

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

# In Defense of Marxism

Number 105

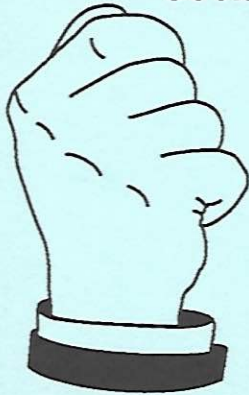
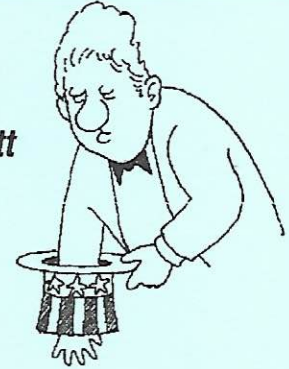
April 1993

\$3.00

## Neoliberalism...

Clinton Unveils Economic Program *by Tom Barrett*

Socialism or Neoliberalism *by Ernest Mandel*

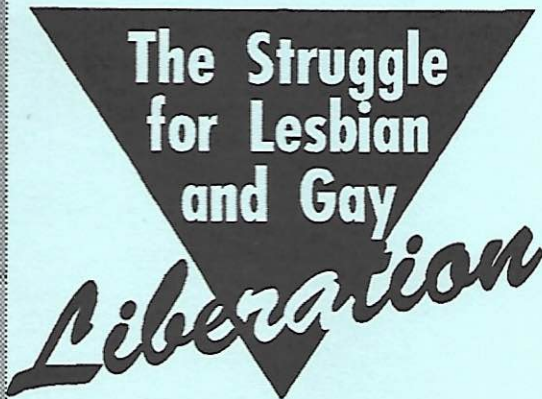


Radical Politics Today *by Frank Lovell*

Revolutionary Socialists and the Committees of Correspondence *by Alex Chis and Malik Miah*

### In This Issue

<i>Austerity, Higher Taxes for Working People</i>	
Clinton Unveils Economic Program .....	1
<i>by Tom Barrett</i>	
Socialism or Neoliberalism? .....	3
<i>by Ernest Mandel</i>	
Continuing Ferment in Los Angeles .....	7
<i>by Evelyn Sell</i>	
Radical Politics Today .....	9
<i>by Frank Lovell</i>	
Revolutionary Socialists and the Committees of Correspondence .....	16
<i>by Alex Chis and Malik Miah</i>	
Examining the Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression .....	18
<i>by Jamie Gough and Mike Macnair</i>	
<i>All out for the April 25 Lesbian/Gay/Bi March on Washington!</i>	
Socialism and the Struggle for Lesbian/Gay Liberation .....	22
<i>by Paul Lefrak</i>	
Salinas's Mexican Miracle Begins to Fade .....	24
<i>by Rosendo Mendoza</i>	
Labor Needs an <i>Organizing Party</i> .....	26
<i>by Baldemar Velasquez</i>	
<i>A Proud People With a Noble and Rich History</i>	
The Chicano Struggle Against Racism .....	27
<i>by Saturnino Gonzales</i>	
Impressions of a Cuban Journey During the Special Period ....	28
<i>by Rubén Berrios</i>	
International Struggle Against Racism .....	29
<i>by Roy Rollin</i>	
In Defense of Black Nationalism: A Reply to Peter Johnson ....	30
<i>by Steve Bloom and Claire Cohen</i>	
Hoffa: Hollywood Trashes the Teamsters (Again) .....	33
<i>by Mike McCallister</i>	
Letters .....	35



Examining the Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression *by Jamie Gough and Mike Macnair*

Socialism and the Struggle for Lesbian/Gay Liberation *by Paul Lefrak*

# Who We Are

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle 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, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

## Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

Volume 11, No. 4

Whole No. 105,

April 1993

Closing News Date:

March 1993

Paul Le Blanc, *Managing Editor*

### Editorial Committee

Tom Barrett

Steve Bloom

Michael Frank

Lisa Landphair

Roy Rollin

George Saunders

Evelyn Sell

Marilyn Vogt-Downey

### Editorial Board

Alex Chis

Claire Cohen

Kate Curry

Lloyd D'Aguiar

Lee DeNoyer

Saturnino Gonzales

Marty Goodman

Dayne Goodwin

Gladys Grossman

Vimukthi Jayadeva

Peter Johnson

Mandy Kivowitz

Michael Livingston

Frank Lovell

Sarah Lovell

Carol McAllister

Mike McCallister

Malik Miah

Jim Miles

Bill Onasch

Jon Paul Patafio

Cheryl Peck

Nanci Richards

David Riehle

Vera Wigglesworth

Send correspondence and subscriptions to *Bulletin IDOM*, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003. To subscribe to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, send \$24 for 12 monthly issues or \$15 for 6 issues to *Bulletin IDOM*, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003. Back issues are \$3.00 each. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

## Editor's Note

We offer in this issue a recent analysis by Ernest Mandel of the "neoliberal" and "neoconservative" alternatives to socialism, demonstrating world capitalism's vicious and undemocratic dynamics. Very much related to this is Tom Barrett's critique of Bill Clinton's newly announced and much ballyhooed economic plan.

