



**Women
Mobilize for
April 5 march
in D.C.**
See pages 4-6.

Vol. 10, No. 2 FEBRUARY 1992 50 CENTS

Recession: Why can't everyone have a job?

By JOSEPH RYAN

The current recession is the longest on record since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Some capitalist economic experts are calling this recession a "contained depression"—and they aren't wrong. For working people in America, the "New World Order" is turning into a "New World Ordeal."

Official government statistics say that the unemployment rate is 7.1 percent. However, the real unemployment rate is well over 10.1 percent when you count discouraged workers—those who are no longer actively looking for jobs.

In a dire, almost apocalyptic, business news article titled "Is Your Job Safe?," *U.S. News & World Report* (Jan. 13, 1992) predicts that hard economic times for working people will be a permanent feature of the next decade. Several economic experts quoted in the article foresee a permanent 10 percent unemployment rate going into the next century.

Since July 1990, almost two million jobs have been lost in this country. In 1991, 25 million workers—20 percent of the work force—were unemployed at some time. Job losses—jobs that are cut by belt-tightening corporations, like the layoff of 74,000 workers by General Motors Corp.—average 2600 a day. Over 854,000 service-sector jobs have vanished, the majority of them permanently.

Crisis of overproduction

The reason? *U.S. News & World Report*, a publication that is certainly not of Marxist origin, hits it right on the head: the crisis of overproduction.

"The heavily burdened economy," *U.S. News & World* laments, "is saddled with too much productive capacity and too few orders."

And the magazine states that the current economic situation isn't likely to change: "At best it will take years for the nation to lighten its debt load and absorb its factory glut."

Meanwhile, working people are expected to grin and bear the hard times ahead, which will only mean a worsening of an already catastrophic situation. It's predicted that between 1988 and the year 2000 over 650,000 industrial jobs will be eliminated.

In the last 10 years, the median income for families with children declined by \$1600. Between 1989 and 1990, the net worth of U.S. households fell by \$890 billion in real terms. This is the largest drop since 1947, which was an inflationary year.

Hundreds of thousands of unionized industrial workers who lost their jobs during the 1980s have seen their incomes drop by 20 percent to 30 percent at new jobs.

For the first time since the Depression of the 1930s, the average standard of living for American families—and this is with two wage-earners—has declined.

Furthermore, the capitalist economists are unable to formulate any particular remedy for kick-starting the economy. The



What the El Salvador peace accords mean

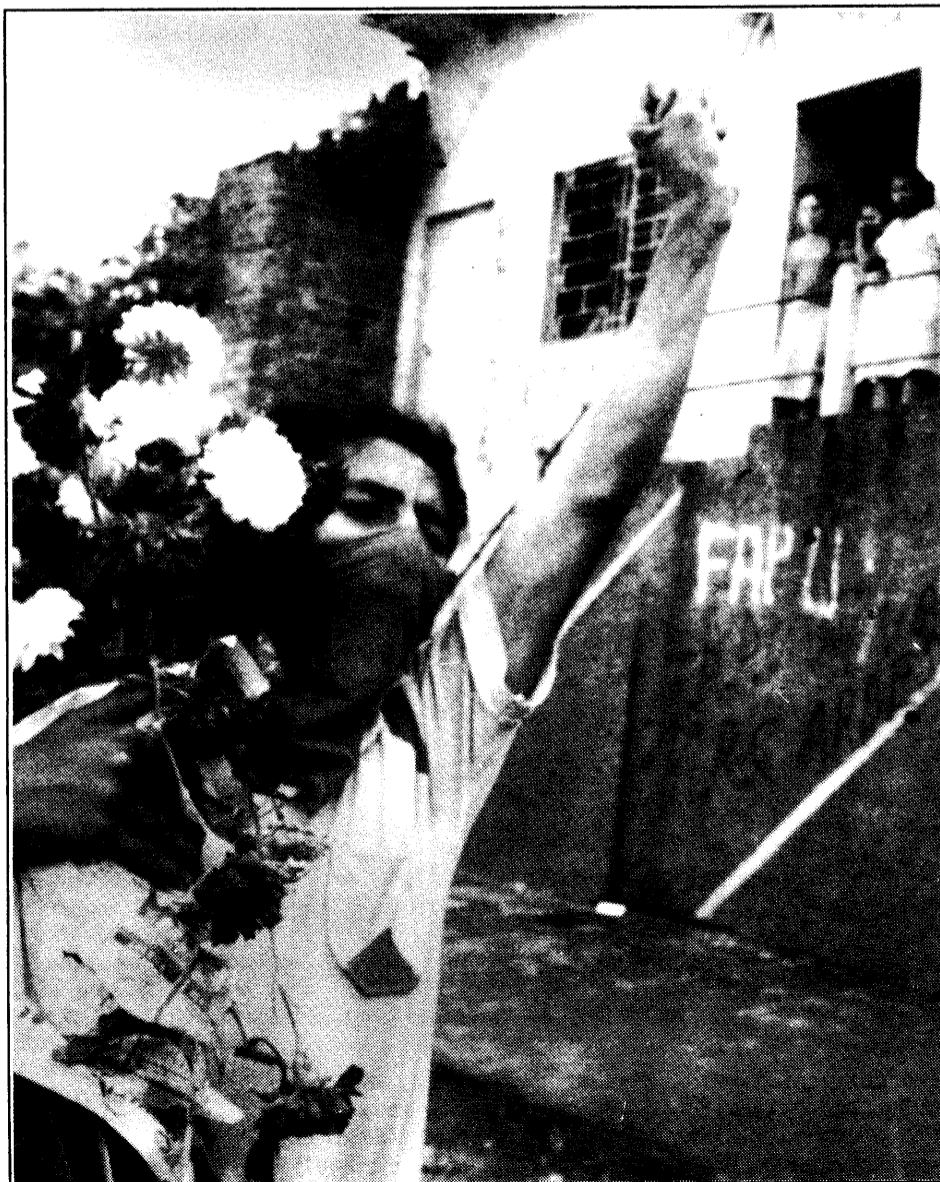
By JIM HENLE

On New Year's Day, the guns fell silent in El Salvador. With the signing of a peace agreement in New York, the Salvadoran government suspended all offensive military operations. The opposed forces of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) had earlier enacted a unilateral cease-fire to further the peace negotiations. FMLN General Command member Leonel Gonzales declared: "The war in El Salvador is over."

New Year's celebrations became impromptu rallies for peace, as news of the accords hit the capital city of San Salvador. Hundreds of people danced until dawn in front of the National Cathedral.

The tremendous feeling of relief that the devastating war was over was mingled with a sense of a long struggle's vindication. Chano Guevara, FMLN commander in the Guazapa volcano area—where the FMLN had held strong only 30 miles from the capitol—summed up the pride and hopes of many combatants: "All the sweat, blood, prison, torture, and exile finally merged into a powerful force that allows us to begin realizing, from this day on, the dream of democracy we awaited for so long. What an honor to have been part of this effort!" (*Boston Globe*, Jan. 19, 1992.)

For 12 years, the Salvadoran government has tried to destroy the guerrilla forces of the FMLN and the Salvadoran popular movement by any means necessary. Death squads and military attacks have been used to defend a narrow social base of commer-



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The United States vs. Cuba



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

"Remember that here you stand in line for bread, but there you stand in line for work. Sooner or later here you get the bread, and jobs are guaranteed. But there?"

The "there" is the United States. That is a quote from an article by Mary Jo McConahay called "Sugar Cane Communism," which was printed in the Jan. 12 *Image* magazine section of the *San Francisco Examiner*.

While the writer describes the hardships being faced by the Cuban people, she also is even-handed in showing the support of the Cubans for their country and its leader, Fidel Castro, and their willingness to sacrifice for their homeland.

A comparison between the Cuban people and their hardships and the working people of the United States would quickly reveal why the majority of Cubans are willing to sacrifice, while the working class and the poor of this country are angry and resentful.

Listen to a Cuban woman, Rosamaria, talk of her country. "I don't know if I could survive capitalism. ... I am afraid I will be marginalized in a non-socialist system," she says. She deeply fears a new world where competi-

tion is important, where there is a vast gap in the standard of living between rich and poor. She has never known such a gap.

Can you imagine any poor person in the United States who has never felt the gap between the rich and the poor? Even capitalist economists are "worried" about the growing number of "have-nots" on one side and the super-rich on the other.

McConahay continues in her article, "After 30 years of social revolution, there are no bums, no more gaps between the glittery rich and the miserable poor, no more desperate prostitution."

She goes on to report on Cuba's controversial AIDS policy. "Cuba's AIDS policy is draconian and effective. Those infected with the virus live in one of the 11 sanitariums that are scattered across the island. From 200 cases in 1986, the number has risen to only 676, of which 54 have died.

"Despite cutbacks almost everywhere else, the state is maintaining its expenditure of \$15,000 a year per patient—about five times the average yearly wage—at this sanitarium. It is a sprawling country estate that feels at first like a rural resort. Over-

head are tropical fruit trees—orange, mango, avocado. Patients live individually or as couples in their own houses with televisions, kitchen appliances, and the tools of their trade.

"Patients at the sanitarium continue to receive the salary they earned on the outside. They can choose the kind of treatment they want or no treatment at all. Cuba produces its own Interferon. AZT is expensive because the U.S. embargo means the drug must be purchased from third countries at inflated prices, but it, too, is free to those who want it."

Dr. Jorge Perez, the director of the sanitarium, allows three-day passes on weekends and sometimes leave during the week for those they deem "responsible." Among the staff are medical personnel who are also residents because they are HIV-positive: five doctors, eight nurses, and four medical students. "This makes the level of trust very deep with other patients," Perez says.

At the sanitarium patients get married, have relatives who are not HIV-positive visit, and work alongside other workers who are not HIV-positive.

Odaline Reyes is a 22-year-old nursery school teacher who lives at the sanitarium with her 2-year-old daughter, who is not HIV-positive. She divorced her husband from whom she contracted the disease. There is no division between heterosexual and homosexual patients at the sanitarium.

McConahay tells of meeting a 60-year-old cigar maker. When he found out she was from San Francisco, he took her into his house and showed her a picture of his nephew. The picture lay flat on a table under glass and sprinkled round with fresh yellow flowers

like an icon. The young man died of AIDS in San Francisco in January.

"I know it's a mortal sickness wherever it strikes," the cigar-maker mused. "But we have these sanitariums here now, you know. I keep thinking if he were home he might have lived longer."

Personally, I am opposed to a quarantine of HIV-positive or AIDS-infected patients. Even in Cuba, it is probably not necessary. But Cuba is a poor country which does not even produce condoms and must sacrifice to import them.

In the United States—the so-called "land of the free"—there has been a cut in funds for HIV-positive or AIDS patients. President Bush very seldom allows the "A" word to slip through his slimy lips. While the U.S. is cutting its health budget, it is planning to purchase 6724 new military tanks at a price of between \$1 million and \$1.5 million each.

How many AIDS patients could that money save? While children are dying from measles and whooping cough, and while an epidemic of tuberculosis infections is killing off AIDS victims, Bush and the other politicians are spending billions on weapons.

Two hundred thousand of our youngest people have already died from this vicious disease. How can we stop it?

This country needs to develop another program like the "Manhattan Project." At the beginning of the Second World War, this government started to develop the atomic bomb. Money was no object. They secured from around the world the best scientists and technicians. They provided them with homes, salaries, and the best

scientific equipment and laboratories available.

They did not leave it up to private enterprise. The effort was a completely social effort organized and financed by the government. Of course, the bomb was developed and used to murder hundreds of thousands of Japanese people.

If we want to cure AIDS, we need an AIDS research-and-development campaign on the order of the Manhattan Project. Secure the brightest and most capable minds in the scientific and medical world. Build them the best laboratories possible. Spare no expense. Give them full salary so they can devote 100 percent of their time to finding a cure. Do not allow one private enterprise corporation to stick their fingers in the pie. Only the broadest exchange of information and experiments will allow for speeding the way toward a cure.

The United States is the wealthiest country in the world. But this government puts profits before human needs. That is why the military budget continues to go up and our human needs budget continues to go down. Only a massive, unified fightback against this rotten capitalist economic system that takes from the poor and gives to the rich can change it.

That's what the Cuban people did in 1959. They took their country out of the hands of the rich and built a society which put human needs of the great majority before profits for the tiny minority of millionaires and billionaires.

And that's why both political parties want to crush Cuba—because it remains a shining example for the poor, oppressed, and exploited of the world. ■

By MARY DORAN

Tuition hikes protested

Students across the country are protesting the cuts in education spending that has caused their tuition fees to rise. In New York, last spring, angry students took over the City College system (CUNY) to protest fee hikes. Now the protest has spread to California.

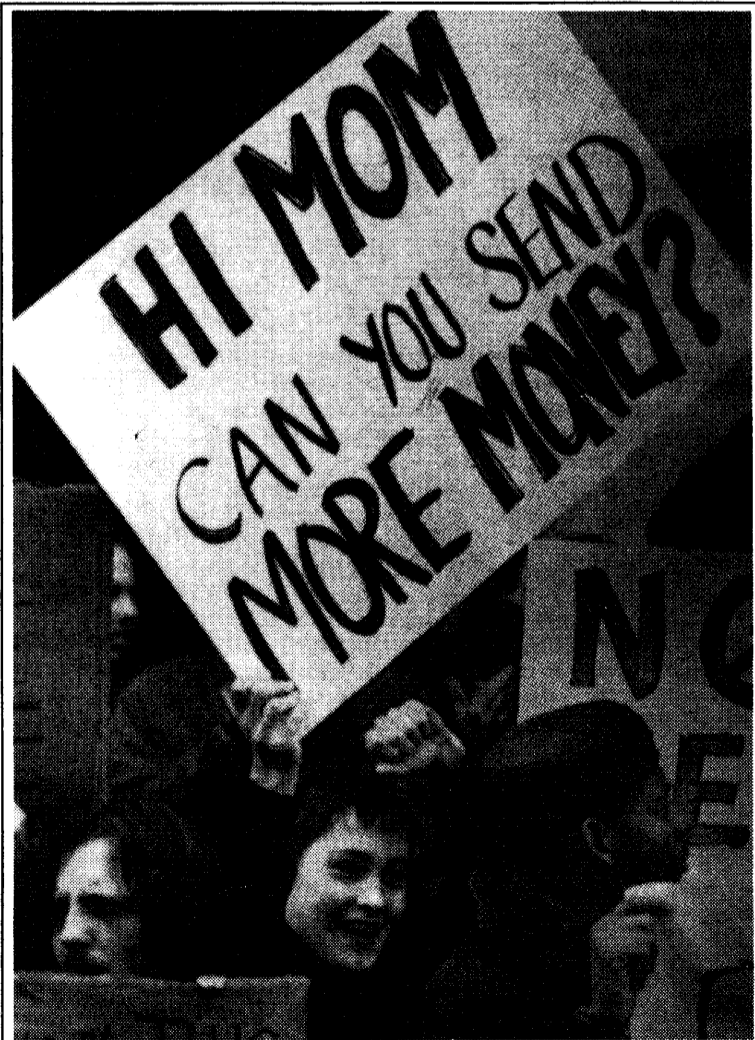
Hundreds of students at the University of California at Davis occupied the school auditorium last month after the regents of the university system, meeting on the campus, voted to raise fees 22 percent. The students held up signs that were directly to the point: "Education is a right, not a privilege."

Several days later, on Jan. 21, over 350 students rallied on the steps of the state capitol in Sacramento.

The University of California (UC) system has raised student fees 60 percent in the last two years. At the same time, 3700 employees' jobs have been eliminated. Salaries were frozen this year—with the exception of UC President Gardner and his chancellors, who will be receiving a 25 percent salary increase.

The fees are also going up in the California State University system (which is separate from the UC system). I am a student at San Francisco State University. When I started in the fall of 1992, the tuition was \$435. Since that time, the tuition went up every semester, to \$528 this semester. And now the CSU board of trustees has approved a 40 percent fee increase for the fall of 1992.

The hike in fees in the CSU



UC Davis students protest tuition hikes in Sacramento, Calif.

system is accompanied with severe class cuts and cutbacks in staff. The CSU system has cut 4000 courses and thousands of faculty members, making it impossible for many students to

enroll in the classes they need.

This spring, SFSU used touch-tone registration (registration through a computer by telephone) to help ease the pain of students trying to register for classes. But

Andy Staff, a senior at SFSU, told me: "Two of the classes I needed were already closed when I tried to register for them. When there aren't enough classes, a new system won't make getting into those classes any easier."

The dream of a tuition-free education envisioned by California's leaders 30 years ago is looking more and more impossible.

Carol Branganje, a full-time SFSU student and the mother of a seven-year-old son, is expecting a hard year ahead. "I guess I'll have to apply for more financial aid," she said. "I'm going to try to work 30 hours instead of 20 hours. I'll probably have to take an extra semester to graduate now."

And Kevin Paul, a junior at SFSU told me: "It has taken me seven years to get this far. It's the

high cost of living that gets me. I have to work so much to pay my rent, it's difficult to work your way through school.

Unfortunately, higher education is a right that the ruling rich have not granted us in this country. It is a privilege for those who can afford the high cost of tuition at private universities, as well as for those who can afford not to work while trying to further their education. For those of us without that privilege, it is a constant struggle to find classes that do not conflict with our work schedules—as well as to keep up with tuition hikes and the high cost of text books.

Working-class students need to demand our right to an education, and—as the students and UC Davis and CUNY have shown—we are beginning to do so. ■

Socialist ACTION

Closing date:
Jan. 29, 1992

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

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

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

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

JFK: The movie and the controversy

By JOSEPH RYAN

JFK: A film produced and directed by Oliver Stone.

Just when the ruling class thought the "Vietnam Syndrome" was dead, along comes director Oliver Stone with his controversial movie, "JFK." Only this can explain the subsequent avalanche of criticism that has landed on the film—and its director.

Stone's politically provocative film alleges that President John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, as the result of a conspiracy involving the CIA, anti-Castro Cubans, and the "military-industrial complex." He contends that the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was set up as a "patsy," and the conspiracy was then covered up.

"JFK" has struck a responsive chord among movie-goers, who are justifiably dubious of the Warren Commission Report conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin. Recent polls indicated that 56 percent of the population believed Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy.

But more than anything, "JFK" has struck a raw nerve among those who try to manipulate public opinion—the capitalist politicians and the major media.

Even before "JFK" was released to theaters around the country, a counter-offensive was launched against the film on the editorial pages of every major newspaper and magazine in the country—*Newsweek*, *Time*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*—and the list goes on. Miles of column space have been devoted to attacking Stone for "rewriting history" and turning "fiction into fact."

U.S. News and World Report called the film "several hours of shameless propaganda." One editor, Jack Limpert, of *Washingtonian Magazine*, was so outraged by "JFK" he refused to publish a glowing review of the film written by one of his staff critics.

Former President Gerald Ford, one of the two members serving on the Warren Commission who are still alive, was compelled to write a column in *The New York Times* debunking Stone's conspiracy thesis.

Arthur Schlesinger, a former Kennedy adviser and a biographer of his administration, attacked the veracity of the movie and then waxed agnostic about the conspiracy premise: "I find it difficult to exclude the conspiracy theory—or to accept it."

Why all the flak? After all, Stone's movie is based on two books—Jim Garrison's "On the Trail of the Assassins" and Jim Marr's "Crossfire"—that have been in circulation for years and never drew the fire Stone's movie has.

"Executive Action," a movie made in 1973, had almost the identical thesis as



JFK. It went virtually unnoticed, although you'll hardly ever see it on TV. What Stone has done with his \$30 million "docu-drama" is challenge the official version of Kennedy's murder with his own political scenario.

Stone's "JFK" sends a visceral political message. His main character in the movie, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, states during scene of the trial of Clay Shaw, that a virtual coup d'etat was accomplished when Kennedy was assassinated.

Kennedy's role glamorized

Stone's "JFK" is based on a syllogistic approach. His premise is that Kennedy planned to pull out of Vietnam and was contemplating *detente* with the Soviet Union and Cuba. The CIA, anti-Castro Cubans, and the "military-industrial complex" were opposed to any appeasement in the "war against communism." Therefore, Stone concludes, Kennedy had to be killed if the pro-war faction was to prevail.

The problem with Stone's hypothesis is that if one of his premises is proven wrong, than his conclusion falls to pieces.

Stone says that Kennedy ordered the withdrawal of 1000 U.S. "advisers" from the force of 16,000 in Vietnam and that he planned on withdrawing all troops by 1965. Four days after Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson contravened Kennedy's order with National Security Action Memo 273.

Kennedy is portrayed as a politician who wanted to end the Cold War and was martyred by the hit men of a secret government. But there is no firm proof that Kennedy intended to withdraw from Vietnam. On the contrary. It was Kennedy who increased the number of American "advis-

ers" in Vietnam from 700 in 1960 to 16,000 in 1963.

In public statements, Kennedy always spoke out of both sides of his mouth—depending on the audience. One month before his assassination, Kennedy condoned a military coup in South Vietnam in which the increasingly unreliable U.S.-installed puppet, President Diem and his brother, were killed. More than likely, Kennedy ordered the withdrawal of 1000 U.S. advisers as a pressure tactic to force the new South Vietnamese leaders to shape up in the war against the National Liberation Front.

Kennedy certainly didn't want to give the American people the wrong message. He signed a memorandum stating that "no formal announcement should be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963."

According to documents in Volumes 3 and 4 of the government publication, "Foreign Relations of the United States, Vietnam, 1963," Kennedy was firmly committed to staying the course in Vietnam.

Nor was Kennedy a "dove" when it came to protecting the interests of U.S. imperialism in other parts of the world.

He was an unrelenting opponent of the Cuban Revolution. He approved the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion; brought the world to the brink of nuclear disaster during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis; and authorized assassination attempts against Fidel Castro. Under the disguise of the UN, he intervened in the Belgian Congo in 1961 and faced off against Khrushchev during the Berlin crisis in 1962.

Kennedy, like any other chief executive of the U.S. ruling class (indeed, he was a

member of this elite circle), was incapable of carrying out any agenda that would vitiate the interests of his class.

Oliver Stone's unforgivable sin

The "dangerous" element in Oliver Stone's film that irks the powers-that-be is that while his specific scenario on Kennedy's assassination might be flawed, his basic contention that there was a conspiracy and a cover-up makes sense to people. While defending his film on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*, Stone said, "I cannot say—I do not say that this is a true story. But that it speaks to an inner truth."

Stone's sin of sins, in the eyes of the politicians and their literary pundits, is that he tapped into that reservoir of healthy skepticism that American working people reserve for the U.S. government.

During the press onslaught against "JFK," many of these well-paid scribblers pinned the movie's popularity on Americans' love for conspiracy theories. They say that not only Oliver Stone is paranoid—but the American people, too.

The press avoids the fact that the Vietnam War, Watergate, Conragate, and the dozens of other conspiracies uncovered over the years, make people think twice about the version of events they get from the government and the media.

Furthermore, Stone's attempt to connect the U.S. escalation of the Vietnam War with Kennedy's assassination has opened wounds that the capitalists thought they had closed with their lightning victory in the Gulf War.

We probably never will know who really killed Kennedy. That type of conspiracy never leaves a paper trail. However, Oliver Stone's campaign to get all files relating to the case—currently sealed until 2049—declassified and released should be supported.

While the files probably won't point to the killers—be they right-wingers, anti-Castro Cubans or CIA agents who perceived Kennedy as "soft on communism—they might expose those responsible for the cover-up.

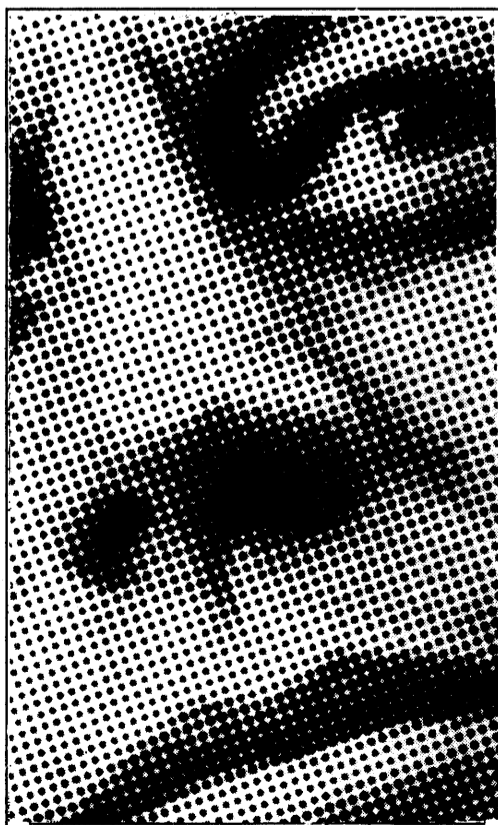
The basic contention of the now discredited Warren Commission Report was that Kennedy was killed by a left-winger, Lee Harvey Oswald, supposedly a Marxist who was active in Cuba solidarity work.

But voluminous research by investigators, like Mark Lane and Harold Weisberg, has revealed that Oswald, if anything, was an informant for the FBI and had numerous connections with anti-Castro paramilitary organizations.

It was certainly in the interest of the U.S. government in 1963 to pin the assassination on the left wing. It dove-tailed with their war drive.

Unlike the Warren Commission Report, Oliver Stone's "JFK", despite its political naivete, is not an attempt to "rewrite history" or "turn fiction into fact." On the contrary, "JFK" is an attempt to create pressure to correct the historical record.

In this regard it has certainly succeeded.



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Theme at National Organization for Women conference: 'We Won't Go Back!'



JOSEPH RYAN/SOCIALIST ACTION

By JULIA STEINBERG
and LINDA THOMPSON

To commemorate its 25th anniversary, the National Organization for Women (NOW) held a Global Feminist Conference in Washington, D.C., Jan. 9-12. Approximately 1000 attended. The conference was marked by a spirit that could be best expressed in NOW's assertion, "We won't go back."

At NOW's invitation, participants came together from 45 different countries to share their experiences building the women's movement. Two plenary sessions were held in which women leaders from around the globe addressed the entire conference.

Most of the speeches given by international guests underscored the comments of NOW President Patricia Ireland, who said that an international backlash is taking place against the rising organization, militancy, and expectations of women. Ireland, who has taken over the presidency from Molly Yard, attributed the backlash to the successes of NOW and the feminist movement generally.

Gisele Halime, a collaborator of author Simone de Beauvoir and a leading feminist from France, spoke of that government's attempts to limit and attack women's right to reproductive freedom. She pointed out that rape was made a crime in France as late as 1980.

Middle Eastern women discussed the threats to women's human rights stemming from the rising fundamentalist movement in their countries.

Aminata Diop, a Malian woman who was sold into marriage at age 17, spoke of her attempt to avoid genital mutilation by seeking political asylum in France. According to misogynist village culture, women in many African countries are "purified" for marriage by slicing off the clitoris and the inner labia with an unsterilized blade and no anesthesia.

There is a rising international movement expressing outrage at the systematic mutilation of over 100 million women of urban and rural areas of Africa and the Middle East. According to Diop's lawyer, if the French court grants her refugee status, it would be the first acknowledgement of a woman's right to flee patriarchal repression.

Oppression of Palestinian women

A disruption of the conference occurred during the presentation of Hanan Ashrawi, spokesperson for the Palestinians at the Middle East talks.

Ashrawi noted that Palestinian women are denied the right to bear children because of induced abortions from Israeli tear gas and beatings. She said that 45 percent of the students at Bir Zeit University, which has been closed by the Israeli government,

were women. With its closure, women's enrollment in higher education in the country has dropped to 25 percent.

Ashwari urged American feminists, "Stop sending military aid to Israel. Stop paying for the deportation of our people." She was heckled and booed after these remarks and several other times during her speech (the only speech of the conference to be attacked in this way) by the newly formed Jewish feminist caucus.

