

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

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Who We Are

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. We have dedicated this journal to the process of clarifying the program and theory of revolutionary Marxism — of discussing its application to the class struggle both internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class and of establishing a socialist society based on human need instead of private greed.

The F.I.T. was created in the winter of 1984 by members expelled from the Socialist Workers Party because we opposed abandoning the Trotskyist principles and methods on which the SWP was founded and built for more than half a century. Since our formation we have fought to win the party back to a revolutionary Marxist perspective and for our readmission to the SWP. In addition our members are active in the U.S. class struggle.

At the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International, the appeals of the F.I.T. and other expelled members were upheld, and the congress delegates demanded, by an overwhelming majority, that the SWP readmit those who had been purged. So far the SWP has refused to take any steps to comply with this decision.

“All members of the party must begin to study, completely dispassionately and with utmost honesty, first the essence of the differences and second the course of the dispute in the party. . . . It is necessary to study both the one and the other, unfailingly demanding the most exact, printed documents, open to verification by all sides. Whoever believes things simply on someone else’s say-so is a hopeless idiot, to be dismissed with a wave of the hand.” — V.I. Lenin, “The Party Crisis,” Jan. 19, 1921.

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Protests Escalate as Apartheid Regime Holds Elections

by Tom Barrett

On September 19, F.W. de Klerk was sworn in as South Africa's new president, replacing P.W. Botha, who retired after suffering a stroke earlier in the year. All-white elections a week earlier had given him his presidency and his National Party a continued majority in Parliament. However, both the far-right Conservative Party and the liberal Democratic Party gained seats (17 and 13, respectively) at the Nats' expense, raising the question of what course, if any, is mandated by the election results.

The true meaning of the September elections is not, however, to be found in the actual vote totals, since the country's 28-million Black majority was, of course, not permitted to participate in the voting. Blacks have demonstrated again their capacity for militant mass struggle, carrying out a program of protest called the "Defiance Campaign" — the same name used for the civil disobedience protests which

greeted the introduction of apartheid (as opposed to the more "gentlemanly" British-style segregation) in 1952. The campaign is being organized by the Mass Democratic Movement, a legal coalition which includes the banned United Democratic Front and continues the UDF's policies. At this writing the protest campaign continues, with widely varying responses from the authorities in different cities and townships.

A nationwide consumer boycott of white-owned manufacturers is in progress and scheduled to continue until October 6. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which belongs to the UDF, and the Black Consciousness-influenced National Confederation of Trade Unions (NACTU) have been able to carry out joint activity against the antiunion Labor Relations Act. On September 27, the largest anti-apartheid demonstration to date brought

Editorial

For a World Without Borders!

Scenes during the last weeks of September and the beginning of October — of East German "vacationers" crossing the border from Hungary to Austria, or climbing over walls at the West German Embassy in Prague, or jubilantly arriving in the West on special trains, or lining the tracks in East Germany as the trains rolled through — underline once again the crisis that is gripping the bureaucratized workers' states throughout Eastern Europe. These societies, which falsely declare themselves to be "socialist," have failed completely, and have proven themselves unable to produce a standard of living which can compete with the capitalist West.

The reason for this failure is not any problem inherent in socialism or a planned economy. It stems from the inability of *bureaucratic* rule and *bureaucratic* planning to do the necessary job. As a result, many within these countries yearn for material goods and a life style which they think they can find outside the Eastern bloc. The fact that this reality has manifested itself in East Germany, the most industrially advanced and productive economy among the Warsaw Pact countries, makes it particularly striking.

The response of the East German government under the leadership of Erich Honecker has been, in typically bureaucratic fashion, to protest the Hungarian decision to open its border with the West and to restrict travel. But this

is no solution at all. It will never resolve the underlying social malaise responsible for the mass exodus in the first place. That can only be done by cleaning up the bureaucratic mess. And only the German working class can do this, by imposing its own democratic controls upon the institutions of government and driving out the incompetent and corrupt bureaucrats.

Such democratic governments will be able to plan economic production in the interests of the masses of workers and farmers rather than in the interests of the bureaucrats. Such governments, even if they are initially unable to match the productivity of the West, can inspire the masses in their own countries and around the world with a vision of a brighter future. If those countries that have already accomplished the overthrow of capitalist rule can find the way to take this next step, it is highly unlikely they would ever again need barbed wire and border guards to keep their own population from fleeing.

Such methods which are routinely used by the bureaucracy are an abomination to genuine socialists. They represent a blot which should be wiped off the face of the earth. This can be done by a *genuine workers' power* established in Eastern Europe which will begin to put some real content into the old communist slogan, "For a World Without Borders!" •

40,000 into the streets of East London, in the Eastern Cape. Though the South African Blacks are willing to fight with great courage and self-sacrifice, as has been demonstrated again and again and is being demonstrated now, their leadership has no program for *taking power* away from the white racist minority government and establishing true majority rule.

The new president, de Klerk, has recognized the opportunity that this leadership crisis has given him to buy time — for imperialism, if not for apartheid itself. He has expressed his view that the election mandate, when the Nationalist and Democratic vote totals are combined against the Conservative, is for gradual change away from rigid racial separation, in the interest of national stability. He, like the most powerful spokespeople for South Africa's business community as well as imperialism's world leaders, recognizes that South Africa depends on international trade and investment for its economic survival. Even disregarding the worldwide campaign to isolate South Africa economically, through divestiture and economic sanctions, it is simply not good business to invest money in a society beset by labor and civil unrest. The investor can get a safer return on his money elsewhere.

De Klerk also seems to recognize that the Black struggle's lack of a revolutionary leadership is unlikely to remain a permanent condition, and that the longer mass protest actions continue the more likely it becomes that a leadership which *does* have the perspective of taking power away from the white capitalist government will emerge from within the Black masses. De Klerk is following the agenda of the so-called "New Nats" — to move toward quick compromise with Black leaders around purely racial issues, so that there will be no compromise around the more fundamental class issues. It is his hope that, if concessions are made to the Black majority, the present Black leadership such as the African National Congress (ANC), and church leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak, will convince the Black workers and township residents to stop the protests and return to work and life as usual — before working class leaders now emerging from the trade union movement lose confidence in the reformists and begin to combine their present industrial struggle with one that poses the governmental question.

As a consequence, since the elections—even before de Klerk's formal inauguration—there has been a dramatic change in the apartheid government's response to the Black protests. Before the elections nearly all the Defiance Campaign actions were violently attacked by the police, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries. Since the elections, though there have been police attacks in some cities, anti-apartheid demonstrations have been allowed to take place peacefully in most cases. A legal march of 35,000, to protest the police killing of 28 people in pre-election demonstrations, was held in Cape Town only days before de Klerk's inauguration with no police interference. The police as well did not interfere with the East London demonstration. Use of the hated *sjambok*, a type of whip used by police against demonstrators, has been banned by the government. The cabinet, which took office on September 23, has even placed discussion of Nelson Mandela's release on its agenda.

Has the white minority government recognized the error of its ways? Will it turn away from the oppression of the Black majority and usher in a democratic South Africa? The answer is obvious: the white minority government's "error" is its own existence. There should not *be* a white minority government. De Klerk's policies, however, are designed to *ensure* the continued existence of that very government.

One must also be clear on the total reality of Black oppression in South Africa. The denial of the vote and other basic democratic rights is very important, it is true. However, many of the grievances against which Blacks in the townships have taken action are not directly related to the system of segregation laws which constitutes *apartheid*. Township residents have taken to the streets to protest increases in rents and rates (that is, utility costs), against educational policies (the 1976 Soweto uprising began as a protest against the use of the Afrikaans language, rather than English, in the township schools), and against Black local government officials who are more interested in lining their pockets than in the welfare of the citizens whom they are supposed to represent. Most importantly, the Black working class, through COSATU, NACTU, and other labor groups, has taken militant strike action to fight for better wages and working conditions, and have joined in the general struggle against apartheid as well.

For all of de Klerk's talk of a transition away from apartheid, he has shown not the least intention to address the most basic forms of oppression which Black South Africans face in their daily lives. In fact, de Klerk's suggested compromises are designed precisely to ensure the continued flow of the superprofits, which result from the intense exploitation of Black workers in South African industry combined with a complete lack of social services for Black families. It should also be remembered that the primary foundations of apartheid, the Group Areas Act, the Land Acts, and the Registration of Population Act, are still in place, and the National Party has shown not the least inclination to repeal them. The Defiance Campaign's success thus far proves conclusively that the African people at the grassroots level are not taken in by de Klerk's promises.

At the leadership level, however, the situation is quite different, and this is the great tragedy of the South African struggle at this time. The present political leadership, an alliance between the African National Congress and liberal church leaders, *does* appear to be ready to accept the white government's compromises. Archbishop Tutu, who is not a revolutionary and has never claimed to be one, has said that de Klerk's policies are a "step in the right direction." More significantly, the African National Congress is turning away from its previous armed-struggle perspective toward the idea of a negotiated settlement with the government.

In the August 1988 issue of the ANC's organ *Sechaba*, Alex Mashinini wrote:

A relatively new concept, that of a negotiated settlement of the South African conflict, has already won itself a prominent position in the political vocabulary of the country. Since we are confronted with conditions under which absolute victory is impossible, conditions in which both sides must necessarily make compromises

(Continued on inside back cover)

In Support of NOW's Call for a New Party

by Carol McAllister

At the National Organization for Women's national convention held in Cincinnati on July 21-23, a *Declaration of Women's Political Independence* was presented and voted on by the delegates. This resolution—whose most significant proposal was to investigate forming a new party dedicated to equality of women and an expanded Bill of Rights—was received with an overwhelming positive response including a standing ovation from the convention floor. The text of the declaration reads as follows:

WHEREAS, women are grossly underrepresented in the legislative halls of this country at the national, state and local levels; and

WHEREAS, without the equal representation of women our legislation advancing women's rights will not move from committee hearings to final passage;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the National Organization for Women recognizes the failure of both major political parties to address women's needs and serves notice on the parties that NOW will support and seek to elect candidates who will move toward the feminist agenda, notwithstanding of party affiliation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that NOW form an exploratory commission to investigate the formation of a new party dedicated to equality for women, and an expanded Bill of Rights for the 21st Century, including but not limited to:

1. the right to freedom from sex discrimination, race discrimination, and religion or age discrimination;
2. freedom from government interference in abortion, birth control, and pregnancy;
3. freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation;
4. a right to a decent standard of living, including adequate food, housing, health care, and education;
5. the right to clean air, clean water, safe toxic waste disposal, and environmental protection;
6. and the right to be free from violence, including to be free from the threat of nuclear war.

As significant as the resolution itself was the process through which it developed. Earlier in the convention a workshop led by Molly Yard and called "Who's Invited to the Party?" was held. A primary emphasis in the presentations at this workshop as well as in comments from the floor was the sense of betrayal NOW members felt in relation to both the Democratic and Republican parties and their grow-

ing frustration and disillusionment of working within existing political frameworks. It was in this context that the feasibility of forming a new party was raised and discussed, a point which dominated the latter half of the workshop. While comments from workshop participants indicated a range of perspectives, the overwhelming majority favored forging a path away from two-party politics as usual and toward the development of political alternatives, including building a new party that would truly represent women's rights.

Near the end of the workshop Molly Yard proposed a straw vote be taken on a set of motions she had been working on. The first motion was similar to the third paragraph of the adopted resolution as cited above and was accepted without comment. The second motion read, "If we see no improvement on the part of either the Democratic or Republican parties to support our candidates and the advancement of women's rights, we shall seek to build a political coalition dedicated to establishing a new party that will be truly representative of the needs of all Americans." There was immediate clapping and cheering and then voices from the floor shouting, "Why wait?" A chant of "now, now, now" went up from the delegates. Molly Yard, when she understood what people were saying, asked "How many want to do it today?" A booming shout of "Now!" filled the room. She asked "Is there any dissension?" and the answer was absolute silence. When the cheering that followed began to die down, Molly Yard could be heard saying "We're historical; that's it, we're historical," while another person from the platform commented: "The reason we are both flabbergasted is we thought that we were writing a motion that was exploring it; you have taken a whole giant leap; we knew that our constituency was demanding this, we didn't know it was right now!" It was, of course, the amended motion that went to the floor of the convention and was passed with a standing ovation.

The Historic Significance of NOW's Action

Molly Yard was right when she said "We're historical." The adoption of the *Declaration of Women's Political Independence* by the NOW convention represents a significant political development in several ways. First, it articulates a clear and sharp critique of the two existing major parties and recognizes their failure to address the interests of the majority of the American people. The special focus is on the joint Democratic and Republican betrayal of women's concerns, but the points raised in the expanded Bill of Rights indicate an awareness that this betrayal reaches beyond the domain of specifically "women's issues."

It is also noteworthy that this critique was developed out of an accumulation of actual experiences by NOW members,

especially those who have worked for years in Democratic Party politics and in recent election campaigns; several participants in the workshop "Who's Invited to the Party?" spoke eloquently to this issue. This in itself shows a strengthened ability among the NOW membership to learn from one's own real life experiences and not be bound by the ideological assumptions of the existing political system. At the same workshop, Ellie Smeal reported on a series of surveys carried out by the Fund for a Feminist Majority which show a steady increase since 1986 in support for the idea of a new party, with a sharp rise in such sentiment this past year. Thus NOW's resolution is a response to a shift in mass consciousness as well.

The declaration also represents a significant step forward in that it begins to lay the basis for a broadly progressive political agenda. The focus is on issues not candidates and the call is for a party that provides an alternative political perspective rather than just an organization to win elections. The agenda being developed is still in its nascent stages but already includes attention to issues of racism as well as sexism, matters of economic equality and justice, and global concerns such as the threats of nuclear war and environmental destruction. One point that was explicitly raised in the workshop "Who's Invited to the Party?" concerned the necessity of arriving at a consensus on foreign policy; it was recognized that the issues being discussed are of international significance and that there are important links between foreign and domestic policy. As one workshop participant commented, we should ask both the Democrats and the Republicans "How many homeless women can you fit inside a stealth bomber?" The breadth and progressive nature of the declaration was also reinforced by a series of other resolutions that offered solidarity to the Pittston and Eastern Airlines strikers, supported struggles for lesbian and gay rights and Chippewa Treaty Rights in Wisconsin, and endorsed the NAACP national march in Washington on August 26.

Finally, NOW's proposal, while not explicitly presented in class terms, has an implicit working class orientation. This is indicated by the particular issues it takes up and also by its rejection of the two major capitalist parties. In a de facto sense, the majority of people who will be attracted to such a party and should thus form the bulk of its constituents are members of the working class and especially its more oppressed sectors, i.e., women and racial minorities. NOW's call for a new party thus has links to our long-standing call for a labor party. The parallels lie not only in its likely membership — i.e., the working class and its allies — but also in the projected break from the Democratic and Republican parties and the development of a broad political agenda based on the interests of workers (including female and minority workers) in domestic and foreign policy. This is a significant change in direction for the women's movement and one which begins to converge with our own perspective in terms of electoral politics.

The significance of NOW's call for a new party is also magnified by the historical moment in which it has occurred. It comes at a time when there is a dramatic resurgence and broadening of the women's movement, especially involving mass actions on a national level and grass-roots activity and

coalition-building in local areas. It also coincides with calls for a labor party on the part of certain union officials, most notably, Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers. While this development is still very limited, it at least indicates that such ideas are reemerging in the labor movement. And finally, NOW's proposal for a new party and an expanded Bill of Rights occurs right on the heels of a series of Supreme Court decisions that cut significantly into the rights of both racial minorities and women. Such broadside attacks may have the unintended result of heightening awareness of the links between antiracist and feminist struggles, a development which was exemplified in the speeches at the recent NAACP-sponsored march in Washington.

The call for a new party is thus occurring at a time when more and more people are becoming active and when links can be made among historically distinct social movements. This situation creates real possibilities for new political formations involving a diversity of forces who can work in coalition around a number of issues. NOW's call for a new party thus has at least a chance of becoming a living entity not just a nice idea. If the women's movement, the labor movement, and the Black liberation movement joined to form a new party, we could create a force for change that would be more powerful than any seen in recent American history. At the very least, in this period of renewed political activity and debate, NOW's proposal should help shift the framework of discussion, especially around the question of electoral politics. It has already thrown new ideas on the table and raised questions about the functioning of our two-party system. Of equal importance, this proposal and any attempts to implement it should challenge other progressive movements to take more seriously feminist issues and demands; in turn, activists within the women's movement should be challenged to think more broadly about the kinds of economic and social changes necessary to create an egalitarian and just society for women as well as for others.

However, in spite of the significance and positive aspects of NOW's call for a new party, the proposal as it presently stands also contains several weaknesses and could lead to some serious pitfalls for the women's movement. These problems do not negate the importance of NOW's action but they do need to be recognized and overcome.

Distortions and Confusions

One weakness of NOW's proposal is its openness to various distortions and confusions. The most commonly heard distortion is that NOW is calling for a "women's party," which implies a party of only female members and narrowly focused on specific "women's issues" such as abortion rights, the ERA, and affirmative action for women. A second and related distortion is that this is all Molly Yard's idea, not the result of broader sentiment among the NOW membership. These distortions originate from and are perpetuated by several sources.

Of course, there is the mass media where headlines proclaim "Molly Yard Calls for a Women's Party" although the articles that follow explain otherwise. Even a fairly progressive weekly in Pittsburgh fell into this pattern when it headlined a very friendly interview with a local NOW

leader: "NOW'S THE TIME: Jeanne Clark says anger has spawned the new women's party." Such media distortions probably result from multiple factors ranging from a genuine misunderstanding of the resolution and of feminist perspectives in general to a more or less conscious attempt to weaken and belittle the women's movement. We are already familiar with these problems, especially in the mainstream media beholden to capitalist interests.

Of more concern is the propensity of activists to repeat these distortions. Thus, an official of the United Steel Workers of America (USWA) involved in organizing a recent Labor Solidarity March and Rally in Pittsburgh reacted to the suggestion that Molly Yard be invited as a speaker by derisively joking that "she's the one who wants to start a women's party!" These responses result from the largely unchallenged sexism which has pervaded parts of the labor movement and other social movements for decades and which perpetuates a blindness to the importance of feminist issues in the general struggle for justice and equality. This union leader simply could not conceive of "a bunch of women" launching a political party that might represent the interests of working people in general and even his own interests in particular. Much of this is a problem of the labor movement. But it also reflects weaknesses in the women's movement which has not sufficiently reached out to organized labor nor paid adequate attention to the needs and perspectives of working class women. This appears to be the case even in the launching of this latest proposal for a new party.

Of most concern, though, are the confusions and distortions on the part of feminist activists around NOW's initiative. Some of this results from opposition to the proposal to form a new party by those who strongly favor working within the Democratic (and sometimes Republican) Party to elect pro-choice candidates and to lobby for pro-choice legislation. Feminists taking this perspective may be members of other groups such as National Abortion Rights Action League, but many are also local and state leaders of NOW who disagree with the national convention's majority opinion. Aside from these oppositional maneuvers, there is also genuine confusion among many in the women's movement about NOW's proposal. For the majority, it presents a brand-new idea that they have never thought about; it is thus not surprising that more discussion will be needed before misconceptions can be cleared up and the proposal can begin to actually "make sense." But this particular confusion and distortion—interpreting the resolution as a call for a "women's party" narrowly defined—also points to a more serious weakness in the contemporary feminist movement. Specifically, it is linked to an inadequate understanding of the broader social context in which gender oppression occurs and is maintained. This, in turn, is related to the failure to give sufficient attention to issues of race and class and to the concern of poorer women and women of color. All of this leads to an assumption that women's rights can be won by focusing simply on "women's issues," without a broader political agenda and without building alliances with other oppressed people involved in a range of struggles.