The question of questions — what is to be done? — is posed by Frank Lovell's "Radical Politics Today." This critical survey of some of the more prominent sectors of the U.S. Left initiates a much-needed discussion, to which Malik Miah and Alex Chis also contribute in their piece on the Committees of Correspondence.

There has been much in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* on the problems of racism, the international dimensions of which are indicated here by Roy Rollin. Evelyn Sell describes the continuing ferment in Los Angeles one year after the explosion there. Steve Bloom and Claire Cohen's contribution, defending the revolutionary Marxist perspective on Black nationalism, continues a debate which opened up in our pages in the January issue.

In a related article, the oppression of Mexican-Americans, or Chicanos, is discussed by Saturnino Gonzales. The relationship of the Chicano struggle and the general struggle of the working class is further explained in Baldemar Velasquez's presentation on the need for a militant Labor Party.

Our comrade Rosendo Mendoza from the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT, Revolutionary Workers' Party) describes the situation in Mexico itself. It is crucial to understand interrelationships between problems and struggles in the United States and other countries. In a future issue we will want to explore other realities in Central America and the Caribbean, but here we are pleased to publish recent impressions of Cuba by Rubén Berrios.

The struggle for liberation is indivisible. Paul Lefrac discusses the implications of the national demonstration for lesbian, gay, and bisexual rights, while Jamie Gough and Mike Macnair continue the theoretical exploration of these issues initiated by Karin Baker and Ann Menasche in our February issue.

## Austerity, Higher Taxes for Working People

# Clinton Unveils Economic Program

by Tom Barrett

Beginning with a televised speech from the Oval Office on February 15, President William Jefferson Clinton has launched an intensive campaign to sell his economic and fiscal proposals to Congress and to the American people. Whether his plan will be supported by the people and enacted by the Congress remains to be seen. American working people are impatient for a plan that will seriously reduce unemployment and begin to lower the gargantuan federal budget deficits, and they have indicated a willingness to give President Clinton the benefit of the doubt. However, if his economic package is enacted, it is certain that their hopes will be dashed. Nothing in Clinton's proposals will do anything toward reducing either unemployment or the federal deficit. In fact, what his plan amounts to is not fundamentally different from what Jimmy Carter was offering in the late 1970s, albeit with somewhat more upbeat rhetoric and clearly more competent salesmanship.

The Reagan Administration debt-financed the recovery from the 1981-82 recession, and the bills were kind enough to come due after Reagan's successor, George Bush, had taken office. The 1980s orgy of junk bonds, leveraged buyouts, and wild speculation in everything from shopping malls to fine art inevitably led to the Savings and Loan debacle, a collapsed real estate market on both coasts, and a deep-going economic recession. The high levels of unemployment and consumer anxiety were sufficient to erase Bush's post-Gulf War popularity and bring about his election loss to Bill Clinton.

Both winners and losers acknowledge that the U.S.'s economic problems were the decisive factor in 1992's electoral results. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the Clinton administration to present an economic plan early, with a maximum of fanfare, especially to divert attention from its inept handling of the issue of homosexuals in the military and its problems finding an attorney general.

So, "Slick Willie" took to the airwaves on the evening of February 15 for a ten-minute speech to prepare the American people for his proposals. He presented them to a joint session of Congress two evenings later. He, Vice President Gore, and his cabinet members barely had time for a night's sleep before spreading out to sell the package in high school auditoriums, VFW halls, and National Guard armories from one end of the country to the other. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, a professor of economics from Harvard and

## CLINTON'S ECONOMIC PLAN



David

one of the foremost exponents of neoliberal economic theories, has been interviewed on virtually every national news broadcast since Clinton's speech.

### What Clinton Is Proposing

In his speech on February 17, Clinton proposed a combination of cuts and increases in federal spending plus cuts and increases in taxes. He claimed that his plan will reduce federal deficits by \$500 billion in four years and invest in the U.S.'s economic future. Some of the key features are:

- **A broad range of new excise taxes**, most especially a tax on energy, tied to amounts measured in British Thermal Units (BTUs). This tax will raise prices of gasoline, home heating oil, natural gas, and electricity. Like all excise and sales taxes, it will hit working people hardest, especially the increasing numbers who must travel long distances to and from their jobs.
- **An increase in the top rates on income taxes**, affecting those earning over \$100,000 per year. If enacted, Clinton's plan would raise the top rate to 36 percent from 31 percent and impose a ten percent surcharge on incomes above \$250,000 per year.
- **An across-the-board freeze on federal salaries**, to last one year.
- **Increases in federal spending for "infrastructure,"** including roads, bridges, and other public works.
- **Increases in spending for some public services**, including child immunization, job retraining, and expanded aid to early childhood education.

Clinton promised that the health care crisis — whose severity he acknowledges — will be addressed later in the year with new legislative proposals. Hillary Rodham Clinton (who is at least as capable a capitalist politician as her husband) is heading the task force which will be formulating them.