Patricia Ireland then accepted the demands of the caucus that the program include a speech by Dr. Alice Shalvi, head of the

Israeli Women's Network—in addition to Tamara Gozansky, the scheduled speaker and a member of the Israel Knesset. The caucus members charged that Gozansky is a Communist and a member of the Israeli Peace Party, and would be unlikely to oppose Aswari's views.

For a New Party

The second plenary session was titled "A Capitol Briefing: Overview of the Agendas and Action Plans of Traditional Allies of the U.S. Feminist Movement." It included speakers from most of the major U.S.

NOW sends mixed signals with formation of new party

By JULIA STEINBERG

A common theme of the NOW Silver Anniversary Global Feminist Conference was the need for more women to have political power. Eleanor Smeal, from the Fund for a Feminist Majority, spoke at the conference on the formation of a new political party in the United States.

Smeal, who chaired NOW's Commission for Responsive Democracy, explained that after hearing testimony from many people around the country, the Commission had voted in September to recommend a new party be formed. She said that the national board of NOW had voted to endorse this recommendation.

Although the final decision is supposed to be made by the NOW membership at next summer's convention, organizational measures are already being taken toward the establishment of the New Party.

Smeal announced that a contest will be held to name the party. In the meantime, literature and membership applications are being issued in the name of New Party, USA.

Six co-conveners of the New Party have been named—Monica Faith Stewart, the first African American woman to be elected to the Illinois State legislature; Mel King of the Rainbow Coalition (an adjunct of the Democratic Party); NOW President Patricia Ireland; Dolores Huerta of the United Farm Workers Union; Sarah Nelson, executive director of the Christic Institute; and Eleanor Smeal.

Daniel Sheehan of the Christic Institute has agreed to serve as general counsel for the New Party. A founding conference is tentatively scheduled for Aug. 26, 1992.

Following the session at which Smeal spoke, a table was set up at which she and Dolores Huerta, who had also spoken on behalf of the New Party, accepted membership applications from conference participants.

Sentiment for a new party is high among NOW activists. For years, supporters of women's rights have supported Democratic Party candidates for office, only to find that the Democrats' lip service to social change goes no further than election day.

A breakaway from the dead end of supporting one of the two parties of big business would be a great step forward for the women's movement. Unfortunately, the New Party does not appear to be heading in this direction.

In her speech at the conference, Smeal referred to the 1980 election for U.S. Senator from New York State, in which Republican Alfonse D'Amato defeated Democrat Elizabeth Holtzman by several percentage points. She explained that D'Amato won because he ran not only as a Republican but also on the Conservative and Right to Life Party tickets, and concluded that if the New Party had existed Holtzman could have won the election.

This strategy of using the New Party to support "good" Democrats is a recipe for failure. To make real change happen, NOW needs to break all ties with the Democratic and Republican parties.

The first step should be for NOW to refuse to support any Democratic or Republican candidates for office. Then, the organization should join with others struggling for social change—above all, in the labor movement—to form a truly independent political party that actively challenges the oppression fostered by the ruling rich. ■

organizations that had collaborated with NOW on the national hearings for a New Party organized by the Commission for Responsive Democracy. Once into the agenda, it was clear that the plenary was actually a rally to announce the New Party. (See accompanying article.)

Many of the speakers expressed their growing anger and frustration with the Democratic Party, as did Patricia Ireland's opening remarks and comments to the press. Ireland was quoted by *The New York Times* as saying, "I am less than interested in playing with the boys in the Democratic Party anymore."

Unfortunately, Ireland failed to draw the necessary conclusion of making a complete break from support to Democratic Party candidates. Instead, she stressed the importance of defeating George Bush in the presidential elections.

Ginny Montes, the new national secretary of NOW and a native of Honduras, spoke about the assault on the voting rights of Black people and the undemocratic redistricting of voting districts to insure white rule. Susan Holleran, from AFSCME and vice-president of the Washington D.C. chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) pointed out that the unions that are most successful today are those that are aggressively organizing women.

Other speakers included Urvashi Vaid, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Peter Bahouth, executive director of Greenpeace; Carol Fennelly of the Community for Creative Nonviolence; Ann Caspar of the Campaign for Women's Health; Daniel Sheehan of the Christic Institute; Lisa Navarette, director of public relations for the National Council of La Raza; and a representative from Amnesty International.

Discussions at the conference reflected the breadth of the issues confronting women today. Working groups met throughout the three days of the conference on topics such as violence against women, race and culture conflict, health and reproductive rights, political empowerment, and the international backlash against feminism.

In addition to the working groups, workshops were held on disability rights, indigenous women, trafficking in women, women in the environmental movement, women workers, and many other topics.

Violence against women

The final plenary ended with reports of the deliberations of the working groups. The working group on violence reported on the politics of violence against women and how it is used to exploit and maintain women's inferior status. Rape and domestic violence were discussed, as well as genital mutilation, forced prostitution, and bride burning.

Reporters documented that violence against women is escalating and must be seen as a vital international human rights issue. NOW reports that since 1974, the rate of assaults against young women (ages 20-24) has jumped almost 50 percent, while it has declined for men.

Thirty-seven percent of women will be physically or sexually abused by the age of 21. Three out of four women will be victims of violent crimes in their lifetime.

The health and reproductive rights working group discussed the needs, resources, and laws which have an impact on women's health and reproductive freedom. The upcoming April 5 March on Washington was discussed.

Dominique Torsat from the French Family Planning Movement explained that French women are supporting their sisters in Poland who are fighting to keep abortion legal. They distributed postcards in French and Polish to be sent to the Polish legislature.

The race and culture working group was called to determine the extent of racial discrimination globally and to discuss remedies. It appears that NOW is under pressure from its ranks and women of color to address the issue of its predominantly white membership.

Overall, the conference was educational for those who participated in the international discussions. Suggestions were made for continuing networking and common actions. There was no opportunity, however, to discuss or vote on any of the proposals. ■



JOSEPH RYAN/SOCIALIST ACTION

By TINA BEACOCK

Women at *Roe v. Wade* rallies say: 'On to April 5!'

On Jan. 22, the anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, pro-choice rallies, picket lines, and "human billboards" were organized around the country. Women and their supporters used these activities to get out the call for the April 5 March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C.

The march, initiated by the National Organization for Women (NOW), is expected to be the largest demonstration ever in defense of women's reproductive freedom.

The U.S. Supreme Court fired the opening shot for the year with the announcement that it will consider the case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the restrictive Pennsylvania law. The Court's announcement raises the prospect of the complete reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. The law requires parental consent, a 24-hour waiting period, spousal notification, and "counseling" on the abortion procedure and alternatives.

As a recent letter from the NOW leadership states, organizers expect the April 5 march to be "the largest outpouring of support for the constitutional right of women to reproductive freedom in history. The

Washington politicians must see us, hear us, and feel the thunder of our steps when we march for reproductive rights. Our massive numbers and our mobilized majority are our best hope to protect and restore the right of all women to birth control and legal abortion."

The letter to NOW activists also points out that "44 million women, including women in the military, young women, poor women—who are disproportionately women of color—have already had their rights to abortion restricted or denied. Consequently, this march and mass rally must focus not only on maintaining the rights we've already won, but will demand that the rights of all women be restored."

On April 5, marchers will assemble at 10 a.m. at the Ellipse, and they will step off at 12 noon. At the Global Feminist conference held in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 9-12, NOW president Patricia Ireland urged international participation in the march.

In preparation for the April 5 rally,

NOW chapters in the Baltimore area have reserved buses to attend. In Boston, 2000 braved the cold to attend a march and indoor rally sponsored by the Coalition for Choice. Participants received a leaflet for an initial planning meeting for April 5 to be held on Feb. 3.

In Chicago, 300 stood and marched in the rain at a rally called by the Emergency Clinic Defense Coalition. Local NOW chapters also sponsored actions, including a picket of the Democratic Party headquarters in Oak Park, Ill., on Jan. 25.

In St. Paul, Minn., approximately 250 women and their supporters—organized by NOW, NARAL, and student groups—filled the State Capitol rotunda on Jan. 19 and heard about April 5.

Last month, Rosemary Dempsey, editor of the *National NOW Times*, toured college campuses in Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio to build support for April 5. Speaking to students in Cincinnati, Dempsey called for a million people to march on Washington. Student

groups in the Cincinnati area are already making plans to go to Washington.

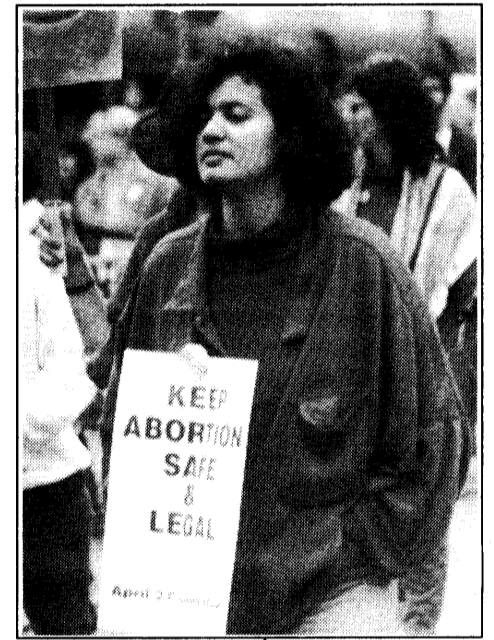
In Cleveland, eight buses have been reserved, and a letter to 300 organizations has gone out asking for participation and endorsements. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, plans are being made to organize flights to Washington, D.C.

Over 300 people attended a noon rally in downtown San Francisco on Jan. 22. The main theme of the rally was to build support for a "March for Women's Lives" in San Francisco on March 29. This march, expected to be huge, is seen as a building action for April 5.

Much work remains to be done to realize the goal of getting a million people to Washington, D.C., on April 5.

The potential exists to mobilize women, students, union members, Black and Latino communities, and all those who see the hypocrisy of a government that talks about the "sanctity of life" while it cuts money for healthcare, childcare, education, and welfare.

As the NOW leadership stated, "Our massive numbers and our mobilized majority are our best hope to protect and restore the right of all women to birth control and legal abortion." For more information on April 5, call the NOW national headquarters at (202) 331-0066. ■



Abortion rights and the 1992 elections

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

During January, the women's rights movement celebrated what many fear will be the final anniversary of the landmark *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion.

The Court has now decided to rule on the Pennsylvania anti-abortion law, which challenges *Roe v. Wade* by adding a range of restrictions on a women's right to private choice. As a result, reproductive rights organizations have had to refine their strategy for keeping the rights we *do* have intact.

Several groups have enunciated a perspective that makes the 1992 elections the centerpiece of their strategy. This perspective was explained with all its justifications by Elizabeth Toledo at a January meeting sponsored by San Francisco chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Toledo is the chapter President.

Her argument went like this: *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned. And even if it isn't overturned, it has been so badly compromised already that the right to abortion must be reconquered. The courts offer no redress for women, and therefore, women must get a bill that would guarantee the right to abortion through the U.S. Congress. In order to get Congress to pass such a bill the composition of Congress has to change. More pro-choice candidates have to be elected.

She said that women also have to be prepared to compromise on the bill, perhaps

accepting a version that does not guarantee the rights of young women to abortion. All other tactics, such as mass demonstrations (like NOW's projected April 5 March on Washington), are subordinate to this electoral strategy.

Besides laying out this perspective, Toledo justified NOW's joining with Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and the ACLU in arguing for the Supreme Court to take the Pennsylvania case on the grounds that if the court were to rule against *Roe v. Wade* prior to the election, the pro-choice majority would be galvanized into voting out anti-choice candidates. Abortion would be the central election issue in 1992.

The problem with this perspective is that it ignores the dismal electoral experience of the women's movement—and of the labor movement as well. In both cases, an electoral strategy similar to the one espoused by Toledo and other NOW leaders has led to defeats.

It wasn't always so. For example, early efforts to win the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution used a variety of tactics, including mass demonstrations and a giant publicity campaign to convince the people of the social justice of the cause for legal equality. These activities were so effective that they won an unprecedented two-year extension from Congress for ratification.

After the extension was granted, however, the movement decided to switch to an electoral strategy. Movement resources—human and financial—were used to elect "pro-ERA" candidates to state legislatures

in order to assure ratification in a few hold-out states.

The problem with this strategy soon became horrifyingly apparent. The very same candidates elected by the blood and sweat of countless women on their promise to support the ERA turned around, once in office, and voted the Amendment down. They were more loyal to the Democratic and Republican arms of the capitalist system than to the people who elected them to office.

The only explanation that makes sense for the betrayal is this: The capitalist system profits directly from the unequal treatment of women and oppressed nationalities. The less wages women make, the greater the profit for the capitalists. The division between male and female workers is enormously effective in keeping both their wages depressed and their ability to unite and fight for a better wage impaired.

For half a century, likewise, the labor movement has been working to elect their Democratic Party "friends" to Congress. In the 1950s, the Democrats garnered votes on the promise to oppose the Taft-Hartley Bill. Yet even when the Democrats had a solid Congressional majority, this promise was not kept.

Only when workers organized their own power—through their unions, on the job, and in the street—were significant advances made for workers' rights to a decent standard of living and working conditions.

The electoral policy of supporting one party against the other is bankrupt because the both capitalist parties are hostile to the rights of women and working people as a whole.

Someday, when working people have broken away from capitalist politics—as usual and form their own labor party of men and women of all colors and nationalities, then an electoral strategy could, as an adjunct to other forms of independent

struggle, be meaningful.

It is true, as Toledo affirmed, that the courts refuse to redress women's grievances, and it is also true that the rights codified in *Roe v. Wade* have been steadily chipped away since the mid-1970s. But it is wrong to try to pin the hopes of women on an electoral strategy to solve these real problems.

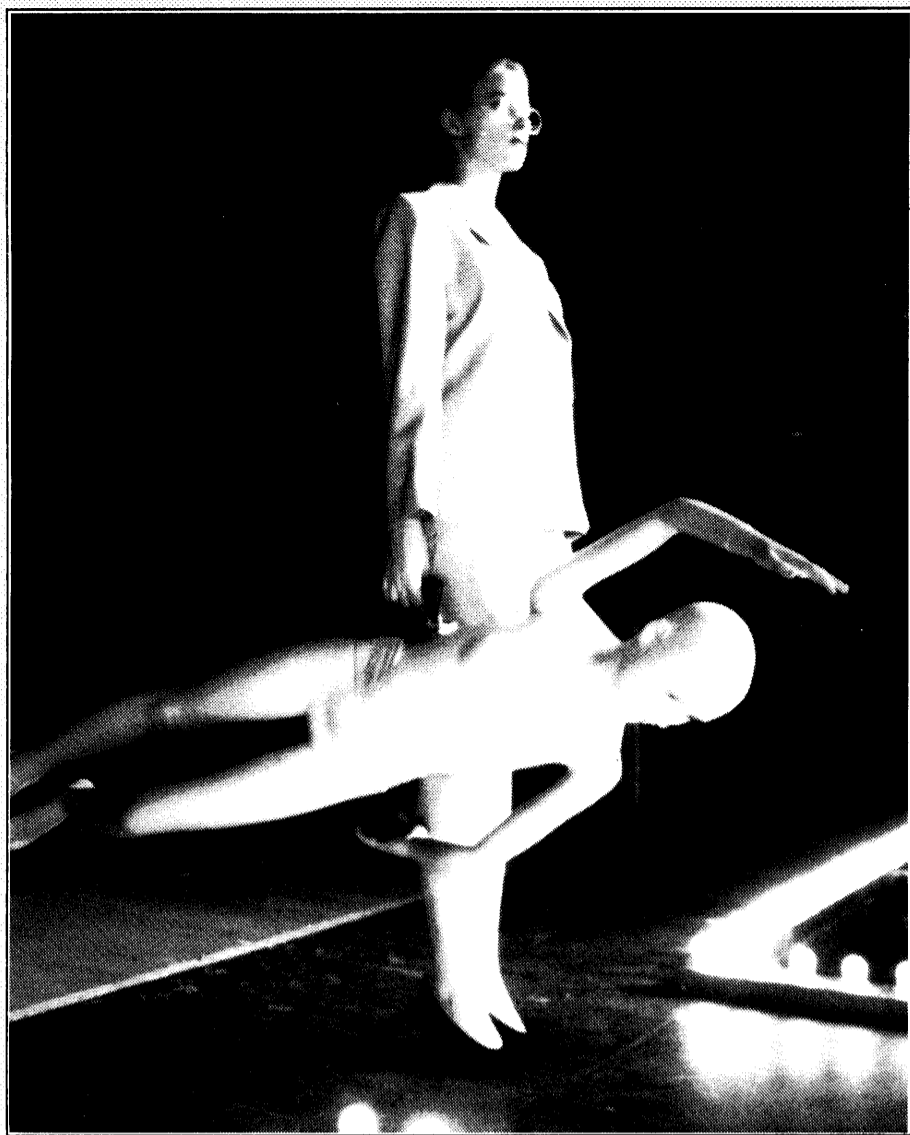
Electoral politics will only be a viable tactic when a party is organized that is truly independent of the capitalists and solely dependent on the working class.

The New Party being set up by NOW at this time hardly looks like such an independent party. How could it be when NOW is supporting the likes of rich Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer for the U.S. Senate?

In fact, support for "friends" like these is probably what leads NOW leaders like Elizabeth Toledo to talk about possible compromises in a bill that hasn't even been proposed yet!

The only possible answer is the independent mobilization of women and men who support women's rights. This means street mobilizations that are organized to galvanize public opinion and raise the stakes for those in power if they dare to oppose the pro-choice majority (now over two-thirds of the population!). Mobilizations that are used as campaign rallies for Democrats or Republicans would blunt the effectiveness of their rallies' message.

Abortion rights will be a central issue in U.S. electoral politics in 1992, especially if hundreds of thousands march on Washington, D.C., on April 5. But the only way to insure that pro-choice activists stay mobilized beyond April 5—go back to their communities and win even greater public support—is to refuse to lull them with false hopes and promises—false because they urge them to put their faith in the enemies of women's rights. ■



Director Gilday examines pressure on women to look a "certain" way

By JOYCE STOLLER

"*The Famine Within*," a documentary film produced and directed by Katherine Gilday.

"I'd rather be dead than be fat," asserts an emaciated young woman in "*The Famine Within*." This new film examines a little-talked-about side of female oppression—the expectation to *look*, if not act, in a preordained way.

Every day, people are bombarded by thousands of images of svelte, slim, 110-pound, beautiful women. On TV and in films, billboards, and magazines, the images purveyed of women are all based on what we look like, rather than what we do in the world. These *models* are the only role models proffered to young women, and many become obsessed with a culturally imposed ideal that is unrealistic and unrealizable for the vast majority.

According to the film, the prevailing cultural misogyny is so virulent that millions of women are suffering and dying from eating disorders.

"The cult of the body is the only coherent philosophy of self that women are offered," says a cultural historian in the film, and this amounts to a "brilliant

form of political oppression."

To be sure, female suppression of our appetites and needs, even as we provide for others, is deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian culture, beginning with Eve eating the apple getting us kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Medieval women starved themselves as a gesture of piety.

And who can forget Scarlet O'Hara eating before she went to a party in "*Gone With the Wind*," and then stuffing herself into a corset so that she wouldn't eat anything when she was actually with other people? Girdles, brassiers, garter belts, and heels, besides restricting women's movement, are all designed to make us look taller and thinner than we naturally are.

An explosion of eating disorders

For centuries, women have been socialized to think of ourselves first and foremost as a "sight" for others. But despite, and perhaps because of, women's changing roles and aspirations, there has been a 30-year trend towards an ever-slimmer ideal. This has led to an explosion of eating disorders that are as common today as sexual repression was in its day.

The average five-foot, eight-inch Miss America contestant weighed 132 lbs. in

Why are women 'dying' to be thin?

1954 and 117 lbs. in 1980. The average North American woman is five-feet, four-inches tall and weighs 144 lbs., while the average model is five-feet, ten-inches tall and weighs 111 lbs., or 23 percent less than average.

In Gilday's film, a modeling agency executive describes a contest they held to turn up "new talent." Forty thousand women applied, and only four were thought to have possibilities.

The film then considers the extent to which even young girls are subject to society's mania for thinness. A recent study found that 80 percent of fourth-grade girls in California had already been on their first diets. Another survey found that 75 percent of young women thought themselves too fat, even though 45 percent of them were actually underweight. Over half of North American women are on a diet at any given time, and they are happier about losing weight than about success in their careers or in love.

This debilitating physical ideal has enriched the pushers of diets, weight-reduction drugs, fitness centers, and liposuction. At the same time, it has engendered an epidemic of anorexia nervosa (self-starvation) and bulimia (eating, then throwing up or using laxatives). It is estimated that 25 percent of women suffer from one of these disorders, and that is only one end of a long continuum.

Chris Alt, the heavier sister of supermodel Carol Alt (she of the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue), described how she felt when she saw a picture of Karen Carpenter shortly before the singer died of anorexia: "I thought she was lucky to be that skinny when she died, and I wondered how I could get that thin without dying."

Any number of female role models have acknowledged that they too were anorexic or bulimic to fit into their assigned roles. They include actress Jane Fonda, gymnast Nadia Comaneci, and ballerina Suzanne Farrell—who reports in her autobiography that the dance world is a breeding ground for bulimia, and that North American ballerinas are on average 10 lbs. lighter than their European counterparts.

"I'm always going to eat later, and later never comes," says Linda, a 27-year-old anorexic interviewed in the film. Linda, like 15 percent of all anorexics, is dead now.

"*The Famine Within*" explores not just the pathology of eating disorders; it tries to put them in a cultural context. Like

famine, millions of women starving themselves is a *social* phenomenon, not just an individual psychological aberration.

The film's title describes the inner emptiness that women feel that can never be satisfied with food, and how, given the lack of viable role models and opportunities, women's energy is absorbed by the one thing we think we can control—the size and shape of our bodies.

Taking the die out of diet

In the film, we learn that women are naturally predisposed to be fatter than men, and that a certain amount of body fat is necessary for both menstruation and childbirth. The trend towards an ever-skinny ideal is seen as a backlash against women's growing power (if not their size). Roundness is identified with femininity and passivity, and leanness with competence and success.

The film goes on to explain that there isn't a strong correlation between calories and body size, and that yo-yo dieting can actually cause you to gain weight because it slows down the rate of metabolism. (Witness the public examples of Elizabeth Taylor and Oprah Winfrey—who lost 67 lbs. on a liquid diet, only to gain it all back).

In polar opposition to thin ("you can never be too rich or too thin") the social stigma attached to obesity has come to symbolize only negative characteristics—e.g., "fat and ugly," "fat and stupid," "fat and lazy."

"We've created a morals of biology, as if fat were a moral characteristic instead of a physical one," cultural anthropologist Margaret MacKensie says in the film.

The recent spate of interest in women's complex relationship with food and the stereotypes that feed it (Henry Jaglom's recent "Eating" and the comic strip "Cathy") have given new meaning to the old phrase "fat is a feminist issue." As social and political barriers fall for women, we are still imprisoned by a cultural ethos that enjoins us to change just ourselves, and not the society that has given rise to such misbegotten attempts.

When high-profile men like Gandhi and Bobby Sands starve themselves, it's considered a political event. But when millions of women do it, they're considered fashion casualties and die unnamed and unknown. That may be difficult to stomach, but it's certainly food for thought. ■

Gunman terrorizes women's clinic in Missouri

By BOB KUTCHKO

KANSAS CITY—On Dec. 28, a lone gunman entered a Springfield, Mo., women's health clinic, opened fire four times, and wounded two people. As a result of the violent attack, operators of the Central Health Center for Women have announced that they will not re-open.

So far, no arrests been made, and Springfield police claim to have no suspects or even a firm motive for the assault.

Accounts by witnesses have established that the gunman acted in a premeditated manner. He entered the clinic wearing a ski mask and toting a 12-gauge shotgun, and demanded to see the doctor. Before fleeing, he scuffled with and shot the clinic manager in the back and the owner of the building in the stomach. Both victims were still hospitalized in fair condition a week after the attack.

The chilling effect of the attack on providers of women's healthcare in the Southwest Missouri area was immediate. The permanent closing of the clinic leaves only one other Springfield women's clinic as the only place in this Ozark Mountains "Bible Belt" region where a woman can obtain an abortion.

Abortion rights supporters and providers in the area are anxious and feel under siege. "Our staff is much more cautious and skittish," said Jane Boles, spokesperson for Planned Parenthood of Southwest Missouri.

Anti-choice activists took a grim satisfaction in the terrorist event. The *Kansas City Star* quoted Missouri Right To Life spokesperson Margaret Schatz as saying: "We certainly don't condone what happened. But it is one less abortion clinic we have to deal with. And it has strengthened the people who want to close other clinics even more."

Abortion opponents and newspapers have also deflected outrage at the violent attack by focusing on alleged malpractice by two doctors at the Springfield clinics. Yet anti-choice pressure itself is the biggest cause of denying first-rate healthcare to women, as physicians nationally continue to bow to intimidation and cease to provide legal and accessible abortion services.

Operation Rescue fails in D.C. attacks

By JULIA STEINBERG

Hundreds of enthusiastic clinic defenders mobilized at 5:30 a.m. in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia, prepared to confront Operation Rescue's "Capitol Project" attacks on Washington-area women's health clinics Jan. 20-22.

Operation Rescue (OR) had announced its campaign to make Washington, D.C., "another Wichita" during the week of Jan. 22, the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion throughout the United States. (This summer OR carried out several weeks of massive blockades of abortion clinics in Wichita, Kan.)

However, reality was far different than Operation Rescue's plans. Although OR had announced three days of activities, no blockades took place on Monday, Jan. 20. On Tuesday, three Washington clinics were blockaded by anti-abortion fanatics. Two remained open throughout the attack due to well-organized pro-choice escorts and clinic defenders, who were able to ensure that patients could safely enter. The third clinic was closed for 15 minutes, but quickly reopened for all patients.

On Jan. 22, which was supposed to be the culmination of their activities, OR found itself outnumbered by militant pro-choice activists. The less than 300 "rescuers" who attempted to shut down two clinics were met by approximately 700 defenders. OR was also stymied when their plans to transport themselves in the back of U-Haul trucks was disclosed by pro-choice shadowers to the police, who declared their attempt illegal and removed them from the trucks.

When Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, arrived at one of the clinics, he was greeted with chants of "All the clinics are open!" and "Operation Failure!"

Michele Douglas of the Maryland Clinic Defense Task Force, explained afterwards: "We are much more galvanized and able to outsmart and outnumber them. They have proven by yesterday's actions that they are the fanatical extreme. That is why their numbers are dropping. Our numbers continue to increase, as through outreach, the pro-choice community—which we know is the majority—understands the need to oppose the fanatical fringe."

Erik Larsen sends greetings from Camp Lejeune brig

Dear friends at *Socialist Action*,

Thank you for the latest issue. I'm confined to the brig, and my new address is the following: Erik Larsen, 563491139, Building 1041, Camp Lejeune, N.C., 28542.

Doing time isn't as bad as some might think. I've been on active duty at Camp Lejeune since March waiting for my court martial, so in a sense I've already been marking time.

Regimental military life in general is like prison. You can't do what you want, and there is someone always looking over your shoulder to keep you in line.

The power relationship between the sergeant and the private is similar to what exists between the guard and the prisoner. Do as you're told, and don't question authority, or else! That is the maxim.

Unlike the active duty Marine, though, if I disobeyed orders, I would go into solitary (segregation), get a diet restricted to 700 calories per meal, and lose privileges, such as reading or writing materials. The worse punishment is going to Q Row, which means being put

into a metal cell, with a concrete floor and no clothes and a blanket.

Currently I share a squad bay with 30 other men, and I'm required to keep my belongings under my bunk in a footlocker. My living situation is best likened to [the] Spartan living conditions of a recent recruit to the army, minus the constant harassment of a drill instructor.

By and large, time goes pretty quickly on the weekdays, because of the work details prisoners are assigned. Working in the workshop making tables or picking up garbage on a base work detail, for example, keeps one's mind busy on a task.

