRY

"Deterring Democracy" by Noam Chomsky. Verso Press, New York, 421 pages, 1991.

Now that the Soviet Union is in disarray, and the Warsaw Pact has been dissolved, America's rulers consider that the 30,000 nuclear warheads in their arsenal are rather excessive. Already President Bush has taken strategic bombers and intercontinental ballistic missile silos off the hair-trigger 24-hour alert.

Under the START treaty signed last July, U.S. and Soviet nuclear stockpiles will be reduced by 30 percent. Some Amer-

ican military experts say cut the number to 100 missiles. Others speculate on a completely nuclear-free country.

who put a democratic gloss on the most barbarous campaigns of mass murder. The Cold War, Chomsky points out, made it easier to win public support for campaigns of aggression in Central America and Asia. The "Evil Empire," like the child's bogey man, would get us if we didn't slaughter peasants thousands of miles away.

No 'Evil Empire' to kick around

Now this military threat has all but vanished, and imperialism faces a new situation. As Chomsky describes it, America came out of World War II with a sound economy facing an economically prostrate

tion unleashed by conventional weapons serves as a warning to small nations that thwarting America's interests means risking a "desert storm" on their territory.

Overwhelming military might may terrorize small nations, but how can the American public be persuaded or coerced into supporting endless wars when the Soviet threat has gone? Here Chomsky presents the major thesis of his book.

Fear of the common people

Bourgeois democracy, he says, never included the common people. The 17th-century English Puritans who cut off their monarch's head feared the British common

The point is made that "control of thought is more important for governments that are relatively free and popular than for despotic and military states. "They can control their people by force, but as the state loss this weapon, other devices are required to prevent the ignorant masses from interfering with public affairs, which are none of their business," says Chomsky.

He observes, "It is not often appreciated how profoundly and deeply rooted is the contempt for democracy in the elite culture, and the fear it arouses." The public are to be observers, not participants. They are to be consumers of ideology as well as of commodities. "There is no infringement of democracy if a few corporations control the information system—in fact that is the essence of democracy," say apologists for the system.

Ultimately, public acceptance must be obtained for government to work. In normal times, acceptance can be created. Chomsky says that "the manufacture of consent" has become "a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government."

Role of liberals

The major role in this process is played, according to Chomsky, by establishment liberals who have never found an American war they could not endorse, and who distinguish between the bestial terrorism of the enemy and the benign terrorism of American forces. Their "expertise," displayed on op-ed pages and TV talk shows as impartial opinion, never challenges the basic goals of capitalist policy.

Chomsky speaks of the success of corporate efforts "to change the attitudes and values of workers" and to turn "worker apathy into corporate allegiance."

Bush, however, is finding the limits of public relations manipulation of the voters. Desert Storm euphoria has faded as the cold chill of recession spreads across the land. No amount of talk will convince the unemployed worker that she or he has a job.

Here, it seems Chomsky pushes his thesis too far. He does not introduce the countervailing forces—conditions on the job, trade unions, the unremitting class struggle.

Chomsky also makes a serious error of fact on page 361, where he charges that Lenin and Trotsky "... in 1917, moved to dismantle organs of popular control, including factory committees and soviets, thus proceeding to deter and overcome socialist tendencies."

In reality, the governmental slogan of the Bolshevik Party, led by Lenin and Trotsky, was "all power to the soviets." After the Revolution, control by the workers and oppressed was increased rather than being "dismantled." Later, the other left parties—the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries—walked out of the Soviets, but the Bolsheviks remained.

Chomsky's acceptance of this distortion of one of the greatest events of the 20th century leads to the pessimism with which he concludes his book. Despite this, Chomsky offers a valuable exposition of the true relations between rulers and the ruled in capitalist America, and demonstrates that hope for real disarmament is an illusion so long as American imperialism rules. ■



U.S. troops during the Panama invasion: Preparing for "low-intensity wars."

"Overwhelming military might may terrorize small nations, but how can the American public be persuaded or coerced into supporting endless wars when the Soviet threat has gone?"

world. Today, America's economy is not so sound, and it confronts a German-European trading bloc and the Japanese economic powerhouse.

While no longer supreme on the economic front, America now has no serious rival to its military might. Where previously the U.S. may have been inhibited sometimes by fear of a nuclear exchange with Russia, now Washington feels no such restraints. The "New World Order" is to be a strictly American order, enforced by all the power displayed in the Persian Gulf.

The Gulf War reflects American determination and ruthlessness. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of what the military call "low intensity" warfare: no need for the ultimate weapon. The devasta-

people more. Chomsky quotes a contemporary who observed, "It is dangerous to 'have a people know their own strength.'" Another said, "When we mention the people, we do not mean the confused promiscuous body of the people." And further, "Day laborers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairymaids must be told what to believe."

Chomsky writes, "Such ideas have ample resonance today, including [philosopher John] Locke's stern doctrine that the common people should be denied the right even to discuss public affairs. This doctrine remains a basic principle of modern democratic states, now implemented by a variety of means to protect the operations of the state from public scrutiny."

... Yeltsin

(continued from page 10)

that the emergency-rule degree could not be enforced because of the existence of "dual power" in the autonomous republic.

The doughty mountaineers complained that asking them to give up their arms was like asking them to take off their trousers. In any event, it was Yeltsin who was left politically undraped. The Russian Supreme Soviet backed off from endorsing the implementation of emergency rule in Chechen-Ingushetia.

Why the crackdown fizzled

What is more, the political movement on which Yeltsin has based himself, "Democratic Russia", rejected the crackdown on Chechen-Ingushetia, and even

experienced a small split of right-wing Russian nationalist forces, the leaders of the so-called People's Understanding Bloc (*Narodnoe Soglasie*), who objected to the majority accepting the "divisibility" of Russia.

At the Nov. 12 press conference of "Democratic Russia" in Moscow, the co-chair of the movement, Yuri Afanasiev, sharply criticized Yeltsin: "President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian government did not accept the slogan of the divisibility of Russia." The Nov. 15 *Russkaya Mysl'*, a liberal organ that is no friend of the 1917 Russian Revolution, summarized his remarks as follows:

"He [Afanasiev] declared that the government headed by Yeltsin has clearly demarcated the contours of the future Russian empire. The decree introducing a state of emergency in Chechen-Ingushetia ... was the logical continuation of the great-power line pursued by Yeltsin and his local

viceroy. The speaker recalled the failure of Denikin's attempt [during the civil war against the Bolsheviks in 1918-21] to defend the slogan of a one and indivisible Russia in the northern Caucasus. The Bolsheviks, speculating on the aspiration of the peoples for independence, were able largely as a result of this to win victory in the area."