With the glowing rhetoric about how the spending for infrastructure and job retraining would provide “high-wage, high-tech jobs” and how “70 percent of the tax increases would be paid by those earning over \$100,000 per year,” Clinton has so far not antagonized the people who voted for him. Opinion polls indicate that people are willing to pay higher taxes if it means an improvement in social conditions. The February 26 *New York Times*, reporting on the reactions of “Reagan Democrats” in Warren, Michigan, to Clinton’s economic plan, quoted a 40-year-old owner of a craft shop, who said that

he does not make enough money to worry about paying more income taxes under the Clinton plan, but that if he must pay \$150 to \$200 more a year under a new energy tax, he is willing.

“Most people I’ve talked to have resigned themselves that raising taxes is necessary,” he said. “Everybody needs to put in a little bit.”

Others, however, are less favorable.

...a 79-year-old housewife living on a fixed income...and her husband, who watched as the Detroit automakers eliminated thousands of jobs, voted for Mr. Clinton because they wanted to see people back to work.

But when Mr. Clinton talked about more taxes, she became angry, even though she would not be greatly affected. “I think he has taken back all of his promises just to get where he is,” she said. “I am very disappointed...We can’t afford to be taxed any more. We can barely make it.”

## Business As Usual

Regardless of working people’s patriotic impulses to make sacrifices for the good of the country as a whole, Clinton’s economic plan will not deliver what is being promised. First, it will *not*, in reality, reduce federal budget deficits, let alone the monstrous federal debt. Second, it will not provide “high-wage, high-tech jobs” for unemployed American workers. Third, it does not even begin to address the deep-going, fundamental social ills which affect every working person in this country. Instead, its priority is to guarantee continued profits to the big financial institutions which hold federal debt securities, while minimizing the popular resentment which brought an end to George Bush’s presidency.

During the presidential campaign Clinton promised tax relief to working-class families. That was among the first of his promises to be broken. Regardless of what proportion (in theory) the rich will be paying of the tax increases, the fact remains that *working people are taxed too much already*, and we are being called upon to pay more. We have seen

our real wages deteriorate, our health benefits decrease, social services — including public education, parks maintenance, mass transit, and sanitation — cut, and the prospect for comfortable retirement disappear. And for this the government wants more of our money!

There will be no “equality of sacrifice” — though in theory the wealthy will be paying higher taxes, in reality they probably will not; they will not be facing the prospect of loss of job and income; they will never be concerned about the possibility of foreclosure of their homes; they will never have to make the choice between food and medical care or between heating their homes and buying clothing for their children. The poor have always had to make such choices; today, however, working people who have generally been labeled as “middle class” are faced with them as well.

No one should be fooled into thinking that the superrich are going to begin shouldering the tax burden of financing the government which defends their interests. Though Clinton is proposing raising the top rate to 36 percent — considerably lower than the top rate before the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (TRA-86) — those whose incomes are in six figures and above can utilize methods of sheltering income which are not available to working people, not the least of which is to hold instruments of government debt. The deductions for sales and gasoline taxes, interest on consumer debt, and even union dues were taken away from working people, thanks to the same TRA-86.

The expenditures for “infrastructure” are actually nothing new. As any motorist in the Northeast can attest, construction on the interstate highway system has been intense for nearly two years. Every federal budget includes programs for public works, and members of congress routinely make sure that their states get their share of federal funds for such projects. A less flattering term for them is “pork barrel.” There is nothing wrong with them in and of themselves if they provide jobs and improve people’s lives; however, no one should be fooled into thinking that Clinton’s budget is any different in this respect from Bush’s or any previous president’s.

Clinton’s spending cuts are in fact nearly balanced by spending increases. When one removes those tax increases which are deceptively labeled as spending cuts (for example, the proposed tax on social security benefits for retired people above a particular income level) it becomes clear that nearly all of the supposed deficit reduction will be accomplished by higher taxes. Since it can be expected that the wealthy will find ways of avoiding the taxes which the Clinton administration is attempting to impose, one of two things (and probably a combination of both) will happen: first, working people will shoulder most of the burden of increased

taxation, and second, the deficit will not be significantly reduced.

## How the Federal Debt Impacts Working People

As Ross Perot’s popularity in the 1992 election demonstrates, working people are concerned about the federal debt, mainly because they have a vague sense that it is bad for the country and because they know how bad excessive debt is for them personally. The problem for U.S. capitalism is not as severe as Perot presented it — in fact, it is more of a problem for relatively small-scale individual capitalists like himself than for the multinational financial institutions which hold decisive power in late capitalist society. However, just like those big balances on working people’s Visa cards, the federal debt has imposed on working-class taxpayers a burden that shows no sign of abating. After military spending and social security, interest on the debt is the third-largest expense item in the federal budget.

Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980 on a pledge to (1) balance the federal budget, (2) increase military spending, and (3) lower taxes. His Republican rival John Anderson explained how it could be done: “You do it with mirrors.” In fact, when Reagan left office his administration had more than doubled the federal debt: that is, it had borrowed more money than all the previous 39 administrations, from George Washington to Jimmy Carter, combined.