I've been assigned to the sewing shop to repair torn sleeping bags and other serviceable military items.

Free time starts at 1800 hours [6:00 p.m.] on the weekdays and at 0900 [9:00 a.m.] on holidays and weekends. It consists of a five-minute warm shower, a few hours of watching TV or listening to the radio, and plenty of time to read and write. Some of my fellow prisoners enjoy playing backgammon, spades,

chess or other games to pass along the hours.

I've lived in isolation—even from family, friends, and supporters—for the last eight months, and have experienced limited freedom, being at Camp Lejeune without transportation. So, incarceration in a military prison is not that great a shock to me. It's not much different from what I've already experienced in boot camp and on active duty.

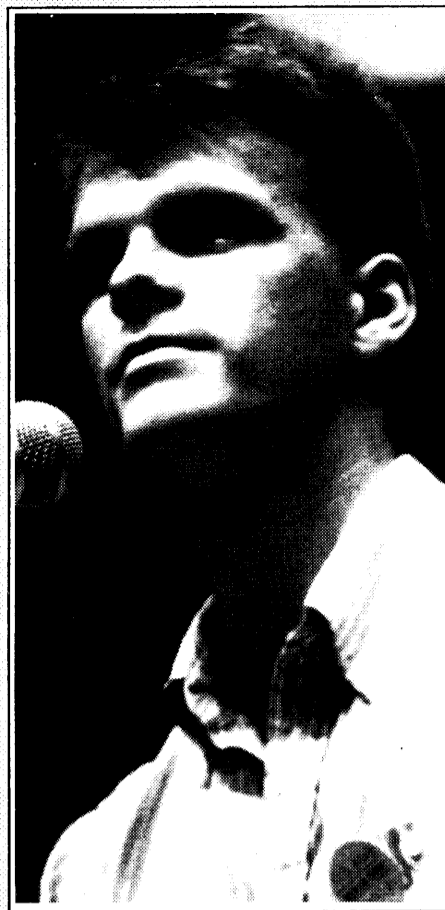
I don't regret one bit standing up for my beliefs and speaking out against the United States' imperialist policies. I'll be out of prison before I know it and back out organizing for a mass movement for economic and social justice.

Thank you for all your support. It is through the work of folks like yourself that I've been able to beat down the Marine Corps' ridiculous threats of seven years to life and end up only being charged with unauthorized missing of a troop movement.

I'll see you all in five months!

In solidarity with the other resisters.

Erik Larsen



Tahan Jones (center), flanked by defense attorney John Murcko (l.) and defense committee coordinator Clay Mahan (r.)

Support for Tahan Jones grows as court martial nears

By JEFF MACKLER

As the Feb. 24 court-martial trial of Marine Corps Gulf War resister Corporal Tahan Jones approaches, public support for this courageous antiwar fighter has escalated.

Amnesty International has declared Jones to be a prisoner of conscience, thereby increasing the pressure on the Marine Corps to retreat from its threat to impose a maximum penalty of seven years incarceration.

Jones is charged with desertion to avoid hazardous duty and missing a troop movement, charges which have brought Gulf War resisters stationed in Germany a jail sentence of five years and U.S. resisters sentences of up to two and one-half years in the brig.

Roger Sheppard of the New England Defense Committee for Tahan Jones and Erik Larsen reports statements of support from several individuals prominent in public life.

Boston University Professor Howard Zinn, for example, writing on behalf of Jones, Erik Larsen, and all other Gulf War resisters observes: "All of these military resisters to war are part of a long historic tradition from the American colonists who refused to fight in the British king's war, to those soldiers who refused to fight in the Mexican War, to the Black GIs who identified with the Filipino rebels who fought against American occupation at the turn of the century, to the conscientious objectors of both world wars, and the great GI movement against the Vietnam War."

In a similar vein, author Kurt Vonnegut's solidarity statement reads: "No liberty-loving American patriot—and especially one who has served as a front-line soldier in a war for the survival of all that is decent and humane—can celebrate or

even tolerate the severe punishment of two of our citizens, whether in uniform or not, for declining to behave like unreasoning conscienceless robots when there is not one iota of a national emergency to justify their behaving otherwise."

"Those who refused to participate in this shameful atrocity, rejecting the use of violence on principled grounds," writes Noam Chomsky, "deserve our firm support and our gratitude for showing that human values still remain alive."

Meanwhile, Marine Corps authorities, consistent with the contempt demonstrated for the legal rights of all GI resisters previously herded into Camp Lejeune, N.C., for kangaroo court martials, have ignored virtually every pre-trial motion brought by Jones. Defense attorney John Murcko told *Socialist Action* that all 15 witnesses requested by Jones to present evidence on his behalf—with the single exception of his mother, Mini'mah Mustafa—have been denied.

Jones's application for conscientious-objector status was similarly denied despite the favorable recommendation of Marine Corps chaplain H. L. Kibble.

An African American reservist from Oakland, Calif., Jones was among the most outspoken opponents of U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf, often pointing to the racist nature of the war and its disproportionate negative effects on the Black community.

Letters and calls demanding that all charges against Jones be dropped should be addressed to: Commanding General C. L. Vermilyea, 4th MAW, FMF, USMCR, 4400 Dauphine Street, New Orleans, LA 70146. Telephone: (504) 948-1210.

Support for Jones is being organized nationally by the Tahan Jones/Erik Larsen Defense Committee, 1678 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone: (510) 655-1201. Contributions are urgently requested.

Mark Curtis denied parole until he admits 'guilt'

By BARRY SHEPPARD

Frame-up victim Mark Curtis, a member of the Socialist Workers Party, continues to languish in a jail in Iowa under a 25-year sentence for attempted burglary. He is also serving a concurrent term of 10 years for attempted rape, part of the same frame-up.

In November 1991 the Iowa State Board of Parole denied him parole on the Catch-22 grounds that he maintains his innocence. Until and unless he says he is guilty and enrolls in a prison-run behavior modification program he won't get parole according to the Board in spite of the fact he is a model prisoner.

The Parole Board's real aim is to silence Curtis's defense campaign, which

loved the "Mexicans as well as the coloreds."

Curtis was then subjected to a police campaign to turn him from the victim into the criminal. When his defense campaign got going, supporters of the police mounted a counter-campaign of slander and misinformation.

He was taken through a trial rigged against him, and denied his right to present crucial evidence on his own behalf, including concerning his political and union activity that was clearly the motivation behind the cops' drive to get him.

He was convicted on the testimony of a cop who had previously been suspended from the police force for lying and brutality in another case.

The wide support for Curtis's right to



has gained impressive support in the unions and elsewhere. The Parole Board, in short, is trying to blackmail Curtis into admitting he was guilty.

Curtis told the Board he was willing to go through any program that did not entail his admitting he was guilty.

Curtis was arrested on March 4, 1988. Earlier in the day he spoke out at a public protest meeting in defense of 17 Mexican and Salvadoran coworkers. They had been arrested by U.S. Immigration police during a raid at the Swift/Montfort meat-processing plant where Curtis worked.

Cops took Curtis to a room in the police station where they stripped and cuffed him and beat him unmercifully. It took 15 stitches to close a gash over his eye. He suffered a "blowout" fracture, where the bone is broken from the inside by intense swelling in the eye socket and was bruised from head to toe. As they beat him, the cops jeered that Curtis

be released on parole was obvious when Parole Board member Barbara Binnie stated to Curtis, "You have attempted to make this case a political circus," referring to the stacks of mail the Board received demanding Curtis's release.

"You'll have plenty of opportunity [to appeal]," she gloated, "since we have you until 2001."

At that date, Curtis will have served half his sentence and would be released unless he is convicted of infractions while in prison.

As a parting shot, Binnie jeered, "if you win your appeal [of the Board's ruling] let us know."

In a separate action, Curtis is suing the cops for the beating he took. The suit was heard before a judge at the end of November, and a decision is pending.

To get more information and to help gain new support, contact the defense committee at Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. ■

New World Order: Poverty with a pay check

By HAYDEN PERRY

"The Working Poor." A documentary program by Bill Moyers. Shown on the PBS television network, Jan. 8, 1992.

"We are creating a work force that can barely afford to buy the goods and services it produces. ... For more than a decade, changes in the global and domestic economy have lowered wages, creating what some have called a 'silent depression'"

With these words, TV commentator Bill Moyers introduced viewers to the city of Milwaukee in a PBS documentary entitled "The Working Poor." Here the working class is divided into two groups: "Those who work for a living and make it, and those who work for a living and can't make it." In a series of interviews with Milwaukee workers, Moyers makes the problem a living reality for the viewer.

For years, a major employer in the city has been Briggs and Stratton, makers of small gasoline motors. This firm, and others like it, offered thousands of high school graduates jobs that paid enough to buy a car and home, and to raise a family. Strong unions brought wage rates to the range of from \$12 to \$17 an hour. Company-paid health insurance further buttressed the workers' sense of security.

In the '80s, however, the rise in wages came to an abrupt halt. For six years Briggs and Stratton workers got no pay increases. Moyers quotes Ellen Bravo, executive secretary of an employment research organization: "There was a con-

scious decision by many business leaders back in the mid-70s ... to cheapen the work force," she told Moyers. "That meant investing overseas, it meant making jobs part time and temporary, lowering benefits and wages, keeping the minimum wage low."

For Briggs and Stratton, this meant moving jobs to other states and to Mexico—where a worker earned less in a day than a Milwaukee employee made in an hour. Thousands of Briggs workers, who believed they had a secure future, found themselves on the street.

Moyers' documentary takes the viewer into the homes of some of the laid-off factory workers. We see directly the devastating effect of plant closings on young families. The bread winners gradually confront two chilling facts: they will never get their old jobs back, and they are very unlikely to get another job that pays as much

"What can I offer a family?"

Steve Laren, 30, was laid off by Briggs two years ago. He was making \$12 an hour. Now he works as a security guard for \$4.50 an hour. He is not guaranteed a full week. Steve's standard of living has plummeted.

Asked what was the worst aspect of his reduced circumstances, Steve replied, "When I haven't had enough to eat ... when I have had to go to an outreach program and ask someone for food. It was the most embarrassing, dehumanizing part of this whole episode." Unfortunately, underem-

ployment is becoming a lasting episode for Steve and thousands of other workers.

In two years of active searching, Steve has not found a job comparable to the one he lost. As Steve's job prospects dim, his hopes of starting a family fade. Steve asks, "What can I offer a family on wages of \$4.50 an hour?"

That dilemma also faces workers who are raising families. Tony Neuman has a wife, three children and a mortgaged house. Moyers introduces them as "The first postwar generation of Americans expected to do worse financially than their parents."

Tony made \$10 an hour at Briggs. Since being laid off, he has been offered only \$6 an hour for comparable work. They cannot pay the \$820 monthly mortgage payment and are about to lose their home.

Neuman's wife borrowed \$1300 to invest in a line of beauty products to be sold door to door. Her laid-off neighbors cannot afford them, and she will probably lose her investment. Now facing the loss of her home, she asks, "Isn't owning your home the American dream? Where is it?"

Work combined with welfare

A spokesman for Briggs told Moyers how his company approached this problem. "We have to make the unions understand that we can no longer pay high wages for unskilled work," he said. Asked how low-paid workers could meet minimum needs, he suggested that public agencies might help—work combined with welfare.

Another proposal—training workers for more skilled jobs—is explored by Moyers.

Steve Neuman graduated from a trade school with enhanced skills. But he found this was actually a handicap in job seeking. Jobs at his new skill were non-existent. When he applied for other jobs, he was turned down as "over-qualified."

One trade-school graduate studied welding because his father had earned \$17 an hour at that trade. Now the going rate is \$6 to \$8 an hour. This is near the poverty level for a family of four.

Moyers interviewed mostly workers who held full-time jobs, but 5.4 percent of America's workers have to get by on less than 35 hours of work a week. These 6.3 million workers get no health insurance or paid holidays. This makes part-time work very popular with employers.

Although part-timers cannot properly support themselves, they are listed as fully employed. Were these underemployed counted, the true unemployment rate would be 9.6 percent instead of the official 7.1 percent.

A true measure of the economy, Moyers says, is not the statistics on employment, but a measure of average income.

By this gauge, the American workers' standard of living will continue to drop even when the business cycle turns and "prosperity" returns.

Moyers has done a service in bringing this aspect of the "New World Order" before a wide television audience. He does not offer a solution, but he punctures the boast that capitalism offers us an ever-rising standard of living. Moyers concludes by saying, "If this trend continues it will change radically America's work force ... millions will find that poverty and a pay check go hand in hand." ■

... Jobs

(continued from page 1)

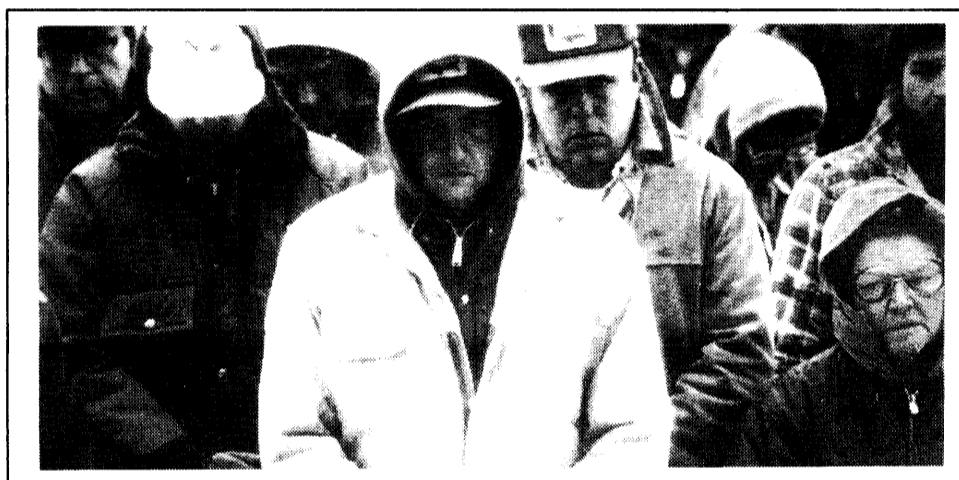
crisis, they say is structural and intrinsic.

In addition, the economic downturn afflicting the United States is spreading to the other major capitalist economic powers. Over the last year sluggish growth rates have been recorded in both Germany and Japan. The crisis in the auto industry, for example, is based on the fact that there is a production overcapacity of nine million units in the global auto industry.

Only months ago the big business media were crowing about the "death of communism." Today, however, they're clearly worried about the viability of capitalism.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, big business's options are limited. And if the government were to attempt to prime the economy by printing more money—a remedy in the past—it could set off an inflationary explosion. This would dramatically add to the woes already being suffered by working people, which might detonate a far more dangerous social explosion.

This is the main reason why economic experts are telling Bush not to tinker with the economy.



For working people the future looks bleak—with double-digit unemployment and underemployment, and a decline in living standards a constant social blight. In the past, full employment—in the *double-speak* of capitalist economics—was considered achieved when the unemployment rate was only 3 percent. During the recession in the early 1980s, full employment was achieved when unemployment was at 5 percent.

Today, working people are being told full employment will be attained when the unemployed make up 10 percent of the working population.

U.S. News & World Report's dire predictions mean only one thing: The economic offensive against working people by the capitalists and the government will intensify.

Unemployment is a permanent feature of capitalism even under the best economic conditions. The capitalist system consciously keeps a layer of workers unemployed, ultimately driving them to desperation, so they can be used to break strikes and keep wages low.

This "reserve army of labor," as Marx called it, and which today is a growing army, will be used by the bosses to force

working people to accept even deeper cuts in their wages, benefits, and living conditions.

One of the central lessons the labor movement learned during the great union upsurge in the 1930s, was that to win a struggle with the employer they had to formulate a program for the unemployed workers.

Similarly, the union movement today, which is under daily attack from both the employers and the government, will have to build a social movement that addresses the question of jobs if it doesn't want to see itself devoured by the bosses.

According to a recent U.S. News & World Report poll, more than 50 percent of Americans think unemployment will worsen in 1992. Only working people and their organizations will solve the economic dilemma being forced on them by the ruling rich.

Every working person should have a right to a job at union scale. The work-week should be cut from 40 hours to 30 hours with no cut in pay, spreading out the available work. A public works program must be initiated to build the schools, housing and hospitals working people need.

Finally, workers will have to organize their own political party, based on the unions, to make sure their jobs are safe.

The following article is reprinted from the Nov.-Dec. 1991 issue of *The Union Bulletin*, the official publication of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union Local 1-547 in the South Bay area of Los Angeles, Calif. The article was written by Dave Campbell, chief steward and contributing editor.

By DAVE CAMPBELL

Imagine this scenario. Your family's home is under siege by a gang. Shotgun in hand, you confront them at your front door. Wisely, they leave. But they don't go far. As a matter of fact, they just change their hats and walk around the house to the back. Would you now welcome them into your home? Hell no!

At the front door, in the economic arena—the plants and shop floors of America—we confront those who oppose our families with our shotgun: The Union! Individuals alone would be powerless, but by uniting, [they] are strong enough to defend their families' interests in this inevitable conflict between capital

OCAW calls for a new political party

and labor. Of course, no one would willingly join a "company union" which purports to represent both the bosses and the workers. A "company union," in its efforts to appease the bosses, can't deal with the basic conflict and therefore would compromise the interests of the workers.

At our front door, in the economic arena, we recognize the need for workers to organize, formulate a program, and pursue that program independent of the bosses. If someone were to propose letting the bosses become members of our union, he or she would be viewed as a nut.

Knowing this, why then at our back door—in the political arena—are we satisfied with defending our families' standard of living by joining a political coalition with the *same investors and managers we would not let into our union?*

Why can't we recognize that the basic conflict between the employers' drive for profit and the employees' need to maintain their families' standards of living extends to the political arena as well?

Why can't we see that a "company political party" can't represent us any better than a "company union" can. By joining with the bosses in one of our political parties, we let them in our back door.

Through our unions we can ward off the employers' efforts to increase profits at our expense. Yet by joining them in a political coalition we give them another shot at accomplishing the same thing. The Democratic Party has never willingly fought for workers' interests. It has merely responded to the pressure of mass mobilizations, all the while seeking to demobilize the workers and to shift the costs of any reforms from the employers

to the employees. Whether it was the labor movement upsurge of the '30s and '40s, the fight for civil rights in the '50s and '60s, or the fight for women's rights in the '60s and '70s, the Democratic Party has "championed" them all. They have done so by co-opting the leadership of these movements, crafting reforms which divide working-class unity, and shifting all the costs to the workers. As soon as the mass movement demobilizes, as soon as the threat of a genuinely independent working-class political formation dissipates, the Democratic Party has joined the Republican Party in turning back the clock.

The answer? A new political party in the United States that will represent the working person. Labor Party Advocates (LPA) is just such a concept and Local 1-547 is engaged in plans to organize a Southern California tour for Tony Mazzocchi [the initiator of LPA] in early 1992.

Let's face it, the bosses have two parties—we need one of our own. ■

WHY 'BUY AMERICAN' IS A TRAP FOR WORKERS

As the election campaigns of the capitalist candidates heat up, we are being confronted with a barrage from most of them blaming the worsening economic situation facing working people on the "Japanese" or other foreigners. The answer is to "buy American," we are told.

The so-called union leaders jump on this bandwagon, because it deflects attention from the fact that they are doing diddly squat about fighting the bosses for our interests.

The whole debate about "free trade" versus "protectionism" is really an issue among the big owners of industry worldwide, as they each seek a competitive advantage against each other in the current situation of deepening international capitalist competition.

It is not in the interests of working people to take either side in this debate. We cannot fight for jobs with "buy American" campaigns any more than with, say, "buy Ford" or "buy GM" campaigns. If Ford workers were to go on such a campaign and GM workers did likewise, that would cut across the labor solidarity that all autoworkers need to fight the big owners, which is the only way we have ever won anything. The formation of the United Autoworkers Union, including both Ford and GM workers, was a recognition of that fact.

We should also note that the UAW was built as an international union, organizing workers here, in Canada, and Puerto Rico. That makes sense, since autoworkers in all three countries face the same profit-mad owners.

The UAW also organizes, or tries to organize, autoworkers who work in auto plants in these three countries owned wholly or in part by Japanese capitalists or capitalists from other countries.

That makes sense too, because it's not the color of the capitalists' skin or their country of origin that matters. It's the fact that, as owners of industry, their interests in making as much profit off the labor of autoworkers as possible runs directly counter to autoworkers' interests in maintaining and bettering their standard of living and conditions of work.

In the struggle between the capitalist owners and "their" workers, the capitalists, although few in number, have many advantages. They have great wealth. Their wealth was not gained by hard work, as the popular myth has it, but through squeezing it out of the labor of the workers.

This great wealth is a powerful tool in the class struggle. You never see a capitalist going hungry during a strike.

Their wealth is used to control the capitalist political parties, the Democrats and Republicans, through which they currently control the government. The whole weight of the government is on their side in every conflict with the workers.

They control the media, too, and most other institutions of society—including the big universities, churches, foundations, etc. No wonder they dominate "public opinion!" In these and countless other ways, the rich capitalists effectively rule us.

As individuals, working people face the rich as practically power-

less "wage slaves" beholden to them.

But workers have something the capitalists do not. That is our numbers and our role in production. When we unite, as in a union, to fight for our rights and interests, we suddenly gain strength. The underlying fact that we produce all the goods and create all the wealth the capitalists dispose of comes to the fore. They need us.

The whole history of the class struggle between workers and capitalists worldwide is one of the workers groping toward ever-greater unity, with ups and downs in this process, and the capitalists seeking to keep us divided and weak.

Our "natural" condition as individual workers is to be in competition with all other workers to sell ourselves for wages to the capitalists. (There are strong countervailing forces once we are hired and working, for inside the workplace we are engaged in cooperative labor with each other.)

The first step towards bettering ourselves comes with the understanding that when we bargain over wages and conditions of work together, we can get a much better deal than doing it as individuals. This is the beginning of unionism.

Likewise, it is better to unite in whole industries to face the bosses, especially as industry becomes more and more monopolized and ownership centralized in the hands of fewer and fewer super-rich families.

To build such unity requires fighting against prejudices, fostered by the rich, against our

Learning About Marxism

By Barry Sheppard



fellow workers who are not white, not from the "right" countries, or who are women, etc. It means fighting against the discrimination all such workers face—on and off the job.

To face the centralized power of the capitalists, we need unity as workers not only in each industry but across the country.

And, since capitalism has become a worldwide system, we need unity across national boundaries, too. No matter how much they fight among themselves, the ruling rich in the advanced capitalist countries—with the capitalists of the "Third World" as junior partners—dominate the capitalist world. They suck the living labor of the workers everywhere. If we are going to fight them effectively, we have to fight together with other workers everywhere.

Falling for "buy America" or Japan-bashing leads us in the wrong direction. It makes us identify with "our" capitalists and against workers in other countries.

The rich always seek to keep us divided. The capitalist candidates, from David Duke to the Democratic Party clowns, are all trying to get us to blame the economic crisis on other workers, whether it is unemployed workers, foreign

workers, women workers, Black workers, or others that are singled out.

When the competition between the big capitalist families of the world gets so severe that they wage war against each other to see which will get the lion's share, they use such national chauvinism to get the workers in each camp to go out and slaughter each other. Twice this century, they have plunged the world into this catastrophe.

In other smaller wars—from 1898 in the Caribbean and the Philippines to Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq—the ruling rich in this country have led us to wage war against our fellow workers and peasants all over the world.

Our path to emancipation must go in the opposite direction. That is to cut across all the divisions of the working people worldwide. Obviously this is a protracted task, which begins inside each country but does not stop there—with steps forward as well as retreats and defeats.

Unity is the fundamental strategy of the working people, the backbone for working out all our tasks. That's why Karl Marx and Frederick Engels ended the Communist Manifesto of 1848 with the following call to action that remains even more true today:

"Workers of all lands, unite!"

Socialist Action's campaign for subscriptions—Over the top!

By BARRY SHEPPARD

Marxism.

Socialist Action members and supporters—albeit with a little more time—made that extra effort that took us over the top! Our drive for 650 new subscriptions and renewals, which began four months ago, was extended until January. At the end of the month, we had 692 subs, or 106 percent.

Many areas pitched in to accomplish this. Special notice should go to Baltimore, which raised its goal three times and went way over in this final effort.

Friends from the Milwaukee Revolutionary Socialist Group and the ArtWork group in New Brunswick, N.J., are also to be given a special thanks.

Most areas used the extra time to make their goals or come very close.

One thing we found out in this campaign is that there is a layer of people out there interested in the socialist perspective.

With the disarray of Stalinism, coupled with a propaganda offensive against socialism by the rich and their pundits, it is understandable that a good deal of confusion exists.

Nevertheless, there is a significant number of people seeking to cut through the lies and distortions and find a way out of the deepening crisis of capitalism—and Stalinism. These people are open to the views of genuine

We also found that it takes a lot of work, long hours of knocking on doors and talking to coworkers and political activists, to reach this layer.

Of course, we were only able to scratch the surface, but what we accomplished in this drive is important because people are looking for explanations—and an understanding—of what's going on in the world today.

During the subscription drive, in addition, we met more than a few people who expressed interest in participating in the day-to-day building of a socialist movement in this country. Some of them have begun to attend the forums, classes, and other activities sponsored by *Socialist Action* in cities where we have branches.

The hard work was worth it. We hope all our readers agree with us on the importance of spreading the socialist press, and that you will continue to help sign up new subscribers from among the people you meet.

Some readers may wish to order a small bundle of *Socialist Action* newspapers to distribute to their friends and coworkers or to take to local bookstores and news stands. Let us know how many copies you would like us to start you out with.

Congratulations for a job well done!

City	Goal	New	Renew.	Total	Pct.
Milwaukee	10	21	2	23	230%
Baltimore	60	83	11	94	157%
Los Angeles	25	14	16	30	120%
New Brunswick	5	6	0	6	120%
Detroit	10	6	8	6	140%
San Francisco	250	226	40	266	106%
Boston	75	69	10	79	105%
Kansas City	5	3	2	5	100%
New York	55	28	26	54	98%
Chicago	50	37	4	41	82%
Cleveland	15	10	2	12	80%
Portland	15	11	1	12	80%
New Haven	5	1	2	3	60%
Twin Cities	25	6	5	11	44%
Philadelphia	20	4	2	6	30%
Bath, Me.	5	0	0	0	0%
Cincinnati	5	0	0	0	0%
Other	25	17	19	36	144%
Total (as of Jan. 29)	650	542	150	692	106%

U.S. Communist Party in crisis

With the collapse of Stalinism in the former Soviet Union a long-festering debate comes to the surface in the American CP

(First of a series)

By JEFF MACKLER

Over the past six decades the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) has been rivaled by few for its craven capacity to support every political twist and turn of the bureaucratic hierarchy in the Soviet Union.

But today the CPUSA is in crisis, with nearly one-third of its estimated membership of 2500 on the verge of a political and/or organizational break with the policies of longtime CP National Chair, Gus Hall.

The dispute in the CPUSA came to a head during its December 1991 25th National Convention in Cleveland. But even before the convention began, Hall, in typical bureaucratic fashion, stacked the deck against the dissident faction. Elected delegates of the opposition faction were refused recognition and leading opposition delegates allowed to speak was limited to Herbert Aptheker and a few others.

After the convention, 21 members of the top staff of the *People's Weekly World*, the CPUSA newspaper, were barred from the party's offices for attempting to produce a "Special Supplement" to their newspaper which contained Aptheker's convention speech, other oppositional material, and critical comments.

[According to the authors of the supplement, "...officials of the CPUSA barred the paper's editor, Barry Cohen, from the building in which the paper is produced on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 1992. In protest against that action, the staff members who produced this supplement decided to have it printed elsewhere and distributed to the paper's readership."]

Furthermore, all of the central leaders of the CP who found themselves aligned against the old-guard Hall leadership were excluded from the new 125-member CPUSA National Committee.