A resolution of the congress of "Democratic Russia" rejected the use of force in Chechen-Ingushetia and "hailed the victory of the peoples of Chechen-Ingushetia over the Communist regime."

In fact, Yeltsin's "local viceroy" in Chechen-Ingushetia, A. Arsanov, whose coded message was used as grounds for declaring the state of emergency, denied in an interview with Interfax that he had recommended any such measure.

Clearly, the "Democratic Russia" movement proved a completely unreliable instrument for Yeltsin in a key test of

strength. The movements of the minority peoples in the Russian Federation will certainly grow, and have been greatly strengthened by this defeat for the Russian government. They are not all small or remote. The Tartars for example are as numerous as all the Baltic peoples put together and live in a strategic area, with important resources.

However, the implications of Yeltsin's defeat in his confrontation with a small people of Caucasian mountaineers go far beyond the question of minorities or the national question.

They indicate that he does not have the authority or the instruments to implement the policy of the bureaucracy.

He, too, is failing to accomplish the job that the Gorbachev government could not do; that is, to force the working class to accept the cost of restoring capitalism and, in the immediate future, a big round of price increases. ■

Market reforms bring hardship to East German workers, youth

By GERRY FOLEY

If there were going to be a showcase of capitalist restoration, East Germany should have been it. Its economy was relatively advanced, with some industries competitive even in the world capitalist market. It has been integrated into a much larger capitalist state—one of the three richest in the world and the one, therefore, that had the tremendous resources necessary for subsidizing reconversion.

In a generally pessimistic view of the prospects for capitalist development in Eastern Europe, however, the well-informed British business magazine, *The Economist*, pointed out in its Sept. 21 issue that East Germany had become a bugbear instead of a boost for the marketizers of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

"Understandably daunted [by their own negative results]," the editors write, "East European governments have hesitated. While still paying lip service to rapid privatization, many officials have begun to advocate a more gradualist approach. Most have been horrified by the collapse of industry in the former East Germany, once considered the most industrially advanced country in Eastern Europe."

Since reunification, industrial production in East Germany has been in free fall. It is now supposed to have "stabilized" at a level of about a quarter that of 1988. In August, the official unemployment in East Germany was 1.1 million, with 1.5 million on short time, and 500,000 in training schemes. That is out of a total population of 16 million, of which about half, 8 million, are economically active.

And this says nothing about hidden unemployment, or special regional problems. For example, according to *Der Spiegel* of Nov. 11, in the eastern part of East Germany the unemployment rate goes as high as 75 percent.

West Germany destabilized

Such an economic collapse has not been seen since the Great Depression or the destruction of Germany at the end of the Second World War. The West German government and capitalists are pouring vast sums into the former East Germany all right, but only to maintain consumption, that is, provide a market for West German business and to stave off social collapse and the dangers that it could create.

In the absence of productive investment, such subsidies are only leading to accumulating debt and rising inflation. The overall deficit is going up by about 200 billion marks a year, according to the Social Democratic Party's estimates. That compares with a projected federal income of 425 billion marks in 1991.

Interest on the national debt is already going over 100 billion marks this year, and is expected to reach 200 billion marks in 1995. Inflation, which was at zero per cent in 1986, has already risen to 4.5 percent in West Germany, and is still higher in the former East Germany.

The West German press has begun making alarmist noises, Winfried Wolf pointed out in an article in the Oct. 28 issue of *International Viewpoint*, the fortnightly magazine of the Fourth International.

"It doesn't add up," *Der Spiegel* fretted. "Who's going to pay?" *Wirtschaftswoche* demanded. "Can our marks hold out?" *Stern* inquired.

Wolf pointed out that the same time the government was pursuing inflationary policies in subsidizing demand in the former East Germany, the Federal Bank has taken a deflationary course, raising interest rates—apparently in anticipation of a recession.

Recently, *Wirtschaftswoche* (issue No. 32) wrote: "Everything points to the fact that we are standing directly in front of a recession." The West German business and prestige press has begun to raise calls for "iron austerity."

There are already 2 million unemployed in West Germany, making a total of 5 million for the reunited country. The figures point to a coming disaster for working people throughout the German state. It will be



German youth—East and West—celebrate reunification in 1990. Euphoria has now worn off.

worse for those in the former East Germany—and they are likely to be, to one degree or another, scapegoats for it. But the axe will come down on the entire German working class. The relative impact may be greater on the West Germans, who have been used to prosperity. The Easterners have already had their hopes for a better life dashed.

Grim picture of youth

The social and political effects of the economic collapse in the former East Germany have already started to provoke alarmed commentary in the West German press. For example, in its Nov. 11 issue, *Der Spiegel* published a long feature on East German youth that painted a grim picture. It began with an interview of a group of young people in a club, where all the talk was about present economic problems and the "good old days" before the turn to the market:

"At present, in the new federal states, 170,132 youth are without jobs. Among those under 20, the number has risen from 14,447 in mid-1990 to 42,679 now. Among those between 20 and 25, it has gone from 40,252 to 127,483, and the trend is up.

"Alcohol consumption has risen sharply among young people. Hard drugs ... are not yet so widespread, but high school students are already sniffing glue and solvents. Sects and spiritualist groups are booming. Instead of delight in greater freedom, many young people are gripped by a fear of not being able to survive."

A Berlin doctor specializing in treatment of young people reported "a disturbing rise of suicides and suicide attempts." Even those who could be expected to welcome the new freedom were overwhelmed by the economic ruin.

"The blond Enrico, 17, with an earring, should have reveled in the new times. ... However, he finds the world bad. Punks think about unemployment and so on. That is what the models of the colorful street kids in England did after all, and the East punks can now follow in their footsteps. In

Saxony, in Riesa, where Enrico lives, life is now like in the north of England.

"The new times have brought poverty to Riesa. The steelworks on which the small city depends is closing. In their songs, the Church Thieves [an Eastern punk group] sing of a desperation that many know from their own homes, where mothers are out of work and have begun to drink."

A Berlin pastor was quoted as saying: "The conflict cauldron of society is heating

up. While self-confident and enterprising youth are needed, a whole generation threatens to sink into melancholia, self-pity, cynicism, and rage."

The reporter noted: "Hardly any of the unemployed youth can manage with the support they get. Every fourth one has to cut back drastically on food. For Tilman, it is just 'enough for the plastic sausage from the A&P.'"