The debt is held by all kinds of financial institutions, including many workers’ pension funds, in the form of different types of bonds, Treasury bills, Treasury notes, and other instruments, with varying terms and rates determined by market forces. Some contracts require the government to make regular payments of interest to the bondholders. On others the interest is payable at maturity. Some debt instruments will not fall due until well into the next century. Others mature in a matter of weeks. But the payments must be made on time, and ultimately it is the taxpayers who must foot the bill. Meanwhile, the government is competing in the bond market with private issuers, driving up the cost of money which could be lent to provide homes and jobs.

At the same time, taxpayers’ money is paying the interest on this exorbitant debt rather than providing social services and public works which could benefit society as a whole. A fraction of the amount paid out to service the federal debt could provide free childcare for every working single parent in the country. It could rebuild and supply every rundown school in ghettos and barrios throughout the United States. It is inexcusable that billions of dollars should be paid to banks while people are sleeping in cardboard boxes on the streets of New York City.

*Continued on page 32*

# Socialism or Neoliberalism?

by Ernest Mandel

*The following is the edited transcript of a lecture given by Ernest Mandel at the New York Marxist School on February 21, 1993. The lecture was transcribed by Lee DeNoyer.*

Since the mid-seventies there has been a worldwide offensive of capital against labor and the toiling masses of the Third World. This offensive expresses the sharp deterioration of the relationship of forces at the expense of the workers on a world scale. It has objective and subjective roots.

The objective roots are essentially the sharp rise of unemployment in the imperialist countries from 10 million to at least 50 million, if not more. The official statistics are all government statistics and they're all fake. In the Third World countries at least 500 million are unemployed. For the first time since the end of World War II unemployment is rising massively in the bureaucratized post-capitalist societies, too.

The subjective roots lie essentially in the total failure of organized labor and mass movements to resist the capitalist offensive. In many countries these organizations have even spearheaded it: France, Italy, Spain, and Venezuela, just to name a few; there is a whole list of these countries. This has undoubtedly made resistance to the capitalist offensive more difficult.

But all this being said, one should not underestimate the concrete impact of pseudo-liberal — in reality neoconservative — economic policies on world developments. These policies, codified by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and symbolized by the governments of Thatcher and Reagan and their many imitators in the Third World countries, have been an unmitigated disaster.

Under the pretext of giving priority to monetary stability, the fight against inflation, and balanced budgets, social expenditure and the expenditure for infrastructure has been ruthlessly cut. This has resulted in a world wide rise in social inequality, poverty, disease, and threats to the environment. From a macroeconomic point of view it is increasingly counterproductive and irrational. From a macrosocial point of view it is indefensible and odious. It has increasingly inhuman results which threaten the very physical survival of the human race.

I should point out the basic cynicism of the neoconservative ideological offensive which accompanies the conservative economic policies. The neoconservatives say that they want to reduce state expenditure drastically. In reality, state expenditure has never been as high as in the 1980s and the early 1990s under the neoconservatives. What really happened was a shift away from social and infrastruc-

ture expenditure to military expenditure, which for that period can be estimated at three trillion dollars, and to subsidies to business. The bailing out of bankrupt and near bankrupt financial institutions, like the savings and loan associations in the United States, as well as the huge interest payments on the steeply rising public debt, belongs in that category.

The neoconservatives say that they stand for universal human rights, but in reality, given the unavoidable mass reactions against these antisocial policies, neoconservative governments increasingly undermine and attack democratic liberties: trade-union freedom, the right to abortion, freedom of the press, freedom to travel, and so on. They create the appropriate climate in which extreme right-wing tendencies — racism, xenophobia, outright neofascism — can arise.

## Deepening Third-World Poverty

The worldwide growth of poverty is disastrous. In the Third World it has become a historical catastrophe. According to official United Nations statistics, more than 60 countries with a total of more than 800 million inhabitants have suffered an absolute decline of per capita domestic product between 1980 and 1990. In the poorest of these countries this decline is in the order of 30 to 50 percent. For the poorest layers of these countries' populations the figure oscillates around 50 percent. Per capita domestic product in Latin America in 1950 was 45 percent of that of the imperialist countries. In 1988, it fell to 29.7 percent.

Decades of modest rise in public welfare were wiped out in the course of a few years. What this means concretely can be illustrated by the example of Peru. According to the *New York Times*, more than 60 percent of the population of Peru is undernourished, 79 percent live below the poverty level, which is quite arbitrarily fixed at \$40.00 a month. Even college educated civil servants earn only \$85.00 a month. That is not enough to pay for a month's car parking in that country.

If one takes into consideration the social differentiation inside the Third World countries, the situation is even more disastrous. The poorest inhabitants of the poorest country have today a daily food intake which equals that of a Nazi concentration camp of the 1940s. A report of the United Nations World Health Organization prepared for a December 1992 conference estimated that half a billion people suffer from chronic

hunger in addition to several hundreds of millions of people who suffer from seasonal malnutrition. Nearly 800 million people in the Third World alone suffer from hunger. If you add to that figure the number of hungry in the postcapitalist and imperialist countries, you arrive at practically one billion people the world today suffering from hunger on this planet. And this is when there exists an overall situation of overproduction of food.