One thing that can be done in the immediate period is to raise such questions as we participate in the general process

of clarification of NOW's proposal. In discussions with fellow activists, socialists can also help diffuse their feelings of confusion and strangeness by sharing the fact that such ideas have been put forth by others in American history and that similar parties exist in many other countries. We also need to encourage people to decide whether NOW's proposal makes sense on the basis of their own experiences in the U.S. political system rather than on the basis of what they have always been taught about that system and its supposed democracy.

Insufficient Class Analysis

In this process of discussion and clarification, activists involved in various struggles will come to see that NOW's proposal is far stronger practically and ideologically than its distorted renderings would have us believe. Operating within a feminist framework, it does address a range of issues and suggests their links to each other; it also shows a basic understanding of the need to create alliances among oppressed people and activist currents.

But this general perspective needs to be strengthened. First, the call for such a new party must be based on a clearer class analysis. This is not just a concern for socialists but a practical necessity for all feminist activists. Without an understanding of the class nature of U.S. society, which itself requires an analysis of our capitalist economy, we cannot really account for, let alone effectively challenge, the persistence of gender inequality or other forms of exploitation.

Such a class analysis is also necessary to provide a clearer sense of who are the potential allies of the women's movement and who are its likely enemies. For example, I would suggest that the USWA official referred to earlier, in spite of his present sexist attitude, might be won to support a feminist platform. And if he personally cannot be so convinced, we should not give up on the union's members, for such an alliance is ultimately in their own interests as working people. In contrast, when we turn to members of the capitalist class, we may find a few individuals who selectively support various women's issues (this in fact is happening in the current pro-choice struggle), but the only way such people—whether corporate elites or leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties—can embrace a full feminist agenda that represents the majority of American women is by betraying their own class interests.

The second way NOW's proposal needs to be strengthened also involves the question of divisions and connections. If the feminist movement is going to seriously promote the idea of a broadly based third party, it must more clearly define what the links are between the struggles for women's emancipation and the struggles of workers and oppressed minorities for their rights. This, in turn, again involves developing a better class analysis and an understanding of the intersections of class, race, and gender, as well as challenging instances of racism and insensitivity to class issues in the women's movement itself.

These are all difficult questions and issues. Many sincere and committed feminists have not really thought about these matters and most of us have not been able to sufficiently overcome these weaknesses. We need to discuss these

All Out November 12 – Washington D.C.

**NATIONAL MOBILIZATION FOR
WOMEN'S LIVES**

**12:00 Noon
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problems further within our own organizations. We also must begin to consistently raise them in the broader movement. Without a serious grappling with such issues, a new party committed to representing the interests of the majority of people in the U.S. will at best remain a "good idea." Worse scenarios can also be envisioned. Without a clear class analysis, political co-optation remains an ever present danger, while without sufficient attention to issues of race and class as well as gender, such a third party is likely to quickly fly apart leaving a further legacy of destructive anger and mistrust.

An Electoral vs. Mass Action Focus

The final potential pitfall which I want to discuss in NOW's call for a new party is its tendency to focus people's immediate attention and energies on the electoral arena to the detriment of mass movement activities such as demonstrations, referendums, and the building of local grass-roots coalitions. This refocusing is not inevitable nor inherent in the proposal itself but is a real possibility given the present dynamics in the larger movement and the lack of clarity among some of the NOW leadership.

In Pittsburgh, this potential problem is being exacerbated by certain Democratic Party activists, at least some of whom have not been particularly "active" in recent pro-choice work, but who have leaped at NOW's call for "independent political action." At large meetings and events called by the local Campaign for Abortion Rights, these individuals promote potential candidates who I assume may now run as "independents" rather than as Democrats or Republicans, though this has not yet been announced. They also consistently argue for a lobbying and electoralist perspective, downplaying or opposing various mass actions such as marches and rallies. At present this perspective is not a majority perspective in the Pittsburgh pro-choice coalition, but I fear that as actual election campaigns get underway, once again people's energies will be diverted into supporting candidates who may well be good feminists and who may *this time* be running as "independents" but who have not made

a clear and fundamental break with the parties that consistently betray the feminist cause.

Several additional complications are sometimes added to this prospective scenario. One is the encouragement of feminist activists in the upcoming period to support and work for candidates who are pro-choice no matter what their party affiliation or positions on other issues. This too is presented as "independent political action," in the same framework as building a third party. Such a blurring of focus can, unfortunately, be derived from NOW's own resolution. This disorientation is also greatly encouraged by recent actions of the NOW leadership, for example Molly Yard's support of the Pennsylvania gubernatorial candidacy of pro-choice Republican Barbara Hafer as announced in the *Sunday Pittsburgh Press* on September 16. Another complication is raised by some local NOW leaders who suggest that the purpose of all of this "new party talk" is to "scare the pants off" the Democratic politicians so they will get their act together and we can support them once again. And finally, at the same workshop where the formation of a new party was being discussed, a good portion of the leadership's remarks focused on reforming the rules of the existing parties toward greater gender balancing in selection of candidates, membership on party committees, etc. Presumably this can only be done effectively from within the Democratic and Republican parties by members whose loyalty is still intact.

The problems such developments raise are threefold. First and most serious, I am suggesting there is a danger that some will take this call for a new party and for "independent political action" and use it to ultimately lead people into (or back into) the two mainstream parties. In other words, various activists will draw on the NOW initiative to organize electoral campaigns and support "temporarily independent" candidates (or simply threaten to do so), but they will not work toward building a truly independent party, one that will not betray our support.

Second, even if the building of a new party is undertaken in a serious way, an *immediate* and *substantial* refocusing of activist energies on electoral campaigns and legislative can-

didates would, I think, be a mistake. It will not only make the feminist movement less effective in winning immediate demands but will tend to undermine the mass character of present activities, thus subverting the process through which lots of people are learning new skills, making new commitments, developing their political understanding, and getting a sense of their own collective power. This will occur at the same time the political perspectives of this new party (and thus of its candidates) are not clearly defined and the groundwork for creating alliances with the labor and other progressive movements has not yet been sufficiently carried out. Thus the focus of political action would be narrowed and weakened in several different ways.

Finally, it seems to me that the *only* way an independent political party of the type NOW is envisioning can be built is through its development out of the very type of mass movement activities large numbers of women and others are currently getting involved in. As the potential for a feminist-labor party grows, our promotion of and involvement in such mass actions should also grow. This is the most effective way to build a new party—not another party of the elite but a party of the majority, making our own decisions, enacting our own power, and winning our own struggles. It is a positive sign that NOW, in distinction to several other feminist or pro-choice organizations, is presently promoting such mass movement activities, the national mobilization in Washington D.C. on November 12 being a prime example, as well as developing their proposal for a new party. We should strongly support and encourage this synthesis.

Mass Movements and Party-Building

If immersion in mass movement activity is the only effective way to build a third party in the U.S., it is also the best way to overcome the other potential weaknesses and pitfalls

of the NOW proposal. As more activists talk about NOW's call for independent political action with each other and with their neighbors and friends who are currently taking their first steps toward political involvement, the more the media's distortions, their own confusions, and even their leaders' disorientations will be clarified and overcome. Also, the call for this new party will "make sense" to an increasing number of people and gain their support when and only when it is related to their own personal situations and their collective struggles around issues such as reproductive rights, equal pay, and violence against women.

Immersion in the struggles of large numbers of people will also help strengthen the working class character of the prospective party. If such a party emerges out of a broad array of social movements, the majority of its leaders and members will necessarily come from various sectors of the working class. In addition, those who are active in day-to-day struggles learn much more quickly about the class character of our society and also the need for allies among other oppressed and exploited groups than those who seek change solely through the ballot box or the lobbying visit. It is, in fact, through mass actions that connections between women's rights activists and those fighting battles on other fronts are forged, while such actions also serve to dramatize to the general public the interrelations of these issues.

For all of these reasons, maintaining and strengthening a mass action perspective may prove to be the most important question at this crucial juncture in the contemporary women's movement. As we lend our critical support to NOW's proposal for a new party and work with others in clarifying and developing its essential points, we need to insure that basic political organizing go forward and mass movement activity continue to be built and strengthened. We need, in other words, to insure that any party truly of the people be always in the midst of the people's struggles. ●

Note to our readers:

In the last issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* we announced that this month we would carry an analysis of Barry Sheppard's recent letter to the Socialist Workers Party Political Committee. Due to problems of space and other considerations we are unable to fulfill that pledge this month. We will be taking up Sheppard's comments and discussing their meaning for Fourth Internationalists in the United States in a subsequent issue.

Correction: In issue No. 66 of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, one of the names of the speakers at the July 11 New York public meeting in defense of the Chinese workers and students was misspelled. It should have been Jim Henle, not Henley.

Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement

by Claire Cohen

Today, anti-choice activists and their sympathizers are demanding severe restrictions on the reproductive rights of all women and frightening infringements on the civil rights of pregnant women—all in the name of “fetal rights.” Women of color, in particular Latinos, Native Americans, and African-Americans, have been disproportionately oppressed by such actions. Although poor white women are also affected, the impact on women of color is significantly higher due to their greater representation among the poor.

Women who belong to more privileged layers of society, especially ruling class and professional women who are predominantly white, have generally enjoyed access to reproductive services—including abortion and birth control even in the days when these things were formally illegal. Also, wealthy women have rarely, if ever, been subjected to forced caesarian sections, restraints, and even imprisonment “to protect the fetus.” These have been used almost exclusively against poor women of color.

Despite this, the reproductive rights movement remains, today, overwhelmingly white in its leadership and constituency. Individual Black women leaders of the movement, like Faye Wattleton of Planned Parenthood, come from the more comfortable, professional layer of the Black community.

Somewhat belatedly, white reproductive rights activists have recently begun to recognize the necessity for a truly inclusive movement, with an active involvement by women of color—especially those from poor and working class backgrounds—in leadership roles. However, activists are finding their weakness in this area difficult to overcome due to past racist attitudes and practices, as well as the continued inability to project a political class consciousness.

The problems facing women of color in the broader women’s movement can be broken down into three broad categories: racism, class, and intracultural issues. It is my hope that this article will stimulate further discussion on the problems of building an inclusive and broadly based reproductive rights movement. The lessons we learn from that effort will certainly be applicable to other areas of mass activity.

I do not claim to be speaking here for women of color or even Black women, in general, since there is no monolithic body of such women with one perspective, one experience, or a single goal. Just as among whites, there is a broad range of ideologies and perspectives for action among women of color. At the same time, however, my point of view is shaped by an entire life experience—which in addition to those elements which are unique to me as an individual contains

others that I share generally with my Black sisters and other women of color.

Racism

Since racism is such a pervasive problem in American culture, it is not surprising that it influences all social movements, including the reproductive rights movement. I am not talking about the blatant racism of bigots. For the left—including the revolutionary left—the “more subtle” forms of racism can be a significant problem. In her article “Overcoming White Supremacy” (*Zeta Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1988) Bell Hooks states: “When liberal whites fail to understand the extent to which they embody white supremacist values and beliefs, even though they may not embrace racism as prejudice or domination (especially domination that involves coercive control), they cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of domination that they profess to wish to see eradicated.”

Probably every woman of color could relate countless experiences of micro-racism from white women in the reproductive rights and feminist movements. Here are some examples from my own experiences and the experiences of other Black women. In one incident, a group of white feminists who wished to involve Black women in the movement approached me to ask for the names of some Black women’s groups. They wanted to contact them so that they could ask these groups to put on a dinner party for them. *Note, they did not propose to put on a dinner party for the Black women.* In another instance, a group of white, relatively well-off reproductive rights activists told low-income Black women that they could earn their way to a pro-choice conference by doing the *cooking and cleaning*.

White reproductive rights activists have repeatedly minimized and marginalized the concerns felt by women of color about issues such as funding for abortion and contraceptive services, forced and coerced sterilizations, forced caesarian sections, and placing restraints on or imprisoning pregnant women to “protect the best interests of the fetus.” Frequent statements about how the right to abortion will especially benefit Black and/or Latino women “because they can stop having so many unwanted children” are seen as indicating a racist devaluation of children of color.

White activists too often don’t recognize, seem unaware of, or blatantly disregard the leadership which people of color have themselves recognized and accepted. Sometimes this takes the form of uncritically and self-servingly accepting pronouncements by *self-designated* leaders of color who are

able to reinforce a white-centered perception of themselves and the world.

Whites are usually assumed to be more knowledgeable and experienced about issues affecting all humanity, while people of color are accepted as authorities only on the needs and interests of their own racial group. The diversity of ideologies, experiences, and capabilities of people of color generally goes unrecognized. Sometimes, on the other hand, when a woman of color does specifically address a problem of racism she is often seen as self-serving, and this can be used as a rationale to minimize or dismiss her contribution to a discussion.

Frequently whites refuse to recognize the unique aspects of racial oppression, preferring to focus only on those aspects that are common with the other forms of discrimination or oppression that they are familiar with. An additional problem is that many whites, particularly white women, seem to view all Blacks (especially, but not only, Black males) as dangerous until proven otherwise. Experience has taught many Black activists that whites in the movement, even socialists, are not immune to this phenomenon.

The all-pervasive racism of our society, of which each of these things is an individual manifestation, divides and weakens all movement politics in this country. I have heard many Blacks raise such problems as a reason for not involving themselves in movements which, on their face, should be broad and diverse. This perception of racism in the reproductive rights and other movements, and the reality that lies behind it, is a problem that the movement, and white activists in particular, will have to deal with consciously if it is to be overcome.

Class

Since people of color are so disproportionately represented among the lower socio-economic groups in this country, there is a lot of overlap in the impact of race and class on the movement. However, it is important to remember that they are not synonymous. Most poor and working class people are white, and some people of color are members of the more privileged classes in this society.

Class has also been a major division in the women's movement since its inception. The leadership of the women's movement has not, by and large, come from the working class or poorer layers of society. That means that it has tended to identify with the needs of a relatively well-off layer of women, and has only taken up the problems of poor women when pressured into doing so. The issues raised earlier concerning forced sterilization and the lack of access to adequate and dignified gynecological or obstetric care, along with problems such as adequate child care and family support services are examples of problems that have not received major attention.

A recent example of how this affects the movement could be seen when the Pennsylvania pro-choice coalition consciously deemphasized demands for funded abortion services so that they could present a more "palatable" package to state legislators. Everyone knows, or at least so it is said, that it's not "politically realistic" right now to ask for funding programs, especially those that benefit the poor. But the

women's movement needs to function on the basis of a different sort of realism — one that comes from the needs of the movement, not the needs of Democratic and Republican legislators.

This issue also comes up in terms of a broader discussion about what demands the reproductive rights movement as a whole should be raising. The single most popular slogan has been, "Keep Abortion Safe and Legal." But for most poor women the issue is not just one of legal access; it also must include economic access. Indeed, the question of economic access may be the more important, since it makes little difference if abortion is legal when one cannot afford the procedure. This problem becomes even more acute in those states where sterilization services *are* still funded by Medicaid, even though funding for abortion has been cut off. This severely restricts the reproductive choices of poor women.

In addition, many racist physicians — while they give white women, especially middle and upper class white women, a difficult time if they want to be sterilized — will pressure women of color into the procedure. Indeed, there have been reports on National Public Radio and from other sources about women on Indian reservations being involuntarily sterilized without their knowledge. Women of color have repeatedly asked that facts such as these be publicized to strengthen the point that the abortion rights issue is, in fact, about the right of women to choose, to have control over their reproductive capacities, and not about "preserving life." Yet the organized women's movement has tended to avoid these issues.

Many women of color and poor women sense that, when it comes to the broad fight for legal abortion, those in the leadership of feminist organizations are anxious to enlist their support. They are urged to join the common struggle. Often they are promised that the fight for their *special* needs will be next on the agenda. But once such a fight is successful, these special problems are ignored. More privileged women do *not* really see it as part of their political agenda to wage a battle on this front.

This is precisely what happened after the favorable Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. When Congress first passed legislation allowing the states to begin cutting off Medicaid funding for abortion, NOW and other feminist organizations did little or nothing to protest. It was only when the rights of more privileged layers of women came under attack again, in the form of new restrictions on the legality of abortion, that these organizations began to mobilize themselves.

Such an attitude alienates poor women and women of color, and makes it more difficult to convince them to join in feminist activity. It reinforces the common sentiment in the Black community that the feminist movement in the U.S. is a "white middle class" movement which is happy to exploit Black women's support for "white middle class" issues, but has no real relevance for Black women. The continued emphasis on the simple fight for legality, *with no attention paid to the problem of funding*, severely weakens the movement's ability to form the necessary alliances with women of color and other poor women.

Many Black women and others have repeatedly called on the movement to adopt the slogan "Keep Abortion Safe, Legal, and Funded," instead of simply "Keep Abortion Safe and Legal." Although it is a mistake to counterpose these two concepts — the simple fight to keep abortion from being outlawed again is absolutely essential for *all* women at the present time — the sentiments expressed by those who have demanded a change are absolutely legitimate.

A means must be found for the women's movement to fight on both of these fronts at the same time. We must march and rally against the blatant attacks on legal abortions around the idea of keeping abortion safe and legal, *while also* carrying on the battle on the question of funding. This will mean raising additional demands, as part of every action, which will call for a return of Medicaid subsidies for abortion and other reproductive services.

Two current examples show how the funding issue can be effectively included in campaigns aimed at legislators and in efforts to mobilize for pro-choice actions.

The Los Angeles chapter of NOW collected many thousands of signatures on petitions stating, "I support a woman's right to safe, legal, and affordable abortion. This includes the right to choose abortion for poor, young, and disadvantaged women who must rely on public facilities and public funding for abortion and family planning. I urge you to oppose any legislation that is aimed at restricting a woman's access to abortion in California."

The Boston NOW chapter is building participation in the November 12 National Mobilization for Women's Lives with leaflets emphasizing "ABORTION MUST BE SAFE, LEGAL, AND FUNDED." The chapter's "Mobilization Fact Sheet," in explaining the purpose of this action in Washington D.C. states: "thousands will demonstrate in the nation's capital to send a message that the right to abortion is the right of every woman or girl in this country, regardless of where she lives. We must keep abortion safe, legal, and funded!"

Unfortunately, although the white-dominated leadership of the movement has verbally agreed on occasion that the question of funding is important, little has been done about it. This contributes to the feeling on the part of Black and poor women that the women's leadership is not really interested in their problems.

Intracultural Issues

By intracultural problems I am referring to some of the contradictory currents within the liberation struggles of oppressed groups that interfere with the ability of women of color — and especially Black women — to mobilize around women's equality and reproductive rights. Sexism among men of color and religious fundamentalism are probably the two biggest factors in this category.

Gender-based oppression of women of color by their own racial groups has always been a problem, especially among Afro-Americans. Too often male-supremacist values have dominated in liberation struggles, and women have been pressured to forego their own demands in the name of group solidarity and the fight for national self-determination. Men of color have often presented women's struggles as a tool

used by the dominant society to divide and conquer. Even those men who have been able to see the legitimacy of feminist demands have tended to press for delaying any struggle around them until after the battle for racial or national liberation has been won.

Oppressed women have responded to this male-supremacist thinking in a number of ways, which we do not have space to go into here. But it should be obvious that no matter how women respond, the pressures involved will tend to have an impact on their ability to relate to the reproductive rights movement.

The strong fundamentalist religious tradition among many poor white groups as well as oppressed minority groups is another barrier to participation in the reproductive rights movement. Women who hold these religious values are especially vulnerable to the propaganda of the so-called "right to life" movement. However, at least some of these women can certainly be reached by a message that sincerely addresses their class and social interests.

Overcoming the Obstacles to a Broad-Based Reproductive Rights Movement

Overcoming all of these obstacles to involving women of color and poor women in the reproductive rights movement will not be easy. It will involve a *conscious and probably painful effort* on the part of the present women's groups to recognize, and reverse, the ways in which women of color have been discriminated against within these organizations. I am sure that Black activists can easily be found to help organize consciousness-raising on this issue. It will also be necessary for Black and other oppressed nationalities to begin to address, in a conscious way through their own organizations, the problems of women's oppression.