There were expressions of resentment of the Western politicians: "With graffiti such as 'the Baltic Sea is still there' on the Rostock shipyard buildings, they are protesting against the West German politicians, who, Lars, 22, complained, stole from them everything from free contraception pills to vocational training and certificates, 'the real advantages of the [former] German Democratic Republic.'"

"Not even time for lunch"

A roundtable interview with East German young people gave even clearer signals. One young woman said: "I wanted to study athletics. I am a top swimmer.

And I want to continue that. But I have already learned one thing about capitalism. Either you go for a family and a nice home, an orderly life, or a career. A woman cannot have both. I look at my mother. At her job, she doesn't even have time for lunch."

The *Spiegel* reporter asked: "Nonetheless, things are a lot freer and easier in the schools today. Or do you want the old strict times back?" One replied: "Of course, a lot of things were bad. But a lot of things were not so bad." "What?" the reporter asked. Another young woman answered: "You knew you had a future. And you had a secure job."

One of the young people had drawn some political conclusions: "Socialism is over, that is clear. But I also don't think that capitalism is the solution. What is it doing against the destruction of the environment, against hunger in the Third World? I don't know what sort of ideals are still possible."

The feature claimed that the response of East German youth to the economic disaster was essentially alienation, a rejection of politics, or at most an attraction to nationalism and right-wing extremism. Such phenomena certainly exist. It could hardly be otherwise when there is no credible left alternative, and the social catastrophe has developed so quickly. Anti-social right-wing youth gangs, along with skyrocketing street crime, were cited by the interviewees as important factors in the decline in the quality of life in the former East Germany.

The protests against the destruction of the social gains under the old regime were also presented as nostalgia for the security offered by a paternalistic state. But these advantages—a guaranteed job, free childcare, free vocational education, the right to contraception and abortion—are part of an economy intended to serve human needs rather than profit. They should also be attractive to West German working people, who are also facing chillier economic winds.

The problem is one of perspective, a credible alternative economic policy to the free-market nostrums made popular by the West German "economic miracle" and the collapse of the East German bureaucratic system. The objective need for such a perspective is there. But it requires a political development—the emergence of a militant leadership on the trade-union and political levels—which is a complex process whose tempo cannot be predicted. Such an alternative would have to appeal to West German workers as well.

However, it seems that, for better or worse, what was one of the most, if not the most, stable capitalist country in the world has suddenly become volatile. It remains, thus, to be determined whether the reunification will strengthen or weaken German capitalism. The ruin of the former East Germany has clearly reclarified the basic evils of capitalism, as well as the social gains that the abolition of capitalism in the old GDR brought. ■

A spectacle of plunder

The selloff of the old East German state firms has provided a spectacle of capitalist greed and plunder that is also having its political impact in West Germany. In its Sept. 3 issue, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* did a balance sheet of the activity of the holding company set up to supervise the privatization of the East German firms, with the following conclusion: "By the end of July, the Treuhand took in 11.6 billion Deutschmarks for all the successful purchases of enterprises. This was accompanied by promises [and only promises] of DM 67.8 billion."

Some of Treuhand's operations have produced real scandals, such as the selling off of the Teltow Tool and Instrument Company for a symbolic price of one mark to the Frankfurt businessman Claus Wisser.

According to *Der Spiegel* of Nov. 4, a secret study done for Treuhand estimated the value of the company's assets at between 170 and 270 million marks. After a report in *Der Spiegel*, the official responsible for the sale was fired and became the subject of an investigation by the Berlin prosecutor. Wisser did not help things any by proposing to sell the land owned by the company for 30 million marks to another firm in which he is a partner.

This is an illustration of the beauties of the market, which, it must be supposed, will not be lost on the working people both in West and the former East Germany. While their standard of living is collapsing or being threatened, the market and its encouragement of "enterprising spirit" is producing a swarm of vultures, large and small.—G.F.

WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

We have all been bombarded with the news that "communism" is dead. The common sense proof of these obituaries is the demise of the organizations called "Communist Parties" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

We are confronted with a corpse, to be sure. But as any reader of murder mysteries knows, sometimes bodies are misidentified. In the particular case we are concerned with, it turns out that both the deceased and the apologists for capitalism have had their own reasons for giving the wrong name to the corpse—both when it was alive and now that it has passed on.

To solve the mystery and determine if "communism" is actually still walking around alive, and to figure out why the body has been deliberately given a false identity, we need some identifying features. There are two descriptions of communism—an older one, which is somewhat general, and a more modern and specific one.

The general description is of a society where the means of production are owned in common. Society is not split apart into classes where each class has a different relation to the means of production.

This distinction sets communism apart from all the societies that have developed in the history of civilization so far. For example, ancient Greece and Rome were slave societies, where slaves worked for landlords. The land-

lords owned the land, the tools the slaves used, and the slaves. There were other classes, too, such as merchants and artisans, but they were not as important to production.

Under feudalism, there were landowners and serfs, as well as other classes. In old China, India, and the ancient cultures of the Middle East (like Egypt), there were still other types of classes, with specific relations to the land and waterworks used for irrigation.

Under capitalism, the two main classes are the capitalist owners of industry and the modern workers.

In every class society, the different relations the different classes have to the means of production (between those who own them and those who do the work, for example) are at bottom relations between the classes themselves, between separate groups of human beings.

In each different type of class society, there is a dominant class (or classes) which skims the surplus of production for itself, and a class (or classes) which do the work, but get the hindmost.

That is, class societies are inherently unequal. Within them there are constant struggles between the classes over the division of the fruits of labor and nature. To prevent such societies from splitting apart, all class societies have been marked by the development of a special organ,

composed of armed men (usually men and not women) who "keep the peace" between the classes. This special organ is called the state.

The state presents a facade of standing above the classes, but it really is the organ of the dominant class, and enforces the laws that codify the unequal relations between the classes. Thus, the dominant class is also the ruling class.

Communism, in addition to being a classless society, is also a society without a state—without this special organ of coercion.

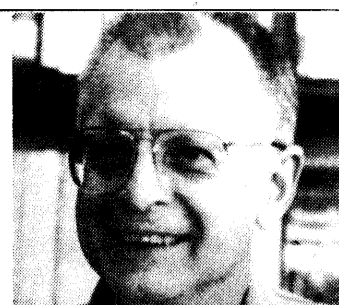
Another feature of communism is the absence of the oppression of women, something which arose with the development of classes. Before the advent of class societies, there were tens of thousands of years of primitive societies in which tools were held in common and the proceeds of hunting, fishing, and gathering were shared in common.

These societies were restricted to small units like tribes, and could go to war over resources if they ran up against each other. One people sometimes didn't even recognize other groups as fellow human beings (we still have a way to go on this score today). But within each group there was a form of communism.