The results of this are disastrous not only from a social point of view. They now begin to have results on a biological level, too. In the north of Brazil, there is a new race of pygmies which has arisen, with an average height of 35 centimeters less than the average inhabitant of Brazil. The way the bourgeois ruling class and its ideologues characterize these people is to call them rat people. This characterization is completely dehumanizing, reminiscent of the Nazis, and has sinister implications. You know what is done to rats.

There is widespread malnutrition involving insufficient consumption of vitamins, minerals, and animal proteins. Women and children especially have these deficiencies. As a result, children in the Third World run a risk of dying or catching grave diseases twenty times greater than that of children in the imperialist countries.

The fate of children symbolizes the rise of barbarism in the Third World. This is not a question of the future; there barbarism has already started on a huge scale. According to the statistics of UNICEF, every year 16 million children are dying from hunger or curable diseases in the Third World. This means that every four years there is an equal number of deaths of children as all the deaths of World War II, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and the Bengal famine combined. Every four years a world war against children. There you have the world reality of imperialism and capitalism in a nutshell. In addition, in South Asia, 20 percent of baby girls die before the age of five; 25 percent die before the age of fifteen. Baby girl infanticide is growing from year to year, combined with massive use of child labor under conditions of semi-slavery.

## Growing Inequality in "Advanced" Countries

The disastrous effects of neoconservative economic policies are in no way limited to Third World countries or to the living conditions of the mass of the inhabitants of post-capitalist societies. They have started to extend more slowly, but in a real way, to the

imperialist countries too. In these countries, depending on what source you use, between 55 and 70 million people live below the poverty level. A dual society is developing, with a growing number of social groups less or not at all protected by the social security net: the unemployed, casual laborers, people living on welfare, mothers having to care for many children alone, demoralized petty criminals, these are some of the constituent elements of that underclass.

Here is but one example which is very telling, very sad, and very revolting. In the heart of what has been historically revolutionary Paris, where five major revolutions have started, every day thousands of immigrants, workers and casual laborers, are standing around waiting to be employed. Sometimes they are, sometimes they aren't. They are without any form of social protection, without permit of residence. They are competing among themselves to work for a pittance, because a pittance is still higher than what they can get in their own countries.

The situation in the United States ghettos is typical of that trend. Youth unemployment in the ghettos reaches 40 percent and most of these youths have no hope whatsoever of finding any job in the future. The same phenomenon has spread in a more limited way to several southern European countries and Great Britain. Privatization accentuates these trends.

While real wages actually declined in the U.S.A., the number of people having gross annual incomes of one million stable dollars has risen sixty fold. That of people getting between sixty thousand and one million dollars has risen from seventy eight thousand to two million, but there's literally not a single worker among this new rich.

### **The Rich Get Richer**

The perverse effects of neoconservative policies on the world economy are likewise evident. Both the growing poverty of the Third World and the growing Third Worldization of sectors of the population in the imperialist countries constitute one of the major brakes on any significant expansion of the world economy.

Third World debt has led to that perverse and scandalous development of a net flow of capital from the south to the north, with the poorest part of the poor countries subsidizing the richest part of the rich countries. One could say in a cynical way that that's nothing new, that's what capitalism is all about. Nevertheless, in this dimension and amplitude it's at least a new phenomenon in the twentieth century.

The same thing is true for what you could call the adverse development of the terms of trade and the role of intermediaries on world price structure. It is very little known that the second largest contingent of Third World exports after oil is coffee, which we all drink. At this time, for the Western consumers, cof-

fee is relatively cheap. A pound of coffee costs around five dollars in the Western countries. The workers who produce that coffee get thirty to fifty cents a day. The rest is taken in by middle men.

### **New Epidemics**

The greatest danger of the Third Worldization in the South, the East, and the West is the spread of typical poverty-related epidemics like cholera and tuberculosis which were assumed to have been wiped out. But the ominous threat of AIDS is likewise poverty related. The former director of the World Health Organizations' anti-AIDS program predicts that at the end of this century, one hundred million people will be HIV infected, of whom 25 percent will fall ill and die; 85 percent of these deaths will occur in the Third World. This is not a result of some cultural or ethnic specificity, but of deficiencies in education, prevention, health care, and sanitation. At the same time, seven billion dollars have been spent in the struggle against AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic. Only 3 percent of this sum has been spent in the Third World, where 85 percent of HIV-infected people live. It is obviously suicidal to believe, even for the capitalist class, that the spread of the epidemic will not reach the imperialist countries, too.

Under these circumstances, the Pope's call to limit the struggle against AIDS to self-restraint and the chastity of individuals and to oppose the use of condoms and the contraceptive pill is totally irresponsible. In light of these facts the neoconservative policies of cutting health and education budgets everywhere likewise appears irresponsible and suicidal. The overall effects are as economically obnoxious as they are socially obnoxious.

### **Destructiveness of "Market Economy"**

In all the university departments dealing with development policies, in all the countries in the world, it is considered to be a truism that the most productive investments are those for education, health care, and infrastructure. But if you cross the corridor into the sub-department of economics called public finance, then you suddenly hear that a balanced budget is more important than investment in education, health care, and infrastructure, and that there have to be ruthless cuts in these budgets in order to stop inflation.