Dissidents Angela Davis, James Jackson, Charlene Mitchell, Daniel Rubin, Barry Cohen, Carl Bloice, Kendra Alexander, Ishmael Flores, Gil Green and Herbert Aptheker, are no longer members of the inner circle of elected leaders—an inner circle who for so many decades were unanimous in their declarations of fidelity to the leadership of the now defunct and misnamed Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

A new course?

Herbert Aptheker, today a leading dissident in the still-Stalinist CPUSA, has been for the past five decades a loyal party historian, intellectual and theoretician. His book, "The Truth About Hungary," written in 1956 shortly after Stalin's heirs sent Soviet tanks to crush the workers' revolution in Hungary, was an abject apologia of Kremlin policy. It typified the "big lie" school of falsification employed by Stalinists at that time and to this day.

Aptheker portrayed the 1956 rebellion of the Hungarian workers as a fascist plot led by anti-Semitic remnants of the pre-war, pro-Hitler, Horthy regime. The rebellious Hungarians' rejection of the dictatorial rule of the Stalinist Hungarian Communist Party and their formation of democratic workers' councils to rule their country were slandered as a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency conspiracy to restore capitalism.

Similarly, Aptheker applied his pen to defend the sending of Soviet tanks to Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring of 1968.

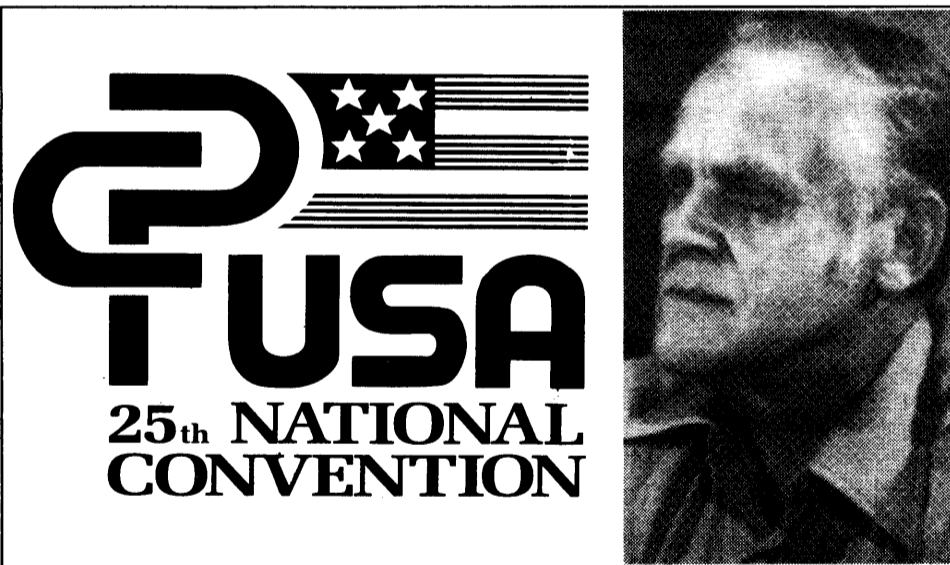
Prior to the failed coup of August 1991, Aptheker and the entire CPUSA leadership were supporters of then-Soviet President Gorbachev, just as they had been supporters of every Soviet head of state from the time of Stalin. Published interviews with Aptheker recorded his glowing praise for Gorbachev's policies, which were characterized as shining examples of the renewal of



Carl Bloice, associate editor of the *People's Weekly World* (PWW), and PWW editor Barry Cohen locked out of PWW offices.

"American CP leaders had long operated on the principle that it is better to be on the winning side of a faction fight in the Soviet CP than to tell the truth.

"...[But] the events since the failed coup of August 1991 have freed each of the major wings of the debate within the CPUSA to state their views more openly."



Gus Hall made sure that his coup wasn't going to fail like the one in Moscow.

socialism in the USSR. But today, as we shall see, Aptheker and a significant layer of CP stalwarts are charting a new course.

For the past two years there has been a great uneasiness in the American CP. In the face of the worldwide repudiation of Soviet Stalinism and its associated parties, the rule has been for these self-serving parties which long ago ceased to function as defenders of the working class, to either formally dissolve or to convert themselves into openly pro-capitalist social-democratic formations.

Not long ago, the central party leadership around Gus Hall began to wonder whether the Gorbachev leadership's restorationist course would not jeopardize the hold of the entire Soviet Communist Party apparatus on the reins of power in the USSR itself. Neither Hall, Aptheker, or any other CPUSA leader, however, had voiced objection to Gorbachev's general course over most of the past six years.

At the level of foreign policy not a word was uttered about Gorbachev's capitulation to U.S. imperialism during the Gulf War. The cutting of Soviet aid to the beleaguered Sandinista government in Nicaragua, Soviet pressure on the South African CP and ANC to negotiate for a coalition capitalist

government with the De Klerk regime, the slashing of vital aid to Cuba, were ignored or justified by the CPUSA.

In regard to Soviet domestic policy, CPUSA tops said little or nothing about Gorbachev's privatization policies. The fake CP-controlled "soviets" were praised as examples of democratic renewal, while strike-breaking laws and attacks on Soviet workers and oppressed nationalities were ignored or supported.

For the CPUSA leadership the key question was whether the Gorbachev wing, that is, the majority of the Stalinist privileged middle-class apparatus in the USSR, could retain power. The fact that Gorbachev, like his opponents in the Soviet CP, aimed at presiding over a capitalist USSR was not a factor in the considerations of Hall, his associates, or the ever-more vocal opposition in the CPUSA.

But the disintegration of the Stalinist Communist Parties in Eastern Europe and the associated dissolution or crippling splits in most CPs around the globe (England, Italy, Denmark, etc.), led for the first time in six decades to an open and sometimes public discussion in the CPUSA itself. This was partially reflected over the course of the past two years in letters to

the editor and occasional articles in the pages of the *People's Weekly World*.

One wing of the CP tended to support Gorbachev; the other, the so-called Soviet hardliners. But each side had to temporize its positions lest the "wrong" side prevail in the increasingly fractious battles within the Soviet CP. American CP leaders had long operated on the principle that it is better to be on the winning side of a faction fight in the Soviet CP than to tell the truth.

The events since the failed coup of August 1991 have freed each of the major wings of the debate within the CPUSA to state their views more openly. With the fall of Gorbachev from power, coupled with his call for the dissolution of his own party and his open alliance for the restoration of capitalism with Russian President Yeltsin, no wing of the CPUSA now feels compelled to prettify his policies and hide their real positions.

The Gus Hall wing of the CP prefers to align itself with the scattered Stalinist hardline CP fragments in the former USSR who still retain significant power and who may one day again challenge for complete power.

'New thinking' or old habits

Hall himself was accused by his American party opponents of hailing the August coup attempt. The Hall forces often refer to this August period not as a Stalinist attempt to settle differences by force to assure one wing of the party bureaucracy a greater share of the restorationist booty, but rather as the time of the "Yeltsin counter-coup" aimed at dissolving the CP and the USSR itself. Hall implied in his speech at the CPUSA convention that before the August coup attempt he was in a minority.

Hall's address to the delegates was quite revealing:

"The logical extension of Gorbachev's 'new thinking,'" Hall states, "are the actions he took after the attempted coup. He collaborated with Yeltsin in outlawing the CPSU, padlocking party offices and buildings, silenced the several party newspapers, confiscated party property, files and records. He illegally dismissed the Central Committee and Secretariat and ordered confiscation of their offices; then he gave open approval to witchhunts, including the arrests of Communists. He then resigned as general secretary. He succeeded in disbanding the democratically elected government bodies, the Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies and wrested power from the elected government of working class power and installed an unelected, appointed government, with emergency powers to rule by decree."

Hall continues, "[This] ... 'new thinking' resulted in setbacks around the world. It set the stage for right opportunism trends worldwide. The new thinking is in essence right opportunism."

And again: "I have argued that the flaws in the Soviet Union are not systemic. This crisis developed as a result of serious mistakes by the leadership."

Oppositionist Herbert Aptheker, in a quite remarkable polemic, took up some of Hall's contentions during his remarks to the convention.

[The quotes from the speech by Herbert Aptheker below, including the emphasis, appeared in the "Special Supplement" intended for publication in the Dec. 21, 1991, *People's Weekly World*.]

Using the foil of responding to a Nov. 23, 1991 letter published in the *People's Weekly World*, which argued that the crisis in the USSR was due to human error and imperialist sabotage, Aptheker observes: "Certainly there was human error and certainly there was imperialist sabotage and most assuredly ... the cause of the crisis is not socialism."

Aptheker continues: "To speak of a systematic source of the crisis and collapse in the USSR—and in Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary—is to insist that the nature of the governing parties in all these cases was the basic source of the crisis. And what was the nature—it was authoritarian, domineering, brutal and guilty of colossal crimes—not only suppression but also massive human extermination. It is possible to under-

(continued on next page)

Northwest Airlines bailout:

Welfare for the rich as social services are cut in Minnesota

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

MINNEAPOLIS—In a dramatic extension to the bipartisan program of "Aid for Dependent Capitalists," the Minnesota state legislature has voted a huge bailout loan guarantee to Northwest Airlines of more than \$800 million dollars. The bailout loan supposedly assures that Northwest will build new aircraft maintenance facilities on Minnesota's Iron Range, which would provide 1500 jobs for this depressed area.

Northwest's new CEO, Al Checchi, showed up at the Minnesota legislature months ago in the midst of a state "budgetary crisis." Minnesota's Republican governor and Democratic party-controlled state legislature were in the process of instituting deep cuts in education, workmen's compensation, and healthcare, while imposing steep new taxes on working people—all in the name of fiscal responsibility.

Arriving in his new maroon stretch limousine, Checchi demanded and quickly got an "agreement in principle" from Gov. Arne Carlson and the legislature for the \$850 million loan bailout. As public opposition grew, the state legislators were forced to hold hearings and debate whether or not to loan Northwest the money.

Northwest responded with a massive publicity campaign. They threatened not only to build their new Airbus maintenance facilities elsewhere, but to leave Minnesota altogether, taking 17,000 jobs with them if the loan wasn't approved. The airline, which has a notorious anti-union history, was even able to involve its unions as partners in this propaganda campaign.

In actuality, this loan is more than just a primer in aiding Northwest to expand. Northwest, formerly one of the more financially healthy U.S. airlines, needed the loan to keep from going bankrupt.

Checchi, one of the new breed of "corporate raiders", recently took over Northwest Airlines using junk bonds and other forms of "creative" financing. Checchi and Northwest are now being squeezed by a massive and very expensive debt load.

While the politicians, the news media, and Checchi have focused public attention on building new maintenance facilities, a large part of this taxpayer-subsidized loan is to be used directly to meet upcoming payments on the debt.

An empty bluff

It is indisputably true that Minnesota needs an airline connection with the rest of the country. The fear that Northwest employees may lose their jobs is a legitimate one. But taking \$833 million from Minnesota taxpayers and giving it to Al Checchi and his stockholders does not insure the survival or expansion of Northwest Airlines. It merely protects Checchi temporarily from the ravages of capitalist competition and his unpaid creditors.

Checchi's threat to move Northwest operations out of Minnesota is obviously an empty bluff. Minnesota's Twin Cities terminal is one of the most valuable and profitable airline hub locations in the country. Northwest's near-monopoly control of the Twin Cities hub is its single most valuable asset.

In addition, Northwest doesn't have the money to move across the street—let alone to another state. As one airline analyst quipped, "They don't even have the cash to rent moving vans."

According to financial analysts around the country, Northwest is on the verge of bankruptcy. At the end of 1990, Northwest booked a \$302 million loss in one year. In the first eight months of 1991, it lost \$126 million, according to a report prepared for the Metropolitan Airports Commission by



the Price Waterhouse Accounting firm.

The Federal Mortgage Guaranty Corporation called Northwest's pension fund the most under-funded in the nation. And Northwest is close to defaulting on its \$1.4 billion senior debt agreement with Bankers Trust.

While Checchi and the politicians assure the public that there is little risk and more than sufficient collateral to back the loan, there is not one bank or investment group in the entire country that would loan Checchi and Northwest the \$833 million.

By rights, Northwest should be placed in receivership, minus Al Checchi and his stockholders, until the fate of the airline is decided.

Public services to suffer

If Checchi and Northwest default on this loan, the costs Minnesotans would have to shoulder is substantial. In the seven-county Twin Cities area, every man, woman, and child would have to pay \$250. Duluth, Minn., residents—who would supposedly benefit from the new maintenance bases—would be assessed \$800 each.

But Minnesota residents lose big even if Northwest Airlines is eventually able to repay the loan in full. No matter what the legislators call it, a "loan" or a "giveaway," the fact is that \$833 million has been taken away from schools, healthcare, roads, and other services the state is obligated to provide for its citizens.

It doesn't matter whether Checchi's Northwest Airlines defaults or profits. A huge chunk of the state's limited financing capacity is being committed to Checchi as opposed to other essential public needs. Eight million Minnesotans have been ripped off to insure that one businessman and a few stockholders are protected from the consequences of their speculative greed.

Democratic Congressman James Oberstar, a prominent sponsor of the bailout loan, explains that the Northwest loan is very much like the \$5 billion loan given to Chrysler in the mid-1980s. Oberstar is not only drawing similarities between the two loans, but is also justifying the ongoing policy of "welfare for the rich", pursued by both the Democratic and Republican parties.

The Northwest loan is merely one piece of a broader bipartisan policy, which most recently includes the savings-and-loan bailout, the banking-industry bailout, and the coming insurance-industry bailout.

It flows from an assumption held by both the Democrats and Republicans that economic prosperity can only be achieved by promoting high profits for the corporations and the super-rich, which will then hopefully trickle down to the rest of us.

"Socialism for the rich"

As the economic crisis of U.S. capitalism deepens, it requires that the

government more and more function to guarantee the profits of every major corporation and financial institution, with all this implies for workers rights, unions, job safety, the environment, and social programs.

But these bailouts, the program of "socialism" for the rich, does not come for free. Someone has to pay for it. The primary function of government becomes one of redistributing wealth out of the hands of the general population into the hands of

... American CP

(continued from preceding page)

stand—not excuse—these distortions and aberrations: backward societies, fearful suffering, the assaults of imperialism from Woodrow Wilson to Adolf Hitler to John Foster Dulles, the terrible burden of the arms race, the magnificent shouldering of assistance to national liberation movements, etc.—but the fact remains of the terrible repression, domination and slaughter. These are not to be called 'mistakes,' as comrade Sam Webb did recently, and the revelations of some of their reality 35 years ago by Khrushchev are not to be called 'revelations,' as by Comrade John Talmadge in a recent Op-ed piece in the *People's Weekly World*, 11/23/91."

Aptheker's speech accurately reveals the nature of the dilemma facing men and women in the CPUSA who devoted their entire adult lives to the conscious defense of the Stalinist terror. Aptheker implies that their tragedy is that they knew better.

The avalanche of truth they now feel morally compelled to utter to cleanse their souls, however, does not indicate to this writer that they have broken from the central tenets of Stalinism, which, because of its almost total misidentification with the USSR and the Russian Revolution of 1917, became synonymous with socialism.

It is this false association—the liberating ideology of socialism with the actual practice of Stalinism—which has done immeasurable harm to the cause of the workers' movement and all humanity.

Aptheker's speech continues: "And what did they [Khrushchev's 'revelations'] reveal? Monstrous crimes which have been engaged in for years, involving mass murder, and these revelations also showed that comrades of other countries have been systematically deceived. And—for many weighty reasons—many of us were easily deceived; we were credulous because we felt we had to be. Hence the revelations were stunning; and while some change occurred, this change was partial. And clearly the monstrous reality had induced profound popular hostility among large masses in all of the nations named above. Hence this mass hostility could not be withstood. And for those of us in the movement but outside the affected countries the blow was two-fold—first the

corporate owners—no matter how incompetent, greedy or dishonest they may be.

This policy, which is currently being dramatically expanded under the codeword of developing an "industrial policy," also requires the government to be ever more aggressive in suppressing those who would resist such a policy—including the unions.

Many Minnesota taxpayers are angered by this flagrant giveaway of their hard-earned money. The politicians and press kept Minnesotans ignorant of their options and fueled the lie that Minnesota could be left without an airline if the loan didn't go through.

If Minnesota taxpayers were organized and armed with the facts, they could demand that the state take over the airline and pay not one cent to corporate speculators like Al Checchi or his creditors. Minnesota and the nation can no more survive without airlines than it could without generated electricity, and if private owners can't maintain that service on the basis of private profit, then they should be nationalized and run as a public utility.

Trade-union leaders encouraged Northwest workers to ally themselves with Al Checchi (as if they had common interests with him) rather than allying with fellow workers and taxpayers. For Northwest workers, their best defense lies in building a trade-union movement that would oppose the growing bipartisan policy of Aid For Dependent Capitalists. This trade-union movement would stand independent of Checchi and the politicians of both parties. It would build a solid alliance with other workers, the growing unemployed, and Minnesota taxpayers.

The recent history of the auto industry proves that "bailouts" and giveaways do nothing to preserve jobs. They merely pave the way for further concession demands from management—which are backed up by the government. Al Checchi's fellow capitalists would never give him \$833 million. Why should we? ■

stunning reality and this compounded by the fact that we had consistently denied that reality. Hence our credibility—our honesty, is decisively questioned; for a revolutionary, nothing replaces honesty. Without integrity, revolutionary commitment is impossible.

"All this produces in some comrades the phenomenon of denial; the reality is so painful that only denial makes sense.

"But denying reality may appease one momentarily—but only momentarily, and in any case reality exists."

To comply with his own belated admission that "reality exists," Aptheker proceeds to agree with Gus Hall that Gorbachev has abandoned Marxism. This was necessary because at least at the moment of the speech itself Aptheker had chosen to fight within the CPUSA for its renewal. But the core of the opposition he had associated with, that is, the 800 signers of the "Initiative to Unite and Renew the Party," favored the pro-Gorbachev wing of the Soviet CP.

In the time between the formation of this diffuse and heterogeneous current and the December 1991 CPUSA convention, Gorbachev and most of the bureaucracy had bitten the proverbial bullet and turned their backs on this thoroughly discredited party to embrace the openly pro-capitalist wing of the apparatus.

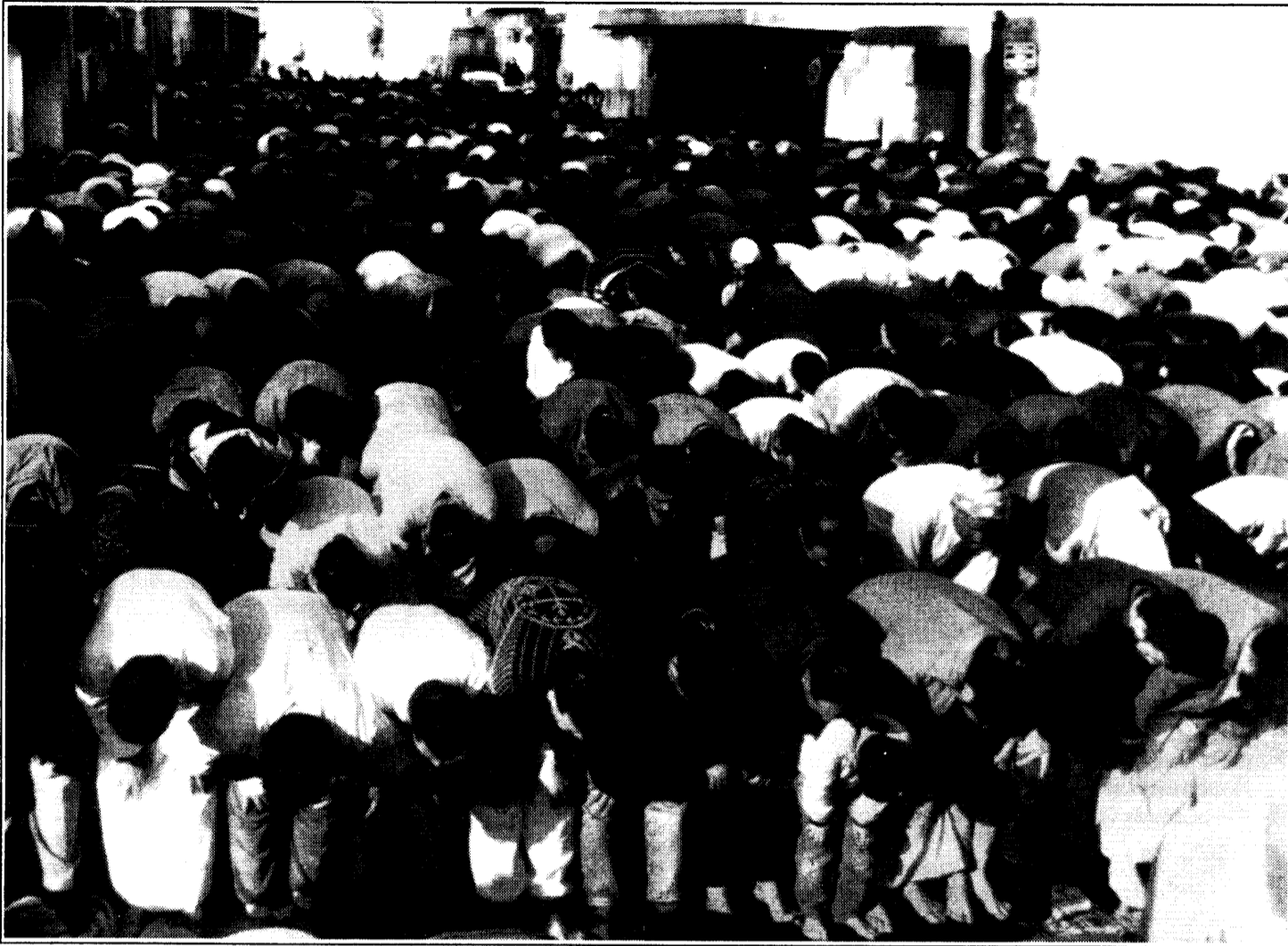
Having separated himself from Gorbachev, Aptheker resumes his polemic with Hall:

"Hall is correct when in the same report he insisted that 'You cannot blame Stalin's crimes on socialism. You cannot blame Gorbachev's 'privatization' on socialism... Yes, but what can you blame; denouncing opportunism will not do. The main source of the collapse that Comrade Hall describes—not only in the USSR but in every party of Eastern Europe—lies not in socialism, but rather in the distortions and vitiation of the essential nature of the Party as conceived by Marx, Engels and Lenin into an organization eaten up by bureaucracy, tyranny, authoritarianism, repression and finally human annihilation."

The fact that Dr. Herbert Aptheker concludes his speech with an appeal for the renewal of this party which was complicit by silence and practice in the "human annihilation" of its own cadre and of millions of oppressed people the world over, indicates that little has been learned. ■

(To be continued)

Coup in Algeria: Takeover by the generals won't stop the fundamentalists



In the days following the recent military takeover in Algeria, Socialist Action reporter Barry Sheppard interviewed Aisha Moharabeh—a leader of the Algerian Fourth Internationalist organization, the Socialist Workers Party (PST). The coup was a response to the victory of the Islamic fundamentalists in the first round of the parliamentary elections.

Socialist Action: What led the National Liberation Front (FLN) to lose support to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS)?

Aisha Moharab: I think that there were at least two elements. The FLN had been in power since 1972. It had imposed at least three periods of emergency rule on the country. In 1988, for the first time, the state sent tanks and the army against the youth and children rebelling against poverty. This happened in the streets of the capital and in other big cities as well. It was then that the break occurred between the masses and the party in power.

Since 1988, the ruling FLN, through the institutions of government, has been pursuing an antisocial policy. And in the last three years, the economic crisis in Algeria has grown much worse.

People were totally unwilling to be thrown back into poverty, when their country had had some international standing and a tolerable standard of living. So, the FLN is being accused today of having created poverty, as well as of having prevented the Algerian people from expressing themselves.

SA: What about the agreement the FLN government made with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)?

AM: Algeria has been in an economic crisis since the fall in oil prices. Thus, the origins of the crisis go back rather far. At the time of Boumediene's death in 1978, with the new president (now the ex-president) Chadli Bendjedid, a new economic policy was initiated, which was called the Infitah ["opening"].

Taking advantage of its position in the state bureaucracy, the petty bourgeois layer in power had accumulated enough capital to need more freedom to invest.

The opening up in 1988 that brought democratic freedoms also brought freedom

for business. So for some years, they have been passing laws favoring free enterprise. This process was accelerated by the fact that Algeria had to turn to the international financial institutions for loans.

First of all, the government needed money to pay the interest on its debt, \$7 billion a year. Secondly, Algeria is quite dependent on imported food—wheat, potatoes, and so on. Then, payrolls had to be met. The coffers were empty.

For the Algerian state, there was no question of making the millionaires pay. They chose to borrow, and they got into a vicious circle of indebtedness.

The IMF attached strings. Agreements were made that were not disclosed to the Algerian people until October 1991. Even now, we do not know the stipulations exactly. What has been revealed is that the IMF rules out state subsidies for consumer goods and wage increases for the workers, and is demanding layoffs.

The trade-union federation in Algeria, the UGTA (Algerian General Workers Union), has revealed that 500,000 workers are to be laid off in just the first two quarters of 1992. There is no plan for reindustrialization or development. The IMF agreed to lend some money for an attempt to salvage some nationalized enterprises that are in the red, but that is to better prepare them for privatization.

For the Algerians—who were shocked by the agreements with the IMF—this plan means not only more poverty and unemployment but a loss of national sovereignty. A statement made by the secretary of the UGTA caught on: "Our policy is no longer being made in Algiers; it is being made in Washington."

SA: What is the FIS?

AM: The Islamic Salvation Front was set up only in 1989, when multi-partyism was accepted by the Constituent Assembly. Before that, there had been a fundamentalist movement that functioned more like a constellation than a structured organization.

Between 1970 and 1980, there were some fundamentalist mobilizations. They were very quickly suppressed, just like the mobilizations of the left. The fundamentalist movement was tiny then.

In 1988, the government, more afraid of a radicalization led by the left, chose to

"As time passed, the FIS more and more became to be seen as the party of the poor. The other parties that claim to be democratic were seen as parties of the middle-class layers."

boost the fundamentalists. So, on the basis of a total myth fostered by the state-controlled media, the fundamentalists launched themselves by presenting themselves as the leaders of the 1988 youth revolt, which became a rebellion of the popular masses.

Little by little, they brought together all of the very poor into what you could call a "lumpen" party, as well as all those disappointed by the system, including many merchants. But the merchants organized in the FIS are not the really little merchants. They include the jewelers, known for being among the richest, and the proprietors of big Mozabite bazaars, which function almost like a national chain of department stores.

The leadership of the FIS is a university-educated petty bourgeois leadership. It has been said that the FIS is linked to Saudi Arabia, among others, or financed by Pakistan. But it is clear that it has the means to get financing from a part of the commercial petty bourgeoisie and the newly constituted national bourgeoisie.

The FIS does not challenge the black market. Its solution for the unemployed youth, in fact, is advancing them a little money so that they can engage in black-market dealings. Or they give them tents for selling vegetables. That is, they give these youth an illusion of a job.

If the FIS has had so much success

today, it is because there is no other party that stands out as the party of the people, the party of the poor, the party of the disinherited, the party determined to get rid of the government. The FIS gives the illusion of being such a party.

SA: What were the results of the first round of the elections? Was it surprising?

AM: The PST has said for a long time, for at least two years, that the FIS has been serving as a rallying point for the disinherited. We pointed out that all the campaigns waged by the free enterprise parties or the FLN presenting the FIS as a party of fanatics or fascists were wrong, that this sort of thing would make the base of the FIS more attached to it. And that is exactly what happened.

As time passed, the FIS more and more became to be seen as the party of the poor. The other parties that claim to be democratic were seen as parties of the middle-class layers.