Such communism is called primitive communism, because it was based on a very low level of productivity. In fact, usually it was hard to produce enough to

Learning About Marxism

By Barry Sheppard



meet the needs of the group, and there was no surplus left over for a dominate group to appropriate.

Class societies developed when production reached the point where such surpluses could be produced, but were not yet enough to satisfy all the wants of every member of society.

Since the rise of class society, however, the idea of the elimination of the inequalities of class society and a return to communism has continued to exist in various forms. It is found in the idea of the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth in Christianity, and in other nooks and crannies of religion—which, however, has been used overall to justify the inequalities, cruelties, and oppression of class societies.

It is found in schemes for utopias, and even in attempts to set up communistic colonies. As a wish, a dream, and a hope communism has been around for a long time.

When capitalism was just beginning to arise, and before there was a workers' movement

to fight for our interests against the capitalists, there appeared a number of utopian socialist (we are using here the words "socialist" and "communist" interchangeably) visions of societies that would overcome the evils of the capitalist system, which were already apparent.

There were three great utopian socialists of this period—Robert Owen, Henri Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier. They wrote extensively on the horrors that early capitalism inflicted on working people. Their socialistic or communistic schemes were not meant to be merely fantasies, but proposals to build a better society.

These great utopians were an anticipation of the modern idea of communism, developed with the rise of the movement of the working class. This new communism announced its birth in a pamphlet, "The Communist Manifesto" written in 1848 by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. We will describe this development in more detail next month.

December final month to make subscription goal

By BARRY SHEPPARD

The flow of new subscriptions and renewals coming into the Business Office slowed the latter part of October and the first part of November, but began to pick up at the end of the month.

Boston made a big jump forward. And Milwaukee and New Brunswick are the first to go over 100 percent. (Actually Baltimore did this earlier, but then raised their goal from 35

to 50, and have once again raised it to 60.)

Sixteen subscriptions were sold at the San Jose, Calif., meeting of NOW Young Feminists, and many good discussions were had with these young fighters. Several new subscribers were interested in having *Socialist Action* supporters speak at their colleges. And supporters of the paper made important contributions to the conference itself.

Although we are getting back into rhythm, we did lose some

ground, and are behind where we should be. This means we all have to finish up the drive this month with a burst of energy to make the full goal of 650. A final wrap-up report will be in our next issue.

One more thing: As a holiday bonus, all who subscribe or renew for at least a year will get a FREE book—either "Gorbachev's USSR: Is Stalinism Dead" or "Nicaragua: Dynamics of an Unfinished Revolution."

And why not give a subscription to *Socialist Action* as a holiday gift? Your friend who receives the gift will also get a free book! (See the subscription blank on page 3). ■

Socialist Action fund drive tops \$20,000 mark

By SHANNON SHEPPARD

As I write, construction is almost done on the new offices for *Socialist Action* newspaper, our national departments, and our San Francisco branch. Our new bookstore and meeting hall will be unveiled to the public on Saturday, Dec. 21. If you're in the Bay Area, come on by to *Socialist Action's* open house!

We got off to a slow start on raising the \$24,000 fund drive *Socialist Action* needs in order to make our next steps forward.

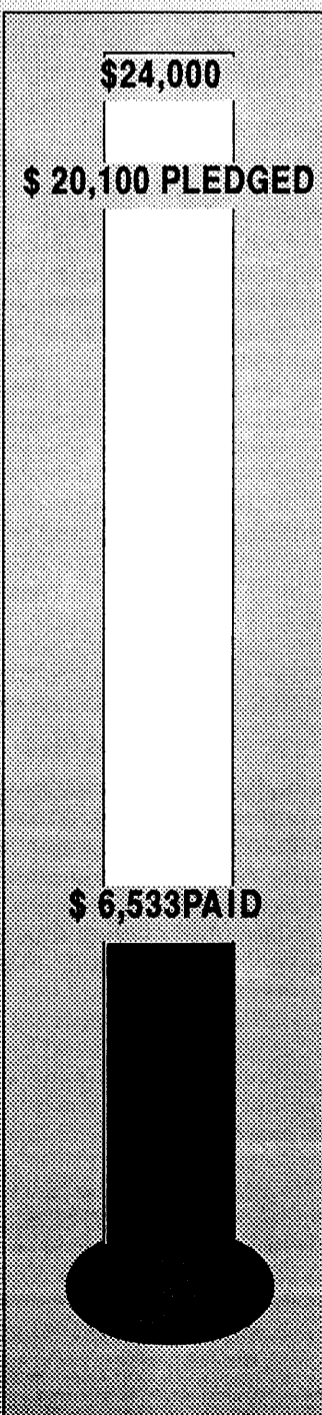
In the meantime, despite a slow start, the amount pledged to the fund has jumped forward significantly this month and we now have over \$20,000 in pledges.

One of these increases comes from an unemployed supporter in Toledo, Ohio. He's sending us \$50 early in December as soon as his checks come in.

An oil worker in the San Francisco Bay Area, who already pledged and paid \$500, has pledged an additional \$200. It seems she won a lottery at work and thought of putting the windfall to work to help *Socialist Action*.

Just as volunteer supporters are donating their skills in helping to build our new headquarters, we are voluntarily funded by workers. If you have not already done so, please send us a contribution. Every amount is important, from the \$5 to the \$1000 that people have pledged so far. Do what you can to help.

And now is the time to contact everyone you know who might want to make a pledge to the drive. Please send all pledges in by Dec. 15. ■



City	Goal	New	Renew.	Total	Pct.
Milwaukee	10	12	0	12	120%
New Brunswick	5	5	0	5	100%
Los Angeles	25	10	10	20	80%
Boston	75	51	7	58	77%
Baltimore	60	41	4	45	75%
San Francisco	250	154	17	171	68%
Detroit	10	3	3	6	60%
New Haven	5	1	2	3	60%
New York	55	13	17	30	55%
Portland	15	6	0	6	40%
Twin Cities	25	5	4	9	36%
Chicago	50	10	1	11	22%
Kansas City	5	1	0	1	20%
Philadelphia	20	1	2	3	15%
Cleveland	15	1	0	1	7%
Bath, Me.	5	0	0	0	0%
Cincinnati	5	0	0	0	0%
Other	25	6	13	19	76%
Total	650	320	80	400	62%
Should be				494	76%

Nov. 25

Answer to a reader: What else could the FSLN have done in Nicaragua?



Nicaraguan peasants march for land in 1987. FSLN only took half-way measures to solve agrarian problem.