It should be stressed that pseudoliberal, neoconservative policies are being applied within the framework of a capitalist-dominated world economy. Two important conclusions can be drawn from that basic fact of life. First, that much of the rantings about the alleged superiority of the so-called market economy are just eyewash. Market economy in the pure or near pure form does not exist and has never existed anywhere. Second, it can be concluded that any alternative economic policy applied within that

same framework, like the neo-Keynesian policies now proposed by a growing number of international institutions and leading capitalists, will not result in any basic change in all these horrible realities which we have outlined.

To give you just one example: the tremendous technological backwardness imposed upon the Third World by imperialism means that while that part of the world consumes only 15 percent of the worlds' total energy expenditure, it has to spend five to six times more energy per dollar's worth of internal domestic product than the richest countries.

Hence the question arises, don't we need a basic alternative not only to pseudo liberal-neoconservative policies, but to the whole capitalist system in all its variants in order to get to a qualitatively better world than the present one? My answer is obviously yes. That's why we need socialism, and that's why I am and will remain a socialist.

Humankind is facing frightful threats to its physical survival: nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare, traditional massive wars which could become nuclear wars by the bombing of nuclear power stations with conventional weapons, growing risks of destruction of the environment necessary for human life typified by the greenhouse effect and the ozone gap, destruction of the tropical forests, desertification of large parts of Africa and Asia, and the cumulative effects of epidemic catastrophes.

Many people have raised the question, "Isn't it already too late? Isn't doomsday unavoidable? Will humankind be able to survive the coming fifty years?" We believe that human kind is not doomed. We believe survival can succeed. We believe that this is not wishful thinking or pure intuition. It is a belief based upon solid scientific data and the ongoing dynamic of scientific research.

Just one example: there exists a concrete, serious approach to completely reverse the desertification of Africa; to irrigate the desert in order to make it again into a rich food-producing region like it had been up until fifteen hundred years ago; to inspire its inhabitants to apply nature-conserving agricultural techniques to switch back from commercial crops to crops which enable them to feed Africans in a healthy manner. The effect of a green, wooded Sahara on the world climate would be really stunning.

The problem to be solved in order to beat doomsday in this case is not a technical, natural, or cultural one. It is a social one. In order for this solution to be applied, you need a social order in which greed, the desire to accumulate personal wealth regardless of overall social and economic costs, and short term pseudo rationality substituting for long term rationality do not determine social and economic behavior. We need power in the hands of social forces which can prevent individuals, classes, and major class fractions from imposing their will on society. Power

needs to be in the hands of the overwhelming majority of the toilers willing to let solidarity, cooperation, and generosity prevail by democratic means over short-sighted egoism and irresponsibility.

I want to stress that it is not a question of awareness. The rich, the capitalists, the powers that be are not stupid. Well, there are stupid ones among them, but many of them are perfectly aware of, for instance, the ecological dangers. They try to take them into consideration, include them in their economic planning and projection, but under the pressure of competition, under the pressure of a profit-motivated system, they are forced to act in such a way that the overall threat remains.

Some say that science and technology have developed an irresistible logic of their own, and that uncontrolled development of science and technology is bringing humankind to the brink of extinction and is threatening to blow up our planet, but this is not the correct way of seeing things. This is what you could call, in terms of Marxist philosophy, reified thinking. Science and technology are presented as forces divorced from the human beings who control them. But this is incorrect.

### Struggle for Workers' Democracy

Science and technology have no power independent of the social groups who invented them, apply them, and bend them to their interests as they see them. The key problem is to subject science and technology to conscious social control in the democratically established interests of the great majority of human beings. To free them from submission to special interests, which abuse them regardless of the long-term interests of the human race. For that purpose the organization and structure of society itself must be subjected to democratically determined conscious control.

What socialism is all about in the last analysis is the conquest of human freedom for the greatest possible number to decide their own fate in all key sectors of life. This is, in the first place, true for all wage earners, women and men, who are under the economic compulsion to sell their labor power and who represent today a mass of people bigger than they ever were in the past. There are now more than one billion wage earners. Those who plead for minority rule over and above that freedom — the freedom of these wage earners to decide in a democratic way for themselves which priorities to apply to pro-



duction and how to produce and distribute at least the major chunks of it — those who state that this freedom should be subordinated to the rule of market laws, rule by the rich, or rule by the experts, rule by the churches, rule by the state or by the party, arrogantly assume the perfectness of their knowledge and their wisdom and underestimate the capacity of the masses to equal or overtake them. We reject these claims as empirically unfounded and morally repulsive, leading to increasingly inhuman consequences.

We share Marx's warning that the educators in turn have to be educated. Only the democratically organized self-activity of the masses can achieve that. Socialism is a social order in which these masses decide their own fate in a free way.

In order to look at the world as it is today, we have to look at it in a way that is different from what you generally read in the newspapers or see on television. Reality is a bit more complex, and I would dare to say that the neoliberal offensive has gone over its climax. People are starting to fight back.