Just as important as the efforts to combat covert racism in the women's movement will be a change in the approach by feminist organizations to certain programmatic questions. They must begin to demonstrate *in action* that they are ready to organize a fight around the issues of particular concern to poor and minority women. If they do so, then new bonds of confidence and collaboration can easily be built.

Lip service and superficial actions will not be useful in any of this. Insubstantial efforts will only serve to further alienate women of color from the movement as it now stands. It may well be that the present leadership of the main feminist organizations, because of its class background and interests, will prove incapable of making the necessary adjustments. In that case the task will be to replace that leadership with a new one, which can correctly make the links between the oppression of women in this system and the oppression of Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and other national minorities with the struggles of the trade union movement, the gay liberation movement, and others — rather than with the goals and objectives of the ruling rich who are responsible for all of these forms of oppression.

That sort of a feminist movement will be in the best position to win the demands of women, because it will be conscious of the kind of struggle it is involved in, and who it can work with in order to wage an effective fight. ●

Women Challenge Rape Myths and Realities

by Evelyn Sell

Every seven minutes a woman is raped in the United States.

Over 50 percent of all rapes occur on dates.

Over 80 percent of teenage victims know their attacker.

These were some of the facts reported by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1987. The statistics give only a hint of the scope of the problem. Rape has been and continues to be the most underreported crime of violence in the country. It is estimated that for every victim who calls the police, from 10 to 20 other women do not report their assailant.

Over the past year the media has carried articles on "the epidemic" of campus rape, and television documentaries have focused on widespread "date" or "acquaintance" rape. The attention given to this violence against women indicates how enormous this problem is in the U.S. At the same time, this public spotlight shows how much the women's liberation movement has accomplished in punching huge holes in the walls of silence, shame, and tradition which had made rape a taboo subject.

Battles Won by Women and Their Allies

Beginning in the late 1960s, the women's liberation movement created a public climate in which all kinds of hitherto "forbidden" topics were brought out into the open for examination, analysis, and action. The feminist groups which sprang up around the country engaged in wide-ranging collective discussions that deeply affected the participants' consciousness and helped convince them that what they had considered "my individual problem to be solved as best I can" was, in actuality, a common problem faced by women as a sex and capable of solution through united action. In the matter of rape, women began to see themselves not only — or primarily — as victims of particular rapists but as victims of attitudes and institutions in society.

The rape issue surfaced as an important concern of feminists and as a focus of public protest actions in the early 1970s. According to a staff woman at a Los Angeles area Rape Crisis Hotline, the initial impetus for many feminists came from reading the September 1971 *Ramparts* magazine article by S. Griffin entitled "Rape—The All-American Crime." The first public action appears to have taken place in 1971 after a West Coast topless dancer complained to a Bay Area feminist meeting that she was hired to perform at a bachelor party and was raped by all of the men present. When one of their members was raped while hitchhiking, the New York Radical Feminists began discussing such situations and in 1972 held a "Speak-Out on Rape." That same year, the first Rape Crisis Center was established in Washington, D.C., to provide emotional support for victims,

counsel them about hospitals and police and court procedures, and hold self-defense classes. In 1974 the first rape crisis center in Iowa was set up by women who had been working together to change rape provisions in the state's criminal code. By March 1978, there were twelve other centers in Iowa.

The emergence of rape crisis centers around the country and the range of their functions pointed up an important feature of the feminist attitude toward rape: the crime was not seen simply as an assault by an individual man or group of men but was placed within its social context and seen as an interrelated series of crimes against women involving basic institutions in society: the legal system (laws, police, courts), medical facilities and staff, and the schools.

Upsetting the Legal Applecart

The legal system was targeted by a wide range of organizations including the National Organization for Women (NOW), the American Civil Liberties Union (which acknowledged it was the women's movement that made it aware of the need to revise rape laws), and the 11-million member General Federation of Women's Clubs (which established Women Against Rape in 1974 to lobby in every state for changes in rape laws). Many local groups, such as the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women, were established to alter legislation and procedures in rape cases.

Laws relating to rape were legislated around a hundred years ago based on centuries-old English precedents and statutes. For example, according to English common law, a wife is a chattel and the husband has the supreme role in the marriage relationship. This concept underlay an 1898 New Jersey statute granting the husband an absolute privilege to sexual relations with his wife. Because of this statute, a Newark judge in 1977 was required to dismiss a rape indictment brought by a wife against her husband. The judge commented that the law ran counter to the contemporary attitude on the right of a woman to control sexual access to her body.

On the other side of the country, California judges had been mandated to instruct juries in rape trials: "A charge such as that made against the defendant in this case is one which is easily made and once made, difficult to defend against, even if the person accused is innocent. Therefore, the law requires that you examine the testimony of the female person named in the information with caution." This instruction to disregard the rape victim's statements was first used in the 17th century by England's Lord Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale.

Police Treatment of Victims

Rape trials were the only ones in which a "cautionary" instruction was given to the jury—until August 1975 when California's Supreme Court voided the mandatory warning. Almost exactly one year earlier California lawmakers, under pressure from feminists and their allies, had amended the state's rape laws in order to greatly curtail courtroom questions about the victim's past sexual relations—a favorite defense attorney tactic to prejudice the jury against women who were "soiled goods." At the present time, such testimony can only be introduced after a special hearing before the judge and away from the jury. This legislation became the prototype for statutes subsequently adopted by Michigan, Iowa, and Florida and introduced into 17 other state legislatures.

Arguments for and against courtroom harassment of women were presented in April 1978 during hearings by a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee working on a revision of the entire body of federal criminal law. Paul Rothstein, a Georgetown University law professor, testified that the woman's sexual history had to be considered because it could establish a pattern of sexual fantasies and behavior tending to prove consent. Carolyn Bode of the Women's Lobby countered with the explanation, "It's been shown that a victim's sexual history is in most cases irrelevant and when admitted as evidence is highly prejudicial."

And speaking of prejudices . . . in 1977 and 1978 three judicial pronouncements in rape trials provoked heated responses from women. In May 1977, Judge Archie Simonson excused the behavior of a 15-year-old Madison, Wisconsin, rapist by explaining that the boy had been excited by newspaper ads, sex stories, nude bars, and women wearing revealing clothing. Feminists demonstrated on the courthouse steps, collected over 35,000 signatures on recall petitions, and helped elect a woman attorney to replace Simonson. He was the first state official to be ousted since the recall amendment had gone into effect.

That same year, judges on the California Court of Appeals rendered a verdict in which they commented that it is not "unreasonable" for a man to believe that a female hitchhiker would consent to sexual relations. About 100 demonstrators from a dozen women's groups picketed the State Court of Appeals building in Los Angeles. The offensive remarks were deleted from the final version of the judges' statement.

In a February 1978 preliminary hearing, Honolulu district judge Robert Richardson dismissed rape charges against a marine on grounds that the woman had not resisted sufficiently—although the marine had knocked her down with his car while she was jogging, dragged her semiconscious into his auto, and then threatened her with a broken bottle. Women Against Rape collected 23,000 signatures on petitions demanding that the Hawaiian Supreme Court investigate the judge's fitness for office. Two days after the judge dismissed the rape charge, 1,000 men and women held a "Rape of Justice" rally sponsored by a broad range of feminist organizations. When the case went to the Oahu Grand Jury, the marine was indicted on counts of rape, sodomy, assault, kidnapping, and failure to render aid at an accident.

The prejudices against rape victims built into the law and displayed by the courts were more than matched by police departments around the country. In a 1/30/72 *New York Times Magazine* article by Martha Weinman Lear, a rape victim spoke bitterly about her experiences with the police: "They advise you not to fight, just lie back and enjoy it—enjoy it!—and then, when it happens, they ask, 'How come you didn't resist?' When it happened to me, one cop said, 'Tell me the truth, don't all women secretly want to get raped?'"

Testifying before a 1973 hearing of the California Criminal Justice Committee and the California Commission on the Status of Women, a rape victim explained that "dealing with the police can often be as grueling an experience as the rape itself." Another woman described what happened when she called police after being raped: "The policemen questioned me at length in my apartment. It was very humiliating. I was in shock, hardly able to talk, and these two uniformed policemen were joking and laughing as they asked me questions about every minute detail. . . . I think it is clear that many policemen believe the common cultural myths that rape is provoked by the victim and that a woman enjoys it. Thus, the one out of every ten women who reports her assault to the police is often subjected to hostile and insensitive treatment."

In order to relieve such postattack trauma, many feminists proposed that female officers meet with rape victims, special rape investigation units be established, and training be given to officers about the realities of sexual assaults and the needs of the victims. Such changes were implemented by some police and sheriffs' departments as a result of feminist pressures but severe problems continued to exist. A 1975 report on the treatment of rape victims released by the Center for Women Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., concluded that only "cosmetic changes" had been made and that "formidable institutional barriers to real reform" still remain. The 600-page survey examined practices of police departments, prosecutors, and hospitals.

The Role of Hospitals

Among the major findings of the survey was the fact that most rape victims were treated at public hospitals because private facilities were reluctant to provide services which might involve physicians in court proceedings. The report also noted the disparaging attitudes toward rape victims exhibited by hospital staffs.

A 1974 report by the California Assembly Criminal Justice Committee pointed out: "Emergency medical facilities provide inadequate treatment for rape victims. A woman who is raped is often beaten and traumatized. The extent of the medical treatment is frequently limited to a vaginal examination for the purpose of gathering potential evidence." Further, "Many physicians on duty at emergency medical facilities are not experienced in the examining procedures necessary to gather evidence from rape victims. Cases are dropped for insufficient evidence as a result of inadequate examinations which ignored valuable evidence."

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After receiving this insensitive and ineffective medical attention, the rape victim was then presented with an efficiently processed bill—even though California rape victims were entitled to financial aid from the Victim of Crime Indemnity Fund. The Assembly committee proposed a number of changes including thorough examinations for both physical and emotional trauma and informing victims about the availability of services for venereal disease, pregnancy, and psychiatric help.

Dr. Martha Kirkpatrick told a session of the California Medical Association in 1976: “We would like to believe that mismanagement of rape is a legal problem, but there’s evidence of medical mismanagement also.” She said that a study of attitudes of nurses (including rape victims) revealed that they felt only “bad” women are raped—a view shared by many doctors, who also believed the myths that rape is rare, only happens to provocative women, and that most accusations are false.

This sexist attitude of hospital personnel was confirmed when Dr. Walter Edwards, president of the California Association of Emergency Room Physicians, explained why rape victims were often taken to several hospitals before finding one willing to provide treatment. “One reason,” Dr. Edwards said, “is that a large number of so-called rape victims are phony and the emergency room personnel become cynical.”

Feminists Put Pressure on Schools

The third major area targeted for institutional change was the educational system. Self-defense training at all levels of public schools as part of the regular physical education curriculum was one of the major demands at a December 1977 demonstration held in Los Angeles. Sponsored by a coalition of feminist groups, the protest took the form of a memorial service for the 13 victims of the “Hillside Strangler” and for all women raped or beaten in Los Angeles.

A rash of self-defense training programs erupted in Los Angeles as a result of the concern over the Hillside Strangler murders. The Los Angeles City Council started self-defense classes for its employees in December 1977. During January 1978, the Los Angeles Police Department held a series of self-defense classes in an area of the city where seven victims of the Hillside Strangler were found. Radio and television

stations carried programs about self-defense. In January 1978, the Los Angeles County Commission on the Status of Women announced that 200 free self-defense classes were going to take place throughout the county sponsored by the Sheriff’s Department, the county Department of Parks and Recreation, Los Angeles city schools, Los Angeles Community Colleges, and the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department.

The demand for self-defense training in the schools was raised around the country. After a wave of rapes during 1974 on Milwaukee’s South Side, two teachers started self-defense classes at St. Francis High School. Along with learning how to defend themselves physically, the young women heard from police officers, psychologists, rape victims, and others in order to gain a better understanding of the many problems connected with rape.

Defense Committees for Victims

Questions related to self-defense received extensive national attention during the 1975 trial of Joanne Little—a Black woman raped in her cell by a white jailer. Little stabbed her attacker with an ice pick while defending herself and was charged with murder.

She received wide support from the women’s and civil rights movements before and during her trial held in North Carolina. A wide variety of local and national feminist organizations sponsored demonstrations, and prominent figures called for dismissal of all charges against her. The demand to “Free Joanne Little!” was heard at marches and rallies across the U.S. The jury, unanimously agreeing with that sentiment, acquitted her on the basis that the prosecution had not proven its case beyond reasonable doubt.

Little’s case attracted the widest publicity and defense activities during the 1970s but it was not unique. An earlier feminist defense effort centered on the case of Inez Garcia who was raped in March 1974, and convicted of second-degree murder seven months later. Garcia had been raped by one Latino while another held her and blocked her escape. After being released by the men, Garcia ran to her house, loaded her rifle, and pursued her attackers. When one threw a knife at her, she fired and killed him.

The courtroom was crowded with feminists throughout Garcia’s trial. When the judge sentenced her to five years in prison, her female supporters shouted their protest. The Free Inez Garcia Committee continued to work for her

release while Garcia was in prison. In December 1975, the California Court of Appeals reversed Garcia's murder conviction and ordered a new trial on the grounds that the judge erred in instructing the jury on reasonable doubt.

Garcia's supporters were again in the courtroom when the second trial began in February 1977. The 3/5/77 *Los Angeles Times* reported, "Inez Garcia, who killed a man she said helped rape her and became a feminist symbol of a woman's right to self-defense, was acquitted Friday of a second-degree murder after a retrial. . . . The Montgomery County courtroom, packed with about 75 partisan supporters of the defendant, exploded into a cheer when the verdict was read."

Developments During the 1980s

The breakthrough victories won during the 1970s provided a basis for continuing efforts to modify legislation, police practices, and hospital procedures.

Additional changes in laws ended many discriminatory practices against women and helped ease the courtroom trauma for victims. In 1981 Connecticut adopted a law making spousal rape a crime. In 1984 the New York Court of Appeals threw out a century-old law that made husbands exempt from charges of raping their wives. At the beginning of 1985, 18 states had abolished marital rape exemption laws. Beginning in 1980, California rape laws were amended to ban the use of lie detector tests to determine whether a rape victim was telling the truth, to prohibit spousal rape, to remove the requirement that a victim had to prove that she resisted her attacker, and to bar judges from ordering victims to undergo psychiatric examinations to evaluate their credibility.

There was an expansion of educational programs for police departments and hospital personnel. In 1981 over 200 police officers, members of county prosecutors' offices, and rape crisis hot-line personnel from all over California met to discuss sexual assault investigations, and to learn how to make things easier for victims. The Dallas Rape Crisis Center established police training sessions and seminars for doctors and social workers. Similar programs were initiated by feminist groups, women's commissions established by local and county governments, and community organizations around the U.S.

While noting progress in improving the attitudes of police, a 1985 study by the U.S. Department of Justice stated that women continued to encounter unfair and insensitive treatment. Assistant Attorney General Lois Herrington explained, "Sexual victims would be more likely to report the crime if they did not fear becoming entangled in the morass of an insensitive criminal justice system." In some states, for example, the victim's address was given to the defense attorney which increased the woman's fear of reprisal from the rapist and/or his friends.

Even with improved attitudes of hospital personnel, the medical situation for rape victims remains difficult. For example, a crisis erupted in the Los Angeles area during the fall of 1987 when over 15 privately owned hospitals stopped admitting sexually abused women and children on the basis that they couldn't afford the time nor costs to comply with newly mandated state procedures. Forced to locate other

facilities, many victims had to wait as long as eight hours to find a hospital—sometimes 50 miles away!—and then had to wait even longer for medical care. State Senator Diane Watson pointed out that hospitals cannot turn away gunshot victims and asked, "Why is it we should be able to discriminate against a victim of rape?" After higher payments were granted by the county, a number of hospitals resumed emergency treatment.

Women Organize Fightback

More rape crisis centers were established—mounting to over 600 by the end of 1987. The Dallas Rape Crisis Center noted at the end of 1981 that 90 percent of the women seeking help at the facility reported their assaults to authorities whereas only 40 percent had reported in 1976 and no one had reported in 1971. This showed that victim support groups gave women greater self-confidence and helped them overcome traditional feelings of shame, self-guilt, and the fear of being known as "damaged goods."

Rape-prevention and self-defense training for women spread across the U.S. The women's committee of United Auto Workers Local 12 in Toledo sponsored a program on rape prevention in 1984. In 1986 Cornell students attended mandatory orientation lectures and dormitory workshops dealing with acquaintance rape, and participated in assertiveness-building and self-defense courses taught by the physical education department. In 1987 the University of California/Los Angeles (UCLA) Women's Resource Center was a cosponsor of a "Campus Awareness Week" which included sessions on "When No Is Not Enough: Aggression in Dating Relationships," "Assert Yourself: Communication in Dating Relationships," and "About Rape: Empowerment Through Awareness." The UCLA Rape Prevention and Education Services holds many self-defense workshops, and recently copublished "Resources Against Rape: A Rape Prevention and Education Handbook."

Demonstrations were held to protest particular incidents such as the 1983 gang-rape of a woman in a New Bedford, Massachusetts, bar. Initial newspaper reports stated that the woman was raped by four men on a pool table while other males watched and cheered. The event and the trials which took place in 1984 captured national media attention and were a focus of women's rights advocates across the nation. The New Bedford Women's Center took the lead in forming a broad local Coalition Against Sexist Violence which held a candlelight march and a rally at City Hall shortly after the attack. Over 3,000 participated, including feminists from New York and Boston. The events in New Bedford prompted the creation of the city's first rape crisis center, and the passage of new laws in Massachusetts and Rhode Island aimed at witnesses who do not report crimes.

A number of "Take Back the Night" marches and rallies were held in various cities. In May and June of 1983 NOW chapters across the U.S. sponsored such actions. Speakers at the June 3 rally in Portland, Oregon, included the president of the Black Women's Network. NOW chapter copresident Linda Menchen explained, "Women will no longer be assigned the role of victim. We are joining women from

all parts of our community to protest violence against us on the streets and in our homes.”

On September 28, 1985, over a thousand demonstrated in a “Take Back the Night” march in Washington, D.C., sponsored by feminist organizations and groups active in the anti-intervention and peace movements. Picket signs displayed a wide range of slogans: “Date rape is still rape,” “Solidarity with our sisters in South Africa,” “Stop rape, torture, and murder in Central America,” and “Stop abortion clinic violence.” Official demands of the march included: “fighting for the right to live free from violence and fear; for an end to harassment on the street and on the job; for full economic equality, jobs, and education; for an end to victimization of prostitutes; and for finding non-sexist instructors for self-defense courses for women and girls.”

On January 27, 1988, the UCLA Women’s Coalition held a “Take Back the Night” candlelight vigil after a series of “shower peeping” incidents and rapes in the residence halls and the University Research Library. The organizers pointed out that such attacks limit women’s right to an education. *Together*, the UCLA feminist newsmagazine, declared: “We are doing our share. We are using the escort service, evening vans, and walking in numbers, we are educating our sisters and brothers, we are banding together, we are being cautious. But we are also being limited in our options and we cannot afford this. We face many other disadvantages as women on this campus and sacrificing safety just to get studying done is unacceptable.” The action was held “to alert the administration that we will not tolerate the wait for more lighting, visible emergency phones, more emergency phones. The time is now.”

What the Record Shows

The activities carried out over the past twenty years clearly pose the key demands pursued by feminists and their allies:

- Free, prompt medical attention for rape victims including treatment for physical injuries, venereal disease, and possible pregnancy. Free psychological services upon request.
- Abolish all laws, police practices, and court procedures which turn rape victims into criminals. Revoke statutes giving husbands the right to rape their wives. Treat “date/acquaintance rape” as crimes of violence against women.
- Include self-defense training for girls and women at all levels of education. Free self-defense classes for women in the community.
- Establish feminist-controlled programs to counsel and help rape victims and their families and friends; to educate the community about rape problems; and to end the abuse of rape victims by police, attorneys, hospital personnel.