By BARRY SHEPPARD

The letter by Stansfield Smith (see "Our readers speak out" on page 15) raises an important question. In today's world, would carrying through the socialist revolution in a country like Nicaragua amount to "suicide?" Would it mean dying from "economic strangulation, constant war, and lack of foreign aid?"

The answer to this question is of far-ranging significance. Carried to its logical extreme, wouldn't such a position mean that the socialist revolution in most of the world must wait until there is a socialist victory in at least one of the main imperialist countries to effectively counter the threat of "economic strangulation" and "constant war?"

And what about Revolutionary Cuba? Is the Cuban revolution doomed by the cutoff of fair trade by the decaying Soviet bureaucracy and its repudiation of defending Cuba against an imperialist attack? Are the Cuban revolutionists wrong to state they will fight to the death rather than submit to Washington?

On the contrary, carrying the Nicaraguan revolution through to the expropriation of the capitalists and the establishment of a workers' state was not only the only alternative to "compromise it until you surrender," but was the road which offered the greatest chances for the advancement of the working people of Nicaragua and of the world.

(Before taking this up, we should clear up that we were for *more* Soviet aid to Nicaragua, not less, as Smith implies.)

Revolution and leadership

Revolutions are not created by revolutionary organizations. They erupt as a result of profound changes in the great masses of people in the course of the struggle between social classes. But the success or failure of revolutions depends in large part on the calibre of leadership that is put in power by the masses.

The FSLN did not create the Nicaraguan revolution. That was created by the masses, who found the continued rule of the Somoza dictatorship, and the imperialist and capitalist exploitation his rule signified, to be intolerable.

The FSLN, only a few hundred strong at the time of the July 1979 mass insurrection that overthrew the Somoza regime, was catapulted into power by the workers and peasants. This was by virtue of its record of heroic struggle against the dictatorship, and its image as a force that would fight for the interests of the workers and peasants.

But we know that in spite of important

mobilizations and organization of the masses in different fields, and above all in the great mobilization for the war against the imperialist-backed contras, they did not lead the struggle of the workers and peasants through to the end. What could they have done differently, and what would have been the effects of a consistent class-struggle policy?

First of all, they failed to immediately and decisively embark on the road of carrying through the agrarian revolution, the central social task of the democratic revolution. They made half-way steps in land reform, stopping short whenever the needs of carrying it through clashed with the property interests of the landowners.

This was in marked contrast to the October Russian Revolution, when the new Soviet state immediately backed the peasant war for the land. It was also in stark contrast to the Cuban Revolution, which immediately embarked on a thoroughgoing land reform—no matter how much the big landowners screamed.

In both the Russian and Cuban examples, the result was to win the peasants to the side of the revolution and lay the basis for a step forward in agricultural production. Both revolutions would have been overthrown early-on without this decisive step.

Such an orientation in Nicaragua would have mobilized the peasants to increase production and brought them more decisively into the defense of the revolution.

Failure to implement the agrarian revolution in Nicaragua meant the contras were able to demagogically appeal to some peasants who wanted land. This gave the contras, who were created and armed by Washington, a social base, especially in the north. A thorough agrarian revolution would have minimized this development and shortened the war.

It would also have helped in food production, and reduced the numbers who fled the countryside into the cities where they led a marginal existence and became another source of discouragement within the revolution.

Revolutionary strategy deferred

Another democratic social task the FSLN should have taken on immediately concerned the national oppression of the peoples of the East Coast. They finally came to grips with this in 1985 through the autonomy programs, but by that time much damage had already been done, with sections of these populations supporting the counter-revolution.

Also, in 1985, under the impact of the war, a partial correction was made concerning the land reform, but it was not

consistently carried out for the whole of the peasantry.

Another necessary revolutionary step, which was only partially developed early on and then abandoned, would have been to set up a generalized system of workers' control in all capitalist enterprises, including whatever capitalist farms might remain after carrying through the land reform.

Such workers' control would not only have mobilized workers to fight for their own interests in such enterprises, including increasing production for the war effort and heightening their revolutionary consciousness and commitment, but would also have been a powerful weapon against the massive decapitalization the capitalists carried out during the war.

Workers' control would have built up workers' support for—no, it would have built up workers' *demands* for—the expropriation of the decapitalizers. All capitalists who sabotaged the anti-contra war effort should have been immediately expropriated.

Such workers' control would have amounted to hundreds of thousands of eyes and ears of the revolution against all the ways the capitalists and their middle-class hangers-on found to give support to the contras, and would have given the revolutionary state much more power to fully implement one of the FSLN's positive decrees, that is, control over foreign trade.

Of course, carrying through these measures, while not going beyond a radical democratic and anti-imperialist revolution in and of themselves, would have meant a willingness to challenge capitalist private property rights, and led to even sharper conflicts with the capitalists.

When this happened during the course of the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban leaders rallied the workers and farmers to nationalize the holdings of the capitalists "down to the nails of their boots," in the words of Castro at the time, and establish a workers' state based on economic planning.

But the leaders of the FSLN refused to carry through the land reform and workers' control. They demurred on the basis that they could not violate the property rights of the "patriotic" bourgeoisie, who, in fact, were not so "patriotic" in the fight against the imperialist-backed contras. Thus the revolution was demobilized at a half-way point, and with the demobilization of the workers and peasants the capitalist political forces were strengthened to the point where they were able to take over the government, with the FSLN now playing the role of junior partner in the liquidation of the revolution.

This is not to minimize all of the positive steps the FSLN took. We are not going to list them all here, and will just

note that all of their achievements are now in jeopardy because of the failure to carry the revolution forward to the establishment of a workers' state.

One important mobilization the FSLN led was of the army in the actual fight against the contras. The fact that the workers and peasants prevented the contras from holding any real territory from which they could set up a "government" to appeal for direct imperialist intervention showed what the working people are capable of. How much stronger could they have been had the FSLN stuck to its old motto of "only the workers and peasants will go all the way!"

Build a mass party

In addition to carrying the revolution through to the expropriation of the capitalists and the establishment of a planned economy, there are other key developments the FSLN could have and should have led—but didn't.

One was the mobilization of the workers and peasants in the formation of mass democratic councils (soviets) to form the basis of the state. This would have strengthened the revolution greatly by increasing the masses' direct participation in making the difficult decisions in the face of "economic strangulation, constant war, and lack of foreign aid."

The other was transforming the FSLN into a real proletarian mass party, based on democratic decision-making and centralized functioning, and on a revolutionary socialist program.

The authoritarian structure of the FSLN, despite the subjective revolutionary convictions and character of its leaders, was a negative factor in the mobilization of the masses. Its lack of a resolute socialist program *in action* led to the revolution's derailment.