In the small Latin American country of Uruguay, the people have just rejected, in a referendum by a majority of 74 percent of the vote, a project of privatization of the telephone company. British miners, and especially Italian workers, have reacted to the austerity policies which their governments tried to put down their throats in a very big way. Both groups have been on strike against these austerity policies, the British miners in a somewhat more limited way than the Italian workers. In Germany we have witnessed, and this is most heartwarming, a radical reaction of the youth, including even high school students, against the rise of xenophobia, racism, and neofascism. We have seen this wonderful chain of light involving probably two million people.

This is completely different from what happened at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s. At that time the Nazis conquered the high schools, the universities — the youth — much before they conquered political power. Today, it goes in exactly the opposite direction. The mass of the youth is moving against xenophobia, racism, and neofascism while political parties, political shifts are going to the right.

The most gratifying example is that of Brazil, where there is a fightback of the working class against a corrupt reactionary government. I'm rather pessimistic, I don't think they will win, but a challenge to bourgeois power in this seventh largest country in the world, where there are now more industrial workers than in Germany in 1918, has at least been made possible.

There is, however, a sober side to the world picture, and that is that many of these fightback movements are generally single-issue movements and are discontinuous because of the lack of perspective of an alternative social order.

### The Credibility of Socialism

Over this whole world development hovers what we call in my movement the worldwide crisis of credibility of socialism. Workers have no confidence whatsoever in either Stalinism, post-Stalinism, Maoism, Eurocommunism, or in social democracy. Social democracy is heading for the biggest electoral defeat in its history in countries like France and Italy.

Under these circumstances, what we have today on a world scale is a situation in which neither of the two basic social classes, capital and labor, is capable in the short or medium term of imposing its historical solution to the world crisis. The capitalists can't for objective reasons; because the working class is much too strong. It is much stronger than it was in the 1930s. But the working class cannot solve this world crisis either because it has no belief in an alternative social order.

So we are in for a protracted crisis, the outcome of which is at this stage unpredictable. We have to fight for an outcome in favor of the working class, in favor of socialism, in favor of the physical survival of mankind. Because that's the real choice today. Not socialism or barbarism, but socialism or the physical extinction of the human race.

In this crisis, I see the key task of all of us socialists as being threefold.

In the first place to defend unconditionally all the demands of the masses everywhere in the world which correspond to their real needs as they see them, without subordinating this support to any priorities of a political nature in this or that sector of the world or of any specific power scheme. We have to go back to the example of what the labor movement did in its inception and during the period of its greatest growth from the end of the 1880s up until the eve of World War I.

Socialists had two key goals at that time: the eight-hour day and universal franchise, and they didn't start from the question: How are we going to realize that, in what form of power, what form of government? No, they said these are objective needs of human emancipation and we will fight for them by all means possible and necessary and we will see what will come out.

In some countries the eight-hour day was conquered by general strikes, direct extraparlimentary mass action. In other countries it was realized through governments which one could consider workers' governments. In other countries it was given by the bourgeois as a concession to a powerful workers movement, thereby trying to prevent it from making a revolution. But that's neither here nor there. The real fact was that the eight-hour day was, as Marx and Engels pointed out, in the objective interest of the working class, and that is the reason why you shouldn't subordinate the fight for such demands to any preestablished power scheme.

I have many times reminded the comrades of the famous formula of that great tactician

Napoleon Bonaparte, whom Lenin quoted very approvingly, "First start the struggle, and then we'll see." The important thing is to start the struggle; what comes afterwards, well, that depends on the relationship of forces, but the struggle itself changes the relationship of forces.

The second task of socialists and communists in the world today is basic socialist education and propaganda. Humankind cannot be saved without substituting for this present society a fundamentally different society, what we call a socialist society. You can call it a society in transition toward communism, you can call it anything you want to, the label makes no difference, but its contents have to be specified, the contents of socialism as it will be accepted by the masses. When I speak about masses I speak about hundreds of millions of people throughout the world, not small groups.

After the disastrous experiences of social democracy, Stalinism, and post-Stalinism, the image of socialism can only be one of radical emancipation, having a dimension of radical feminism, radical defense of the environment, radical antiwar pacifist consciousness, political pluralism, and total identification with human rights without exception. Socialism will only be accepted if it is considered radically emancipatory on a world scale without exception.

Now I come to the third condition for solving the terrible crisis of credibility of socialism on a world scale. This is the reunification of socialism and freedom. The bourgeoisie has made a terrible strategic mistake in raising the human rights issue against socialists the world over. This will become a boomerang hitting it again and again and again. But in order for that to happen, the reunification of socialism and human freedom has to be complete.

In the mid-20s, the traditional song of the Italian labor movement "Bandiera Rossa" contained these wonderful words, "Long live communism and freedom!"

One of the gravest crimes of Stalinism, post-Stalinism, and social democracy has been to provoke the historical divorce between these two values. We have to come back to that.

I'll just mention in passing that here in the United States, in the mid-20s two anarchists, anticommunists — they had absolutely no sympathy for communism — Sacco and Vanzetti, were condemned to death by the reactionary bourgeois government. Their cause was taken up by the Communist Party of the United States and by the Communist International. The fact that they were anarchists, anticommunists, didn't make any difference whatsoever. I say with pride that our comrade James P. Cannon played a significant role in organizing that worldwide campaign for these two anarchists. That's the tradition we have to go back to without any restrictions.