Many of these demands have been won in particular cases—but much remains to be done to secure these goals in every city throughout the country. The problem of violence against women has taken on added dimensions as more and more women enter the labor force and try to cope with various shift hours, unsafe transportation and parking facilities, and increased exposure to sexual harassment. Traditional attitudes, for example, hamper women’s job opportunities. A woman cab driver in San Francisco lost her job after being raped at gunpoint in her vehicle. The basis for the firing, according to the firm’s personnel director, was that the woman driver did not exercise sufficient caution in picking up her fares. The rape victim regained her job when she threatened to take her case to the Federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

The organized labor movement can play a crucial role in preventing such discriminatory practices as well as in defending women workers who have been attacked. Such efforts must be pursued along with campaigns to win and preserve pay equity, affirmative action, child care, parental leaves, and comparable worth plans. No one campaign can meet all the needs of women workers.

The record of the past twenty years shows which strategies have been most effectively utilized to address women’s needs regarding rape. Instead of getting trapped in the pitfalls of vigilante groups or attacks on individual rapists, most women’s rights supporters have employed united action campaigns against those institutions in our society which encourage and perpetuate the abuse of women. Instead of relying on the police for protection, women have indicted the police for their sexist practices and increasingly learned how to protect themselves. This has helped undercut the traditional police tactic of using rape as an excuse to harass oppressed minorities (as happened to Black men at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973)—but the charge of rape remains a tool for the police as shown by the frame-up of Socialist Workers Party member Mark Curtis. (See articles in past issues of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.)

The Fight Continues

The battles waged and gains won over the past 20 years provide a foundation for the continuing struggle against rape and its consequences. Socialist activists can strengthen efforts to win the key demands posed to date. Socialists involved in labor unions can help initiate women’s rights committees and programs dealing with sexual harassment and rape problems in the workplace. Socialists on campus can help mobilize women and their allies in campaigns to make schools and colleges places where women will not be limited by fears of being attacked. In all of their activities, socialists can explain the vital connections between specific battles—such as a fight to gain free medical treatment for rape victims—and the working class struggle to replace capitalist exploitation and violence with a new kind of society based on cooperation and concern for the needs of all persons. ●

For a Constituent Assembly

Statement of the Revolutionary Socialist Party

Chilean Section of the Fourth International

In 1970 Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile with the support of Popular Unity (PU), an electoral coalition of socialists, communists, and other parties of the left and center. Allende and the PU tried to lead the country toward economic development and independence from the imperialists. They aimed to transform the system through nationalization of the holdings of the multinational corporations such as Anaconda and Kennecott, owners of the copper mines (the main material resource of the country), ITT, Citibank, etc.; and redistribution of the land (with payment to the landowners). All the reforms were to be made within the framework of the 1925 Constitution and the laws of the country. The answer of the bourgeoisie as a whole, national and international (with the direct intervention of the CIA on the part of the United States), was a military coup in 1973. It overthrew the government, killed Allende and thousands of workers and students, jailed thousands more, and forced over a million people into exile. A military junta headed by General Augusto Pinochet, commander in chief under the Allende government, reversed the measures taken by the PU (the copper mines remain nationalized with compensation paid to the foreign owners), and annulled the 1925 Constitution.

The dictatorship drafted a new Constitution which was approved in a controlled plebiscite in 1980. This Constitution deprived the workers of almost all of their rights and gave the capitalists unlimited freedom to exploit both the natural and human resources of the country. In an October 1988 plebiscite Pinochet was decisively defeated in his bid to continue his presidency for another eight years. This victory for the democratic forces propelled them onto the political scene. Presidential and congressional elections to replace the Pinochet government are to be held in December 1989. The Alliance for Democracy (Concertación por la Democracia), made up of center and left-of-center political parties, comprises the democratic opposition today. This Alliance, instead of rejecting the 1980 Constitution, worked out an agreement on amendments to it which were submitted to a plebiscite in July 1989 and were adopted. The Revolutionary Socialist Party issued the following statement preceding the plebiscite. Translation for Bulletin in Defense of Marxism by Sarah Lovell.

No to the Fraudulent 1980 Constitution!
No to the Sham Reforms!
For a Constituent Assembly!

A terrible crime has been committed against the democratic rights of the exploited classes. The so-called Alliance for Democracy has made a deal with the government and the political right on reforms to the 1980 Constitution that will be submitted to plebiscite July 30.

The bourgeois and reformist parties of this Alliance have capitulated shamefully. They have given up the demand to repeal the Constitution, which was fraudulently imposed in 1980, accepting slight changes that essentially leave its anti-democratic provisions intact.

In order to justify their betrayal, the parties of the opposition argue that "even though the current proposal with its well-known limitations will not guarantee full democracy, reforms are a step forward and facilitate the transition to a democratic regime to be headed by a new government in March 1990." Some of them contend that this "will be the first step to change the Constitution in the coming Parliament and make it democratic."

It's enough to analyze some aspects of the agreement to show how false these contentions are. They boast about the repeal of Article 8 which stated that parties advocating violence or ideas based on the class struggle were in violation of the Constitution. But Article 19 establishes the uncon-

stitutionality of organizations "whose objectives, acts, or conduct do not respect the basic principles of the democratic constitutional regime. . . ." Moreover, it does not eliminate the provision that prohibits the association of people who are said to oppose so-called public order and security of the state. In other words, those parties whose goal is the revolutionary change of the bourgeois regime are placed outside the law.

The dominant role of the armed forces is maintained. The National Security Council, consisting of three commanders of the armed forces, the chief of police, the president of the Republic, the presidents of the Senate and Supreme Court, the attorney general, is intact. The role of the council is to advise the president of the Republic, the Congress, and the Constitutional Tribunal as to what, in its opinion, is a threat to the state's institutions. Taking into account the class interests of this council, its power constitutes a grave menace to the workers, the popular movements, and their parties.

The proposed reforms regulate the appointment, promotion, and retirement of officials of the armed forces and police by constitutional law, which according to the current Constitution is done by simple legislation. This would make it more difficult to modify these regulations, increasing the independence and authority of the armed forces.

It establishes rules that would make new reforms to the Constitution difficult. In order to effect any change a two-thirds vote of Parliament is required, which is difficult to

achieve considering the fact that the electoral laws brazenly favor Pinochet supporters. And there are provisions that permit the commander in chief and head of police to remain in office until 1998.

In conclusion, the constitutional reforms to be submitted in the plebiscite neither signal a transition to full democracy nor facilitate future changes.

Mr. Aylwin, spokesman of the Alliance and its certain presidential candidate, reiterates a pledge to National Renovation that he will study the new amendments and introduce them in the next Parliament. He pretends to ignore the fact that Sergio Jarpa* clearly indicated the aim of National Renovation when he stated: "If we leave the Constitution as it is now, it will be much more vulnerable than it would be with our proposed amendments. If there is no reform, the Constitution is left with a big hole through which the next president, by means of veto of the introduced changes, could then produce reforms to the Constitution by simple majority vote." And further: "If there is no reform now, the matter will become an electoral issue, and positions will be polarized for or against the Constitution. This means that those who are opposed to the reforms will try to change them in the coming Congress and who knows where this road would lead."

We cannot forget that Jarpa, as Pinochet's minister of the interior, was the one who sent 18,000 troops into the streets to bloodily suppress the 1983 protest and who tricked the leading oppositionists into demobilizing the people.

Whom does Señor Aylwin think he's fooling? While the parties of the Alliance for Democracy bow before the government, the government continues its attacks. It has banished two leaders of the CUT [Workers Unitarian Confederation] and persists in prosecuting three others; it is trying to incarcerate a member of the Communist Party who is an ex-member of Parliament. It promotes the privatization of state enterprises. Most serious is the constant threat of a new military coup. Nothing has changed in the repressive and antidemocratic conduct of the government.

In order to carry out its betrayal, the opposition hides its maneuvers from the popular masses. These are the masses who, in the combative days of protest of May 1983, compelled the dictatorship to open a safety valve allowing the emergence of the opposition parties, a concession won at the cost of tens of protesters assassinated or wounded, of hundreds detained, and of countless numbers of shan-

tytowns searched by the troops. These are the same masses whose NO vote in the October 1988 plebiscite dealt a blow to the regime and opened up a new political situation. Now the bourgeois and reformist oppositionists disregard the interests, opinions, and wishes of the exploited, thanks to whom they are now able to appear on the scene.

The workers, together with all the oppressed, are the ones who should determine the future of society. They are the majority of the country. They are the ones who produce the nation's wealth. They have been the chief victims of the dictatorship. They are the ones who, through their political struggles, have changed the political situation.

The working class and all the exploited should mobilize and demand the convening of a Constituent Assembly to study, propose, and approve a new Constitution that really expresses the democratic rights of the exploited. The popular mass base should agree on the central line to be defended by its representatives at the Constituent Assembly. The opposition bloc did not consult the people about the reforms to be submitted to plebiscite. The proposed reforms leave untouched the essence of the antidemocratic repressive provisions in the Constitution and in effect legitimize the institutions imposed by the dictatorship. The exploited should repudiate the alternatives that have been placed in the plebiscite.

They should express their own alternative on the ballot, their firm resolution to fight for a Constituent Assembly, manifesting this decision in their vote and in future mobilizations. Let's build from today, from the base to the top, Committees for a Constituent Assembly. With the same resolution with which we raise our proletarian banners and our demands, let's engrave on the ballot: *For a Constituent Assembly!*

Repudiate the capitulation of the bourgeois and reformist parties of the opposition!

Reject the alternatives in the plebiscite!

Take real steps in defense of democratic rights!

Carry out the decisions of the ranks!

Fight for a Constituent Assembly!

Mark your ballot: *For a Constituent Assembly!*

THE LIBERATION OF THE WORKERS IS THE TASK OF THE WORKERS THEMSELVES!

Santiago, June 1989

*Sergio Onofre Jarpa, former senator and minister of interior, is a leader of the largest right-of-center party, National Renovation. Patricio Aylwin, a Christian Democrat, is supported in his presidential candidacy by two electoral blocs. One consists of his party, smaller centrist groups, and a social democratic group. The bloc of left parties, including the Communist Party, supports Aylwin on the basis that the transition from military to civilian rule will be easier under someone with a moderate image.

Democracy and the Bolshevik Revolution

by Paul Le Blanc

In February/March 1917, the Russian monarchy was overthrown in a spontaneous mass upsurge of the Russian working class, protesting against the terrible slaughter and hardships of World War I, and also against shortages of bread and of democratic rights imposed by the policies of the prowar tsarist regime. Over the next few months a coalition government of procapitalist liberals and moderate socialists ruled the country through a Provisional Government, which existed with the support of democratic councils — the Russian word was *soviets* — of workers and soldiers (largely from peasant backgrounds). Yet the Provisional Government failed to bring peace, solve economic difficulties pressing down on the workers, or carry out the land reform desired by the vast Russian peasantry. In October/November the Bolshevik party led an insurrection to overturn the Provisional Government, under the slogans of “peace, bread, land” and “all power to the Soviets!”

Because of the violent assaults and hostile pressures of capitalist governments around the world, and the foreign-supported counterrevolutionary armies which waged a brutal civil war against the Bolsheviks in Russia's Soviet Republic, democratic political forms gave way to authoritarian policies under the Bolshevik regime. Against the resistance of many leading Bolsheviks, this regime was gradually transformed into a hardened bureaucratic dictatorship over the working people of Russia. Now, however, developments in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics seem to indicate that a new transformation is in process, raising questions about the meaning of the Bolshevik Revolution for our own time.

The Capitalist Offensive

In the recent elections in the USSR, despite serious limitations imposed by the bureaucratic elite, there was a significant degree of free expression, pluralism, and opportunity for voters to express their will and make meaningful choices. People throughout the world were presented with an image which has caused many to hope that this workers' state might become a genuine socialist democracy. Such an image undermines support for the Cold War policies in the West and also has a subversive potential especially among working people. Perhaps a nationalized, planned economy could really be consistent with human rights and democracy, which would mean that working class rule and genuine socialism are actually possible. To the extent that working people in such countries as the United States come to believe that, the possibilities for a mass socialist movement are enhanced, and—if it is believed that this is what the Russian revolutionaries of 1917 had been aiming for all

along — the example of the Bolshevik Revolution seems more inspiring.

The capitalists and their ideological spokespeople have done much to counteract such subversive impact of the “democratization” process in the USSR. One key element of their ideological counterattack is that the “market reforms” being implemented and proposed in the USSR demonstrate that capitalism is superior to a socially owned, planned economy, that the USSR is moving toward capitalism and must eventually “go all the way” in order to overcome its economic difficulties. The recent study by Catherine Samary, *Plan, Market and Democracy*, highlights the flaws in this line of thought.¹

But another key element in the bourgeois offensive is embedded in the claim that what happened this year in the USSR involved “the freest elections since 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power and established their dictatorship.” That is to say, not only market reforms but also moves toward democracy represent a turning-away from the “hardline” revolutionary orientation of Bolshevism. There is more to be said about early Bolshevik economic policies. Here it is necessary to deal with the lie that the Bolshevik Revolution was undemocratic. The fact is that the criticism made of the Bolsheviks at the time was that they were “too democratic,” exciting “utopian expectations” of self-rule among the “ignorant” Russian masses. Certainly the pronouncements of the acknowledged leader of the Bolshevik party, V.I. Lenin, even in polemics with his comrades, were uncompromisingly democratic in the period leading up to the 1917 revolution.

Lenin's Words

The Leninist orientation to the relationship of democracy and socialist revolution is aptly summed up in the following passage from Lenin's article of November 1915, “The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination.” It is worth quoting at length not only because it illuminates the political outlook of Bolshevism, but also because of its continued relevance for revolutionary socialists of today:

The proletariat cannot be victorious except through democracy, i.e., by introducing complete democracy and by combining every step of its struggle with democratic demands formulated in the most determined manner. It is absurd to contrast the socialist revolution and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with *one* of the questions of democracy, in this case, the national question. We must *combine* the revolutionary struggle against capitalism with a revolutionary program and revolutionary tactics relative to *all* democratic demands: a republic, a militia, election of

officials by the people, equal rights for women, self-determination of nations, etc. While capitalism exists, these demands can be achieved only in exceptional cases, and in an incomplete, distorted form. Basing ourselves on democracy, as already achieved, exposing its incompleteness under capitalism, we demand the overthrow of capitalism, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as a necessary basis both for the abolition of the poverty of the masses and for the *complete* and *all-sided* achievement of *all* democratic reforms. Some of these reforms will be started before the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, others *in the process* of this overthrow, and still others after it. The social revolution is not a single battle, but represents a whole epoch of numerous battles around all the problems of economic and democratic reforms, which can be consummated only by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It is for the sake of this final aim that we must formulate *every one* of our democratic demands in a consistently revolutionary manner. It is quite conceivable that the workers of a certain country may overthrow the bourgeoisie *before* even one fundamental democratic reform has been accomplished in full. It is entirely inconceivable, however, that the proletariat, as a historical class, will be able to defeat the bourgeoisie if it is not prepared for this task by being educated in the spirit of the most consistent and determinedly revolutionary democracy.²

This orientation has been central to the strategy and tactics of revolutionary socialism. On the other hand, many critics of the Bolshevik Revolution claim that it has little relevance to actual events in Russia in the autumn of 1917.

Sidney Hook's Words

The Bolshevik insurrection is often described not as a popular uprising but as the destruction of Russian democracy. One of the foremost proponents of this analysis over the past fifty years has been the noted political philosopher Sidney Hook. It's worth noting that Hook was once a revolutionary-minded partisan of Marxism, part of the Communist movement in the 1920s and early '30s, then close to Trotskyism for several years. Like many ex-Communists, however, he came to forget much that he once knew and to despise what he once believed in. Moving away from revolutionary commitments while advancing his career as an influential academic and well-known intellectual figure, he renounced revolutionary socialism in favor of a very pale variant of "democratic socialism." Hook soon became a virulent anti-Communist, red-baiter, and supporter of U.S. imperialism — ultimately reconciling his own brand of "socialism" with support for such political figures as Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Not surprisingly, he became one of the most consistent and influential denigrators of the Bolshevik Revolution, identifying and in many cases personally befriending various Russian opponents of Bolshevism who had emigrated to the United States.³ A critical examination of Sidney Hook's version of the Russian Revolution helps to demonstrate the poverty of the anti-Bolshevik account.

The Provisional Government which came to power after the overthrow of tsarism, under Alexander Kerensky, "made Russia one of the freest countries in the world at the time," in Hook's words. Hook has noted how Kerensky himself later acknowledged "errors of judgment," the first of which involved "not taking more effective action to repress the insurrectionary potential of the Bolsheviks in July [1917]." Expanding upon his theme in a letter to the August 20, 1988, issue of the *New York Times*, Hook argued, "the elections to the All Russian Constituent Assembly, for which the Bolsheviks agitated under Kerensky's regime, were held in January 1918 after the Bolsheviks seized power. It was the nearest thing to a free and democratic election ever held in Russia from 1917 to the present day. The Bolsheviks received less than 25 percent of the vote (their count), and forcibly dissolved the Constituent Assembly." He added: "Even Rosa Luxemburg—in a German jail—condemned Lenin's action as a betrayal of democratic socialism."

The Real Dynamic of the Russian Revolution

The common counterposition of Luxemburg to Lenin doesn't hold up to analysis. While voicing criticisms of certain Bolshevik tactics, she argued: "the Bolsheviks, though they were at the beginning of the revolution a persecuted, slandered and hunted minority attacked on all sides, arrived within the shortest time to the head of the revolution and were able to bring under their banner all the genuine masses of the people; the urban proletariat, the army, the peasants, as well as the revolutionary elements of democracy, the left wing of the Socialist Revolutionaries." This has been corroborated by non-Bolshevik eyewitnesses, such as Raphael Abramovitch (whose history *The Soviet Revolution*, published in 1962, contains a laudatory introduction by Sidney Hook). According to Abramovitch, a prominent Menshevik leader, "the February bloc" of moderate socialists and bourgeois liberals quickly disintegrated during the spring of 1917 "while Bolshevism received another powerful impetus. The masses were tired of the appeals for patience and self-control which were being made by the leaders of the socialist parties [i.e., the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries supporting the Kerensky regime]; they were looking elsewhere for guidance, and the influence of extremist groups was everywhere on the increase." By October "the balance of forces within the all-important Soviets had shifted radically. One Soviet after another was slipping out of the control of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks and into the hands of the Bolsheviks and their allies, the Left Social-Revolutionaries." Abramovitch added: "Among the workers in Petrograd, the atmosphere was becoming increasingly tense as the second congress of Soviets approached. Bolshevik slogans were winning support in most of the large factories. . . . The same was true in many plants in Moscow and other industrial centers." Asserting that "the country, as a whole, was not nearly so uniform," Abramovitch admitted that "nevertheless, the trend in October was unmistakable," mentioning growing radicalization among the peasants and soldiers. "The Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks were aware that the rising tide of political and social discontent was carrying the Bol-

shevik Party toward victory.” Another Menshevik, N. N. Sukhanov, several years after 1917, protested that the Bolshevik Revolution was “being slandered as a military rising and almost a palace coup,” elaborating: “Did the Petrograd proletariat sympathize or did it not with the organizers of the October insurrection? . . . There are no two answers here. Yes, the Bolsheviks acted on the mandate of the Petrograd workers and soldiers.”⁴

‘Democracy’ Against the Bolsheviks

The sweeping reforms which the workers and peasants had originally thought Kerensky represented “remained unimplemented,” as Sidney Hook acknowledges, largely because Kerensky’s foremost commitment was to “the Allied and United States Governments, which urged Kerensky not to slacken the war effort.” Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, a British diplomatic agent in Russia at the time, later recalled that the primary goal of the Allied diplomats was “to cajole or bully Russia into continuing the war.”⁵

There is also need to qualify Hook’s assertion that Kerensky’s government was the freest in the world. After the militant July demonstrations against the war and for implementation of the sweeping social reforms promised by the revolution, a fierce repression was unleashed. “Troops of officers, students, Cossacks,” recounts Left SR Isaac Steinberg, “came out on the streets, searched passers-by for weapons and evidence of ‘Bolshevism,’ committed atrocities.” The Bolshevik party became illegal, its headquarters was raided and wrecked, its leaders and most visible militants were arrested or driven underground. What more should have been done to, as Kerensky and Hook put it, “repress the insurrectionary potential of the Bolsheviks”? The U.S. ambassador to Russia, David Francis, may provide a clue in his memoirs *Russia From the American Embassy*, in which—over and over—he complains bitterly (and asserts that he complained similarly to the Provisional Government at the time) that “Lenin and Trotsky and their fellow conspirators had not been shot as traitors as they should have been,” that “had the Provisional Government at this time arraigned Lenin and Trotsky and the other Bolshevik leaders, tried them for treason and executed them, Russia probably would not have been compelled to go through another revolution,” that a primary reason why Kerensky failed was that “twice in the brief tenure of his power he blundered fatally; first, when after the attempted revolution of July, he failed to execute as traitors, Lenin and Trotsky. Second, when during the Kornilov episode, he failed to conciliate General Kornilov [a right-wing military man who Kerensky initially elevated but who then attempted a coup] and instead turned to the Council of Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Deputies and distributed arms and ammunition among the workingmen of Petrograd [to help defeat the Kornilov coup]. By this singularly inept stroke he alienated his own army and armed his enemies.”⁶ Of course, what all of this suggests is that it would have been exceedingly difficult to defeat Bolshevism without suppressing democracy, just as it was exceedingly difficult to realize the desires and goals of the masses of workers and peasants without breaking with the domestic and international bourgeoisie and

fundamentally radicalizing the revolution—which was the Bolshevik program.