What would have been the consequences if the FSLN had charted such a course? Would it have eliminated the difficulties of the war, the inadequate aid from the Soviet Union, the inherited backwardness and poverty resulting from imperialist exploitation? Obviously not.

But it wouldn't have meant suicide, either. The war would have been shorter, and more decisively won. The economy would have been strengthened compared to what happened under the capitalist sabotage. Economic planning with participation of the working people would have helped, not hurt, the economy.

Could socialism be built in Nicaragua? No. If socialism in one country was a reactionary utopia in the Soviet Union, it certainly would be so in little Nicaragua. It would be a workers' state, in transition from capitalism to socialism, whose ultimate fate would be decided by whether the socialist revolution is victorious in the advanced capitalist countries in time.

But it could have been a shining example, impelling the revolutions in El Salvador and the rest of Central America. It would have had an important positive impact on revolutionists in the rest of Latin America, just as the Cuban Revolution did. And the Cuban Revolution would have no longer been alone in the Americas. The revolution in Cuba would have been deepened. Revolution would have been on the offensive in Latin America.

Would the U.S. have intervened directly with troops? Possibly, in a desperate attempt to roll back the revolutionary wave that a victory in Nicaragua would have unleashed. But this would have created a massive antiwar movement right here in the U.S. And a mobilized Nicaraguan people would not be like Iraq under Hussein—this would be a *people's* war that would threaten to set fire to the continent.

Unfortunately, the FSLN strategy of stopping short at "violating" capitalist property has taught all the wrong lessons.

It has demoralized the masses in Nicaragua and elsewhere. It has caused former revolutionists to doubt their convictions and even reject the revolutionary road in awe of the supposed invincible might of capital. It has strengthened the idea that revolution is "suicide."

But this is temporary. The class struggle continues—capitalism and imperialism sees to that. ■

More than 'Magic' needed to fight AIDS

Since Earvin "Magic" Johnson announced on Nov. 7 that he was retiring from professional basketball because he had contracted HIV (the virus that causes AIDS), information about the deadly virus has been widespread. Johnson at 32-years-old had played for the Los Angeles Lakers for 12 years and was considered a superstar, thus attracting numerous television advertisements and name recognition.

Magic has been hailed for speaking out against AIDS. He told a press conference that he would use his celebrity status to help educate young people, especially young Blacks, about the need to practice "safe sex."

Johnson later explained in an article in *Sports Illustrated* that he contracted the HIV virus by not practicing safe sex: "I confess that after I arrived in L.A. in 1979, I did my best to accommodate as many women as I could—most of them through unprotected sex."

Johnson does not yet have AIDS. But most people who test positive for the human immunodeficiency virus, HIV, begin showing symptoms of AIDS within 10 years on average.

The big furor over Magic's situation has surely helped in the campaign to educate the public on AIDS. President Bush announced that Johnson would be appointed to his AIDS commission. Calls to health groups by individuals have significantly increased.

The obvious question that begs to be asked is why has it taken a prominent person to become a victim of HIV for all this publicity? Bush, the advertisers, and the big-business media now hailing Magic all knew before Magic's announcement that once a person tests positive for HIV virus, AIDS and death are inevitable. Yet Congress plans to reduce by some \$14 million the \$400 million 1992 budget for AIDS education, testing, and counseling.

Governmental inaction

Why the government's inaction? Because the primary victims of the disease are not heterosexual men or the well-to-do. The main victims in the United States are gay men and impoverished intravenous drug users.

Thus it is not true, as Magic and others are saying, that all sections of the population are equally at risk. AIDS can only be transmitted through blood or semen being brought into direct contact with the bloodstream. Otherwise, the virus dies quickly outside the body. Gay men get infected primarily during anal intercourse. Drug users get it by unsterilized needles. Of the 196,000 AIDS cases, only 6 percent contracted it through heterosexual sex.

(The exception is in Africa, where—according to the World Health Organization—some 7 million people are thought to be

infected with HIV. Most have contracted it by heterosexual sex. These Africans are poor, lack any resources to fight the disease, and get little support from the rich capitalist countries. In some urban areas, one-third of the adult population is infected with HIV.)

According to the Federal Centers for Disease Control, as of the end of September, 195,718 people in the United States have been infected with AIDS. Since 1981, 126,159 people have died from AIDS-related illness. Health officials estimate that another one million Americans have contracted HIV. A majority of the victims are male homosexuals. Nearly one-third are intravenous drug users who share needles. And over 40 percent are Blacks and Latinos.

A majority of women with AIDS are Black and Latino, who are infected sexually by a husband, boyfriend, or casual sex partner. Some 80 percent of children born with AIDS are Black or Latino.

The government's refusal to devote massive resources to assist those with the virus and to help find a cure for AIDS reflects who the victims are. The government doesn't give a damn about gays, drug users, and the poor.

Calls for mandatory HIV testing is no solution either. What the issue isn't about who has AIDS. It's about developing a program to help its victims and finding a

Which side Are You On? By Malik Miah



cure. Mandatory testing will be only used to scapegoat victims, take away their dignity, deny them healthcare, and make them pariahs.

The government's inaction also reflects its opposition to improving the healthcare of all Americans. Spending for healthcare in general is down. Those with healthcare pay more for less.

What can be done?

What solutions should the labor movement and other progressive-minded people be advocating?

First, the government should take the necessary steps to find a cure for AIDS. It should devote massive resources to assist all victims—especially the poor, who can't afford treatment. Currently, many people with HIV infections do not qualify for Medicaid (the federal-state insurance program) until they are declared "disabled" because they've developed AIDS outright. What a Catch 22! Those who need care should get it, whatever their financial situation.

Second, government should provide free needles to drug users. Where such programs exist, fewer people are being infected by HIV. Drug rehabilitation programs should be provided free and without fear of criminal prosecution. Drugs should be decriminalized.

Sex education is also important, including free condoms. But the Bush administration recently canceled two planned surveys of sexual behavior that would have helped the fight against sexually transmitted diseases.

What's needed is not only a Magic campaign against AIDS but a drive to take profit out of medical care. AIDS victims should get free medicine financed by the government. Many people can't afford the drugs now being offered to prolong life until a cure is found. Health care should be provided to all who need it.

These are the first steps needed to fight AIDS and to improve the health of all Americans. The labor movement is for a national health program. It needs to make the battle against AIDS a central plank in that fight. ■

Our readers speak out

Nicaragua

Dear editors,

Though I agree with the bulk of your article on the Sandinista congress in the September issue, I think you avoid fully addressing the point Victor Tirado made in the speech you quoted.