We expected that the FLN would get a good vote because all the laws, passed by institutions it controlled, favored it. A two-round first-past-the-post electoral system promotes voting for the lesser evil. Thus, all those who didn't want to vote for the FIS could be pushed into voting for the FLN to make their votes count. We expected that the FIS and the FLN would get similar results.

So, like everyone else we were surprised by the elections, but maybe not for the same reasons. Out of 430 seats, the FIS won 188 in the first round. The FLN got only about 15. The FIS was also well placed for the second round. What surprised us was simply the size of the FIS victory.

Our assessment was that, unfortunately, the masses had chosen a retrograde leadership to express their opposition to the regime, a retrograde leadership that will turn its back on their interests. But the masses will only see this when the FIS is in power, and has to conduct some sort of policy.

The FIS does not have any program different from that of the FLN. It has said so itself. It said in the wake of the elections that it would respect all the contractual agreements, including those with the IMF.

SA: The PST ran candidates in the elections. How did you do?

AM: We got very modest results, but with such an electoral system we were surprised that there are still 6500 persons able to vote for socialism and for a socialist program. For us, that was already a good result.

SA: Wasn't there a big demonstration of women after the first round?

AM: There was an enormous demonstration called by the Front of Socialist Forces [a party based largely on the demand of the Berber people for cultural rights]. The slogan was "Neither a fundamentalist dictatorship nor a police state." It is clear that it is women who are most afraid of a FIS government.

But there has been another type of reaction—that of the bourgeois liberal groups who decided after the election that democratic rights no longer suited them. Among them are some women's associations. All those forces are grouped in the so-called Committee for Defense of the Republic. This committee called for a women's rally, which brought out between 1000 and 1500 women.

The organizers tried to get this women's rally to call for cancelling of the second round of the elections. Despite the attempt by those running the meeting to keep us from speaking, our comrades intervened. We explained that the defense of democratic liberties would never have any credibility in the eyes of the masses if women supported those who were violating the rules they themselves claimed to defend before the election.

The majority of the women left the hall, refusing to associate themselves with such a betrayal. But about 400 stayed and voted for the motion.

In Europe, this was presented as a unanimous position, that all Algerian women were demanding cancellation of the second round. This is false. Today, the women's movement in Algeria is quite split.

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Algerian women fight for democratic and social rights

BY SHAFIA JEMANE

The following article originally appeared in the Nov. 7, 1991, issue of *Socialistische Zeitung*, the paper of the German United Socialist Party, in which the West German Fourth Internationalists work. The translation has been taken from the Jan. 20, 1992, issue of *International Viewpoint*, the journal of the Bureau of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, with some stylistic changes.

Much has been said and written in the Western media in recent years about the women's movement in Algeria, above all about its struggle against the Islamic fundamentalist. However, this movement did not arise yesterday.

Already during the war of independence, women took part in the liberation struggle. Some, the best known among them, but only a minority, planted bombs. Others went into the mountains and joined the guerrilla struggle. Most, however, joined the resistance in the towns, while the men took to the mountains.

Their participation in this struggle has given Algerian women a strong sense of historical legitimacy. Even today, women involved in the war of independence take the front line in the movement, above all at the moments of sharpest confrontation with the fundamentalists.

The ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) has never acknowledged that women took part in the guerrilla struggle. In 1958, it gave the order that all the women fighting in the mountains on the Tunisian border should be sent back into the home. Women have never been represented in the leading bodies of the FLN or the liberation army.

Roots of women's movement

It was in the FLN's nature that, at the time of the declaration of independence, it should pursue its policy of excluding women. Resistance to this took shape in the capital, Algiers. This led the president



of the time, Ben Bella, to call an Algerian women's association into being, in order to head off the women's protests.

Throughout the whole existence of the association, that is, since 1963, its leadership has always been in the hands of men. Some of them have permitted themselves, when speaking of the association, to say, "we women of Algeria."

The roots of the present women's movement lie outside this organization. They are the work rather of women outside the asso-

ciation who have resisted attempts by the government to enact anti-women legislation.

The FLN was a liberation movement with a national program. It had no precise social program for building an independent Algeria, and it came under the influence of the most diverse social forces, including the fundamentalists.

Since independence, the government has tried many times to impose a family law regulating marriage, divorce, inheritance,

and so on according to Islamic law. Such a law was entirely unacceptable to the women who had taken part in the war of independence, and in the decade after independence they created an organized women's movement that reacted to events as they happened.

With the industrialization drive of the late 1960s and early 1970s, girls were allowed to attend high schools and universities. The newly founded industries needed women. At this time, women were able to improve their social position significantly.

But with the end of the "Golden Age," at the start of the 1980s, the situation of women once again began to deteriorate. Layoffs affected women first. The government once again began to seek to legislate against women.

In the 1980s, independent movements such as the women's movement, the student movement, and the Berber movement were harshly suppressed. It was the women's movement that put up the stiffest resistance to the government. People would say: "The women are the only men left in this country."

However, lacking a firm national organization, even the women's movement finally went under. After the big demonstrations of 1981, 1982, and 1983, the movement suffered a big setback in 1984. And this was the very year in which the government brought a draft family code before the National Assembly.

Murder and mass torture

In 1988, Algeria experienced a social explosion. The youth occupied the streets of the capital, and attacked all the institutions that symbolized the regime. In Algeria, 60 percent of the population is under 20 and 75 percent under 25. This revolt shook the regime. One of its results was opening up the way for the formation of several political parties.

The subsequent repression was terrible. There were deaths, and torture was used—for the first time since independence—and on a mass scale. Thousands of young people "disappeared."

Women besieged the barracks, the police stations and the prisons. They organized committees for the release of their sons, against torture and for democratic freedoms. It was out of this movement that organized groups of women emerged in a variety of places, above all in the north of the country.

These women's structures had broadly

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... Algerian coup

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The Committee for the Defense of the Republic was formed two or three days after the results were announced by the UGTA and three employers' unions. It was presided over by the minister of communications.

In our eyes, it was clear that this was a structure controlled by the government. It includes the bourgeois liberal parties—as well as the Stalinists, who are in an extremely grave crisis.

That is, it includes the Stalinist milieu, because there is hardly anyone left in the party. This element has taken charge of all the mobilizations demanding cancellation of the second round.

The attitude of the secretary general of the UGTA was very badly received by the workers. The following day, several unions denounced the UGTA general secretary for abusing his position as spokesman of the confederation by putting forward a position the workers did not support.

There is another aspect to this. The elections did not stop social struggles. There were strikes during and after the elections. Important workforces, such as the railway workers, had given strike notice.

But after the UGTA position, all strikes were discredited. The workers thought that if they struck, it would be seen as supporting the call for cancelling the second round, and so they withdrew their strike notices.

This is disastrous. This is the time the UGTA should try to create a more favor-

able relationship of social forces, which is the only way of opposing the fundamentalists. Social tests of strength are coming up. The first lifting of price controls will take place in January. The lifting of all controls is scheduled for July 1992.

So, today we in the PST have the mission of contacting all those sectors who do not agree with the UGTA's attitude, since we have a network of trade-union activists with a lot of credibility. We might call for a renewal of the UGTA through a special congress, and perhaps call for the formation of a new confederation.

SA: What was behind the coup?

AM: The army, which represents the section of the FLN that refuses to share power with the FIS.

It's just self-preservation, because they need to maintain their privileges. People who have been in power for 30 years cannot give it up. You have to listen to the way the generals talk. For them, there is no question of their relinquishing power just because "three-and-a-half million lumpen" voted for the FIS.

Secondly, the coup is a sign that the attempt to install free enterprise in conditions of social peace has failed. They dumped the president of the republic because he had become the symbol of this failure of the FLN's policy. Today they want to put forward another image.

Another faction of the FLN today is against the Council of State that has been installed. Thus, there are two totally different factions of the FLN.

In appointing Boudiaff—that is, a veteran nationalist—as head of government, the Council of State is trying to find a new

legitimacy also in the name of the FLN. Boudiaff is one of the historic leaders of the FLN. The mid-January meeting of the FIS and the FLN proves, in fact, that the faction that had been pushed aside was ready to share power with the FIS.

SA: What is your position on the coup?

AM: Our first reaction, when the president resigned on TV, was to declare there could be a military dictatorship, and we would be against it. When the coup happened, we just reaffirmed our position.

We are totally against it for a whole number of reasons—for democratic reasons, for reasons of principle, but also for eminently political reasons. The FIS cannot be blocked today by force. Over the past years, it has gained far too much credibility in the eyes of the masses to expect that by momentarily pushing it aside you can break it.

The more undemocratic attacks there are upon the FIS, the more credibility it will gain in the eyes of the masses.

SA: So, what do you think is going to happen?

AM: All the statements, the formulas tried, show that we are heading for a period of total instability. They may find a formula that will hold up for a few months, but maybe not even that.

The Council of State has dumbfounded people. A comrade told me yesterday that even those who had greeted its establishment, since it put forward a very general formula, became quite uneasy when they saw its composition.

The strong opposition of the FIS and the FLN to this sort of Council of State is opening up a war. We cannot know where

this going to lead. It is possible that things will get out of hand. For the moment, the FIS is keeping its base in check. It is calling for caution, it is negotiating with the FLN.

But anything is possible. You can't rule out that some meeting for Friday morning prayers could lead to an insurrection. They might even negotiate and get a formula for transition. But in my opinion, there is no lasting solution, because there will be no solution to the political crisis before there is one to the social crisis.

SA: What are the possibilities for building a workers' opposition?

AM: We can always work to try to rally those who are ready today to defend democratic freedoms, all the democratic freedoms for everyone. Unfortunately, there are not many of them. All the liberal parties are supporting the coup d'etat. Only the Front of Socialist Forces characterizes what has happened as a coup d'etat—but without calling for a mobilization or any action.

There may be some small groups, some workers, maybe those [in the UGTA union federation] who took a position against their own general secretary. But there is no already-constituted force that can serve as a basis for an immediate counteroffensive against the coup d'etat and the threat to democratic freedoms posed by the fundamentalists.

The crisis is so deep that no formula will succeed in containing the anger of the masses when they see their buying power continue to decline. We need to survive in order to be there when the explosion comes. ■

Supreme Court denies Christic Institute La Penca case review

By JEFF MACKLER

On Jan. 13, 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court denied a petition for *certiorari*, or review, filed by the Christic Institute. This action brought to a close the legal aspects of the historic 1986 lawsuit that forcefully exposed the many connections between illegal U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan contras, the Central Intelligence Agency, and international drug trafficking.

The Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that had awarded unprecedented damages in the amount of \$1.2 million against the Institute for filing a "frivolous" lawsuit against 19 defendants who were involved in illegal support to the Nicaraguan contras.

The original litigant, journalist Tony Avirgan, was severely wounded when a

bomb exploded at a La Penca, Nicaragua press conference called by contra leader Eden Pastora to denounce CIA support to one wing of the contras.

Included in those receiving money from the enormous bond the Christic Institute was compelled to post were the likes of CIA secret agent John Hull. Hull was indicted last year by the Costa Rican government on charges similar to those included in the law suit headed by Christic Institute Chief Counsel Daniel Sheehan.

The Christic Institute's executive director, the Rev. Bill Davis, told *Socialist Action*: "The Federal Court system is a 'goner.'"

However, though this particular battle may be lost, the war is not. If we cannot get our case in front of a jury, we will take it to the court of public opinion. The

issues are not going away, and neither are we."

The Christic Institute will pursue its campaign, "Causes and Cures," a national campaign on the narcotics epidemic, which has won broad support from the religious community. This effort links the drug issue with U.S. government agencies that are illegally involved in drug trafficking.

It will also support efforts to open government files associated with the Kennedy assassination.

A number of the Institute's La Penca defendants have been associated with Kennedy-era "Shooter Teams" of anti-Castro Cuban professional assassins associated by Oliver Stone and others with the murder of former President John F. Kennedy.

The Institute will also defend itself from government attacks on its tax-free (501C3) status, and against efforts by the former defendants in the lawsuit to extract an additional \$400,000 in legal fees.

Contributions to the Christic Institute can be sent to: 1324 North Capitol Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20002. Phone: (202) 797-8106. ■

Emergency Appeal

Protest Tunisian Police Torture of Fourth Internationalists

By JEFF MACKLER

On Jan. 4, Tunisian police arrested eight political activists in the city of Tagerouine, Tunisia. Members or sympathizers of the Revolutionary Communist Organization (OCR), Tunisian section of the Fourth International, they were accused of "illegal association and assembly" and with "distribution of literature which threatens the public order."

At the time they were put in jail, they were distributing a leaflet that protested the government's arrest of members of a Tunisian Muslim fundamentalist organization.

One of the activists, Hammadi Dalhoumi, was released on bail a week later. He reported that he and the others were subjected to brutal torture and intimidation. They were compelled to give the names of other members of the OCR who are being sought by the police. A public trial is imminent.

The arrested activists are: Fathi Salawi, Saber Saidi, Mohammed Kamal Charni, Nureddine Salmani, Imad Zoghalmi, Charafeddine Ben Ali, and Habib Souihi.

Letters of protest are urgently requested. Protests should be faxed and addressed to the President of the Republic/Minister of Justice, Tunis, Tunisia, and faxed to the Tunisian Embassy in Washington, D.C., FAX Number: (202)862-1858. ■

Court OKs deportation of Irish Republican Joe Doherty



Joe Doherty

ASSOCIATED PRESS

By GERRY FOLEY

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for the extradition of Joe Doherty, an Irish Republican, to Britain. The Reagan-Bush reactionary court ruled that, in order to protect the interests of the United States, the U.S. Attorney General has the right to send Doherty against his will to a country where he faces life in prison.

In 1982, Doherty escaped from the notorious Crumlin Road jail in Belfast, before the conclusion of his trial on the charge of shooting a British army captain in an IRA ambush. He fled to the United States, where he was arrested two years later. Since that time, he has been held in U.S. prisons awaiting a final ruling on deportation.

In the December issue of the San Francisco Irish paper *The Gael*, Doherty wrote that he was celebrating the "3000th day of

my imprisonment without charge in an American prison. With 18 years of imprisonment in Ireland and the United States behind me, and more than likely, many decades of prison cells, belly chains and strip searches ahead of me, I continue committed to my Republican beliefs." Doherty's beliefs are shared by at least half the oppressed population of Northern Ireland, who regularly vote for Republican candidates, and a great deal of the Irish American population as well.

Commenting on the Supreme Court decision, the editors of the *Washington Post* called for disregarding the views of the lowly Irish in their Feb. 27 weekly edition. "We," the *Washington Post* editors wrote, "find nothing troubling about denying political asylum to someone convicted of murder in the course of a violent campaign to overturn the democratically elected government in one of this country's oldest and firmest allies."

A more shameless avowal of the partnership in crime between U.S. and British imperialism is hard to imagine. There is no "democratically elected" government in Northern Ireland. It is ruled directly by Britain. The local government that had been established in his area, artificially cut off to assure the largest possible territory with a pro-imperialist majority, was glaringly exposed as a repressive regime similar to the white supremacist government in South Africa. This fact was exposed by a mass movement of the oppressed people that the British army tried to suppress by shooting down 13 peaceful demonstrators in 1972.

The 1972 massacre sparked a turn to armed resistance in Northern Ireland, just as the Sharpesville massacre did in South Africa.

All opponents of oppression and exploitation in the United States have a duty to denounce the partnership in crime between U.S. and British imperialism, now sanctified by the Reagan-Bush Supreme Court, and oppose the deportation of Joe Doherty. ■

... Algerian women

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similar aims. In time, and through common work, they built up a national coordinating committee. This collaboration was strengthened by the malicious campaign that the fundamentalists launched against women. At first, this campaign was conducted through verbal insults in the streets, the media, and in the mosques, and with the use of anti-woman arguments.

The essential message was that the sole cause of the crisis hitting Algeria was women. Women were responsible for unemployment, since they were taking men's jobs. Women were responsible for the decline of the education system, since most teachers were women. Women were responsible for rising crime, because they were not where they should be, bringing up children properly. Women were responsible for the moral decay of the country.

After a few months, the whole country was in a state of real psychosis. Women were being attacked in the streets, on the buses, at work, in the universities—especially women on their own—whether widowed, divorced, or single.

At this time, almost every weekend, the women's groups organized rallies, demonstrations, and other activities. The movement seemed to grow with every attack. The 1990 municipal elections brought the fundamentalists' campaign to a standstill.

For the whole of 1989 and the first half of 1990, the women's movement was prac-

tically the only force that actively opposed the fundamentalists, even though it was totally isolated within the society. There were indeed several parties whose programs called for emancipating women. But, except for the far left parties, women could not rely on their support.

Nonetheless, the activity of the women's movement led the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the biggest of the Islamic parties, to change its approach to women for these municipal elections. The same people who had been inveighing against women now started talking about a wage for housewives. If you asked how this was to be paid, the answer would be that the police would be abolished—an argument especially popular among the young.

Promising heaven on earth

Since the 1988 revolt, there has been a deep gulf between the population and the FLN regime. The FLN is seen as corrupted, and has lost the confidence of the people. Opposed to the regime, the fundamentalists propose to restore moral values and social justice.

They have promised housing for all. There is an extremely severe housing shortage in Algeria.

On the average, seven people live in dwellings of nine square meters. Whoever promises housing promises heaven on earth. They have promised a just distribution of water. There is indeed water in the rich neighborhoods but not for the poor.

Such promises have found a good reception among women. They saw their daily housework valued and a possibility for

improving their living conditions. This explains why women who had taken part in demonstrations against fundamentalist attacks voted for these same fundamentalists on June 12, 1990, and contributed to their massive victory.

The electoral law was devised so that a man could vote for himself, for his wife, and for three other people. On the eve of the 1990 poll, the interior minister publicly stated that there would be no identity checks at the voting stations. In this situation, every kind of electoral fraud could be practiced. People would vote several times in different booths or towns. Votes were cast for people who were absent or dead.

This led the women's movement to concentrate its attention on the electoral law. It has succeeded in getting the right of men to vote for three other people withdrawn.

However, it has not yet succeeded in depriving a husband of the right to cast his wife's vote. Nonetheless, the women's movement won a victory. Once again, it was this movement and the far left who fought for democratic rights. Now, the front has widened. Twenty-eight parties are demanding reform of the electoral law.

Deterioration in living standards

Women do not only have to deal with democratic questions. Another issue is the economic crisis, which has worsened in recent months.

The agreement made by the government with the IMF has meant massive job losses. The official unemployment rate is 22 percent, but is in reality higher. The national currency has already been devalued

twice, but wages have risen hardly at all. Purchasing power has been sharply reduced, and the government has decided to abolish subsidies on basic necessities.

This means a huge deterioration in the living conditions of women. Previously, the healthcare system was free, but now you have to pay.

State plans for healthcare have disappeared in the bottom drawer, since the state is withdrawing from the health service. This means a huge rise in the death rate for women.

The price of school books has risen sharply. Families will soon have to decide which children to send to school. On the average, every woman has seven children. It will, of course, be the girls who lose out.

Similarly, it is women who get laid off first. They will thus have to enter the shadow economy, selling home-made products in the markets to supplement their shrinking housekeeping money. The prospect looms of growing impoverishment, which will destroy all possibility for women's emancipation.

The fear is that the subjection of the government to the IMF's diktats will only serve to make the reactionary ideology of the fundamentalists more popular. Women are the victims in both cases—on the one hand from the FLN's free-enterprise, pro-capitalist orientation, and on the other from the Islamic movement, which wants to go back to the past.

This situation obliges the women's movement to look for new answers, and in particular to address social problems. ■

... El Salvador

(continued from page 1)

cial landowners and industrialists closely tied to U.S. corporations.

The Salvadoran rulers have been organized, trained, and funded by the U.S. government, which has poured in \$1 billion in aid in the last decade. Some 75,000 people have been killed in the war, with thousands more lives disrupted by injury, prison, expulsion from the land, and exile.

The military/death-squad killers have not been brought to justice. For example, there is strong evidence that the murder of six Jesuits and their two housekeepers was directly ordered by the military high command. They are still in charge, while a colonel has been convicted of the crimes.

This background of stark terror gives an aura of unreality to the peace celebrations. It is all the more startling that all sides are lavishing praise on the settlement. Chief FMLN negotiator, Jorge Shafik Handal, long-time leader of the Salvadoran Communist Party, crowed: "These agreements are going to transform the country. ... There is going to be a great effort to achieve basic levels of social justice."

The right-wing President Alfredo Cristiani agreed: "This signing constitutes the beginning of a new era of rebuilding toward democracy and freedom." (*El Salvador on Line*, Jan. 6, 1992.)

Peace accords provisions

The specifics of the peace accords are contained in a set of new laws that must be enacted by the right-wing ARENA-dominated National Assembly. They detail changes in the army, government, and society that the pro-FMLN Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) claims are "unprecedented."

"If implemented, CISPES states: "Salvadoran society stands to undergo a profound transformation by means of agreements curbing the power of the military, institutionalizing democracy, and reforming the economy." (*Alert!*, January 1992).

On military reform: The most notorious repressive forces are to be dissolved. According to Shafik Handal, the reform reduces the military's function to only "the defense of the country's territory and its sovereignty." In two years, the Salvadoran military will be halved down to 26,000. For internal security, a National Civilian Police will be formed in which ex-combatants of the FMLN will participate.

The human rights record of the army officers will be reviewed by a three-person civilian review panel to be jointly appointed by the government and the FMLN.

Under United Nations supervision, the units of FMLN troops, estimated at 6000, will be phased out. They will turn in their weapons and re-enter civilian life.

On land reform: The struggle for the land by El Salvador's peasantry has been at the heart of the civil war. The accords provide that land held by peasants in FMLN-controlled zones will be kept by them, while legal owners (i.e., absentee landowners) will be compensated. Land in "contested zones" is to be adjudicated by a special government commission.

Beyond this, the accord calls for the implementation of previous land-reform decrees, which were sabotaged by opposition from large landowners and the far-right.

Several land reform proposals were developed in the early 1980s by "moderate" bourgeois forces in conjunction with the U.S. government, which hoped that agrarian reform could stave off another Nicaraguan revolution. But the laws did little to curb the power of the big landowners and provided no solution to land-starved peasants.

On political reform: The National Assembly is to issue a decree legalizing the FMLN as a political party. A general amnesty is to be declared for FMLN members, and political prisoners are to be freed. Further, a "forum" is to be created that will allow further negotiations on social policy, the situation of labor, and to join "representatives of the popular movement and the business community to discuss plans for revitalizing the Salvadoran economy" devastated by 12 years of civil war.



"While the leadership of the FMLN has signed on for now, their worker and peasant base may not be able to make the necessary concessions."

In the last few years, the most dramatic development in El Salvador has been the revival of the labor movement, which was brutally decimated in the early 1980s. In great waves, whole sectors of the working population have been organized, and unions have waged heroic struggles for wage and social benefits.

As recently as Nov. 15, 1991, thousands of public sector workers marched in the streets of San Salvador in support of strikers demanding wage raises. Three days later, barricades went up to stop ARENA scabs. Despite harsh repression, the unions have maintained their forces and entered into the political arena as a key factor.

A short-term respite from the repression, which may be provided by international supervision, could give a new impetus to the workers' movement. Likewise, democratic openings would encourage peasants to voice their demands.

Worsening economic conditions

Conditions are worsening for the Salvadoran masses. In 1991 alone, 20,000 public employees have been laid off as part of the government's privatization plans. Continuation of the policy would mean another 33,000 layoffs. (*El Salvador on Line*, Nov. 25, 1991.)

Likewise, the government was moving to disband cooperatives last fall. The U.S. may use the peace settlement as an excuse to deport more Salvadoran exiles, further swelling the ranks of the unemployed. Popular demands can be as basic as the defense of the right to a job or to the land.

The FMLN will be now in a position where it has to contain the "excesses" of such just demands, in the interest of a smooth process of "reconciliation." The problem is that the fundamental demands of workers and peasants for social justice cannot be "reconciled" with the iniquitous system of capitalism. The oligarchy and the army which was reared to defend it must first be smashed.

The U.S. government is all too aware of the explosive nature of the situation. Speaking in El Salvador the day after the formal signing of the agreement, Secretary of State James Baker warned that if the FMLN wants international help, it must also prove to its adversaries at home that the accord is not "an enormous trap—a political Trojan horse" through which the rebels could reenter society only to tear it apart.

Baker also pledged \$1.6 billion for national economic reconstruction in the next five years. The U.S. support for peace is clearly conditional on the implementation of its stabilization plans.

While the leadership of the FMLN has signed on for now, their worker and peasant base may not be able to make the necessary concessions.

For now, the U.S. and Salvadoran rulers seem to be opting for this deal with the FMLN. But it remains to be seen how

much of the agreement will be dismantled in the approval process by the ARENA-dominated National Assembly. When ARENA party President Armando Calderon Sol called for a general amnesty for military criminals in the Salvadoran National Assembly, it was clear that the Salvadoran bourgeoisie wants to keep this scum on hand for future use.

When that time comes again, the capitalists will find themselves still in control of the military and they will be backed by the guns and dollars of the United States. The FMLN could find itself without the armed strength that has counterbalanced the military.

The FMLN's status as part of the police force is uncertain. Will they be willing to act the part of police and repress striking workers or peasants occupying land? Or will they risk derailing the peace process in order to defend workers against the bosses' continuing attacks? These are the choices of a popular movement trying to reconcile itself with a capitalist state.

Rather than preparing the workers and peasants for the coming confrontations, the FMLN is sowing illusions in the international guarantees provided by the United States and the United Nations.

The UN's international role was made crystal clear in the Gulf War: the UN serves as a weapon in the arsenal of Bush's New World Order. Nor does the UN provide any guarantee against military repression. When the United States supports a brutal military junta, as in Haiti today, it enlists international brokers, like the OAS or the UN, to give a democratic facade to the regime and to isolate the popular-based forces diplomatically.

FMLN isolated internationally

The Salvadoran negotiations reflect the real relation of forces in the civil war, but also in the international situation. While the FMLN has scored an impressive record militarily, international factors have made their struggle more difficult.

Support that the USSR had given at times is no longer there. Since the rise of Stalinism in the late 1920s, the Soviet Union has regarded "revolutionary movements" as useful tools, mainly to be used as bargaining chips to exchange for concessions from imperialism. Under Gorbachev and his successors, ever more eager for imperialist support, these movements were increasingly hung out to dry.

Thus, the USSR cut off Sandinista Nicaragua's oil at crucial moments and has abandoned Cuba. These gestures have aided U.S. imperialism in its desire to contain and strangle revolution "in its own backyard" in Central America.

The Soviet government lined up unequivocally with the United States on El Salvador. The two governments even issued a joint statement: "A U.N.-supervised ceasefire is urgently required to consolidate the progress that has been made

and to put a definitive end to the conflict." The statement adds that once a ceasefire is achieved, both sides should "start implementing measures aimed at national reconciliation." (*El Salvador on Line*, Dec. 9, 1991.)

Another difficulty for the FMLN was that the Nicaraguan revolution was greatly weakened with the election of Violetta Chamorro in 1990. The Sandinistas retreated on a whole series of social measures—enforcing capitalist austerity—and legitimizing the U.S.-backed Arias plan for Central America.

Nor is help coming from Cuba. Under increasingly severe pressure because of the Soviet deal with the United States at their expense, the Cubans chose to retreat as well. According to news reports of a recent meeting in Havana with U.S. scholars, "Castro has renounced all support for foreign guerrilla movements." (*Boston Globe*, Jan. 15, 1992.)

Castro was quoted as saying, "Times have changed. We have changed. Military aid outside our borders is a thing of the past." (*New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1992.)

The FMLN is an indigenous movement, relying on a peasant and increasingly worker base for its support and survival. Nonetheless, international isolation put them in a diplomatic straitjacket. For "friends," the FMLN relied on the Social Democratic parties and the governments of Venezuela, Mexico, and Spain.