The Meaning of the Constituent Assembly

There remains Hook’s point about the Constituent Assembly. One point that should be made is that the 25 percent of the vote which went to the Bolsheviks included the great majority of the Russian working class. This was, however, a minority class in Russia at the time. The great majority of the peasant votes went to the candidate lists of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries, approximately 58 percent of the total vote in the country. In his 1918 work, *From October to Brest-Litovsk*, Trotsky explained that “numerically, the principal revolutionary party . . . was the party of Social-Revolutionists,” of which Kerensky was formally a member but the larger portion of which had split away to support the Bolshevik insurrection. The SR list of candidates for the Constituent Assembly was destined to win majority support in the countryside, but “since these lists were made up two or three months before the October revolution and were not subject to change, the Left and Right Social Revolutionists still figured in these lists as one and the same party.” The result was bizarre: “by the time of the October revolution—that is, the period when the Right Social Revolutionists were arresting the Left and then the Left were combining with the Bolsheviks for the overthrow of Kerensky’s ministry, the old lists remained in full force; and in the elections for the Constituent Assembly the peasants were compelled to vote for lists of names at the head of which stood Kerensky, followed by those of Left Social Revolutionists who participated in the plot for his overthrow.”⁷

As it turned out, a majority of candidates on the lists drawn up for the SRs had been Right SRs, who had lost majority support of the membership; what’s more, the Bolshevik-Left SR coalition was in favor of immediate implementation of the land reform which the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries had traditionally favored (which is why the peasant majority was voting SR), although the Right SRs had opposed such implementation until “later.” In short, the meaning of the Constituent Assembly elections was far from being the repudiation of Bolshevism that Hook’s letter suggests.

What of the judgment of Rosa Luxemburg? Her position, in fact, was quite different from that which Hook attributes to her. She quotes at length from Trotsky’s work cited here and then writes: “All of this is very fine and quite convincing.” And she goes on to *agree* with the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly but then proposes a different course of action than that taken by the Bolsheviks and their allies. Here is how she put it: “Since the Constituent Assembly was elected long before the decisive turning point, the October Revolution, and its composition reflected the picture of the vanished past and not of the new state of affairs, then it follows automatically that the outgrown and stillborn Constituent Assembly should have been annulled, and without delay, new elections to a new Constituent Assembly should have been arranged.” This may be a serious criticism, but it is not, as Hook would have it, a condemnation of “Lenin’s action as a betrayal of democratic socialism.” In fact, she concludes her polemic by asserting that, whatever her

criticisms, "the Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of the historical possibilities," adding: "In the present period, when we face decisive final struggles in all the world, the most important problem of socialism was and is the burning question of our time. It is not a matter of this or that secondary question of tactics, but of the capacity for action of the proletariat, the strength to act, the will to power of socialism as such. In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the *first*, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world."⁸

Even though not the condemnation of a betrayal, the secondary tactical criticism offered by Luxemburg is not without importance. The fact remains that many revolutionaries in Russia, while remaining committed to socialist democracy, did not see the Constituent Assembly as the best form through which that could be realized. "In the era which we are now entering the old standards no longer suffice," proclaimed the Left SR Maria Spiridonova. "Until recently the phrase Constituent Assembly spelt revolution. It is only recently, when the character of the revolution has made itself more and more clearly felt, that parliamentary illusions began to be dispelled from our minds. It is the people themselves, not parliaments, that can bring about the social release of man. Yes, when the people discovers the secret of its own power, when it recognizes the Soviets as its best social stronghold, let it then proclaim a *real* national assembly. Let that national assembly be the only one invested with legislative and executive functions."⁹ In the opinion of Bolsheviks, Left SRs, even some Mensheviks, not to mention a majority of the Russian working class, the Soviets were to be the framework within which genuine democracy would be realized.

Back to Lenin

The proclamation which Lenin issued immediately after the overthrow of the Provisional Government gives a sense of the revolution's actual character:

Comrades workers, soldiers, peasants — all toilers!

The Workers' and Peasants' Revolution has won at Petrograd, at Moscow. . . . From the Front and the villages arrive every day, every hour, greetings to the new Government. . . . The victory of the Revolution . . . is assured, seeing that it is sustained by the majority of the people. . . .

Comrades workers! Remember that you yourselves direct the Government. No one will help you unless you organize yourselves and take into your own hands the affairs of the State. Your Soviets are now the organs of governmental power. . . .

Comrades workers, soldiers, peasants — all toilers!

Take immediately all local power into your hands. . . . Little by little, with the consent of the majority of peasants, we shall march firmly and unhesitatingly toward the victory of Socialism, which will fortify the advance-guards of the working class of the most civilized countries, and give to the peoples an enduring peace, and free them from every slavery and every exploitation.¹⁰

This is the goal that the Bolsheviks, and the masses of working people who rallied to the banner of the Bolshevik Revolution, fought for. Many years after the defeat of the Soviet working class at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it remains the way forward for working people of the USSR. And it remains the way forward for working people of all countries. ●

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Plan, Market and Democracy—the experience of the so-called socialist countries by Catherine Samary

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The following interview appeared in the USSR during August 1989, in issue No. 33 of *Cobesednik*, "the weekly illustrated supplement" of the mass daily, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the Young Communist League newspaper. "N.S." stands for Nikita Sibilev, who conducted this interview. References to Lenin's *Collected Works* are for the Russian edition. Translated for *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

TROTSKY: On the Road to the Truth About Him

In 1926, at a session of the Politburo Trotsky called Stalin: "Gravedigger of the revolution!" But the days of Trotsky's political career in his homeland were already numbered. He would soon be removed from all posts and expelled from the party. In 1929, he was expelled from the USSR and in 1940 he perished at the hand of an assassin. For many Soviet people his name is invariably combined with the definition "enemy." Until the recent period, the activity of Trotsky was assessed exclusively in a negative context. Only recently have we begun to see articles whose authors acknowledge that Trotsky was not devoid of talent as an organizer, an orator, and a publicist — and that he had some merits.

Leningrad historian Vladimir Billik disagrees with such a conservative approach to this question.

The speeches of this scholar before widely varying audiences, as well as on Leningrad television, have attracted our attention to his position.

Not all of V.I. Billik's arguments seem convincing to us and many of his conclusions are debatable. But we still believe he should be allowed to express his point of view in the pages of a weekly publication. This is all the more true as his remarks concern a personality who even today is provoking bitter arguments among the youth. We hope that both the specialists and ordinary readers will join in this discussion.

* * * * *

N.S. — It is known that you wrote to the CC of the CPSU [Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] and have spoken out publicly about the need to reexamine our view of Leon Trotsky. What are your reasons for saying this?

V.I.B. — Common sense and the facts generally known in the 1920s but now "forgotten," which one can easily verify on the basis of published stenographic records of party congresses and conferences, congresses of Soviets, and the publications of that period. In addition, I believe that in the enormous ideological-political legacy of Trotsky there is much that is extremely relevant for making decisions with respect to our tasks even today.

N.S. — I am not sure I understand what you are including in this instance in the concept "common sense."

V.I.B. — Common sense compels us to acknowledge that a man who could be assigned such key posts as Trotsky occupied during the years the revolution was fighting for its life must have been devoted to the revolution's ideals, and must have been able to successfully carry out his duties. Besides, in the 1920s, the formula "Lenin and Trotsky" — signifying that Trotsky was the most significant, authoritative, and

popular among Lenin's collaborators — was well known to the revolution's friends as well as to its enemies.

But this true face of Trotsky has, until now, been hidden from subsequent generations. His name has for decades been linked with so many unfounded charges that it has become a negative term for many people. The stereotype of him as a self-centered demagogue, an egotistical opportunist, and opponent of Lenin, has been firmly established in the everyday mind.

People of varying philosophical views in other countries have written many thousands of books and articles about Trotsky. Even those who could hardly be suspected of socialist sympathies consider Trotsky one of the most brilliant revolutionaries, political figures, and publicists of the first decades of the twentieth century. At the same time, in a letter I received in June of this year, American Sovietologist and publisher of a series of Trotsky's works Yu. Felshtinsky justly says: "They have lied so much about Trotsky that he has become an extremely enigmatic figure. Essentially, today, no one understands who Trotsky was. And this applies equally to those who love him and to those who hate him. . . ."

N.S. — Yes, we have raised a difficult theme.

V.I.B. — Common sense would say that the numerous books and articles of Trotsky's that were published in the USSR in the 1920s and which enjoyed enormous popularity at that time cannot but be of interest to us. I remember it well; I read much of it myself and discussed it with my comrades. And today certain works by Trotsky remain strikingly topical. For example, his opinion about the extremely long road to socialism.

Trotsky was the most consistent fighter against the pseudo-Marxist system that was being built in this country — the dictatorship of Stalin. But (what an irony of history!) if, in the face of bloody repression, a person undertakes to fight against the myth that all of this was a result of "objective necessity," then that person — Stalin's main and most persistent opponent — is blamed for being the obstacle to the unmasking of Stalin, is charged with extremism, adherence to the ideas of barracks socialism, etc.

N.S. — But when I was in school I heard, for example, that Trotsky developed the idea of "an army of labor," according to which the entire adult population had to be involved in compulsory labor. Was this true?

V.I.B. — The work armies arose in January 1920 but not under Trotsky's initiative. Lenin also immediately supported this approach (*Collected Works*, Vol. 46, p. 116) and later spoke out repeatedly in favor of work armies. And within the work armies themselves, many believed in the need for them.

What charges have they not raised against Trotsky?! The leaflets of the society "Pamyat,"¹ for example, contend that it was Trotsky's idea to curtail the anti-alcohol campaign, that he allegedly aspired to dissipate the population on drink. What can I say in response? In fact, in 1926, Trotsky said: "If we do not repulse the alcoholism offensive, beginning with the cities, then we lose both socialism and the October revolution to the bottle. . . . Nothing so much threatens the physical and moral health of the new generation of the working class as alcohol. . . . The fundamental means for this struggle is to raise the cultural level of the masses themselves and create within it a basic structure for a militant collective effort to struggle against alcoholism." As a matter of fact, it was Stalin (who unlike Trotsky regularly consumed alcohol) who opened the vodka sluices in the USSR.

N.S.— General D. Volkogonov contends that Trotsky exaggerated his own contribution to the building of the Red Army.

V.I.B.— Charges of that type were not even raised against Trotsky when he was relieved of his post as People's Commissar of Army and Naval Affairs in 1925. And one can understand why: In the 1920s, the actual role of the chairman of the Revolutionary-Military Council in the building of the armed forces was too well known for such a charge to have been raised. In the first edition of his essay "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin" (1924), Gorky recalled how Lenin said: "They are lying a great deal and particularly, it seems, about me and Trotsky." Banging his hand on the table, he said: "But can you show me another man capable in one year of organizing a virtually model army, and also of winning the respect of military specialists. We have such a man. . . ." Lenin was, naturally, referring to Trotsky.

Even in the 1920s, Trotsky devoted serious attention to establishing among army personnel relationships based on mutual respect, and he was concerned about a soldier's personal and civic dignity. Take, for example, his short article "'Ty' and 'By' in the Red Army" that was published in July 1922 in *Izvestia*. What was Trotsky speaking against in this article? Against the humiliation of a soldier that occurs when an officer addresses a subordinate using the familiar form of address "Ty" while the latter is expected to address the officer with the respectful form "By." "Some may think this matter a trifle," wrote Trotsky. "But that's not true! Red Army soldiers must respect others as well as themselves. Respect for human dignity is the most important element in the cohesion of the Red Army."

N.S.— How do you answer those who charge Trotsky with excessive cruelty in the years of the civil war, and contend

that injustices were allowed against certain individuals who were shot on his orders during the war?

V.I.B.— Every such charge must be carefully checked, this includes verification of the authenticity of each individual document. But even if one or another fact is confirmed, we will not forget: there was a civil war going on. A regular army had to be created from ruins, and overcome the resistance offered by the supporters of the partisan forces and those opposed to the utilization of military specialists.

Those who "have tried to slander Comrade Trotsky" by charging excessive cruelty were rebuffed by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin himself. See what he said in 1920 at the First Congress of Working Cossacks (*CW*, Vol. 40, p. 178).

N.S.— Everything that you have said is extremely curious. But all the same, somehow it is hard to get into my head that Lenin could have defended Trotsky.

V.I.B.— And it is hard for me to comprehend what you have just said.

N.S.— However, you will not deny that even in the pre-revolutionary period there were serious disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky.

V.I.B.— These disagreements, in my view, are not so significant when viewed in a historic perspective. That includes the question of permanent revolution that was constantly blown out of proportion (after Lenin's death). By the way, after 1916, Lenin himself never brought up the issue.

At the Second Congress of the RSDLP [Russian Social Democratic Labor Party] in 1903, Lenin and Trotsky were in agreement during the discussion of the program of the party. Moreover, at that time Trotsky was even called "Lenin's cudgel." They parted ways only when the discussion of the statutes was begun. Trotsky refused to support Lenin's proposed version of point 1, which stipulated that every party member must be involved in the work of one of the party's organizations. He explained his refusal by the fact that enforcing this demand would require that the party apparatus have peculiar and unusual power over the rest of the party members. This conceals within itself the danger of an extraordinary strengthening of the role of the apparatus, and ultimately the possibility of the appearance of a single dictator. True, while Lenin led the party, this did not take place, that is, when Lenin was in the leadership. Until 1917, Trotsky occupied a centrist position in the Social Democratic party, for which he was actually often criticized by Lenin. But at the same time, they collaborated on specific problems, particularly during the first Russian revolution, when Trotsky (on the front lines 1905-06) headed the Petersburg Soviet of Workers Deputies. Several of Trotsky's works were printed in journals that were under Lenin's direction. Then came 1917. At the Sixth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolshevik) a "merger" took place (as Lenin termed it) of the group Internationalists—"Mezhraiontsev"—of which Trotsky was a member—with the Bolsheviks. Moreover, in the elections to the party's CC Trotsky received 131 of 134 votes. The Sixth Congress, at which neither Lenin nor Trotsky could be present but which elected them honorary chairpersons, for all intents and purposes marked an end to the disputes that had existed previously. In the autumn of 1917, Lenin referred approvingly to Trotsky's internationalist position and remarked that

Trotsky's Exposé of Stalin Reprinted in USSR

As we were approaching press time, we received a copy of an article from the Soviet newspaper *Voprosy Istorii*, July 1989. The introduction states that the article reprints "significant sections" of Leon Trotsky's *Stalin School of Falsification*.

Trotsky “in the difficult July days proved himself up to the task and a devoted supporter of the party of the revolutionary proletariat.” The facts prove—and this is important—that immediately after the overthrow of the autocracy, the points of view of both these political leaders on the tasks and the possibilities for the further development of the Russian Revolution were the same.

N.S.—Well, all right. But what about the arguments between Lenin and Trotsky during the October days of 1917 when the issue was setting the time for the uprising? Didn't they have disagreements on this?

V.I.B.—Yes, they did. And this is a theme that has been the most exploited by historians and publicists. However, these historians have remained silent about certain facts, whose essence is this: Lenin, as is well known, insisted on the need to overthrow the Provisional Government before the upcoming congress of Soviets. Trotsky, on the other hand, who was preparing for the Petrograd garrison to switch over to the side of the Bolsheviks, “stretched” it, as did several other members of the CC, until the congress. It is interesting that even the notorious “Short Course”² did not criticize Trotsky for this.

N.S.—And how do you explain that?

V.I.B.—By the fact that in October 1917, Stalin was among those who supported delaying the uprising. And in 1920, on the occasion of Lenin's 50th birthday, in a speech devoted to only one question—self-criticism of the leadership—Stalin said: “And despite all Lenin's demands, we did not listen to him . . . and waited until the congress of Soviets. Ilyich was by then already in Petrograd. Smiling, and giving us a cunning look, he said: “Yes, perhaps you were right.”

Trotsky, in his article “Can a Revolution or a Counter-revolution Be Made on Schedule?” published in *Pravda* in September 1923, explained that the uprising was put off “ten days because the course of the preparations—agitational and organizational—confirmed that to carry out an uprising independently of the congress of Soviets would sow confusion among significant layers of the working class who associated the idea of the seizure of power with the Soviets and not with the party and its secret organizations. On the other hand, it had become abundantly clear that the bourgeoisie was already too demoralized to manage in a two- or three-week period to prepare a serious rebuff.”

N.S.—But what about the disagreements between Trotsky and Lenin after October at the time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations with the Germans and during the discussions about trade unions?

V.I.B.—Around the Brest talks, Lenin had arguments not so much with Trotsky as with Bukharin and other “left communists”—the supporters of revolutionary war. There was also strong resistance to a concessionary, one-sided peace from the ranks. A not unfounded fear was prevalent that a hasty peace would weaken the revolutionary upsurge in the West. The prolonging of the talks and the formula “we are not ending the war and we are not concluding a peace, we are demobilizing the army” was accepted by the Bolshevik CC (see “Minutes of the CC of the RSDLP(B), August 1917-February 1918,” Moscow 1958, p. 173). The disagreements in connection with the Brest talks and the

trade union discussion require individual study with due account taken of the position of Trotsky in his writings.

Trotsky's position at the Tenth Party Congress that the turn to the New Economic Policy (NEP) made necessary in the immediate future a reexamination of the party's resolution on the trade unions was adopted. His arguments concerning the well-known “shake-up” and about the course of the discussion as a whole deserve attention, and his idea of democratization of production seems to me extremely relevant even today. The main point in my view is that all the disagreements between Trotsky and Lenin after 1917 taken together have microscopic significance in comparison with the questions upon which these two individuals were united during that time.

N.S.—But how did Trotsky react to NEP?

V.I.B.—Why do you think he only reacted to NEP? Trotsky energetically cultivated the New Economic Policy. Do you know that even a year before the Kronstadt rebellion, which by the way was the final impetus toward NEP, Trotsky—alone in the Politburo, proposed a repudiation of the policy of war communism on the food question. But he did not find the needed support at that time. Trotsky felt it necessary to replace the surplus appropriation system with a progressive tax in kind, to eliminate wage-leveling.