He said at the end: "But revolutions of this kind cannot sustain themselves all alone; now there is nobody to subsidize them."

You answer: "In reality, Nicaragua never received the aid it needed from the misnamed 'Socialist Camp.'" It may seem to you that you are trying to refute what Tirado says, but you simply affirm his point. You say Nicaragua "needed" their aid and didn't get it.

Then you say: "The aim of the token aid extended by the Soviet Union to Nicaragua was not to promote the advance of genuine socialism, but to increase the bargaining power for the Soviet bureaucracy as it sought an accommodation with world imperialism."

Are you trying to say that Nicaragua should refuse this aid because of the motivations or "aims" of the Soviet bureaucracy in giving it? That really makes no sense.

Cuba has received Soviet aid—and also aid from minor imperialist countries. Has that wrecked their revolution? So, how would aid from the Soviet Union have undermined the Sandinista revolution?

The fact is that the lack of aid from the Soviet bloc did hurt the revolution and contributed to its degeneration. I think this fact is not lost on the FMLN, the Angolan and Mozambique governments, Vietnam, Kampuchea. Condemning the aims of the Soviet bureaucracy in no way addresses what national liberation movements in small Third World countries should now do. The book by Alan Benjamin on Nicaragua also does not address this question.

I think you should present some feasible alternative between fighting to the death or caving in to imperialism, but having read what you have written on Nicaragua over the years, those are the only two "choices" I see: win the revolution and die from economic strangulation, constant war, and lack of foreign aid; or win the revolution and compromise it until you surrender.

I would like to see you spell out your program for revolutions in countries like Nicaragua. It does not seem to me that your program is very much different from the Sandinistas today: you simply differ on the choice of suicide. (See response on page 14.)

Stansfield Smith,
San Monica, Calif.

Back to Africa

Dear editors,

Anytime I turn on the boob-tube, I am assaulted by the pernicious image of Black on Black violence. From South Africa to "gang-banging" in L.A., a lie is being spread. The lie is that Africans, wherever they live, are murderous savages.

I have the good fortune of knowing a man working hard to shatter this myth. Dr. Kambon, a professor at California State University, Long Beach, and a Panther Party member, is out to show that African youth are capable of more, much more.

Dr. Kambon has encouraged some 30 young gang members and ex-gang members to stay in school and finish. The incentive is the reward of a back-packing trip through Africa.

While recognizing the damage imperialism has wrought on Africa, Dr. Kambon feels the trip will provide the youth a history they have been denied. The pilgrimage will raise their consciousness, much as Malcolm's was in his trip to Africa. Dr. Kambon is calling for contri-

butions from the people. "We can beg the people, but we will not beg the imperialists." Please send all donations to Akimsanya Kambon, 2240 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, CA 90806.

D. T.,
Long Beach, Calif.

Visual Arts

Dear editors,

In her criticism of my article, "Do the Visual Arts Have a Future?" (August 1991 Socialist Action), Samia Halaby makes the point that "art does not have the potential to create revolutionary change." "Only the working class," she says, "has the potential to cause such change." Of course, she is right. Art by itself does not have this potential.

However, I take issue with Halaby on some of her other statements. For example, she refers to the "Soviet" constructivists and suprematists as "intellectuals moved by the great revolution." In fact, Gabo, Pevsner, Lissitzky, Rodchenko, and other constructivists and suprematists were bourgeois artists who operated in total isolation from the revolution.

One of the directives of their "Realist Manifesto," which they were then peddling on the streets of Moscow, stressed that constructivists should "construct art," noting that constructivism is "an art that struggles for essences." They dismissed Soviet-sponsored art as "propaganda," using the term in its pejorative sense.

Lenin was quick to oppose their Manifesto. On Oct. 8, 1920, he wrote: "All educational work in the Soviet Republic of workers and peasants, in the field of political education in general and in the field of art in particular, should be imbued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat. ... All attempts to invent one's own particular brand of culture, to remain isolated in

self-contained organizations ... should be rejected."

As to Halaby's claim that "artists do not scare the bourgeoisie," I would suggest she study the history of Diego Rivera's mural painted on the walls of the RCA building in New York City in 1933. After Rivera had added the face of Lenin to his mural, Nelson Rockefeller Jr., wrote him: "It seems to me that his portrait, appearing in this mural, might very easily offend a great many people. ... As much as I dislike to do so, I am afraid we must ask you to substitute the face of some unknown man where Lenin's face now appears."

This Rivera refused to do. The following February, the mural was removed from the wall "by the process of smashing it to powder!" Rage is so much stronger when animated by fear!

Franklin Balch,
Baltimore, Md.

Spring Adams

Dear editors,

Spring Adam was not killed by her father, who impregnated her (as Sylvia Weinstein explains in your November issue), simply because he knew she was pregnant. It's worse.

Spring was past the first trimester when she realized she was pregnant. No doctor in Idaho could be found to do a second trimester abortion, so arrangements were made for her and her mother to come to Oregon so she could get an abortion.

Because of Idaho's consent laws, she needed to notify both parents. Her father tried to persuade her to carry her pregnancy to term. But the sixth-grader protested that she was not ready to be a mother. Her father then shot her to prevent her from getting an abortion in Oregon.

C.R.S.,
Oakland, Calif.

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David Duke: How a fascist can fit into American mainstream politics

By MALIK MIAH

David Duke wins 39 percent of the vote Nov. 16 for Louisiana governor. Major newspapers around the country, big-shot Republicans and Democrats, all give a sigh of relief: The racist, neo-Nazi and former Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan is defeated by twice-indicted former Democratic Governor Edwin Edwards.

People from the Bayou state, they say, are progressive-minded and anti-racist. Duke is politically dead.

Yet how was it possible for an open racist to win nearly 40 percent of the vote? Was it just Louisiana? Duke says no. He's even considering a run for the Republican presidential nomination. What does Duke's success tell us about the state of U.S. politics? Was he an accident—or a sign of the times?

Duke won 55 percent of the white vote. Of those voters, a high percentage are workers with low-wage jobs and the petty bourgeois (small business people, farmers and professionals) who are barely surviving in today's difficult economic times. Some are on welfare. Duke claims to speak for these social layers and their families. He points to Blacks on welfare and affirmative action for Blacks as proof for his racist charges that Blacks are living better than poor whites.

"People say that David Duke has made race an issue," Edward Richmond, a 38-year-old owner of a heating and air-conditioning business and a supporter of Duke, told *The New York Times*. "But he doesn't say anything different than Patrick Buchanan says. Most Republicans think just like David."