These forces dissented from the Reagan/Bush policy of open death-squad rule, hoping to stabilize capitalist development in El Salvador with a broader social base. However, the international recognition to the FMLN provided by these governments was entirely contingent on the guerrillas' staying within the bounds of social reform and not offering the example of another Cuba.

Important forces in the FMLN looked to the Soviet Union or social democracy and to the strategy of national reconciliation in world "zones of conflict." Furthermore, they look to the strategy of alliances with Salvadoran bourgeois forces in a period of "democratization" separated from the struggle against capitalist rule. In keeping with the retreat of Stalinism, key FMLN leaders have now renounced the struggle for socialism altogether.

It is understandable that after 12 years of war and so much suffering the Salvadoran masses should seek peace. But the FMLN could be sowing the seeds of a disaster when they support a "peaceful settlement" with bourgeois forces that does not alter the fundamental conditions of class power.

As recently as last November, urban units of the FMLN stated in a communique: "We claim the right to defend our people against government repression and to direct our efforts to winning revolutionary changes that will benefit the nation."

The fighting traditions of the workers and peasants of El Salvador reflected in this declaration have been built over decades of tremendous resistance and struggle. What is lacking, though, is a political force that can clearly express those traditions and direct the workers and peasants toward the socialist society that is glimpsed in their mobilizations. ■

Old-line Stalinists try to redecorate themselves as defenders of masses

By GERRY FOLEY

Since the wreck of the Communist Party in August 1991, the various factions of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the republics of the old USSR have been trying out new instruments and new formulas in an attempt to regain some political credibility. The old Soviet CP central organ *Pravda*, representing the wing of the bureaucracy hostile to Yeltsin, has become a sounding board for such operations.

These maneuvers pose special problems for fighters seeking to organize opposition to Yeltsin's attack on the living standard of the masses, and in general for revolutionists trying to offer a socialist way forward out of the collapse of Stalinism.

According to the standard Stalinist *modus operandi*, these maneuvers point to the left and right at the same time, but the underlying direction is rightward. *Pravda* has been indulging in radical-sounding condemnations of the effects of Yeltsin's policies on the working people. After all, there is no honor among thieves.

Thus, the headline of the Jan. 13 *Pravda* was: "When the emperor has no clothes, the people are also undressed." The problem is that when this faction of bureaucrats sat on the "imperial" throne, they were no better draped than Yeltsin, and the people's clothing, such as it was, was already being stripped from them.

While claiming to defend the "working people," *Pravda* seems to have started to orient increasingly—and on a chauvinist basis—to the discontent of the military officers. The sinister implications of this are highlighted by the signs appearing in demonstrations organized by old-line Stalinists calling on the army to "save the people."

"A great people's movement?"

The general orientation was expressed quite clearly in an article from Moscow by veteran Stalinist hack Mike Davidow in the Jan. 18 issue of the *People's Weekly World*, the paper of the old-line Stalinist U.S. Communist Party.

"The soil is being prepared," Davidow wrote, "for a great people's movement uniting two powerful forces—patriotic and socialist—for the restoration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

He pointed to a demonstration in Moscow on Jan. 12, whose participants "shouted slogans demanding strict price controls supervised by workers' committees and a united Soviet army in a united Soviet Union." Davidow hailed the formation of a Union of Officers, whose mood "can be summed up in one word: ACTION."

He described the forces organizing the rally as follows: "The mass meeting was a vivid demonstration of the Left Bloc. Its organizers included the newly-formed Russian Communist Workers Party, which played a leading role in the formation of the Bloc; the Union of Communists; the Socialist Working Peoples Party; and the Initiative Committee for the Formation of the Komsomols, the communist youth organization."

However, Davidow exposed the real character of this movement of "patriotic and socialist" forces by ending his article with a quote from the sinister Colonel Victor Alksnis, leader of the chauvinist Soyuz [Union] bloc in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Alksnis said: "The officers and soldiers will never accept the dismembering and destruction of the Soviet armed forces."

Most recently, Alksnis has gained atten-

tion by proclaiming that the recognized independence of the Baltics remains unreal and unrealizable. And this is in a situation marked by the reluctance of the Russian authorities to withdraw the large military forces still stationed there.

Appeal to the rightists

The rightist, Great Russian (Soviet) chauvinist direction of *Pravda* is further confirmed by its interest in the group of right-wing procapitalist leaders who broke from Yeltsin's coalition, Democratic Russia, because the coalition's majority was unwilling to defend the "indivisibility" of Russia.

One of them, the chief of the right-wing pro-capitalist Democratic Party, Nikolai Travkin, was offered the columns

them to absolute beggary."

It should be noted at this point that *Pravda* has also been very friendly to Rutskoï. It published an interview with him in its Dec. 17 issue, which was his major statement of opposition to the Yeltsin government's policy.

Left-wing alternatives?

Then, in its Jan. 17 issue, *Pravda* published an article by him on its front page, under the banner: "Hero of the Soviet Union." (Rutskoï was a pilot in the Afghan war.) In this piece, Rutskoï assumed the defense of the army and denounced the Yeltsin government for failing to defend the Russian minorities in the "independent republics."

However, Slavin's article went on to lay



5000 military officers meet at the Kremlin to demand that armed forces stay intact.

"Soviet workers are unlikely to follow a leadership composed of their past jailers."

of *Pravda* so that, among other things, he could denounce the majority of Democratic Russia for being "left liberals."

It is in this context that *Pravda* published a long article in its Jan. 6 issue on a so-called left alternative to the Yeltsin government. In fact, this article by Boris Slavin defined the context as follows:

"After the statements of [Yeltsin's vice president] A. Rutskoï, the departure of N. Travkin from the congress of Democratic Russia and the sensational statements of G. Popov at the congress of the Movement for Democratic Reforms, we can talk about a split in the ruling coalition of right-wing political forces and about the formation of an opposition within the ruling class [that is, the ruling political forces, who are in fact not necessarily any more procapitalist than *Pravda* and the forces it represents—GF].

"This opposition," Slavin continues, "is not over the substance but over the forms and methods of carrying out Yeltsin's reforms. It is largely conditioned by fear of the people, who are instinctively rejecting uncontrolled privatization, which they call 'grabbing' [a pun in Russian], as well as the freeing of prices, which is reducing

out a perspective of a principled "left" alternative, a "Bloc of Left Forces." It would include Rutskoï's People's Party of Free Russia (formerly Communists for Democracy) and the Socialist Working People's Party (SWPP), whose most prominent representative is Roy Medvedev. Slavin considered these parties Social Democratic.

Medvedev is a veteran dissident, who has consistently followed a Khrushchevite line—a variant of Stalinist reform. He emerged already as a frequent contributor to the Communist Party theoretical journal *Kommunist* long before the August coup.

Medvedev's party, Slavin wrote, "may represent not only the interests of wage workers, the 'collective producers and individual producers,' as its program says, but the old party bureaucracy seeking to make a comeback."

Slavin tried to present this whole spectrum of "left forces" as something new. Yet he had to acknowledge at least a doubt about the SWPP—which is commonly referred to in *Pravda* as one of the successor groups of the CPSU.

Slavin also expressed pessimism about the ability of Medvedev's party to become a mass force. But he thought that the new

Labor Party, supported by forces that have taken more distance from Stalinism (like Boris Kagarlitsky's Socialist Party and some leaders of the old Marxist Program in the CPSU, such as A. Buzgalin and A. Kolganov), did have that capacity.

Slavin included the Labor Party in the new "left movement" that should unite in a "Bloc of Left Forces."

Among the "Communist-Radical" components of this prospective Bloc of Left Forces, Slavin included the Union of Communists, founded by another group from the Marxist Platform, and the Russian Communist Workers' Party. He linked the two closely.

Looking for orthodox communists

The Union of Communists, Slavin wrote, "stands very close to the 'orthodox' Communists of the most recent period. Its natural desire was to go into the Russian Communist Workers Party formed in November in Ekaterinburg [Sverdlovsk] as a faction, but this did not come to pass."

The RCWP, "in the tradition of Leninism," Slavin continued, bans "factions." He wrote that the RCWP was the "most representative" of the various "Communist parties" and might grow out of the protests against Yeltsin's economic policies.

"Despite its Communist fundamentalism," he said, "this party is quickly developing modern forms of political struggle. Its supporters can be seen continually among the defenders of the Lenin Museum and Mausoleum, in the participants in the November demonstration [to commemorate the Russian revolution], in the December hunger march, and in the newly formed Workers Soviets in Moscow and other cities."

Interestingly, Slavin, like other writers in *Pravda* has said that the Movement for Democratic Reforms, which was the reform bureaucracy's major attempt to develop an alternative instrument to the old CPSU, has been stillborn as an organization. Thus, obviously, new experiments are necessary.

Slavin complained that "official propaganda," presumably that of the Yeltsin government, is trying to present this whole "left" as "neo-Stalinist." He claimed, to the contrary, that all these forces were "resolutely anti-Stalinist."

But that is obviously untrue.

Some of them are notoriously old-line Stalinist, like the group of Nina Andreeva, which he mentioned among the smaller components of the "new left movement," or the Front of Working People. Others, like Kagarlitsky's party and the Buzgalin wing of the Marxist Platform have more left positions.

Overall, Slavin's proposal for a "Bloc of Left Forces" seems to be part of an operation by a wing, or perhaps the bulk, of the Stalinist bureaucracy to slow the breakdown of its domination or to reconsolidate it. It indicates how tricky the political situation is in the old Soviet Republics, in Russia in particular, for genuinely revolutionary forces that want to fight capitalist restoration.

The neo-Stalinists formally espouse many of the ideas of the Russian Revolution and are trying to exploit well-founded protests against the effects of the market reforms. But unless revolutionists can differentiate themselves from these redecorated Stalinists, they will not win the support of the masses and the participants in real struggles.

It seems clear that, although the credibility of the "democrats" is fading rapidly, the neo-Stalinists—even when they protest hated policies—are repugnant to the masses.

In fact, the attempt by the Russian neo-Stalinists to exploit for their own purposes the revulsion against Yeltsin's economic policies may be one factor that has inhibited a mass fightback. Soviet workers are unlikely to follow a leadership composed of their past jailers. ■

Soviet bureaucrats squabble as price rises take their toll

By GERRY FOLEY

Fear of a mass revolt against the brutal price rises launched at the beginning of January is already dividing the dominant political forces in the republics of the former Soviet Union—including the preponderant and still relatively backward Russian Federation.

Even those bureaucrats most sanguine for restoring capitalism and "real prices," like Russian President Boris Yeltsin, have to face the fact that the price increases are a terrible goad to a people whose standard of living has already declined disastrously.

The increases are so steep that the Paris-based Russian language weekly, *Russkaya Mysl'* reported on Jan. 10 that most Russians are still not buying anything except bread and milk, and a lot of products are being sent back to suppliers. Consumption of meat, for example, has already dropped about 20 percent.

Even if the population in the largest republic, Russia, still seems relatively passive, as if struck dumb by these blows, the politicians know that its anger could overflow rapidly.

And in the republics where an independent democratic movement has developed, where the Stalinist bureaucracy suffered its first major defeats, this anger seems already to be finding some expression.

Bureaucrats begin to squabble

The well-justified fear of the Russian politicians is shown by their fevered maneuvering. Among the Russian political forces, the first division is between those sections of the Stalinist apparatus who wanted a more cautious approach to the reforms—especially in regard to maintaining "order"—and those sections that are trying to ride the wave of antibureaucratic sentiment.

The former are represented by the bureaucrats dependent on their position in the Communist Party and the military, the latter by the more venturesome (or even adventurist) storm birds of the bureaucracy, personified in the first place by Boris Yeltsin himself.

But now Yeltsin's government also has split. The first to break ranks was his vice president, Aleksandr Rutskoi, who gave a long interview to *Pravda* denouncing the price rises. It was published in the Dec. 27 issue of the old Communist Party central organ, which now claims to be independent but clearly represents the continuity of the party milieu.

Rutskoi violently condemned the way that the whole reform project has been carried out: "We have chaos in the full sense of the word."

The Russian Federation vice president claimed to be lamenting the fate of the poor working people. But his real concern showed through quite clearly: "I don't want a social explosion. I don't want people to shout, 'Out with the democrats!' the way they shouted at the Communists before. I do not want a new dictatorship to come to power."

The chair of the Russian parliament, R. Khasbulatov, one of Yeltsin's main lieutenants, also broke from his mentor, demanding the resignation of the Russian government and a retreat on the price rises.

In its Jan. 16 issue, *Pravda* printed a resumé of an interview Khasbulatov gave to the British *Financial Times* on its front page. He said: "Everyone is calling for a change in the present program of economic reforms—many deputies, including both democrats and non-democrats, specialists, and factory managers."

Both Khasbulatov and Rutskoi claimed to still be loyal supporters of Yeltsin, despite having received resounding kicks in the pants from their boss. In fact, Rutskoi claimed that he was not against the price rises in principle but only thought that they should be postponed until October. In this respect, his position was similar to that taken by Yeltsin before the mass

Вот тебе, бабушка...



Front page of *Pravda* illustrates how bare the cupboard is for workers.

PRAVDA

movement against Gorbachev's price rises in April put him on the top of the bureaucratic heap.

In his long report to the Russian parliament at that time, Yeltsin said that he opposed such price rises because, unless they were prepared for by other changes in the economic structure, they would lead to hyperinflation. He also said that he would never try to ban strikes. Then, he made a deal with Gorbachev to end the April mobilizations, which included a strike ban.

And now Yeltsin is applying the same policy as Pavlov, Gorbachev's premier, did in April. In the meantime, although the agreement held out the promise of revising the price rises, they have not been lowered but increased many times.

"Facing total collapse"

One of Yeltsin's closest economic advisors, Oleg Bogomolov, said in an interview in *Der Spiegel* of Jan. 6 that he expected the price rises to lead to disaster. "The economy is facing total collapse," he said. "I see no incentive for the factories to produce more. To the contrary, production will fall further. That has, in fact, happened everywhere prices have been freed before privatization, as in Poland and Czechoslovakia."

Bogomolov stressed that it was essential to give the people some assurance that they had a stake in the economy. "The most important thing is not to demand more sacrifices from people, but finally give them something—their home, land, a share in the factories, natural resources, and all this without a price or only with a symbolic one. Otherwise, there will be explosions, mutinies, uprisings, plundering."

This puts in context the many schemes being floated in East Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union for giving the people shares in the economy—a totally illusory ownership.

The privatization of housing in Moscow

"In recent weeks, *Pravda* has tried to present itself as a tribune for protests against Yeltsin's economic policies."

has already been a political disaster for the "democratic" Mayor Popov. In the first place, it perpetuated the privileges of the bureaucrats, who got title to their nice flats, while the masses only got claim to their cramped holes.

Secondly, taxes and charges amounted to as much or more than rent. This scheme has become an easy target for *Pravda*, which nonetheless leaves no bones about the fact that it favors privatization of housing in principle.

In the first phase after the failed old-Stalinist coup in August, the old CP organ contented itself with cynical sniping at Yeltsin, suggesting that he had previously sabotaged poor Pavlov's attempt to raise prices and that now he would get a taste of his own medicine. In recent weeks, *Pravda* has tried to present itself as a tribune for protests against Yeltsin's economic policies.

Pravda was a great defender of Pavlov's price rises last April, while it decried and continues to decry such measures in the "separatist" republics, such as Estonia. Moreover, it featured a condemnation by the *Financial Times* of Ukraine's using coupons to cushion the shock of the price rises

National-democratic movements

At the same time, *Pravda* has not reported on the resistance to market policies in Estonia, which has led to the resignation of Estonian Premier Edgar Savisaar.

Savisaar is an economist of the Gorbachev school, as well as a leader of the Estonian national-democratic People's Front (Rahvarinne). Because of both these hats, his discomfiture has far-reaching implications. It seems to reflect the social differentiation that could be expected in the national democratic movements after they assumed full formal governmental power.

The *New York Times* correspondent, Serge Schmemmann, reported gloomily and disparagingly on Jan. 21, "The faction-riddled [Estonian] Parliament is paralyzed by internal dispute and the Government is in disarray."

In reality, the fact that the Estonian parliamentary majority has fragmented in the face of having to carry out an undemocratic and antisocial program is a healthy sign. It reflects the development of independent democratic organization.

In Lithuania, the national-democratic government has adopted a law prohibiting government officials from being the beneficiaries of privatization, offering a limited but good example for the other former Soviet republics.

In Russia, on the other hand, mass democratic organization is much less developed. Yeltsin's coalition, Democratic Russia, has far more continuity with the old political bureaucracy than the national-democratic fronts that exist in many of the old republics.

This lack of democratic organization is probably the main, or at least a principal factor, explaining the lack of widespread protests so far in Russia against the price rises. Some protests have been carried out by the unions, which for the most part are only slightly refurbished versions of the old Stalinist ones. Independent unionism has gone furthest among the coal miners, but there also, some of the structures have been absorbed into the old setup.

Democratic Russia is beginning to divide, as the split in Yeltsin's government testifies. At its congress in November, the majority refused to support Yeltsin's attempt to crack down on the national movement of the Chechen people, one of the many small nations incorporated into the Russian Federation.

The role of the national movements had made this question clear for the Russian democratic movement. But understanding has not yet developed within it of the antidemocratic nature of the capitalist restoration policies.

Protests in Uzbekistan

The biggest blowup reported so far against the price rises has, come, symptomatically, in Uzbekistan—where the old Communist Party and leadership remained intact but assumed Uzbek nationalist trappings. Their declaration of independence in the wake of the failed old-Stalinist coup in August was accompanied by a crackdown on the real national-democratic movement in the republic—Birlik, an organization modeled on the Baltic people's fronts.

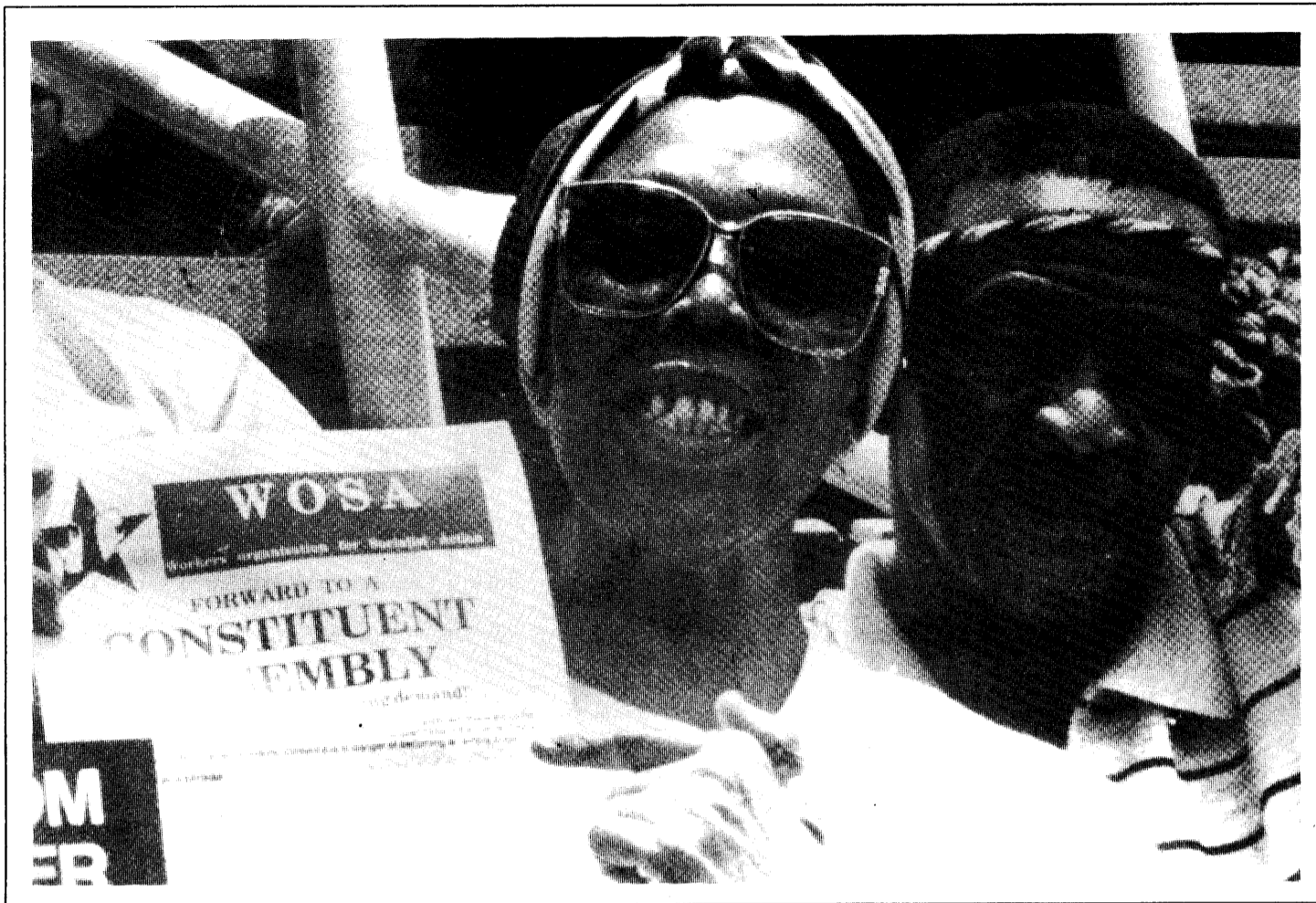
Thousands of students started violent protests. On Jan. 16, they demanded the resignation of the government. Demonstrations and clashes continued for some days, according to the *New York Times* of Jan. 18, which also reported that the national-democratic movement was supporting the students.

The process of differentiation in the existing democratic movements and the growth of democratic and workers organizations in the Russian Federation will certainly take some time and be uneven.

In Ukraine, for example, where the national-democratic leadership has expressed radical social positions, it seems that the victory of the Stalinist boss Kravchuk in the presidential elections and his confrontation with the Russian authorities has led these leaders—for the moment at least—to rally around the "independent" Ukrainian government.

But the pressures for differentiation and for the emergence of leaderships that will express the desperation of the masses of people are certainly very strong. This, among other things, is reflected by the generally gloomy prognoses for Yeltsin, both in the Western capitalist press and among his own lieutenants, some of whom are starting to make motions that look like jumping ship. ■

The ANC's Patriotic Front: Some critical questions



WORKERS' VOICE

By ANDREW LUKELE

Last October, delegates from the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), and other political, professional, and religious groups met to form a new Patriotic Front. The front was initiated by the ANC under the premise that it would bring together the Black liberation organizations within a common platform that could be put forward in negotiations with the government.

One major Black organization, however, the Azanian Peoples Organization, was excluded from the conference. More recently, the PAC has broken loose from the front.

Following is an abridged version of a position paper on the Patriotic Front. It was presented by South African activist Andrew Lukele at a meeting sponsored by the Organization of South Africans/Azani-ans for Liberation Education (OSAAL) in New York City, on Dec. 7, 1991.

The full text appears in the January 1992 edition of OSAAL News, which may be ordered by writing to 899 Davidson Road, Piscataway, N.J. 08854.

The launching of the Patriotic Front (PF), which had its inaugural conference in Durban on Oct. 25-26, 1991, is a noteworthy event that could also be of historical significance. We would hope that it is not a gesture inspired by a desire to enlist the organizations of the oppressed in the so-called negotiations initiated by the regime as part of its program to restructure and consolidate the domination of the existing establishment.

Whether the inauguration of the PF will be an event of significance will depend, in the first place, on whether the PF shall indeed be a united front of all the organizations of the oppressed for the continuation and consummation of their struggle for the destruction and total elimination of the oppression and exploitation of racist-capitalism that has held us captive for so long, preventing us from building our lives and making our history.

Will this PF take all its major resolutions and resolves to the masses of our population to be ratified by them and effected by the might and social force which the masses alone can muster and bring to bear? Will this initiative mark the beginning of an earnest effort towards the

"The euphoria about the negotiations, the promised reforms, and the post-apartheid era is already all around us. The leaders in the populist movements have not been unaffected by that euphoria. In fact, it is true to say that they have shown far more enthusiasm than the ordinary folk."

elimination of sectarianism and the mutual feuding that have been the bane of the liberation movement for such a long time?

Will this alliance have the will and capacity to undertake and carry out a thorough-going democratization of its entire organizational practice and the mobilization of the masses of our population on the basis of strict adherence to democratic principles and practice?

These are important questions, and they boil down to one large question: Is this alliance poised to advance the interests of the masses, the Black working class? That question has to be posed at the very onset.

The economic background

The launching of the PF happens at a time when the capitalist system in our country, which has never been bountiful to the Black masses even in its periods of boom, is in the throes of profound crisis.

Economically, the country is in a debacle. According to a survey carried out recently at the instance of Big Capital, the rate of unemployment among the Blacks stands currently at a little over 40 percent. On the projections of that same survey, by 1995 the unemployment rate among the Blacks will have reached 54 percent. In practical terms. This means that very soon, out of every two Black persons, a little over one will be unemployed—without the means of a livelihood.

There are already 7 million Black people who are without housing or accommodation. That means 20 percent of the population of the country consists of people who are homeless. Poverty, malnutrition, and disease are taking their toll on a scale that is enormous and horrifying.

What do the whole people need to do in order to put an end to the havoc and devastation that the racist-capitalist system is inflicting upon their lives? That is the real question that has to be asked if we must make a real advance towards taking our history into our hands.

Does the PF pose such a question? If not, does it seem that they might? We should put this question to the PF, and say to them: Gentlemen and ladies of the PF, which way are you going? Are you flying to Pretoria and to Cape Town or are you marching to Soweto, to Langa, to Mitchells Plain, and to Cato Manor? And we should insist on simple and straight answers.

The most that these leaders can obtain in Cape Town and Pretoria are slots for themselves in the seat of rulership of the same system of racist-capitalism that has brought this whole misery to the masses of our population and which will continue to heap upon them further misery and wretchedness.

Such an allotment of seats in rulership is what the regime intends to give these leaders anyway, by way of weaning them away from the body of the oppressed people. It is self-deception that would look upon this co-optation as the prize and reward for our struggle.

The regime's "political reform"

We should be clear on another matter as well. The Western capitalist countries are not likely to be of help in this crisis. Of course, they have never let up in giving all manner of support to the regime in South Africa. They have helped this regime morally, ideologically, militarily, and in many other ways. But the hope that they

will intervene to relieve the crisis seems very forlorn indeed.

These capitalist countries have their hands full with problems of much the same kind. Concerning the state of the U.S. economy, this is what President Bush's new Chief of Staff, Samuel K. Skinner, had to say just recently: "The people of this country know that the economy is in trouble, and it doesn't make any sense to play games." (*The New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1991).

This is a reluctant acknowledgement of fact, made because it is no longer possible to pretend otherwise. We should realize that the crisis that is presently afflicting the South African capitalist economy is not a phenomenon that is local and peculiar to South Africa.

It is part and parcel of the crisis of capitalism as a world system, occurring at a time when that system is in decline into deeper decadence. A sick part of a sick body cannot, realistically, expect nourishment from the rest of the body which is itself in malaise.

Besides, there is Eastern Europe, which has to be a priority in whatever Marshall-aid-type project that they might contemplate. It seems, then, that the South African capitalist economy would have to pull itself by its own bootstraps. Not even the South African regime pretends that this can be done.

Reform, even on the modest scale as indicated above, is not within the capability of the South African ruling classes—certainly not in the prevailing state of economy and society. To compensate for the lack of a true socio-economic reform, the regime must put all its energy and vigor into propagandizing their program of political reform.

Yet, even that political reform does not and will not amount to much beyond an enlarged and dressed-up version of the Bantustan equipment. However, they must present it as the panacea, the magic thing that will cure all evil and usher in a post-apartheid South Africa that will be heaven-on-earth for everyone.

The euphoria about the negotiations, the promised reforms, and the post-apartheid era is already all around us. The leaders in the populist movements have not been unaffected by that euphoria. In fact, it is true to say that they have shown far more enthusiasm than the ordinary folk."