After the Tenth Party Congress, as is well known, NEP was instituted. In November 1922, Lenin writes: “I direct those who do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the question of our New Economic Policy to Comrade Trotsky's speech and mine devoted to this question at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International.” Ten days later, Vladimir Ilyich addresses Trotsky: “I read your theses concerning NEP and I find them in general very good, and individual formulations very apt, even if a small number of the points seem to me arguable. My advice for now would be to get them printed in the newspapers and later certainly to reprint them in a pamphlet.” It seems that such a pamphlet was never written. But in 1923, at the Twelfth Party Congress, Trotsky presented a brilliant report “On Industry” which, as is clear from the stenographic account, was received by the delegates with stormy and prolonged applause. The report presented a perspective for the development of industry in the years ahead. Its main point coincided with the thesis included in the resolution of the congress: “Only such industry can be triumphant which gives more than it consumes. Industry that lives at the expense of the budget, i.e., at the expense of agriculture, would not be able to create stable and long-term support for the proletarian dictatorship.”

N.S.—Well, was the writer Vasily Belov wrong then when he contended in *Pravda* that forced collectivization was borrowed by Stalin from Trotsky?

V.I.B.—Of course he was wrong. The press has already printed criticisms of Belov for his unfounded charges. The following is the essence of the matter: As early as February 1919, *Izvestia* printed “A letter to the middle-layer of the peasantry from the People's Commissar of Army and Naval Affairs” which was a reply to a letter from G. Gulov, a Red Army soldier who was disturbed by rumors about differences between Lenin and Trotsky on the peasant question in particular. Refuting these rumors, Trotsky wrote: “Soviet power is not forcing and does not intend to use violence to

force the middle-layer peasantry to shift to a communist means of agricultural management.”

And later, February 15 *Pravda* published Lenin’s “Answer to an inquiry from a peasant,” in which we read: “. . . I for my part fully affirm the statement of Comrade Trotsky. I have no differences at all with him. . . . Comrade Trotsky in his letter in detail and clearly explained why the Communist Party and the present-day workers’ and peasants’ government, chosen by the Soviets and belonging to this party, do not consider the middle-peasants their enemies. I endorse what Comrade Trotsky has said with both hands.”

N.S.—It turns out that the views of Lenin and Trotsky on economic construction in many ways coincided. But were there any differences between them after the turn toward NEP, 1921-23?

V.I.B.—In my opinion, they were of the same opinion on the majority of the principled questions of policy. At the Eleventh Party Congress—the last one Lenin attended—he, in his concluding comments, expressed solidarity with Trotsky eleven times! And later, being unable to attend the Central Committee sessions due to his illness, Lenin turned precisely to Trotsky for support for his positions. After he had already written his “Testament,” the sick Lenin—in one of his last two letters—appeals to Trotsky: “I would ask that you very urgently take on the defense of the Georgian affair in the party’s Central Committee. This affair is now being ‘prosecuted’ by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, and I cannot rely on their being dispassionate. Quite the opposite, in fact. If you would agree to undertake its defense, then I would be able to rest comfortably. . . .”

If you conduct a careful study of all the statements that Lenin made about Trotsky, you will see that they confirm the fact which has, for some reason, been “forgotten”: From 1917 to the end of his days, Lenin viewed Trotsky as his most reliable collaborator in the resolution of many of the most important problems of policy.

N.S.—Then how did it happen that from the end of 1923, Trotsky turned out to be an oppositionist?

V.I.B.—Do we today really know what actually took place in the last months of Lenin’s life?

In the works and letters of Lenin written not long before his death, his main concern is the need to struggle against the bureaucratization. The resolution unanimously adopted by the joint plenum of the CC and the Central Control Commission of December 5, 1923, spoke directly about the “observable bureaucratization of the party apparatus” and stated that the interests of the party “demand a serious change of the party’s course in the sense of a genuine and systematic application of the principles of workers’ democracy.” It is obvious that for some people (as subsequent events were to show), these were words and nothing more. But not for Trotsky! He not only called for a decisive struggle against the bureaucratization of the party, but advanced the slogan “The party must subordinate its own apparatus to itself” in accordance with the resolution of the CC and the CEC mentioned above. However, Stalin remained at the head of the party apparatus, despite Lenin’s recommendation, as is well known. Vladimir Ilyich as early as 1922 wrote that Stalin had concentrated in his hands “extraordinary power,” and was more and more abusing it.

Trotsky’s decisive criticism of bureaucratization of the apparatus was not supported by the other members of the Politburo, and some clearly “were not pleased” by the stormy applause with which the delegates to the Twelfth Party Congress rewarded Trotsky. But all the same, considering Trotsky’s authority and popularity, the Politburo was compelled in December 1923 to state: “While not being in agreement with Comrade Trotsky on one or another point, the Politburo at the same time notes as a malicious fabrication that allegedly in the CC or its Politburo there is even one comrade who could imagine the work of the CC and of the organs of state power without the most active participation of Comrade Trotsky.”

It would take four more years before Stalin would be able to conduct the inner-party struggle to such a point that Trotsky could be expelled.

N.S.—How honest and sincere, in your view, were Trotsky’s criticisms of party policy? Perhaps, as some authors contend, he really “longed for power!”

V.I.B.—For what power? He occupied the highest party and government posts—he was a member of the Politburo, chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council. But he was not the Gensec? But then the Gensec was not considered the top person in the country. Trotsky always understood the power of the apparatus, but he had no taste for this type of work. His orientation was above all based on the power of his words and his pen, and in these areas he held a special place in the party. In my view, a pursuit of posts—a charge raised against him for no reason by authors spoonfed on stereotypes—was alien to Trotsky.

N.S.—From everything that you have said about Trotsky, it follows that he was a talented man of strong will, and an intelligent and principled political figure. How then did it happen that even though he possessed such fine qualities and enjoyed such popularity among the masses, Trotsky nevertheless suffered such a crushing defeat?

V.I.B.—This question requires a special examination. Above all it is necessary to consider those changes which took place in the party after Lenin’s death. In connection with the defeat of Trotsky I will say this: In a struggle with mediocrity, talent does not always win. As far back as 1909 Trotsky wrote concerning the ringleader of the Black Hundreds, Purishkevich: “The theory of natural selection teaches that in a struggle, it is the fittest who win—not the best, not the strongest, not the most perfect, but the fittest.” Trotsky, evidently, was just not fit for a struggle against the apparatus and intrigues of the type Stalin conducted.

N.S.—Maybe his anti-Soviet activity abroad, as some textbooks of history have made known, stood in the way of an objective evaluation of Trotsky’s role after the October revolution and in the 1920s.

V.I.B.—Neither in the books nor in the articles written by Trotsky in the 1930s have I encountered confirmation of anti-patriotic activity on his part. Anti-Stalinist documents and statements—yes, these there were. But it is impermissible to equate anti-Stalinism with anti-Sovietism! The works written by Trotsky abroad—*History of the Russian Revolution, My Life, Stalin*, and several others (although I do not know all

(Continued on page 28)

Stalinism in Crisis

'Difficult Days' for the Communist Party, USA

By Samuel Adams

"Generally, these are difficult days for socialism," lamented Gus Hall, national chairman of the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA), in the party's publication, the *People's Daily World* (8/1/89). Hall would have stated the problem more accurately if he had said these are difficult days for Stalinism.

Recent events in the Soviet Union have thrown the CPUSA into the worst crisis in its history. The failure of the programs and beliefs which the party has promulgated for decades is exploding in its face.

- The party has portrayed life for workers in the Soviet Union in practically idyllic terms. But the strike by 150,000 miners and the growing revolt in other sectors of the work force tell a different story and portend a general rise of workers against the bureaucracy.

- The party has said the Soviet Union demonstrated the harmonious living together of its many nationalities. But nationalities from one end of the Soviet Union to the other are in revolt against bureaucratic Stalinist misrule.

- The party has said the Soviet Union was the most democratic country in the world and that its citizens could freely express their views, provided only they did not advocate counterrevolution. But the leadership of the Soviet Union itself acknowledges there have been gross violations of elementary rights, including in the post-Stalin period.

- The party has said Soviet trade unions acted independently and were effective fighters for the rights of workers. But the workers are making clear their contempt for these bureaucratically imposed unions, and Gorbachev himself has criticized them for their ineffectiveness.

- The party has said that the ruling Communist Party was widely supported by the Soviet public. But that public used every opportunity it was given in the recent elections to defeat many leading party members running for the new parliament, including rejecting those who were running unopposed.

- The party has described the Soviet people as well-fed, well-housed, and well-clothed. But the whole world now sees the poverty, privation, and lack of basic consumer goods in that country.

- The party has said that Soviet foreign policy has always been characterized by internationalist solidarity and support for revolutionary movements in other countries. But the Soviet leadership has itself made clear it is sharply scaling back the limited help it has given such movements, including the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, in order to promote detente with U.S. imperialism.

- The party has said that the Eastern European countries have made great strides forward economically. But these

countries' economies, with the possible exception of East Germany—whose youth together with older citizens are fleeing the Stalinist-ruled country by the thousands—are in deep crisis and masses are without the essentials of life.

- The party has said that these Eastern European countries are the warm friends and grateful allies of the Soviet Union. But deep antagonisms toward the USSR and its leadership are undeniably widespread among the peoples of these countries.

- The party has said that the people in the Eastern European countries support their Communist Party governments. But the Polish people repudiated the CP in that nation's elections and the Hungarian people appear ready to do the same next year.

- The party has said that the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Poland in 1968 were justified to put down "CIA-sponsored counterrevolutions." But it has become increasingly obvious to all that uprisings in these and the other Eastern European countries, including East Germany, were directed against Stalinist suppression and poor living standards.

- The party has said that the Baltic nations—Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania—voluntarily joined the Soviet Union. But the Kremlin now acknowledges the existence of Stalin's secret pact with Hitler by which they were annexed.

- The party has said that Trotsky was a counterrevolutionary, even a fascist. But today Trotsky's role as coleader of the Russian Revolution, together with Lenin, and organizer of the Red Army, is being recognized; his writings are being published in the Soviet Union; he has already been partially rehabilitated and his full role as the leader of the historic left opposition to Stalinism is finally becoming known.

The list could go on and on. The point is that the CPUSA's ideological bankruptcy is so devastating and has become so evident that it is a wonder it can retain the loyalty any longer of thoughtful members.

Past Crises: A Look Backward

The crisis that is today engulfing the CPUSA has its roots in the 1920s, when the party leadership sided with Stalin against Trotsky and supported the idea of building "socialism in one country." From that point on, the CPUSA was the uncritical supporter of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy every step along the way—until Khrushchev's 1956 speech at the CPUSSR's Twentieth Congress.

In those three decades, Stalin practically turned the Soviet Union into one big concentration camp. He not only jailed,

exiled, or murdered the hated “Trotskyites,” he killed off virtually the entire Bolshevik leadership that had led the workers and peasants to power in 1917.

After Stalin consolidated his power in the Soviet Union, the country was governed not as the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” or of the soviets, or even of the Communist Party or its Central Committee (which stopped meeting). It was one-man totalitarian rule replete with frame-up trials, the dreaded secret police, the crushing of all dissent, tight control of the media, glorification of the dictator, psychiatric hospitals (if not worse) for those who disagreed, annihilation of competent Soviet generals on the eve of World War II, etc.

And the CPUSA applauded it all!

Meanwhile, inside the U.S., the CP threw its support to Franklin D. Roosevelt and championed the no-strike policy during the Second World War. The party denounced the miners and anyone else who dared to strike, despite the fact that the capitalists used the war to rack up billions in profits at the expense of the workers. Communist Party members fingered to the FBI militant workers in industry who refused to subordinate struggles to defend hard won gains in wages and working conditions to “national unity” for the war effort! The party also condemned A. Philip Randolph for daring to call a civil rights march during the war, which the party leaders considered divisive and disruptive.

In 1942, with Black soldiers segregated in the Jim Crow U.S. army and Black workers discriminated against in the war industries, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading Black newspaper, began a campaign known as the “Double V,” which stood for “double victory for democracy at home and abroad.” The Stalinists denounced this campaign. They argued that “Hitler is the main enemy. . . foes of Negro rights should be considered secondary.” There are former members of the CP in the Black community today who still remember this slight, and others who have read or been told about it, who distrust the CP as the outfit that once declared the struggle for Black equality “secondary.”

These same CP leaders shamelessly supported the capitalist government’s crackdown on another working class tendency when they endorsed the frame-up of the Minneapolis Teamsters and Trotskyist leadership under the notorious Smith Act.

The chickens began to come home to roost with a vengeance for the CPUSA after the end of the war in 1945.

First, the party lost almost all of its influence in the labor movement. To be sure, the main drive against it came from the ruling class and reactionary forces within the labor movement. But the party was ill-positioned to defend itself because of its pro-speedup, antistrike policies during the war. It isolated itself and its cadre and made them vulnerable to the right-wing attacks.

Then came the 1948 indictment of the CPUSA leaders under the same Smith Act they had hailed when used to jail the Trotskyists. (Here it should be noted that the Trotskyists denounced the prosecution of the CP and joined the fight in support of their freedom.)

The CP gained prestige among radicals in the U.S. as a result of the ruling class attacks against it, both in the Smith Act prosecutions and during the McCarthy era. But at the

same time the party suffered extremely heavy blows, with the incarceration of its leaders and the witch-hunt atmosphere which enveloped the nation. Other radical tendencies suffered as well.

With the setback to McCarthyism and the restoration of the CP’s legal status, the party began a campaign to rebuild in the 1950s. But the 1956 events in Hungary and the Khrushchev revelations of some of Stalin’s crimes caused an internal crisis of major proportions. A split developed within the CP with the old line Stalinist faction led by William Z. Foster, a “revisionist” faction headed by *Daily World* editor John Gates, and a “centrist” group which followed the party’s general secretary, Eugene Dennis. Gates was in the process of breaking with Stalinism at the time, but did not move in the direction of revolutionary socialism. The Foster position, which was to maintain the CPUSA’s slavish relationship to the Soviet bureaucracy (while acknowledging that certain mistakes had been made, as stated by Khrushchev), won the day. Gates and tens of thousands of others left the CP and it ended up a shell of what it had been.

In the years that followed, the CPUSA proved itself the unswerving apologist of every Soviet action – from Hungary to Poland to Afghanistan – while it attempted to bury in the past its many mistakes. (It did self-critically state in the late ’50s that it should have defended the Trotskyists when they were charged under the Smith Act.) Gus Hall had replaced Dennis as the party’s leader and when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union and began to make dramatic disarmament proposals – proposals widely acclaimed by masses in Europe and the U.S. – Hall and his coworkers believed that the millennium had finally arrived for the CP. They began talking about building a truly massive Communist Party that would lead U.S. workers to socialism.

The Nature of the Crisis Today

For the first few decades of its existence, the CP dominated the radical left in the U.S. But by the end of the 1950s, its influence had waned, for reasons described above.

The ’60s saw the birth of the Vietnam antiwar movement, which became one of the greatest social movements in U.S. history. The CP sought to exclude the Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party from participating in that movement but was unable to do so.

The Trotskyists from their inception had been the CP’s most uncompromising adversary on the left. The positions of the two groups differed fundamentally on practically all issues. The CP regarded the Soviet Union as a socialist state, the Trotskyists contended it was a bureaucratically deformed workers’ state. The CP called for “peaceful coexistence” between the Soviet Union and the U.S., which meant the sacrificing of national liberation and revolutionary movements by the Soviet bureaucracy in hopes of making a better deal with imperialism. The Trotskyists counterposed to this internationalism and revolutionary solidarity in support of the struggles of oppressed peoples around the globe. The CP preached class collaborationism in the form of supporting the capitalist government during the war and working for the election of Democratic Party candidates during and after the

war. The Trotskyists stood consistently for class struggle politics and independent labor action.

It was the practice of the CP not to engage in united front campaigns unless it dominated them. But the CP could not avoid participating in the Vietnam antiwar movement, where party members found themselves defeated programmatically and organizationally time after time by the SWP and its allies.

But the one thing that the CPUSA always felt it had going for it throughout its history—no matter how adverse the relationship of forces it faced within this country and the radical movement—was the glowing support of the Soviet bureaucracy. So long as the Soviet Union itself and its government enjoyed apparent prestige and authority among its own people—and to a considerable extent from subjugated and exploited peoples in other countries—the CPUSA felt itself the beneficiary.

Today, however, the Soviet bureaucracy stands exposed as a corrupt and despised clique, ruling by force a population which shows increasing signs of wishing to overthrow it altogether. Moreover, the Soviet economy, which the CPUSA had always trumpeted as providing a high standard of living for its people and being the wave of the future, is in acute crisis. The parasitic Soviet leadership is responsible for this crisis because it substituted its incompetent, bureaucratic misrule for workers' democracy. The bureaucracy's turn to perestroika and the market economy will only make matters worse and threatens to bring down the whole rotten structure at the hands of an aroused Soviet working class.

It is this crisis of the Soviet bureaucracy which explains why the CPUSA, having put its whole faith in that bureaucracy, has now arrived at what is perhaps its all time low point of political bankruptcy.

Which Way for the CPUSA?

Deep fissures and potential splits within the ranks of the CP's membership lie just beneath the surface and in fact are already becoming evident. This was apparent when the party reacted with different voices to the Chinese government's

massacre of prodemocracy demonstrators at Tiananmen Square. Carl Bloice, associate editor of the *People's Daily World*, who had been to Beijing, condemned the action. But writing a few days later, Gus Hall (the CPUSA's national chairman) sided with the Chinese Stalinists. For Hall, it was a matter of defending "socialism."

Hall, an unregenerate Stalinist, has enormous authority within the CP, and as long as he is around he may be able to keep the lid on, at least for a while. But, if so, it will be temporary at best, as the contradictions between avowed socialist goals and counterrevolutionary bureaucratic practices become more and more obvious. And if a challenge does develop within the CP to that leadership's continuing Stalinist policies, it is to be hoped that, unlike the split of the 1950s, at least one wing of the party will move in the direction of genuine revolutionary socialism.

In this connection, the retreat by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party from that party's traditional Trotskyist positions is a negative factor of enormous consequence. The SWP of old would have utilized the openings provided by the recent rush of events and reached out to at least some of the CP comrades in an effort to salvage them for the revolutionary movement, as it did in the 1950s. The *Militant* would have been actively polemicizing and educating, drawing historical lessons, identifying the root of the problem, and offering beleaguered CP members a truly communist alternative.

But the SWP today seldom does any of these things. Perhaps it believes that its orientation toward Cuba, whose government has enjoyed good relations with the CPUSA, precludes attacking and exposing Stalinism in the way the SWP and the *Militant* of old did for so many years.

Barring a change within the SWP and the reclaiming of its Trotskyist heritage, it remains for other revolutionary socialists to develop a dialogue where possible with CP members and discuss with them the need to reorient to principled class struggle revolutionary politics in the tradition of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky. This, of course, is part of the broader process of reconstituting a unified U.S. section of the Fourth International on the basis of its historic program. ●

September 11, 1989

Trotsky (Continued from page 25)

his works) astounded me by their depth and objectivity. If they could be immediately republished, it seems to me, they would fill a vacuum that exists in our historical literature.

N.S. — You have said a great deal that is new and interesting about Trotsky. But isn't your approach to his role in our history too one-sided?

V.I.B. — Obviously my view is one-sided. But not "too" one-sided. Haven't we already received more than 60 years worth of one-sidedly negative information about Trotsky? Against such a "background," my approach is more than justified.

Of course, Trotsky made mistakes. But what great political figure has managed to avoid mistakes? I am not saying that Trotsky should be blindly lauded. But I believe that it is necessary to objectively examine his views, his concerns, and his fate. Trotsky should occupy that place in history which he deserves. ●

Notes

1. Pamyat is a right-wing Russian chauvinist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Bolshevik organization which has developed since Gorbachev's glasnost reforms in the USSR.