Richmond could have added the names of Ronald Reagan and George Bush to his list. David Duke is not out of the mainstream of U.S. politics. He's a good Republican. He could just as easily be a good Democrat like George Wallace.

The issues of race-baiting and racism have been effectively used by Reagan and Bush. Bush's infamous Willie Horton ad during the last presidential election campaign had one target—white voters who falsely believe that their economic problems, crime, and poor education are caused by Blacks.

Bush opposed the first civil rights bill because of "quotas." And Democrats in Congress tail-end this opposition by themselves taking distance from "quotas."

In California, Gov. Pete Wilson is blaming too many "immigrants" (i.e., Latinos and Asians) as a primary reason for the economic crisis in that state.

So why did Duke get so much heat from the media and top Republicans, including Bush, before the election? They agree with Duke about the issues. But his past was an embarrassment for them.

Duke's ruling-class opponents never challenged his political positions. They only attacked his right-wing affiliation to the Nazis, the Klan, and racist groups. The capitalist class doesn't want or need an open fascist as governor of a state. They don't favor using right-wing mob terror as a way to keep their rule or impose harsh attacks on working people *right now*. Their current political parties, courts, and other institutions are doing just fine for the time being.

While Duke was the creation of mainstream rightist policies, he was too extreme. The ruling class favors the further integration of a layer of Blacks, other minorities, and women into the capitalist



"Duke cleaned up his old fascist image and declared himself a true-blue American Republican. Like Bush, he attacked quotas, busing, and abortion rights. He simply spiced up his attacks with demagogy."

system as junior partners. Duke doesn't. Fear that a Duke governorship would hurt business is what finally led Louisiana businesspeople to oppose him.

Offensive against workers

The capitalist class, however, must continue to shift the burden of its growing economic problems onto the backs of working people. They have been doing so for nearly two decades with great success, which is why the real wages of U.S. workers declined in the 1980s by 8 percent. Organized labor—in terms of membership—is at its lowest point in decades.

Yet more is needed. Wages must be lowered more. Expectations reduced. Mainstream capitalist politics will become more rightist. Anti-Black, anti-immigrant, and anti-women demagogy will become commonplace to keep working people divided and to justify reactionary policies by the government.

This rightward shift in capitalist politics dates back to the early 1970s. For 25 years, from the end of World War II, the capitalist class's dominant world position allowed it to grant concessions to workers that significantly improved our standard of living. It took strikes and struggles to win these concessions, but the bosses could still increase their mass of profits as well as grant real gains to labor.

That unique period of U.S. history ended in the 1970s. International competition began to erode the U.S. world position. The employers and government began to step up attacks on working people. They ended their cozy relationship with union leaders who grew fat on large membership dues. The labor "leaders" supported capitalism and expected the status quo to continue forever.

The 1974-75 recession marked the beginning of a sustained offensive against labor. The employers began major assaults on service sector workers, and later, industrial workers. Workers were put on the defensive, as the labor officialdom tried to figure

out what to do. They decided to urge workers to accept "concessions" until the economy got better. Workers, without an alternative perspective, voted for two-tier contracts and other give-backs. These concession policies led to setbacks and defeats for the labor movement.

The anti-labor offensive accelerated in the 1980s. Both Democrats and Republicans supported the need to shift the relationship between capital and labor to the capitalist class's advantage. Reagan's smashing of the air traffic controllers' strike in 1981 was the signal to all employers to use whatever means to defeat the unions.

As money poured into the coffers of "friend of labor" Democrats, labor received little back in return. Thus Malcolm X's famous comment—that the difference between Democrats and Republicans is like the difference between the fox and the wolf—became more and more obvious.

Democrats and Republicans (liberals and conservatives) may disagree over tactics, but not over this fundamental policy of attacking labor. Defense of capitalism comes first.

The Persian Gulf War was a reflection of the crisis, and more wars will be fought to defend the interests of world capitalism. But the economy isn't getting any better.

Tapping frustrations

The emergence of David Duke comes in this context. Duke cleaned up his old fascist image and declared himself a true-blue American Republican. Like Bush, he attacked quotas, busing, and abortion rights. He simply spiced up his attacks with demagogy.

Duke tapped the resentment of a layer of white workers and petty bourgeois elements who are frustrated at not being able to improve their lives. A typical comment of many workers backing Duke was expressed by Danny Braud, an electrician: "We have gone through depression, suppression, repression, and everything

else—and it's time for a change like David Duke."

Duke's fascist past was secondary to these voters. In a *New York Times* random survey outside polling booths, 91 percent of voters who pulled the lever for Duke indicated that government corruption was the most important factor in their decision. Forty-eight percent indicated they voted for Duke because of the state of the economy, and less than one third (31 percent) voted for Duke because of his views on racial matters.

They didn't see an alternative in Edwards or the Democratic Party. Duke's success, however, shows how the politics of race-baiting and scapegoating can be used to divide working people and let the capitalist class off the hook for the economic crisis they've created.

Duke's significant support among a layer of white working people reflects the void created by the lack of an independent labor movement or political party in this country.

The labor movement is hand-tied by supporting Democrats. The capitalists' offensive will accelerate as international competition increases. The employers will seek lower labor costs as a quick cure to increase profits. The strike and lockout of workers at Caterpillar, Inc. over wage and health costs is an example of what the employers will try to do to raise profits.

The fact that a few labor officials (for example, Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union) advocate forming a labor party is a sign of the impact of the ruling class attacks on working people. The Labor Party Advocates (LPA), an organization initiated by Mazzocchi that is educating on the need for a labor party, shows how the capitalist offensive is leading some union officials to wave the banner of independent action to pressure the major capitalist parties to reach out to labor.

Whatever the officials' intentions, however, the idea of a labor party is something many workers want to see come about. They know the Democrats are not the solution. This desire for change is a positive development. The challenge for labor is to direct that anger against the status quo and isolate opportunist demagogues like David Duke. The basis for this is through building Black and white, women and men, labor solidarity and independent working-class politics. ■

Tail wags dog

In a move that would make David Duke grin with satisfaction, President Bush slipped in the ruling class's racist agenda when he signed the compromise Civil Rights Bill on Dec. 21. While he disowned an attempt (which was leaked to the press) to issue a directive that would gut affirmative action hiring policies in companies with federal contracts, he nevertheless directed federal agencies to interpret the Civil Rights Bill in line with a memorandum submitted by Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan). This interpretation is widely viewed as favoring business interests over minorities and women who attempt to make charges of job discrimination. This is another example of how the capitalist class uses racism to implement its campaign against working people.—M.M.