This is especially true of those of them who accepted the doctrine of Stalin about the so-called two-stage revolution. It is comforting to move into a compromising position believing that one has only taken one of the "two steps" towards revolution.

Almost all discourse in South Africa today is dominated by the theme of negotiations and reform. This is the theme that has been introduced and is being orchestrated by the regime. It is echoed throughout the country; and there is hardly any discussion or activity which is free of its resonances.

The question that has to be posed is: To what extent does the PF carry and echo the theme and resonances of negotiations and the so-called reform? Is there a way of looking at the PF as an independent initiative with purposes and objectives larger than and transcending the small aims of de Klerk's reform program?

Demand for Constituent Assembly

At its conference, the PF made a declaration for a democratic society. It also affirmed that a Constituent Assembly (CA) shall be the organ for the inauguration of the democratic society.

Both declarations are sound in principle; and they are consistent with the advancement of the interests of the majority of our population, especially the Black working class, which up to now—along with the rest of the Black population—has been laboring under the disability of disenfranchisement, the deprivation of the elementary right to participate in the making of the laws that govern their lives.

This has served to handicap the Black workers immensely in their efforts to defend themselves against the super-exploitation that they have been subjected to all along.

Indeed the demand for the franchise has been the premise of the movement for

(continued on next page)

... Patriotic Front

(continued from preceding page)

national democratic rights. That demand will stay as long as it continues to be denied in the existing establishment.

The demand for a Constituent Assembly is on the same footing as the demand for the franchise. The CA is the organ, established by the whole people, for the inauguration of the democratic society.

It is crucial that the CA must be a creation of the people themselves. They should elect those persons who will be entrusted with the function of drawing up a constitution; and they must have control over such delegates. The control is exercised through the right of recall and other appropriate measures for checking abuse and delinquency in office.

A CA should not be confused with any bureaucratically created contrivance which the state might devise and seek to impose upon the population. Democracy, and not bureaucracy, is the watchword. Thus conceived, the demand for a Constituent Assembly and the demand for a democratic society constitute appropriate calls for rallying our population towards the establishment of the new order of society.

But was this how the PF approached these demands? The answer has to be no—not at all. This was one among many of the shockingly disappointing features of that conference of the PF.

The PF did not set up a program for the mobilization of the masses of our population on the basis of these principles which they merely enunciated. No plans whatever were made for the rallying of the people around these demands. A curious omission indeed, which is hard to reconcile with a genuine and serious intent to pursue those demands in a democratic manner and by democratic methods.

The question of violence

Mention must also be made of yet another disappointing feature in the PF conference. This concerns the important question of the violence. The immediate impetus to the launching of the PF, we believe, was the rampant violence that is sweeping across the country—bringing havoc, disaster, and death to numberless communities of our people.

It does not seem that at its conference the PF did address, adequately or at all, this question of the violence. It made no plans and it offered no thoughts on the violence. This is disappointing.

One can understand that the Bantustan delegation would have little to say about the violence. They are not in the habit of politicking or theorizing about violence. They practice violence, there among the people in the Bantustans.

But one cannot say the same of the leaders of the populist movements. As persons, they abhor violence and keep clean of it. How was it then, that at the conference, they did not find their way to expressing their abhorrence of the violence?

Could it be that their preoccupation with strategizing towards the multi-party conference [proposed by the De Klerk government] and related matters so absorbed them and their energies that they could find no time nor inclination to consider the question of the violence?

But the violence continues to this day, to be a matter of life and death for the masses of our population. One wishes that the leaders would not be distracted from the real concerns of the people by the promises of reform that the regime continues to dangle before our eyes.

From the information we have, WOSA [Workers Organization for Socialist Action] seems to have been the lone voice that spoke out against the violence, putting forward well-thought-out approaches and methods for building up and enlisting the energies and resources of our communities into an all-out effort to stamp out the violence. Its voice found no echo in that vast hall of the conference of the PF. Other preoccupations prevailed which rendered that voice discordant.

We learn that the COSATU [trade-union federation] was represented at that conference of the PF. Its delegation, too, did not have anything to say on this question of

the violence. It seems anomalous that it had to fall on one of the youngest of our organizations to address this large question which so much concerned the workers whilst the leaders of the largest organization of workers sat in silence.

Where was the independent voice of the independent organization of workers? It never used to fail or falter in any issue that concerned the workers. It is not conceivable that the workers themselves would be shy to express their feelings and thoughts on the violence, for it is they who continue to take the brunt of that violence. It is their lives that are being blighted every day and every hour by the violence, which is not of their making.

Concerning the violence itself: A feature that has increasingly come into prominence is the state's involvement in it. It is being recognized everywhere that the police and even the military appear powerfully involved in the unending waves of terror and brutal killings that have become a constant feature of life in the Black communities.

The so-called Inkathagate scandal that the press so sensationalized is only a small detail in what has become an enormous and well-orchestrated reign of terror. The state, through its police and military agencies, and in conjunction with large numbers of right-wing vigilante groups are having their field day in what has become a carnival of carnage, terror, and killings.

This crusade of terror is reminiscent of the Renamo massacres in Mozambique. It has much the same purpose, which is to reduce our entire population into terror-stricken panic and disarray. Thrown into chaos and in a paralyzing frenzy, our population will be rendered helpless as the state proceeds to reinforce the establishment by systematic co-optation of the very same class of elites who have been the leaders in the organizations of the people for their liberation.

What about the "Peace Accord"?

Many of the leaders who were at the PF Conference had previously attended the conference of the National Peace Accord; and they endorsed that accord.

The National Peace Accord was an initiative of the state. It purported to seek a solution to the violence by enlisting the leaders in our communities along with the leaders in the liberation organizations in joint undertakings with the police for stopping the violence. Those leaders seemed to have believed that the police and the state, who had been orchestrating the violence, could also be the agency for stemming the violence.

The Nkomati Accord never stopped the Renamo atrocities in Mozambique. Yet, seemingly, the belief prevailed that the National Peace Accord, the domestic version of the Nkomati Accord, could stop the violence inside our country. Perhaps it was this erroneous belief which made these leaders give scant attention to the question of violence at the conference of the PF.

The real initiative in the stemming of the violence will not come from the state and the police. It will have to come from our side, from our communities, from the whole population of the oppressed. That massive effort, for so it will have to be, will have to begin with the recognition of the fact that we ourselves had a hand in the creation of the violence of which we have all become the victims.

In our case the violence originated from and has been generated by the feuding between and among the different factions in the populist movements, which are led by the petty bourgeoisie. It has pitted one organization against another, or more correctly, a combine of organizations against one or another organization.

It could be called a 10-year war. It might well be a 20 or 25-year war, if our movements continue to be dominated and directed by a petty bourgeoisie seeking sectarian interests.

Sectarianism and the quest for hegemony have been the inspiration and impetus of these unending wars in the populist front. The petty bourgeoisie, as a class, does not often have the capacity to hoist itself by its own bootstraps out of its natural urge towards privilege, the pursuit of limited and sectional interests—its tendency towards sectarianism. Consequently,

South African Socialist to Tour U.S. and Canada

A newly formed organization, the Democracy in South Africa Tour Committee, has announced that South African socialist leader, Mercia Andrews, will tour some 17 cities in the United States and Canada, Feb. 27 through March 28. A longtime socialist, labor and feminist activist, Andrews is the National Organizer of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA).

Andrews was jailed for 29 days in 1986 for her opposition to South African apartheid under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act during the declared State of Emergency. Since then, she has been arrested and detained on a number of occasions for her political activities.

Andrews was a rural high school teacher from 1976-81 until she was expelled from the teaching profession by the South African government for initiating a schools boycott to protest apartheid policies. She was a founding member and organizer in 1985 of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU). Her trade-union experience includes organizing assignments in the Domestic Workers Union and the Public Servants League. Andrews also organized women in the electronics industry who then affiliated with the Metal and Electrical Workers Union, an affiliate of the National Congress of Trade Unions.

She was a founding member and leader of End Racism and Sexism through Education (ERASE) and the Children's Resource Center.

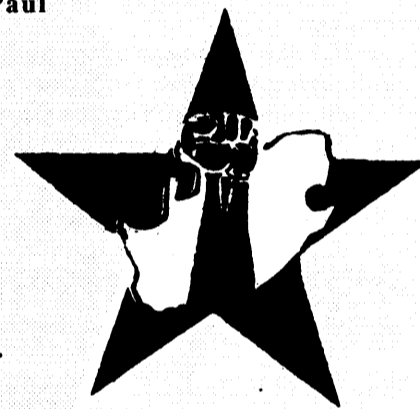
When the South African government imprisoned 26 people and falsely accused them of killing a policeman in 1985, Andrews helped to found the Uppington 26 Support Committee. This defense group won the release of the 26 who had been imprisoned under the infamous Common Purpose Rule, a South African law that makes all witnesses to a crime liable to be punished for it if the court considers that they sympathized with the person or persons who committed it.

Andrews has been published widely in the WOSA journals, *Worker's Voice (Vukani Basebenzi)* and *Strike*, and in other popular South African publications, including the *South African Labor Review*, *Agenda*, *ERASE*, and others.

For details on Andrews tour schedule and for speaking engagement requests, call: (908) 463-3139 (East Coast) or (415) 821-0459 (West Coast).

Mercia Andrews Tour Schedule

Feb. 27-	New York/New Jersey
March 1	Minneapolis/St. Paul
March 2-3	Pittsburgh
March 4-5	Boston
March 6-9	Milwaukee
March 10-13	Iowa City Chicago
	Toronto
March 14	Cleveland
March 15-16	Baltimore
March 17	Washington, D.C.
	San Francisco
March 18-20	Portland
March 21	Los Angeles
March 22-24	Kansas City, Mo.
March 25	New York City New Brunswick



instead of building unity, it foments petty wars.

Workers' example building unity

That is not true of the Black working class. We need only look at their record in the last 20 years. In that period, the Black workers were able to set up their independent trade unions. They established federations of their unions. There were even attempts at founding confederations of those federations of Black trade unions. And that happened in a period of less than 10 years of the launching of the independent Black trade-union movement.

The splendid record of unity building that the Black workers established in close to 20 years is all the more impressive when juxtaposed against the trail of blood that the petty bourgeoisie-led populist movements have left behind them in almost a decade of uninterrupted feuding and mutual slaughtering.

The experiences of the Black workers in their independent trade unions offer us lessons of the highest value. Workers in their struggles always demonstrate the workers' capacity to take in and make their own the very best in the tradition of struggle.

For, in the period that we are now entering it will be the Black workers that will, again, play the decisive and historically determinative role.

Amidst the high excitement that is swirling around the constitutional rearrangements, it will again be the Black workers who will keep a level head and ask the right questions: Where is my house? Where is my job? Where are the teachers

and the schools for the education of my children? Where is the peace and security of my community?

These are the demands which will bring the workers in their millions and with great passion to the long march on the road to true freedom.

The subordination of workers' organizations to the populist variety of organizations is a malalignment, a disorder, which is much like the tail attempting to wag the dog. The condition that has to be satisfied in order to free the workers' organizations from the pressure of the middle-class-led populist movements is a thorough-going democratization of all the organizations of the oppressed.

The leaders of the populist movement have often declared, as they did in the PF conference, that they favor a democratic society. They must be held to the promise of their declaration. Those words have to be translated into deeds.

A democratic society cannot be achieved by bureaucratic fiat or by means that fall short of and contradict democratic practice. We should practice what we preach. The populist movement has to undertake thorough-going democratization of its organizations and their practices.

All pretensions toward overlordship over other organizations, especially the organizations of workers, have to be condemned. When such democratic conditions shall prevail, the mighty force of the workers will be released, and true movement forward shall be brought underway. All the flowers must be allowed to thrive and blossom, and no weed shall be let to throttle wholesome growth. ■

By ALBERT ROCHAL

PARIS—A hundred thousand people demonstrated here on Jan. 25 against racism, for equal rights, and in support of immigrants. This was a great success for the antiracist movement for several reasons:

1) This demonstration was organized by a very broad united front of antiracist organizations, trade unions, and immigrant groups. Also involved were a range of political parties, notably, the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Communist League (French section of the Fourth International), the Revolutionary Communist Youth (the Fourth Internationalist youth organization), the Greens, and Lutte Ouvrière.

The Socialist Party called for participating in the demonstration. But it did not sign the common platform, because the latter criticized the Mitterrand government for its policy toward the immigrants and applicants for asylum who are fighting today to get a secure legal status in the country.

In fact, many of the slogans raised in the demonstration attacked the government's policy and called for an end to discrimination against immigrants, and an end to deportations.

Government's rightward shift

Another central theme of the demonstration was denunciation of Jean Marie Le Pen, the rightist politician who is waging a ferocious campaign against the immigrants. The demonstrators not only condemned Le Pen, but demanded a policy that would block the growth of this anti-immigrant current.

In fact, Le Pen's National Front feeds off unemployment (one of its slogans is, "Three million unemployed equals three million immigrants"), poverty, and the corruption that is now coming to light.

100,000 demonstrate in France against racism

Since this far-right party started to score successes, other political parties started to borrow from its arsenal. For example, Jacques Chirac, former premier and leader of one of the main conservative parties, the Rally for the Republic, has talked about the unbearable "smell" of the immigrants.

Giscard d'Estaing, former president of France and leader of the other big conservative party, the Union for French Democracy, has decried the "invasion" of France by foreigners.

For their part, the leaders of the big left parties have been making more and more concessions to the racists. Edith Cresson, premier and Socialist Party leader, said that she was ready to deport "clandestine" immigrants, in chartered airplanes if need be.

The Communist Party has issued a scandalous leaflet that denounced "clandestine" immigrants and called for still more severe police checks.

Immigrants mobilize

Facing such exclusion and discrimination, the immigrants themselves have begun to react. In the working-class suburbs and satellite towns of the big cities, for a year, young people whose parents are North African or Black African immigrants have been building mobilizations—sometimes very violent ones—against police repression and all the discrimination they face in their daily lives.

The great majority of these young people have little or no hope for finding jobs,

and drugs are widespread in their neighborhoods. Virtual uprisings have taken place in Vaulx en Velin (near Lyon) and in Sartrouville and Mantes La Jolie (near Paris).

Another very active element are the candidates for asylum. They are refugees who have fled from dictatorships and repression. They come primarily from Turkish Kurdistan, Haiti, as well as from Zaire and other Black African countries. As has happened in other European countries, for some years the French government has been making the asylum laws more restrictive.

There are now tens of thousands of persons whose appeal for asylum has been rejected. These "rejectees" came up out of the underground a year ago, and have been holding more and more mobilizations—massive hunger strikes and demonstrations.

For example, 15,000 applicants for asylum marched through Paris last May 25. The government has been forced to retreat a bit and grant legal status to 7000 people.

On the other hand, the minister of the interior wants to get a law passed which would permit authorities to hold applicants for asylum for 30 days without any court oversight or guarantees. Such a law has been passed by the National Assembly, but it has to be reviewed by the Constitutional Council.

In the Jan. 25 demonstration, representatives of the asylum seekers marched in the front rows, and there were many slogans condemning the repressive laws, as well as the minister of the interior.

Harlem Désir, leader of SOS Racisme, took a very critical stance toward the government, which he accused of taking certain steps inspired by the National Front. He said that it was hypocritical on the government's part to claim to be fighting Le Pen and at the same time applying some of his racist ideas.

The Socialist Party and the government tried to divert the action into being just a demonstration against Le Pen. The "Socialists" wanted to allay discontent with their own policies and present themselves as a rampart against Le Pen.

This attempt failed. One reason was that the organizers denounced this maneuver. Likewise, the demonstrators were very firm against the extreme right, denounced the government's policy, and firmly committed to continue the fight for equal rights, including the right to vote for foreigners residing in France.

Other demonstrations planned

It should be stressed that the demonstration was very militant and included a lot of youth and immigrants. At the conclusion of this demonstration, the organizations that initiated it announced the formation of an Ongoing United Front Collective (CUP), which will organize the struggle against racism and for equality, especially the right of asylum.

There is thus a perspective for more big demonstrations for equal rights. One possibility is to demonstrate on May Day, along with the unions. New opportunities, therefore, are opening up for fighting for the unity of the French and immigrant workers against all forms of discrimination.

On the same day as the demonstration in Paris, 100,000 people in Milan, Italy, demonstrated against racism. So, a mobilization is beginning to build against the wave of racist campaigns sweeping Europe. Revolutionists are playing their full role in this. ■

Grant asylum to Haitian refugees!

By HAYDEN PERRY

In December 1990 Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Haitian parish priest, was elected president of a nation that had not sustained a democratic government in 200 years. Seven months later Aristide is in exile and another brutal military dictator rules in his place.

Aristide came into office with the army, the Catholic hierarchy, and the wealthy elite against him. He had only the support of the poor—who constitute 90 percent of the population of this poorest of all nations in the Western Hemisphere.

To consolidate his power Aristide had to curb the army, neutralize the businessmen of Port-au-Prince, build a base of support in the legislature, and lift, if only slightly, the burden of poverty oppressing the poor.

Operating within the confines of an impoverished capitalist state, Aristide did little more than curb excesses, apply to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for aid, and reach out to some of the Port-au-Prince business leaders.

For the poor he held out hope, as he invited the ragged people to his inauguration in the palace and held weekly court at the palace gates for any citizen with a grievance. A visitor to Haiti observed that under Aristide, "Citizens walked through town without fear ... bodies did not litter the streets at dawn. Soldiers were not allowed to attack civilians with impunity. For the average Haitian the quality of life had improved."

Aristide, however, was less successful as a politician. He failed to consolidate a base in the legislature with its innumerable splinter parties. He appointed an unknown, Rene Preval, a baker, as prime minister. He did not consult the legislature because, he said, they would oppose Preval's nomination.

To curb the army he retired a number of generals. To counter the threat of a military coup he began to enlist a palace guard loyal to himself. This may have been the signal to the generals to execute the time-worn maneuvers of a military coup.

On Sept. 30, 1991, the palace was seized, Aristide



Haitian refugees are risking their lives to flee brutal military dictatorship—but are turned back by U.S.

arrested, and the poor of Port-au-Prince, who were only loosely organized, were further disorganized by the murder of hundreds of potential leaders. Haiti was back to square one—but not quite.

President Bush made the customary noises of disapproval, but he did not really care much. Haiti had no oil or anything of interest to the American Colossus. He turned the problem over to the Organization of American States (OAS), who did care. Many of these states had recently got rid of their dictators and were disturbed to see another military coup on their block.

They proclaimed an economic blockade to squeeze the Haitian generals out of power. The wealthy peoples' choice was Marc L. Bazin, a former world Bank official and safely conservative—too conservative to win the support of the poor.

Will a "communist" save the day?

A compromise candidate had to be found. To the surprise of many, the conservatives nominated Rene Theodore, leader of the Haitian Unified Communist Party, as potential Prime Minister. He is known as a communist only through misunderstanding. A social democrat said that in five years, "I have never heard Theodore mention Marxism."

Theodore is actually a skilled and unprincipled politician, who can be counted on to pave the way for Bazin or some other conservative, while restraining the masses.

Later, the thinking goes, Aristide could slip back into the president's office. But he would be surrounded by conservatives who would hold the real power.

Many on the left see through this ploy. *Haiti Progres*, a liberal Haitian newspaper says, "The Haitian people did not carry the *lavalas* (cleanup) movement to victory in order for it to be totally eliminated. Whether or not Aristide is in the presidency, if we have a cabinet made up of putschists, *lavalas* no longer has any meaning."

Success of the OAS scheme depends on the junta being squeezed until they cry uncle. But it is the poor who are bearing the pain of the embargo.

Without oil, farmers have to cut down what is left of the forests for fuel. Hunger is so desperate

Haitians are eating their seed grain instead of planting for a new crop. Thousands of others are fleeing death from starvation or the bullets of rampaging soldiers. They crowd leaking boats heading for Florida.

President Bush, who welcomes every single Cuban as a political refugee, declares that Haitians only want to raise their standard of living.

The Navy and Coast Guard intercepted 1100 Haitians on the high seas in one day. Bush wants to send them back to the horrors of life and death under the dictatorship, but U.S. courts have forced some sort of judicial review. So several thousand Haitians are penned up in the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo, Cuba—prisoners of a racist government that could not care less about them.

Meanwhile the junta is resisting pressure to dislodge them. They are stalling in negotiations while gunmen are breaking up Theodore's political meetings, killing his bodyguards, and threatening Theodore himself.

Solutions imposed from the outside behind the backs of the Haitian people can only lead, eventually, to a new dictatorship.

The power of the poor, which has been demonstrated in sporadic fashion, must be mobilized in mass parties, with a clear perspective—not only of *lavalas*—but of taking state power.

Meanwhile, people in this country must demand that every Haitian in Guantanamo and on boats heading west be given asylum here until it is safe to go home. ■

Alarming growth of far right in 'new' Germany pegged to social crisis



Neo-Nazis demonstrating in Dresden. They have been the vanguard of the attack against immigrant workers.

DER SPIEGEL

By HANS JURGEN SCHULZ

The economic catastrophe inflicted by capitalist restoration on the population of former East Germany and the power of the reunited Germany have fanned fears of a revival of Nazism. On Nov. 9, over 100,000 people marched in cities around Germany to protest right-wing pogroms against immigrant workers.

*The following article on this problem is translated from the November issue of *Avanti*, the magazine of Fourth Internationalists in the former East German territories.*

"The seed that the teachers of our country have sown has sprung to life," commented Margot Honecker [wife of the deposed East German Stalinist boss] in June 1989.

She knew better. Even then, six percent of East German youth identified themselves as on the radical right. In fact, for a long time the Stasi [East German secret police] employed a team of skinheads.

This problem was hardly the teachers' fault. It was the result rather of the way things were in society as a whole, which undermined the teachers' credibility.

Since the beginning of April, when Jorge Gomandai was killed in Dresden, scarcely a night has passed in the new "democratic and peace-loving" Germany without arson attacks or physical assaults. On June 1, 2000 neo-Nazis marched in Dresden, and again on Aug. 17 in Bayreuth—with generous police protection.

This street terror took on a new quality with the outrage in the East German town of Hoyerswerda [where skinhead gangs attacked a hostel for foreign workers repeatedly over a two-week period, with the evident support of the local population].

German politicians and their acolytes—policemen, journalists, and "experts"—were obliged, in order to defend their country's good name abroad, to express their consternation. Even then, however, we were warned not to overreact.

In the meantime, the fact is that refugees, foreigners, and migrants cannot find accommodation anywhere in Germany, and none of them can feel safe from intimidation and attack on the streets. Previously, these things happened often, but now they are the rule.

Reactionary, far-right, and openly fascist

views are being widely expressed or at least tolerated. In Hoyerswerda, people cheered the terror only because nobody stood up to it. They are less daring in the West, but the good citizens of Essen invited skinheads to attack a refugee hostel, so that they could make their neighborhood "foreigner free."

In Bremen, the far right recently got eight percent of the vote. In this case, the votes came not from the petty bourgeoisie but from workers and unemployed—that is, from precisely those social groups with whom we hope to change society.

An ideological void

There is still a difference between the East, where an anti-fascist tradition remains strong, and the West. "Only" 21 percent of Easterners, as opposed to 38 percent of Westerners, have expressed "understanding" for far-right tendencies.

It is said that in East Germany there are only 1500 young far-right cadres, and this number has not changed since the fall of the Wall. This may be true, but they have some 15,000 open sympathizers, while another 50,000 consider themselves "inclined" toward them—whatever that may mean.

Thus, it is merely an organizational problem to increase the number of active thugs tenfold. In West Germany, there are at least twice as many. A militant fascist mass movement has become a possibility.

In East Germany, Stalinism has left an ideological void, while in the West, bourgeois democratic ideas are losing ground, except among the intelligentsia. Only the media disseminates such ideas in the working class, and they are at odds with people's daily experience.

The established social organizations have lost almost all real links with the unemployed, welfare recipients, and above all with working-class youth. Scarcely anyone is to be found in the youth organizations of the political parties, except careerist yuppies. The trade-union youth structures exist mainly on paper, and are the lackeys of the enterprise-council [Betriebsrat] and union bureaucrats.

The sick, the old, or simply the ill-adapted have no chance. Whoever cannot toe the line in the factory is out. People have no possibilities for influencing things, whether in the party, the union, or the community. People are powerless; those above give the orders, those below obey.

When classes or social layers see no alternative, when progressive ideas are no longer promoted, and no countervailing experiences are provided by unions, parties, or civic movements, then reactionary thinking grows. It becomes rooted in society as a consequence of the fact that socialist ideas—or even merely radical democratic ideas—are no longer a living force.

The far-right parties

The two years since the fall of the Wall have been turbulent for the far-right groups. Unexpectedly, here was a united Germany, and they had contributed nothing to bringing about its existence. They descended into their usual squabbling.

The strongest of these groups was the Republicans ("Republikaner"). In the summer 1989 European elections, they won 2 million votes (7.1 percent). But the mutiny of the openly fascist wing, around the Bavarian regional deputy Neubauer, crippled this party for almost a year before the big chief, Schönhuber, could get rid of it. Membership sank to below 15,000.

Since last summer, however, the party has consolidated itself, and now claims a membership of 25,000. It is no longer able to organize mass events as it once could. On the electoral scene, it remains by far the most important of such groups, and in the past year has been able to reinforce its position. In the East, its organization is weak, and it has scored no spectacular successes.

The NPD and DVU [the two other principal far-right formations] have become stronger in the past two years, but have made no qualitative breakthrough. Together they have no more than 30,000 members. Rather than overcoming the splintering, the attempted unification of far-right forces through the "German Slate," has in fact created an additional organization with an uncertain fate.

The problem for all these groups is that their membership is chiefly drawn from bourgeois forces concerned about getting representation. They want to express something politically, but are ill-adapted to long-term organizational work, and their willingness to make financial sacrifices is not unlimited.

These groups have no independent social base. They are more like electoral blocs than parties. They can draw support from the widespread fascist outlook, feeding off reactionary thinking and anti-foreignism.

Under favorable conditions, they might get 10 percent of the votes in an election. But their electoral base is still timid and inactive. Mostly, it votes for the established parties, chiefly the Christian Democrats. These parties, with the aid of the tabloid press, have whipped up terror with their anti-refugee hysteria, and have thus strengthened the reactionary groundswell.

Nonetheless, the far-right parties have politically stabilized themselves, consolidating their base and electoral support. This is already a significant change since the mid-1980s. They are present in the public mind as a political alternative, and can achieve electoral successes—an example being Bremen.

Fascist and skinhead attacks

The openly fascist groups are incomparably more dangerous. Unlike the established far-right parties, they rest on an activist cadre that operates among working-class youth rather than from outside.

They have more than 3000 members, and their activity is based primarily on the skinheads. Official estimates say there are only 3000 of them in Germany, but in fact there are at least 7000, even if not all are fascist in thought and action.

They are very undisciplined, and it is difficult to get them in lasting and firm structures. However, this has already changed to some extent in East Germany. Up to 150 skinheads have been involved in concerted assaults in many towns.

Often they act for a whole day in a coordinated manner, attacking specific targets, walking around with incendiary devices. Actions involving 20 to 30 people are commonplace. This can no longer be described as spontaneous.

It is clear that many attacks are carried out as copycat actions by sympathizers and small groups. But this does not explain the systematic nature of the terror nor the choice of targets—dwellings of asylum seekers and foreigners—or why all the actions follow the same pattern. It seems that among the skinheads there are activist cores who whip up their associates, organize them for action, and establish a level of discipline.

The idea may be to create an organization through action. To do this, they can rely on the broadly sympathetic environment. If such a plan were to succeed, then we would find ourselves living and working in quite different conditions.

For the first time since the end of the Nazi period, there exists a militant fascist movement. Their actions are carried out in such a way that people will inevitably be killed or injured.

How to stop the terror?

The response to this terror will take the form, above all, of demonstrations and other such actions. This may restrict and perhaps reduce the mass influence of the right. But it cannot halt the construction of the militant fascist gangs.