2. The "Short Course" was a Stalinist history of the Soviet Communist Party.

Where Tom Barrett Goes Wrong on China

by Myra Tanner Weiss

I read with interest Tom Barrett's analysis of the events in China, and, of course, I share your support of the heroic opening stages of the political revolution in this relatively young "workers" state. However, I should like to express some differences which I hope will be welcomed by you, for discussion of differences is the hallmark of democratic relations among socialists.

Barrett says, "What is needed now is an international campaign, not only to protest the Beijing massacre, but to demand an end to the wave of arrests throughout China and freedom for those political prisoners who are already incarcerated." Yes, yes, of course. But CIA agent Bush seems to be in our corner on that one, with a lot more clout than we possess. Our task is much bigger than that, as you know. We, especially in the United States, have to campaign to get the U.S. capitalists out of China, to expose its democratic pretensions, and to warn of the dangers of collaboration with the imperialist enemy. It is incumbent upon us to differentiate ourselves from the "democracy" howlers in Bush's corner who really want to destroy the planned economy in China.

Instead, Barrett repeatedly refers to the events in China as the "struggle for democracy," which is the terminology of the imperialists. Now I know that he means socialist democracy and the imperialists mean bourgeois democracy. But precisely because the imperialists avoid defining the kind of "democracy" they are hoping for, which includes the murderous contras and the death squads now ruling "democratic" El Salvador, it is necessary for us Marxists to be precise. To use their terminology—to talk of democracy in the abstract—is to blur the class distinctions between us.

The crime of the Stalinist bureaucracy is and always has been its illusion that it is possible to collaborate with the "democratic" imperialist forces. That is class collaboration which Marxists know bolsters the bourgeoisie, not the working class.

The primary source of the tragedy in Tiananmen Square is U.S. imperialism. It is the imperialists who cultivate the corruption of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is they who invent the slogan of the Chinese elite that "It is glorious to enrich yourselves."

Comrade Barrett seems to miss the point. He compares the corruption of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucrats with that of the bourgeois political machine. That identifies the two systems, qualitatively.

And I must protest Comrade Barrett's citing of the figure of 10,000 killed in Tiananmen Square, even with the "no one

really knows" qualifier. Ten thousand is a figure that the communist-hating Bush squad doesn't use. Had 10,000 been the extent of the massacre, everyone would know. There were not only victims, there were also witnesses, by the hundreds, if not thousands.

It is difficult for me to understand how Barrett can refer to this epoch as "China's unhappy twentieth century." I can understand India's "unhappy twentieth century," even the U.S.'s "unhappy twentieth century," drowning in drugs, crime, prejudice, and demoralization, with soaring rates of suicide among the young. But China? Did he forget the revolution of 1949? This is the century that China liberated itself from the voracious imperialists, and began its long march toward a socialist society, much nearer than any of us could have hoped. This is the century of what many of us believe is the second most important event of the century, second only to October of 1917. For China it is indeed a happy century, with all its trials and tribulations.

And finally, and most important, most fundamental, is the following statement in Tom Barrett's article:

There can be no quibbling about theoretical fine points: the Chinese workers, peasants, and student youth have the right and obligation to remove the Communist Party from power by any means necessary and replace it with a party and government of their own creation, which represents their own interests and aspirations.

Indeed there can be no quibbling about such a statement. The nature of the Chinese government does not constitute a "fine" point in Marxist theory. In fact, the Trotskyist movement is pledged to defend that government, dominated by a corrupt bureaucracy or not, from imperialist attack—overt or covert, I might add. Is Barrett again forgetting the great revolution in China?

We Trotskyists are *not* interested in removing and replacing the Communist Party of China or anywhere else. A party that can replace it has yet to be created in China. And we prepare for that eventuality. But our objective has always been the destruction of Stalinism, the bureaucracy which has grown to dominate the CP, the soviets, the communes, and the entire planned economy. We fight for socialist democracy which millions of Chinese Communists want as much as we. The imperialists would like to remove and replace the Communist parties—and socialist parties as well—if they could. The fact is that the political revolution has found its expression both within and outside the Communist parties.

Great blows in support of the political revolution have been delivered even by bureaucrats—for some are respon-

NOTE: This letter has been abridged.

sive to their base, workers' states, however degenerated or deformed. Need I mention the defiance of Stalin by Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party, fresh from their victory over the Nazis? The East German strikes in the early fifties, the Hungarian revolution, the Czech and Polish upsurges, all of which had their Communist contingents? Or the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union at which Nikita Khrushchev told at least part of the truth about the enormous crimes of Stalin. That shook up the entire Communist world, shattering for all time the Stalinist monolith. And finally Gorbachev's bold attempt to take the world out of its muzzle-to-muzzle confrontational terror.

Whatever organizational forms emerge out of the struggle for socialist democracy, they will certainly include Com-

munist cadre, those who made the social revolution in the first place and those who have been inspired by it.

And finally, we do *not* use "any means necessary" to accomplish our objectives. Only the capitalists operate without principles. They lie, kill, murder, torture, assassinate, and make war if they can to achieve their purposes. And they have committed all these crimes. We revolutionists never lie to the working class. We never suppress opposition or the expression of differences with anyone. We never exploit people and enrich ourselves at others' expense. If we do, we fail as revolutionists because our struggle for freedom can be won only with the truth. It is our sole weapon. ●

July 20, 1989

Recognizing Reality in the Antibureaucratic Struggle

by Tom Barrett

I hope that in the time which has elapsed since she wrote her letter to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* Myra Tanner Weiss has had a chance to observe the unfolding events since the disaster in Tiananmen Square, events transpiring in China itself, in the imperialist centers, and among the overseas Chinese students. An honest observation should bring her to a more realistic judgment of what is *actually* going on and what socialists can and must do about it. In order to proceed correctly we have to recognize reality as it is — not as we wish it to be, nor as abstract theory dictates it should be.

I must admit to surprise at Weiss's objection to my rhetorical reference to "China's unhappy twentieth century," especially when my point was that massacres of civilians by police and/or military forces have happened many times between the Boxer Rebellion and the Beijing Commune.

By the time the Chinese CP took power, the twentieth century was nearly half over. In its first forty-nine years, the Chinese people suffered imperialist bondage in a way which North Americans can scarcely imagine. The United States made sure that every industrial power (except Japan) was free to walk through the "Open Door" and make obscene profits at the expense of the Chinese working class and peasantry. The Chinese people struggled to free their country with exemplary courage, but at a horrific cost of lives.

In 1911 a bourgeois republic replaced the rotten monarchy. But most of the country fell under the sway of local warlords who stole and murdered at will. In the 1920s and 1930s, a state of civil war existed in China, with a multitude of warring factions, much like the situation that exists in Lebanon today. And also as in Lebanon today, it was the civilian workers and peasants who paid the highest cost.

As we know, a promising Communist movement developed in China after the Russian Revolution. However, the honest mistakes of inexperience combined with the misleadership of the emerging Stalinist bureaucracy in the Communist International were to have a profound impact in that

country. There was both a squandering of genuine revolutionary opportunities and ultraleft attempts to precipitate a revolution when the relationship of forces actually favored the class enemy. The greatest tragedy was the crushing of the "Shanghai Commune" in 1927, when the Communist Party advised the workers to welcome the Guomindang (KMT) troops into the city. The KMT troops proceeded to slaughter thousands of worker militants.

And probably the worst suffering inflicted on the Chinese people came at the hands of the Japanese invaders in the 1930s. None of this is new to Weiss, of course, and I'm sure that we have no significant disagreement on the subject of prerevolutionary China. However, I suspect that we do have a genuine disagreement with regard to the 1949 revolution and the workers' state which emerged from it.

It seems clear from her letter that Weiss considers the 1949 revolution to be an unqualified victory for the working class and peasantry. I must take issue with that assessment.

The Chinese workers' state was, from the start, encumbered with all the worst features of the Stalinist dictatorship in the USSR. Repression of political dissent was joined with bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy. Within the party permanent factional warfare was the rule.

The superiority of socialist property forms was proven by the improvement in the Chinese workers' and peasants' living standards after the revolution. Those who observed life in China before and after the 1949 revolution, and those who take the time to compare the experiences of China and India after the war, must all acknowledge that China made tremendous strides after its revolution. China's achievements, however, have all been *in spite* of, not because of, the bureaucratic leadership of the Communist Party.

So much more could have been gained if workers, rather than bureaucrats, had been running China. It could have avoided the disastrous forced collectivization of the peasantry (which has since been reversed), the failure of the "Great Leap Forward" with its lunacy of backyard steel

smelting, and the ultimate catastrophe of postrevolutionary China—the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.” Has China’s twentieth century been happy since the 1949 revolution? Ask any Chinese citizen: the accounts of political repression and bureaucratic mismanagement, the horror stories which everyone tells of the Cultural Revolution— not taken from books or press reports but from direct experience—are overwhelming.

I completely agree with Weiss that “it is incumbent upon us to differentiate ourselves from the ‘democracy’ howlers in Bush’s corner who really want to destroy the planned economy in China.” In the campaign which has begun to free Chinese political prisoners and to stop the arrests and executions, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency will make no united front with the KMT, American Institute for Free Labor Development, Jesse Helms, or any other reactionary, anticommunist forces. They are not welcome.

However, as the events of the past three months should make abundantly clear, George Bush is *not* “in our corner on that one.” As I pointed out in the September issue of this magazine, Bush and the class he represents have made every effort to *forget* the Tiananmen slaughter and return to business (yes, Business!) as usual.

The young fighters in Beijing made no distinction between “bourgeois” and “socialist” democracy. To them, democracy is quite simple: the right of the workers, peasants, and intellectuals to rule their own country; the right to express opinions freely without police harassment; the right to be appointed to responsible positions based on “what one knows,” not on “whom one knows.” *We, like they, are for these things without reservation!*

When I point out the corrupt and antidemocratic features of American society it is to explain—to the Chinese fighters among others—that “bourgeois democracy” is a fake and a fraud. The alternative to socialist democracy is not bourgeois democracy—it is no democracy at all.

George Bush understands completely that the limited democratic freedoms which the American people have wrested in struggle from the ruling class have revolutionary implications in an underdeveloped country, which China still is. Democracy in China would be an *obstacle* to the opening of the Chinese market to imperialist penetration. That’s why he is, in fact, completely *opposed* to democracy in China, despite all of his pretensions to the contrary. Revolutionary socialists, on the other hand, *support* the struggle for democracy, *without condition*, despite political misunderstandings on the part of those who may be waging that fight. We are not afraid of illusions some will have in “American democracy,” for experience and political discussion will easily dispel them.

I must plead guilty to one charge: this Trotskyist is *vitaly* interested in removing and replacing the Communist Party of China—and of the USSR, Poland, and all the other bureaucratized workers’ states. The CCP is corrupt and counterrevolutionary through and through, and it must be broken up and removed from power, *by military force if necessary* (and I believe that it will be necessary). “Any means necessary” does *not* mean operating without principles. Only methods which are *effective* can ever be neces-

sary, and only *principled* methods can be *effective* for revolutionary Marxists in achieving our goals.

No, the Chinese people have *not* won a government of their own choosing, as I hope I have explained. Even if some rank-and-file CCP members may be won to political revolution—and it is certain that some will—the CCP as an organization is beyond reform. A new revolutionary socialist party will have to be built to replace it.

The *deformed* workers’ state in China is under attack—but not from imperialism at this time. It is under attack from the workers and students who live in it, and we do *not* defend it against attack from this quarter. The interests of the imperialists lie in dismantling the *workers’ state* in China. We oppose that 100 percent, which is why we defend the deformed workers’ state against imperialism. The needs of the workers and students, by contrast, lie in *dismantling the deformity which cripples the workers’ state*. This we support completely.

Recognizing that the class foundations of imperialism and Stalinism are different cannot become an excuse for glossing over the atrocities committed by the bureaucrats. Though Stalinism is different from imperialism, it must still be destroyed, just as imperialism must be. No, we don’t quibble over fine points here. Which side are you on?

It is quite accurate to recognize that the “Beijing Spring” had the potential to grow into a real political revolution—and, in fact, it remains to be seen how decisive a defeat was inflicted on the democracy movement. However, the leaders and participants in the demonstrations were not, in general, conscious of this logic inherent in their own struggle. Like the American student demonstrators of two decades ago, during the Vietnam war, they took political action in order to reform the Chinese state, not to make a revolution. Probably most of them accept the government’s contention that “Marxism,” “socialism,” “communism” are what the Chinese Communist Party actually stands for. To the extent that they believe in the ideals of socialism, the activists cling to the hope of reforming the Communist Party and Chinese state. To the extent that they recognize that the CCP and state are beyond reform, they are rejecting—at least for the present—what they believe to be Marxism and socialism. There are exceptions, of course, and Trotskyists will do all they can to make sure that their numbers grow, but this is the situation at present, which we must recognize if we are to change it.

At the conference of overseas Chinese students in Chicago at the end of July there was an overwhelming rejection of “ideologies” on the part of the participants. The clear majority rejected both “capitalism” and “communism.” They are understandably confused and distrustful—of Western capitalism, which raped their country in the years before the 1949 revolution, and of socialism, which they equate with the Stalinist tyrants who rule China today. The challenge which faces the Trotskyist movement is how to work with these young activists, earn their respect in struggle, and begin to show them a real socialist alternative to Stalinism and imperialism. ●

September 5, 1989

Notebooks for the Grandchildren

by Mikhail Baitalsky

33. My Co-Butymnik

Before you can be accepted into the investigator's residence you have to be purified: shorn bald, bathed, and operated on with a penknife. The newcomers admitted that they almost fainted when they were led into an empty room where a person in a blue smock sat sharpening a knife on a whetstone. All sorts of horrors crossed one's mind. Are they going to suddenly snip off some necessary organ as a sign that it won't be necessary any longer?

Meanwhile, the operation was an innocent one—it was only buttons they were after. And at the same time, they took away all your shoelaces and belts so during the long excursions through the corridors you had to hold your pants up. After that came the “personal search.” In comparison with the past, it had been significantly improved. A place that had previously been overlooked was found where the person under investigation could hide sedition.

They order you to undress, spread your legs and bend over; then the searcher examines your anus. Now it becomes clear why the search is called “personal.” During every serious search, they again and again search your person, forcing you to bend over.

Finally, searched, depleted, washed, shaved, and all unfastened, you are taken to the investigator.

“All right, prisoner, tell me about your anti-Soviet activity.”

Taken aback by this demand, in confusion, you try to imagine: What could I have done that could be called anti-Soviet? But the investigator knows. He suggests you sit down (question No. 1 was asked while you were still in the doorway) and tell him about your life from the beginning. Some parts he supplements with more precise data, other parts he disregards altogether. He still isn't writing any record of what I say. I am talking about the psychological, not the physical

side of the case, about the means the investigator uses to weave his web.

The investigator, Major Volkov, out of the blue, presented his first charge against me: concealing facts about my relatives. I did not name them when he was filling out my questionnaire, a most detailed questionnaire it was with a list of relatives that even included those who lived abroad. This last point is worthy of some attention. Against whom is it directed? During tsarist times, millions emigrated from Russia, including the very poorest layers of the population. It was mostly Jews, but there were also Ukrainians (to Canada), Lithuanians, Latvians. I myself have an aunt in America whose name I do not even know, that is, I do not know her married name. She emigrated as a girl. But so what? Does this relative mean that I can be classified as an admirer of America, perhaps? And even if someone has a relative abroad who emigrated or was carried off by the Germans, can this provide some clue for the investigation? This question is only necessary in order to add material to the charge when they know in advance that a charge is being fabricated.

But their questions about your local, Soviet relatives involve other considerations. As opposed to my aunt abroad, these people are fully accessible, and you are required to write down their addresses. That is precisely why I concealed their existence, fearing that their relation to me would cause them harm. The investigator dragged from the archives, however, my old records—oh, how naive I was then—and I was trapped. Only the devil knows how keeping silent during an investigation can be the same thing as giving false testimony to the court! According to our laws, no lawyer for the defense has to be present and I do not know the legal code. There is no prohibition against maintaining a discrete silence in public—in newspapers, books, reports—but what about

In 1977, a manuscript totaling hundreds of pages arrived in this country from the Soviet Union—the memoirs of Mikhail Baitalsky, who was in his middle 70s at the time and living in Moscow. His work consists of a series of nine “notebooks” which describe his life as a Ukrainian Jewish revolutionary militant. He narrates how, as a teenager inspired by the October revolution, he joined the Communist Youth, tells about his participation in the Red Army during the Civil War years that followed 1917, his disenchantment with the developing bureaucracy under Stalin, and his subsequent experiences in Stalin's prison camps. To the very end of his life Baitalsky remained devoted to the ideals of the October revolution. He says that he is writing “for the grandchildren” so that they can know the truth of the revolution's early years.

*The first installment and an introduction by the translator, Marilyn Vogt-Downey, appeared in **Bulletin IDOM** No. 36, December 1986.*

before the state, whose representative the prosecutor is in this instance?

The investigator, however, explained that what I had done was a crime.

But what is a list of relatives compared with a list of friends! Woe to you if, when you are arrested, they confiscate five letters! You keep contact with five people? Is this not a group? And uncovering a counterrevolutionary group increases an investigator's prestige in the service. After all, he uncovered an organization!

They begin to work over the data—they must get to the bottom of this. First of all, are there anti-Soviet sentiments in the letters? Sending sentiments through the mail is a form of activity. The anti-Sovieters love to express their ideas in Aesopian language, and deciphering this is refined, clever, and demanding work worthy of a nice bonus. He deserves a handsome reward for that. And further, just in case, it would be in order to place under surveillance the correspondence of the five indicated friends with their acquaintances. In a word, a lot of work is involved. And it is still more complicated if they find a notebook in your jacket pocket with the addresses of two or three dozen acquaintances. The least noticeable acquaintance could turn out to be the key link. How much work all this is! And checking out each one of these people is no laughing matter.

An entire platoon of specialists is being fed around the case of one suspect. How much did my notebook cost the workers and peasants? If you really want to save the state some money, memorize the addresses and telephone numbers of your friends. Or better still, don't call or write to anyone.

The investigators are not after some political crimes. It is very important to convince the masses that all these people are *in essence* agitators. (This is a marvelous way of exposing people: You said "a" but *in essence* you said "b.") In essence the agitators are your ordinary swindlers, who were convicted earlier for their criminal activities. I was just such a type. "If you are sitting on the bench of the accused, you are already to be held accountable for criminal activity." There's no need to go into detail inasmuch as all the people we have here are criminals and crooks. When I was arrested, they took, in addition to my Heine books, a plan for rationalizing the plant's production. The investigator got a terrible look in his eyes and summoned a commission of experts. But they could find no military secrets in the plan, so I did not turn out to be a spy.

I suggested the investigator ask the factory to provide my records about how I worked and what kind of agitation I conducted. He roared with laughter. In fact, he was right. Who there would dare to defend me? Not the work brigade, not the party committee, not the director, not the prosecutor, no minister, no one at all. What is there then except one's own sense of human dignity to support a person no one in the entire length and breadth of the country will defend?

When I stammered something about the constitution—the Stalin constitution, as it was called for many years—the investigator curtly and maliciously interrupted: "Here, I am your constitution. Is that clear?"

* * *

An indispensable part of the investigation system is the brood-hen. Beria's and Stalin's people figured that every Soviet citizen is a potential criminal in the same way that every egg is a potential chick. All that need be done is to incubate the arrested person with someone able to raise his temperature. The brood-hen will initiate a conversation on delicate topics, the temperature of the arrested person will rise, and he will utter secret anti-Soviet thoughts. And later, they will confront the victims with these slanderous statements made in the cell, as additional evidence: "Look, he was even agitating in prison."

"Human being—those words are suspect." I heard this joke in Moscow even in the 1930s. And this crack was made by my major: "I'll call you a swine until you grunt." He had fully mastered the fundamentals of investigation.

The major knew: for persuading and getting to know people inside out, what counts most is your approach. The brood-hen was one of the most fruitful approaches to a Soviet person. The brood-hens were not only in the cells. If a person in the company of friends calls John Reed's book [*Ten Days That Shook the World*] truthful—that is, simply repeats what Lenin said about it—get yourself out of there! Either someone will inform on the person who was talking and the audience, or the person speaking will report who the listeners were while describing himself not as a provocateur but as a genuine patriot who loves the truth.

But if you were to say that the people live in a state of terror and distrust, that would be a slander of Soviet reality. Give the slanderer ten years reeducation in an environment of highly conscious thieves and murderers!

* * *

My cellmate in Butyrka (my co-Butyrnik) was a long-time lieutenant in the Soviet army, Volodya Ramensky.

He was not yet 26 years old, the same age as my son and those two platoon commanders who fell the same day near Sarny. He talked about himself. His parents were Communists from the first days of October. His father was a general and his mother a military engineer. Both his father and his mother had perished at the front. Volodya was 16 years old when he ran away from home to the front. He served in the cavalry. He went several times behind German lines on reconnaissance missions pretending to be a mute and dressed in the clothes of a peasant boy. He fought in victorious battles in Romania and in Hungary. By the end of the war, he had made junior lieutenant and he did not demobilize. However, he did not at first tell me about his current place of service.

After many long days and more and more frank conversations, Volodya decided to name where he had most recently been serving. During the holiday demonstrations, when the long mass columns passed through Red Square with portraits of Stalin and cries in his honor, in the courtyard of the National Hotel, directly opposite the square stands a cavalry regiment. That was where Volodya had been serving.

He had married his childhood sweetheart, the daughter of a deputy minister of communications. The investigator com-

plained that she was now boring everyone at the MGB [Ministry of State Security] with her requests. But they never did grant her a meeting with him.

When, after the signal to go to sleep, we lay down, Volodya would always say: "I hope you dream of your Asya and that you are not called for a nighttime interrogation." The second part of his kind wishes rarely came true, so the first part rarely ever did either. Such were the prison's internal regulations. You could sleep only from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. If you spent these hours as a guest of the investigator, it wasn't the prison's business. And if for five nights running you caroused in the investigator's office, still, it was not the prison's business. It was a separate institution. The cots were put away. And you had only to try to let your head slump on your chest and the peephole in the door would clink and the guard would whisper: "No sleeping!" It was not even permitted to lean against the wall; you have to sit upright with your eyes open. If you closed your eyes one more time, it was the punishment cell. And you won't sleep there, that's for sure. And you are brought back from there during the day. So keep your eyes open and don't sleep.

And in the cell itself, things were set up so that even during the permitted hours, the sleeping was not sweet. A bright lamp shines all night right into your eyes. You have to keep your hands on top of the blanket and if they should get cold and you unconsciously stick them under the blanket, the guard will wake you up ten times a night saying "your hands!"

The prison's internal regulations were posted on the wall of the cell and consisted of three categories: "The prisoner must:" "The prisoner is forbidden to:" and "The prisoner is permitted to." The last category was, naturally, the shortest of all and I never found in it specific permission to walk about the cell composing rhymes; but then, on the other hand, that wasn't specifically prohibited either. But because the lines "I know of no other country in the world where a person breathes so free" had stuck so deeply in my mind since the days that I breathed so freely in Vorkuta, I tried to transpose the Butyrka rules to the music of a well-known song. The first lines rhymed nicely. Volodya, hearing them, got scared and upset. But to this day, I don't understand what was so upsetting about this, since regulations that rhyme are better; they are easier to remember. And the melody was a Soviet one, just like the prison was!

In printed prose, the Butyrka prison regulations were not much different from those of any prison of average severity and fully suitable for presentation to any assembly or commission of the UN if our prestige were to permit us to admit such a commission into a prison. But what counted was what happened during the hours set aside for sleep.

The innocent prison administration put up the pretense of knowing nothing about the work of the investigators, while the investigators pretended to have no knowledge of the prison's rules of order. The investigators devoted every ounce of strength to their work. There were so many criminals to process! And that the investigators stayed up all night was further proof of their devotion to the cause of communism, which they were all constructing in their own areas of work. The investigator's five nights of work have given the prisoner 125 hours without sleep. After that the prisoner becomes more docile and will sign the record of the

interrogation that is swimming before his eyes. At five a.m., the investigator is driven home to sleep, and you are led to your cell to stay up. "Get up!" has just been shouted. ("Get up" are the only words in Butyrka that are said in a loud voice.) The time to sleep is over. Then in the evening—after having all day looked forward in your agonizing stupor to the call to go to sleep, after you have finally made it and fall like a dead man on your cot—two minutes after you have lain down, the peephole in the door opens: time for questioning!

Having opened the door, the guards will not call out your name but whisper: "for B." This means they are calling for a prisoner whose name starts with B. If there are three of you in the cell whose name begins with B, we shout out in turn: "Bubrov?" "No!" "Blinov?" "No!" And finally they've made it to me and the guard says: "Yes, you!"

All these childish tricks had the same aim, the same as the snakelike hissing in the corridors of the Krasnodar internal prison: Don't let the arrested see one another or know anything about each other. The starting point, the basic premise of this prison vigilance is the assumption that there is a universal, grandiose conspiracy which involves thousands of villains. But let us suppose that a prisoner in one cell hears that someone with a familiar name is in a neighboring cell; what difference would that make? It is all beyond comprehension.

The serious tone with which the "Mr. Fidgets" whispered "for B" or "for M" always amused the prisoners.¹ (Even in prison amusing things happen; although, it's true, you have to laugh on the sly.)

They did not often call Volodya for nighttime interrogation. Was he a brood-hen? I tried to figure him out, and he tried to figure me out. A predisposition of citizens to study each other was characteristic of that period.

Volodya, irritating my spiritual wounds, told me how a year after his marriage he had left his wife and child and taken up with another woman, much older than he was. And while living with the second woman, he had become involved with a third. He would hardly have been lying. The only lies around there were the ones heard in the investigator's office, and there value was placed on other types of sins. We had heard the formula "everyday corruption." Before me on the prison cot, with his hands clutched around his knees, sat a living example. He confessed his sins. He admitted himself that the original cause for his corruption was the overly easy life that had been guaranteed to him from the cradle by having highly placed parents. He was 13 years old when his mother came home from a meeting and found him in bed with a maid of the household. Of course, the maid was fired. Volodya recounted all his amorous adventures, without boasting, and even with a certain distress. He had had many affairs—many, many.

The immediate cause for his arrest, he thought, was his very close association with a cocktail hall frequented by foreigners. One of his friends and drinking buddies, who was hooked up with a stenographer at a certain embassy, got caught and implicated Volodya as well. It was a fully believable story.

Volodya received a good salary. But in his family, consisting only of Communists, such was the established practice: Volodya didn't have to bring his money home. There was

enough money coming in without that. Let him spend his pay entertaining friends. Young people have to socialize.

Volodya related his story in a fully untroubled way. I listened and before me I could visualize my neighbor in Akhtary. She was convicted for “kernels,” that is, for gathering kernels of grain on a collective farm after the harvest was completed. (There was a law against this in Stalin’s time.) Her children were hungry. But what the Communist Volodya Ramensky drank away in one evening would have taken care of her and her children for one month. For “kernels” she got a ten-year term.² But Volodya walked on the asphalt avenues of the capital of our homeland and not along the dusty rural lanes.

As regards where Volodya felt he belonged as a worker, he maintained a deep conviction that he only belonged in the top echelons and only in the capital.

“My father earned it,” he said with the haughtiness of the nobility. He could not receive as his inheritance a title and a thousand serfs, but he did inherit a dacha and the gardener who worked there. And his wife, after the death of her father – the deputy minister – also received a dacha. It was physically impossible for Volodya to split himself in half and occupy the both of them. So he had to give one up – the less desirable of the two – for use as a kindergarten. He did so not as a gift, of course, but for rent. I asked him how much he rented it for. He smiled and said: “according to their conscience.” Once the question of conscience arose, I fell silent.

Despite everything, Volodya was a charming fellow, handsome and not at all stupid. He read poetry well, deeply admired Mayakovsky, loved Simonov, and did not like Blok – whom he considered bad and out of date.

And now about what Volodya believed in and did not believe in.

He believed above all in revolution. But perhaps the American working class would not be able to finish off the monopolies by itself. And Volodya often dreamed aloud of how his cavalry would look on Broadway. I am not joking. He spoke of a joint action by the cavalry and the air force; and even thought over the military-scientific considerations accompanying this theme, during which America’s capitalist bastions would fall all in one blow. Perhaps he had in mind that his beloved cavalry would stand somewhere in the courtyard of a skyscraper during a demonstration of American workers in honor of the great leader of all the peoples of the world, Comrade Stalin. He never once doubted that he would see Broadway. He also had no doubt that it was his right to defend the socialist camp by leading his cavalry to the streets of New York. For him this was an unquestionable prerogative of socialism.

And to act otherwise was a halfway measure. Volodya could not accept such a thing. He left no room for doubts, and allowing no doubts in anything that had been once and for all affirmed was the basis of his moral fiber.

Upon colliding with anything that he couldn’t explain, Volodya simply slammed the door to his brain and left the unexplained phenomenon outside.

He considered the investigators good guys (it wasn’t really those guys who were responsible for your being summoned for interrogation during the night!) who would soon realize

their mistake and issue a pass for his release. The investigators’ appeal “to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” was something Volodya comprehended with his whole heart. He told them all his secrets, including about his amorous adventures. According to Volodya, the investigator – an elderly, solid, avuncular type of fellow – listened intently to his stories, which were similar to the adventures of Casanova and were physically documented by a stack of photo-negatives taken from Volodya’s writing desk during a search. However, the Italian Casanova did not photograph the legs of his beloved ones.

Volodya, of course, did not trust me. Whenever the opportunity arose, he repeated his favorite motto about “the whole truth.” The fact that I was a repeat offender put him on guard. (If you have been imprisoned twice, there must be a good reason for it.)

But the desire to talk is undeniable. There we sat, without books, newspapers, chess, or even dominoes – that sure antidote against politics. What offense caused us to be deprived of everything we owned from the very first moments, I do not know. It was so easy to commit an offense. Maybe we had left a speck of dust on a window grating when we tidied up the cell the first time. The doctor carefully ran his fingers along the walls and the windows. But if someone happened to get sick (which was a rare occurrence – in prison, for some reason, you don’t seem to get sick – it’s as though one’s organism spontaneously strengthens its resistance to ailments), the doctor did not come. A medical assistant would come with a collection of tablets. He didn’t come into the cell but made his diagnosis through the peephole, dispensed a pill and watched to make sure you swallowed it in his presence. Obviously, sanitation was considered the most important treatment – for a speck of dust on a window, they would take away your books, packages, and the small trunk with your possessions.

We talked in low tones from the call to rise until the call to sleep. We often played an oral game that involved guessing the names of well-known people. I avoided using political figures of our time because Volodya persistently cited Matias Rakosi and André Marty under the rubric of “popular leaders.”³ On the whole, he could not imagine people without leaders, particularly contemporary people. Moreover, he believed with all seriousness that the leader of any population was the secretary of the local Communist party. Lincoln, of course, meant nothing to him and the leader of the Romans was Spartacus and ShamyI was an English spy.⁴ However, over the last 20 years, the poor schoolteachers of history have had to develop three different versions of ShamyI, hero to spy and then back to hero.

In a historical science functioning according to the motto: “What is your pleasure?” such things still occur today.

And Volodya knew the secrets of Stalin’s court, but they did not bother him. He said that he saw in a holiday parade “one of our great figures, with his children but without a wife. She had been sent away,” – he added with a whisper, but did not say immediately that he was talking about Zhemchuzhina, Molotov’s wife. She suffered because she had warmly received Golda Myerson (Meir) when she was the Israeli ambassador in Moscow. During the first year after the creation of the state of Israel, our press wrote sympathetically

about it, never in any way contending that it was created by the imperialists. (Moreover, in the United Nations General Assembly, where the question was decided, the USSR voted for Israel's creation.) But as suddenly as the assessment of ShamyI changed, so other sympathies and evaluations changed. You go to bed thinking ShamyI was a spy and Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel, is a hero, and you wake up and are told to think the exact opposite: Weizmann is an imperialist agent and ShamyI is a hero. What is important here is not the changes themselves. They are always possible and there is nothing surprising in the fact that they occur. It is their surprise appearance and the secret way they are prepared that is the problem. By the way, an historic link connects ShamyI and Weizmann, one very likely unknown to Volodya for all his familiarity with palace secrets: ShamyI—the Caucasus—Englishmen—Moslems—the Near East—the Mediterranean Sea—a defense of the gates of Tsaregrad—a division of spheres of influence—and the just cause of the Arabs—all these are links in a certain historic chain.

Once in our game of guessing well-known people, I had in mind Einstein. Volodya got upset—he was a high-strung fellow.

“What kind of world renown does Einstein have? For his theory of relativity? That wasn't such a great revelation. Anyway, your Einstein was a cosmopolitan!”

And Volodya knew better than I did what a cosmopolitan was. I did not know but Volodya had most likely overheard not far from the palace that Einstein was close to the Zionists and had even been nominated for the post of president. Volodya shared with me anecdotes about Rabinovich which had again been resurrected after 1949; but he never repeated witticisms about Stalin, clearly remembering Article 58. This article, which had played such a fateful role in my life, stuck in my memory also. But by natural association, I also invariably remembered Lenin's Testament. It was not written

with me in mind but for all of us. However, I had been linked with it in numerous ways.

[Next Month: “You Don't Get Something for Nothing”]

Notes

1. Because the guards were constantly warning the prisoners not to fidget, the prisoners took to referring to them as Mr. Fidgets.

2. When I was in Moscow this summer, I met by chance an old man who was on holiday with two grandchildren from a Ukrainian rural settlement. Tears welled up in his eyes as he recounted to me—a total stranger he had met not five minutes before—how his mother had received an eight-year term for the same “crime” in 1929 during Stalin's forced collectivization when the old man was a boy. Although 60 years have passed since then, it seemed that his pain was as deep as if it had happened only yesterday.—Translator.

3. Matias Rakosi (1892-1963) was a Hungarian Communist Party figure and disciple of Stalin. Made premier of Hungary in 1952, removed by the anti-Stalin upsurge in 1953, he regained power but was forced to resign during the massive anti-Stalin rebellion of 1956. He fled to the USSR, was expelled from the CP in 1962, and died in 1963. André Marty was a member of the French Communist Party; although a veteran party leader at the time, he was appointed “youth leader” in 1931; in 1932 he lost his seat in the French parliament and subsequently became a functionary in the Communist International, elected to the presidium and to the secretariat of the CI at the 7th and final world congress in 1935. He was a commissar of the International Brigades during the Spanish civil war, 1936-38. The Soviet playwright Mikhail Shartov chose Marty as the prototype for the typical Stalinist in his 1968 play *Dictatorship of Conscience*.

4. ShamyI (1798-1871) was a legendary religious, political, and military leader of the Eastern Caucasus mountain peoples against Russian conquerors in the 1830s and 1840s. He became an ally of England and France against Russia during the Crimean War (1853-56). In 1859, after Russian troops crushed his forces, ShamyI was captured. Although a prisoner of the tsar, ShamyI was allowed to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he died. Such historic figures are alternately heroes or villains depending on the flip-flops of the bureaucracy's internal and foreign diplomatic policies. Under Stalin and since his time, with the return to Great Russian chauvinism heightened during World War II, non-Russians who defended their peoples against the expansion of the tsar's Russian empire have become villains and spies while the tsars' generals have become heroes.

Judge Issues Finding in Ten-Year-Old Lawsuit

Socialist Workers Party Wins Important Victory

by Stuart Brown

Federal Judge Mariana Pfaelzer, in Los Angeles on August 15, issued her long-awaited written ruling in the ten-year-old lawsuit of Alan Gelfand against the Socialist Workers Party. In a resounding victory for the SWP she found that there wasn't “a single piece of evidence” to back up any of Gelfand's patently absurd charges that the party is run by FBI agents.

On the grounds of this assertion, Gelfand had demanded that the federal court intervene in the internal affairs of the SWP to determine who could, and who could not, be a member of the party. Gelfand had been expelled from the Los Angeles SWP branch in 1979, and was asking the court to reverse this action. The court

refused to do so, and found that Gelfand's suit had no other purpose than to disrupt the functioning of the party.

While this decision is a victory which should be supported by all those who are interested in the rights of minority political organizations to function free from harassment and intimidation, there remain severe limits to that victory. The SWP had taken the position from the outset that the court should never have accepted jurisdiction in the case, since the very act of doing so implied a right on the part of government bodies to intervene in the internal affairs of political parties, minority political parties in particular. This is a very dangerous precedent which, if

extended to other cases, could have a chilling effect on the right to free association. In her ruling Judge Pfaelzer reaffirmed the jurisdiction of the court to decide the substance of this matter.

The ability of Gelfand to bring such an action in the first place, and pursue it to trial, meant that the SWP was forced to expend considerable energy and money in mounting both a legal and a political defense of its rights. Although the party recovered some of its legal expenses as a result of an out-of-court settlement, this cannot compensate for the damage that was done by the suit. ●

on certain positions, we can conclude that the outcome of any negotiations that can be conducted must end up in partial victories for the warring parties. Both sides would have failed to defeat each other absolutely, and we would have to be content with partial victories. . . [which would] impose some limitations on our program of social emancipation. In practical terms, this means that the concept of partial victory implies the *de jure* abolition of apartheid, and says less about the *de facto* abolition.

In many respects, this is a return to the policy which the ANC has followed since its founding in 1909. The ANC was set up to win civil rights for Blacks within the context of colonialism. Its turn to an armed-struggle perspective in the aftermath of the Sharpville massacre in 1960 was adopted only in the face of an absolute intransigence by the Verwoerd regime and the rise of militant Black nationalist groups within the country such as the Pan-Africanist Congress and later the Black Consciousness Movement. The nonrevolutionary perspective, which reflects the concerns of the small but influential Black bourgeoisie, has always been represented in the ANC. The influence of the South African Communist Party has also been quite strong.

It is a change on the CP's part which is strengthening the hand of the bourgeois reformist forces in the ANC at the present time. To understand why, one need do no more than read Mikhail Gorbachev's book *Perestroika*, in which he explains that the USSR's foreign policy will retreat even further from supporting revolutions against imperialism. Southern Africa is one area where the USSR's foreign policy shift is now being put into practice. The compromise agreement on Namibia, in which the South West African People's Organization played no part, is one result which has already come to pass. Another result is the reduction in aid to Nicaragua, which has left that struggling workers' and farmers' republic alone to face the economic nightmare

which has resulted from economic isolation and the contra war, both imposed by the U.S.

The negative effects of the South African CP's turn toward conciliation with the apartheid regime are compounded by the sectarian policies of the Black Consciousness-influenced organizations. Even though their program of Black self-determination in South Africa could be considered, in the abstract, better than that of the ANC and the UDF's other component organizations, their abstention from the actual struggle has isolated them from the great mass of Black South Africans and has weakened the struggle overall. The ANC, to be sure, must bear its full measure of responsibility for the sectarianism of the South African movement. It has refused to collaborate with, or even recognize the legitimacy of, other forces. But NACTU, the Azanian People's Organization, the Pan-African Congress, and other Black Consciousness-influenced organizations have failed to act in a way which could positively help to overcome the divisions which are undermining the liberation struggle.

The gap between the combativity of the masses and the programmatic confusion of the leadership is especially glaring in South Africa. The responsibility of revolutionists in the United States, Britain, and throughout the world is to work with the young leaders who are emerging from the front lines of the South African liberation struggle, both to build support for the struggle itself and to help overcome the leadership crisis within that struggle. Action without program, as practiced by the Mass Democratic Movement and its component organizations, is insufficient for victory. So is program without action, as the Black Consciousness movement is unfortunately proving. The South African liberation struggle has achieved a number of important victories in the latest upsurge, which began in 1984-85. The white minority government is in retreat. What is necessary is a leadership which will not only force the apartheid regime to retreat, but which will remove it from power altogether. ●

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