The real problem is that the far right is appealing to, and building among, the working-class youth—when the left and the social movements have lost more or less all their influence in this layer.

The fascist danger cannot only be met with protests. Furthermore, the use of legislation banning organizations, the favored antidote of reformists and ex-Stalinists, is useless. The fascists are the emergency reserves of the bourgeois state, and will be protected by it.

What is required is building a broad, permanent coalition movement. It needs to be based on local initiatives and coordinating committees that can organize actions and mobilizations, as well as construct self-defense structures and do propaganda work.

This movement must in the first place oppose the anti-foreigner hysteria and address the roots of unemployment and homelessness.

It must center its work on the most deprived neighborhoods, work in the factories, and seek an alliance with the immigrants. Campaigns should be organized starting out with a march against anti-foreignism.

It is not only a question of directly confronting the terrorist groups. Thinking also needs to be changed. ■

Several thousand attend Cuba solidarity rally in N.Y.

By PAUL SIEGEL

NEW YORK—Despite a last-minute attempt by the Jacob Javits Convention Center to abrogate its contract with Peace for Cuba, despite efforts by counter-demonstrators to disrupt the rally, and despite the bitter cold, a huge rally in support of Cuba was held here on Saturday, Jan. 25.

Close to 3700 people jammed into the building, while another 1000 were turned away for lack of space. Cuba's UN ambassador, Ricardo Alarcon, speaking at a celebration later in the evening, affirmed that the event was the largest solidarity rally for Cuba ever held in the United States.

For weeks, the big business media had blacked out any mention of the upcoming rally. Finally, shortly before the event was to take place, the papers announced that it had been "cancelled."

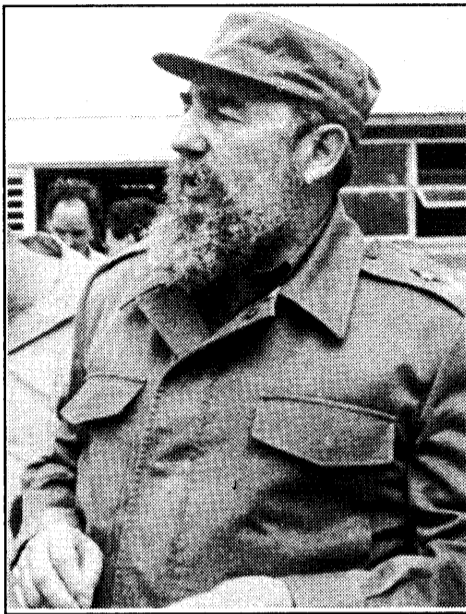
On Jan. 23, the organizers of the rally were notified by the Convention Center that the agreement was being revoked because of expected overcrowding and fears of violence.

However, with the help of civil-rights attorney William Kunstler, an injunction against the summary action by the Center was obtained from Justice Bruce Wright.

Wright is a Black judge, whose release of Black victims of injustice has caused him to incur the wrath of the reactionary media, which gave him the nickname of "Turn 'em Loose Bruce."

In a judicial hearing the next day, Peace for Cuba showed that while it had printed 4000 tickets for a hall that holds 3200 seats, the bulk of these tickets had not yet been sold.

For weeks, the big business media had blacked out any mention of the upcoming rally. Finally, shortly before the event was to take place, the papers announced that it had been "cancelled."



In view of the evidence that the hall would not be overcrowded, and of the protests against the stifling of free speech, the court ruled that the meeting should be permitted.

Strict security measures

Although the rally was held, it was much delayed by security measures. All those entering the hall had to pass by two

metal detectors, which created a bottleneck.

As a consequence, the crowd had to wait outside in long lines for up to three hours. Although the cold penetrated us to the bones, everyone retained his or her good humor, and very few, if any, left. Elderly persons were sent to separate lines so they could get in sooner.

The high morale of the crowd was displayed when the lines were converted into a kind of spontaneous rally. People chanted and waved the Cuban flag.

Meanwhile, a large group of anti-Castro counter-demonstrators gathered around the corner. Several estimates in the big business press put the size of the counter-demonstration at well over 20,000. But others on the scene said that far fewer—from perhaps 3000 to 10,000 people—were there.

Kept separate from each other, the rally participants and the counter-demonstrators did not clash. But there were occasional cries of "Communist!" and answering chants of "Gusano!" [counterrevolutionary worm].

Once people got into the hall, they quickly warmed up by the enthusiasm of the audience. Statements concerning the accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution and denunciations of the U.S. embargo were loudly applauded. There were frequent standing ovations.

Every one of the seats was occupied. Several hundred persons had to remain in the lobby, where they could hear the speeches broadcast from within the hall. Two or three *gusanos* in the hall tried to disrupt the meeting with stink bombs, but they were quickly, quietly, and efficiently ejected.

Cuban Americans attend

The audience included a good sprinkling of Cuban Americans, and several Cuban Americans spoke. One of the Cuban American speakers said that two busloads of rally participants had come from Miami.

The Cuban Americans, he stated, are generally conservative, but the majority of them are opposed to U.S. aggression against their native country. Some 15,000 signatures have been obtained from within the Cuban American community, calling for an end to the embargo and for opening travel to Cuba to all so that they can communicate with their families and friends.

Speakers included notables like William Kunstler; Frei Betto, the Brazilian social activist and liberation theology adherent; Tony Benn, British Laborite MP; and Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general and an outspoken opponent of the Gulf War. Others included representatives of Cuba support organizations and other activists, representatives of labor, and clergy.

Representatives from Cuba who were to have been present were refused visas by the State Department.

The Cuban ambassador to the UN, Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, was given a plaque by Cleveland Robinson of the UAW, one of the US labor representatives, but the ambassador could not respond, as this would have been a violation of the conditions of his stay.

A statement from Fidel Castro was read, however. It received thunderous applause, as did the announcement that the children's organization of Cuba will shortly be putting George Bush on trial for crimes against the Cuban people. ■



By ELIZABETH BYCE

Over Nov. 7-9, 1991, some 224 labor leaders and activists from 20 countries across North and South America met in Havana, Cuba, to discuss the plight of workers in the new world economic order.

The event, called a "union gathering for the rights and freedoms of workers against neo-liberalism," was hosted by the Cuban Federation of Labor (CTC). The dozens of unions and labor federations officially represented covered a wide range of views, from Christian Democracy to the socialist left. They came together to discuss what we in Canada know as the right-wing corporate agenda and its impact on working people and the poor.

The horror stories we heard were not unfamiliar. Privatization, cutbacks in

Elizabeth Byce is a Canadian trade unionist and political activist.

Trade unionists from 20 countries meet in Havana

social expenditures, wage controls, massive layoffs and union-busting.

But in Latin America and the Caribbean, the situation, which was much worse than ours before, is now desperate for millions because of the foreign debt payments and the austerity measures imposed by international banking bodies and their client regimes. Deep poverty, homelessness, illiteracy and disease are widespread and growing fast.

As a postal worker, my attention was drawn to reports from Argentina about how the postal service there was completely privatized.

In Panama, where the U.S. invaded supposedly to restore democracy two years

ago—and killed over 2,000 people in the process—thousands of public employees were fired and civil rights attacked.

In Nicaragua, after 10 years of contra war, and following the election of a pro-U.S. government, peasants are losing their land. Health and education are rapidly declining. And the country is creeping toward civil war.

Factories are springing up in northern Mexico, but only to assemble imported parts, with mostly young women workers paid six dollars a day. Unsafe working conditions and horrible pollution are common in such "free-trade zones" in Mexico and South Africa.

The conference demanded an end to

exploitative trade and economic policies that favor continued domination of Latin America by the big banks and businesses of the U.S., Europe, Canada and Japan. The delegates called for an end to the debt payments, for genuine economic development through Latin American cooperation and integration, for respect for human and labor rights and liberties, and for an end to the economic blockade and the occupation of Cuban territory by the U.S. military at Guantanamo.

The gathering showed that Cuba is overcoming its isolation in this hemisphere, and that Latin American and Caribbean labor federations are moving to the left under the impact of economic crisis, and are being influenced by the positive example of Cuba's commitment to social justice and equality.

An international steering committee was established to plan the next conference to be held in Mexico. ■

It feels like *deja vu* all over again



And in this corner...

By
Joni Jacobs

Malik Miah's column, "Which side are you on," couldn't be published this month. Miah, like most of our readership, works for a living and was obliged to attend a class series to upgrade his skills as an airline mechanic. His column will be back in next month's issue of *Socialist Action*.

With this month's issue, however, we are introducing a new column by Joni Jacobs, who was the *Socialist Action* candidate for mayor of San Francisco in 1991. Her column will be a regular feature of future issues of *Socialist Action*.

I've been angry since the U.S. Supreme Court announced on Jan. 21 that it would determine

the constitutionality of Pennsylvania's anti-choice law. The ruling itself didn't upset me. I learned long ago that the Supreme Court is a ruling class institution incapable of safeguarding working people's rights.

It's the response of the pro-choice leadership that angers me. They have met the ruling with defeatism and camouflaged it as a "new strategy" that's as old as the capitalist system itself. They're sending mixed messages to the movement.

On one hand, NOW is calling for a million people to mobilize for choice in Washington, D.C., on April 5. This would be a powerful demonstration of the strength of the pro-choice movement.

On the other hand, they're lamenting the death of *Roe v. Wade* and calling for a "new strategy" to save abortion rights. The "new strategy" is to elect "pro-choice" politicians to Congress and state legislatures, and then lobby them for pro-choice legislation like the Freedom of Choice Act.

What's new about this strategy? It's the same strategy the pro-choice leadership has pushed for 19 years. And it's a strategy that's failed miserably.

Ironically, support for abortion rights has never been higher. Over 30 percent of Americans polled support *unrestricted* abortion, while over 80 percent support some form of legalized abortion. Have you ever before heard of a movement that had the support of 80 percent of the people, and yet the leadership is pessimistic about winning?

When the leadership puts out a defeatist message like this, it can devastate a movement. It's demoralizing to tell activists they have no control over their situation. It frustrates activists to follow a

losing strategy for 19 years; many just throw up their hands and quit.

It also demobilizes the movement. Instead of bringing activists together where they can sense their united power, it restricts them to individual acts like letter writing and telephoning.

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of the pro-choice leadership's pessimism is that it breeds confusion. I've met young women who think abortion is *already* illegal because they've heard repeatedly that the Supreme Court is overturning *Roe v. Wade*. If confused young women get pregnant, they may seek out a back-alley abortion because they assume that a safe, legal one isn't available. The possible result is too tragic to contemplate.

I think the pro-choice leadership is mired in pessimism because they have no confidence that the movement itself can defend our rights. They haven't learned that every right ever won by working people was the result of a struggle carried out indepen-

dent from—and in opposition to—the government.

Instead, the leadership has put its faith in capitalist politicians, hoping that maybe this time it'll turn out differently.

It's funny—the pro-choice leaders think that Congress will protect our rights, yet they call us socialists utopian.

Many pro-choice activists I've talked to say they are depressed by the pro-choice leadership's "new strategy" because they know it won't work. However, we must remember that, as Gloria Steinem said, depression is anger turned inward.

Pro-choice activists must not turn our anger inward, we must direct it outward—at the courts, at Congress, at every institution that denies women their fundamental rights.

We must mobilize and build April 5 into the largest pro-choice demonstration ever. We have to show the government that we won't go back to the back alleys and bloody hangers, and we have to show the pro-choice leadership that we won't go back to failed, defeatist strategies. ■

Our readers speak out

JFK

Dear editors,

We can learn many things from the Establishment's movie critics who have written about Oliver Stone's "JFK." How much patience we have, for instance. I have read many reviews and articles about "JFK," and most remind me of the *Chicago Times'* verdict on Abraham Lincoln's address at Gettysburg in 1863: "Silly, flat, and dishwatery utterances."

None of the bourgeois writers in the big commercial press (with the exception of Belinda Taylor's "Why the attacks on JFK film?," in the Jan. 22 *Oakland Tribune*, seem to be willing to deal with the movie itself—but spend all of their words in attacking the movie's director.

For example, George Will, for a number of years a pontiff in the Washington, D.C., hierarchy of film criticism, spent two big paragraphs of his Dec. 26 article, "Stone film libels America" on the June 28, 1914, attempt to kill the Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand. He then devotes the rest of his article to attacking "JFK's" producer Oliver Stone. He says absolutely nothing about the movie itself, except for calling it "cartoon history" and other negative things.

It's obvious that George Will believes the myths told in the Warren Report, unless he thinks a myth is a female moth. Both Will and former cabinet member Joseph Califano, a close adviser to President Lyndon Johnson, claim the movie shows Johnson as a co-conspirator. Yet Califano admitted he had never seen the film.

I saw it twice, and Johnson was presented as a man the military-industrial complex trusted so much, they didn't have to involve him in the planning of the assassination—just its coverup.

I assisted a private investigator in his search for the truth of who killed J.F. Kennedy, and how and why. I also escorted a witness to District Attorney Jim Garrison's

office in New Orleans four years after Kennedy was shot, and I conferred with Assistant D.A. Jim Alcock and others.

My analysis is that three hours and ten minutes was not long enough for the movie "JFK" to do justice to what Stone was trying to say.

But the film seemed to have two major flaws. One was that it was obvious that too many scenes had been cut before the Clay Shaw trial was presented. The other flaw was that Kennedy really didn't want the United States to withdraw from S.E. Asia. He only wanted to change the steps he had been taking, in an attempt to force the South Vietnamese government and army to reform and to carry the burden of the war.

The movie was far too brief to show that Kennedy, inexperienced politician that he was, made the mistake of telling too many people he wanted to lower the 17.5 percent oil-depletion allowance, as a tax reform, and that he wanted some civil rights legislation and a detente with the USSR that would permit more trade, and a small cut in some useless military expenses.

Those expressed thoughts alone could have gotten almost anyone killed who was president at the time.

I urge everyone to see "JFK" and decide for themselves who the masters of snidery and venom really are—who operate in the dark, smelly corridors of half-truths.

Victor Saxe,
Albany, Calif.

Abstract art

Dear editors,

You reproduced an example of early Soviet abstract art called, "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge" in the November 1991 issue of *Socialist Action*. The art is not too different from the kind of symbolism used every day of the week by advertising artists today.

The piece could be used as a left

propaganda logo, silk-screened onto millions of T-shirts. Art is powerful when combined with social forces for progressive change. But it can also be employed, as with the Marxist-developed science of dialectics, by the enemies of social change.

People can be easily fooled by artists who want to fool them. Artists have, for example, manipulated perspectives and designed rooms which appear to contradict reality. An object placed in such a room, such as a rolling ball, can appear to be defying gravity and roll uphill. A child, in another room, can appear larger than a man.

Marxists are people who debunk a lot of myths and fakery. One myth to debunk should be the notion that a particular art form associates with a particular school of politics. In our society, sadly, most professional artists are employed in jobs where they are supposed to fool people for commercial purposes.

Mike Alewitz, writing in the November *Socialist Action*, tells us about a controversial painting by Courbet called "Burial at Ornans." No doubt the subject caused some controversy. Mike points out that the artist is using illusions to make the painting more powerful. But we should not forget that the same tricks can be used by artists on the other side of the barricades.

Mike believes that the "dis-jointed perspectives" are serving a good purpose in the painting. Perhaps. But fake perspectives are not the exclusive property of progressive artists.

Non-objective art is usually a spin-off of a person's emotions and not a conscious effort to influence anyone. What for some people is just a non-exploitative pastime can be for others a political weapon, either in the service of the capitalist or the workers. Don't let anyone tell you that this art form speaks only the language of progress and revolution.

Too many have gotten into the bad habit of thinking that all the "smart" people are on the left because the rightists don't know

anything about politics. Likewise, leftist artists are not in a field without competition.

Don Simpson,
Oakland, Calif.

Materialism

Dear editors,

For Cliff Conner: I have followed your series on dialectical materialism with great interest. Many of your examples teach points clearly and forcefully—for instance, the observation in the December installment on dialectics that things in the French Revolution were not good for one class and bad for another, but rather that developments for each class for both good and bad.

In the same article, you use evidence about subatomic things to make the point that their motion is contradictory. However, while their motion defies mechanical views, most interpretations of the rules of quantum mechanics are mystical and anti-dialectical.

We are told that when we measure the momentum and position of an electron, there is a realm of absolute uncertainty to the amount of Planck's constant, and

no causality exists there. From that, we are told that many "material" worlds may exist, each with their own history and truth, and we must give up the materialist search for a more accurate and powerful knowledge of reality because we have reached a limit of law-governed motion.

It is not a question of popular distortion of solid science. The problems exist in theoretical physics. The best criticisms and suggestions I've seen are in David Bohm's, "Causality and Chance in Modern Physics." Chapter Three is about quantum physics.

C.D.,
Oakland, Calif.

Fund drive

Dear editors,

I agree with the conclusion to your last fund drive article, and I am sending a small check. I don't have much, as I'm part-time. But the newspaper is doing a wonderful job and providing some of the only real solutions, answers, and explanations. I try to pass my copies along.

M.S.,
Seattle, Wash.

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New Malcolm X biography slanders the man and his ideas

By ROLAND SHEPPARD

"Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America," by Bruce Perry. Station Hill Press, Barrytown, N.Y. 542 pp. \$24.95.

Bruce Perry has written a biography of Malcolm X that the publishers claim is "the first comprehensive biography of Malcolm." But for anyone who knew Malcolm X and saw the man that he had become in his last years, nothing could be further from the truth.

Although Perry spent a lot of time interviewing people who knew Malcolm X throughout his life, he has used the information to do his own psychoanalysis of the martyred Black revolutionary in terms of the current reality of today. He then tries to apply that reality to the 1930s, '40s, '50s, and '60s.

In reporting on Malcolm's early youth, Perry psychoanalyzes Malcolm's relationship with his family, teachers, and friends completely out of context of the conditions that Blacks endured during this period—Jim Crow laws, racist curriculums in school, and no chance for a decent job. The target of Perry's "biography"—in the last analysis—is to attack Malcolm X's autobiography.

Perry conjectures that Malcolm's father had burned down his own house. And he implies that Malcolm X followed in his father's footsteps by setting fire to his own house in 1965, shortly before he was assassinated.

Throughout the book, Perry reports as "fact" that Malcolm X had homosexual relationships, and that the young Malcolm operated out of deep-seated fear and tried to act "fearlessly" in order to hide his doubts about his manhood. Perry makes these allegations based on conversations made about 30-40 years later, without providing any concrete evidence.

While describing Malcolm's life during the war years of the 1940s, Perry declines to take into account the problems of the Black ghetto in white America. Blacks had nothing to gain by joining a segregated army to fight for a country that did not recognize their rights and whose sole aim was to become the main imperialist power in the world. So Perry applies his psychological theories about Malcolm's manhood to explain why he did not join the war effort during World War II.

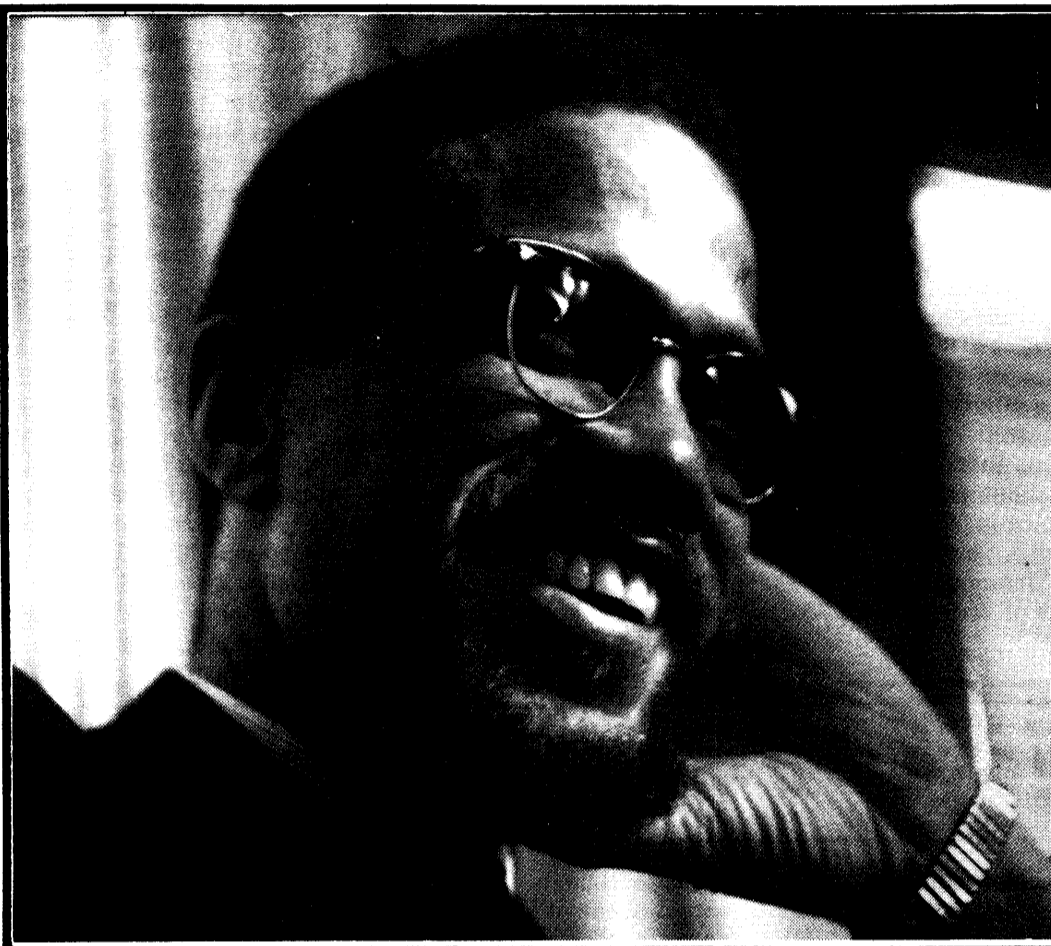
Malcolm and the Nation of Islam

In prison, Malcolm was recruited to the Nation of Islam. The basic appeal was that the Nation explained that white America was responsible for dehumanizing Black America. The Nation said that Black America must take pride in itself. It pointed out that Blacks cannot rely on white America to solve their problems, but rather, that Black America must rely upon itself and separate itself to achieve independence from the white power structure and the opiate of Christianity.

The appeal of this position was powerful then, and it is powerful now. But Perry doesn't explain this. Instead, he psychoanalyzes Malcolm and concludes that he needed a father-figure.

Perry credits the rise of the Nation of Islam into a mass organization to Malcolm's individual abilities rather than to the rise of the civil rights movement in the United States and of the Black liberation movements in Africa.

It's true that Malcolm's ability to articulate the aspirations for equality and freedom was quite powerful. But he would have had little effect if what he said did not reflect the mass movement that developed among Blacks in the late '50s and early '60s. He



and the Nation addressed the problems of Blacks "Up South"—problems that the civil rights movement didn't address "Down South."

Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam emerged as the organization that gave hope to Blacks in the North—where the struggle was not against Jim Crow laws, but was *and still is* a struggle for economic and political power. They underscored the need for education and organization to secure those rights.

Falling out with the Nation

Perry goes on to explain his concept that, psychologically, the split between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammad was a father-son quarrel and a personal battle for power in the Nation of Islam. He doesn't explain that Malcolm was responding to the pressure of the Black masses for the Nation to get involved in the day-to-day struggles, which he saw as the next step for the development and growth of the Nation. Perry mentions the different areas of conflict but draws no conclusions.

Malcolm X identified with the struggles of his people and was incapable of separating himself from them.

In his autobiography, Malcolm X explained why he wanted the Nation of Islam to be more involved:

"If I harbored any personal disappointment whatsoever, it was that privately I was convinced that our Nation of Islam could be an even greater force in the American Black man's overall struggle—if we engaged in more *action*. By that, I mean, I thought privately that we should have amended, or relaxed, our general non-engagement policy. I felt that, wherever Black people committed themselves, in the Little Rocks and Birminghams and other places, militantly disciplined Muslims should also be there—for all the world to see, and respect, and discuss.

"It could be heard increasingly in the Negro community: 'Those Muslims talk tough, but they never *do* anything, unless somebody bothers Muslims.' I moved among outsiders more than most other Muslim officials. I felt the very real potentiality that, considering the mercurial moods of the Black masses, this labeling of the Muslims as 'talk only' could see us, powerful as we were, one day suddenly separated from the Negroes' front-line

struggle."

As he does throughout the book, Perry explains Malcolm's last years in psychological terms, emphasizing Malcolm's "fear of death." He doesn't mention Malcolm's opposition to the war in Vietnam, or that Malcolm said that the struggle of Blacks was a struggle for human rights and part of a worldwide *international* struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors.

Perry does not mention that when Malcolm was speaking of Vietnam, China, and Cuba, he stated that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

The worst accusation that Perry makes is that Malcolm was a con artist, who spoke differently depending upon the audiences.

I was in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) at that time and was responsible for organizing the security when he spoke at the Militant Labor Forum. I also attended all but two of Malcolm's meetings at the Audubon Ballroom.

At many of the meetings, Malcolm urged the crowd to read our socialist newspaper, *The Militant*, because it told the truth about him and his organization. *The Militant* had reprinted all of his speeches at the Militant Labor Forum, and it was not uncommon for me to sell over 100 copies of the paper prior to the meetings.

Most of Malcolm's supporters were well aware of what he said "downtown," and they were familiar with his opposition to capitalism, expressed in speeches at the Militant Labor Forum and the Audubon Ballroom.

I remember one meeting at the Audubon several months before Malcolm's murder. Dick Gregory, Fannie Lou Hamer, and several revolutionaries from Africa were there. Malcolm read a message from Che Guevara to the meeting. He told the audience that he had invited Guevara to attend the meeting, but that Guevara could not accept because of security problems and the large anti-Castro Cuban community living in New York at that time.

Perry charges that socialists have claimed that Malcolm, too, was a socialist. This is untrue. We in the Socialist Workers Party (and later, in Socialist Action) said merely that we agreed with his anti-capitalist positions and his opposition to both the Democratic and the Republican parties.

We approached Malcolm as a revolutionary of *action* (as we did Fidel Castro) and

we defended him to the best of our abilities while he was alive—and after his assassination. In fact, Perry never interviewed people like Clifton DeBerry or Kwame Somburu, socialists who knew and worked with Malcolm.

Cover-up for police

Perry's explanations of the 1964 Harlem "riot" and of Malcolm's assassination are taken directly from the police versions of what happened. I was there and I sat in the front row two seats from center aisle stage left. (The cop version was that there was no center aisle.)

Perry accepts as good coin that Norman 3X Butler and Thomas 15X Johnson, two acknowledged Muslims, were there. However, I was called before the Grand Jury at the same time as Malcolm's lieutenant, James Shabazz, whom Perry claims to have interviewed. Shabazz told me at that time that Butler and Johnson were not there.

Perry acts like a lawyer for the police. He dismisses any possibility of police, FBI, CIA, or government involvement. However, the assassination could only have been planned and carried out with prior knowledge that there would not be the normal large presence of cops. (The cops were virtually non-existent at the meeting where Malcolm was killed on Feb. 21, 1965.)

Perry accepts the police version that the Nation of Islam, acting alone, was responsible for the assassination and discounts the FBI's COINTELPRO program or any activity by *agents provocateurs*—one of whom was responsible for Malcolm X's security. The purpose of Perry's book is basically to slander Malcolm's character and to distort Malcolm's development after he left the Nation of Islam.

Malcolm X told me and Clifton DeBerry, the presidential candidate of the SWP in 1964, that he hoped to live long enough to build a viable organization based on his current ideas—so that he would be more dangerous dead than alive. Unfortunately, he did not have the time.

The best way to understand Malcolm is to read his speeches published by Pathfinder Press. Little can be learned from Perry's book, which in all honesty should be entitled: "The Second Assassination of Malcolm X."

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