Whoever commits crimes against human rights under whatever pretext in what ever country should be condemned by the socialists-communists of this world. That's the precondition to restore confidence among the masses in our movement. Once that confidence is restored we get a moral power, a moral credit, a moral strength which has ten times more punch than all the weaponry which the capitalists control.

### Revolutionary Internationalism

I hope it is no imposition on my friends at the Marxist School if I say a few words for my organization, the Fourth International, before the end of this lecture. I just want to make one point.

In today's *New York Times* there is an article on the Uruguayan referendum which rejects privatization. Our press organ of the Fourth International, *International Viewpoint*, carried that information four weeks before the *Times*. Not because we are more clever journalists, that's not the point at all, or more clever theoreticians, but because we have a real implantation in the mass movement in many countries. The comrades just notice what's going on. You can't fool them; they know the score through their practical activity.

A few weeks ago we had a meeting of our international leadership and we learned from the Polish comrades who were there something which had not been published in any bourgeois newspaper. Not because the journalists are involved in some conspiracy, but because they just don't understand what's going on. We learned from our Polish friends that after the reactionary parliament voted on a law declaring abortion illegal, in a couple of days time one million eight hundred thousand signatures were assembled by the people to call for a referendum to restore the right to abortion.

I don't want to end my lecture on too positive a note! This integration of revolutionary Marxists with the real mass movements in many countries — not in all countries, it would be foolish to make that pretense — in and of itself does not solve the problem. It's just another contribution. We have a long uphill struggle to restore the credibility of socialism-communism. Nobody can tell how long it will take: five, ten, fifteen, twenty years. It is not an easy struggle. It will take a long time and many efforts with many partial defeats and many setbacks. We are not promising easy victories. We have to make the utmost effort for the survival of the human race. But in the long run, the struggle will be a success.

### In Defense of Marxism

Having said that, I want to tell my friends at the Marxist School that they are absolutely right to stand for Marxism and not to give in in the slightest way to the anti-Marxist pres-



ures which are all around us. Some are open, some more diffuse, but they are all around us.

Marxism is the best thing that has happened to social thought and action in the last hundred and fifty years. Those who deny that, those who make Marxism responsible for Stalinist counterrevolution, for social-democratic support for colonial wars, are either ignorant or deliberate liars. Marxism has given humankind two basic conquests which we have to defend, but with the assurance, the self-confidence that we are defending a good cause.

Marxism is the science of society. It is the understanding in a coherent way of what has been going on for the last two hundred years, if not much more than that, on the basis of a tremendous wealth of empirical information and without any valuable, even partially valuable, alternative among the social sciences.

We make no prediction about the future. The only scientific form of Marxism is open Marxism. Marxism which, like Marx himself said, integrates constructive doubt. Everything remains open to reconsideration, but only on the basis of fact. Those who do this in an irresponsible way without taking facts into consideration, those who throw away this tremendous tool of understanding world reality in exchange for nothing but skepticism, irrationality, mystification, or mythology serve no positive purpose.

As important as Marxism is as a science, its second basic component is just as important, and that is its moral component. Marx himself formulated this in a very radical way. From his youth through to the end of his life he didn't waver for one minute from the definition of what he called the categorical imperative. That is, to fight against any condition in which human beings are despised, alienated, exploited, oppressed, or denied basic human dignity. Whatever the pretexts are for the justification of such denials, we have to oppose them unconditionally. Understand that you cannot be happier than if you know that you have dedicated your life to this defense of human rights everywhere in the world; the defense of the exploited, the oppressed, the downtrodden, the despised.

There is no better way to be a good human being in this world than to dedicate your life to this great cause. That's why the future is with Marxism. □



# Continuing Ferment in Los Angeles

by Evelyn Sell

Instead of doing something substantial about the problems which erupted in fire and destruction one year ago, Los Angeles city officials are creating a climate of fear and hysteria about the possibility of another explosion of outrage and frustration. Helped by the media, government leaders are using a carrot-and-stick approach, combined with a "pacification program."

The biggest carrot offered was Rebuild L.A., a nonprofit corporation created by Mayor Tom Bradley on May 2, 1992, and headed by Peter Ueberroth (who earned exuberant praise as president of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee). It was promised that the composition of the Board of Directors would reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the city and would represent various communities within Los Angeles. But the first 20 board members were not racially or ethnically diverse, and community activists were not included. William R. Robertson, executive secretary-treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO), noted angrily that the list of the first 40 directors did not include any union leaders. When board membership reached 50, Ueberroth had included 20 Anglos, 14 Blacks, 11 Latinos, 5 Asian-Americans, and 10 of these were women — but still no labor representative. The board remained heavily weighted with state and local government officeholders and prominent business executives.

In its first days of existence, Rebuild L.A. initiated several task forces: lawyers studying legal problems involving emergency assistance and rebuilding efforts; an urban planning group looking at demolition, waste removal, architecture, and landscaping issues; and advisers from firms in advertising, public relations, and communications fields. But Rebuild L.A. made no attempt to tackle the issues and problems plaguing Los Angeles over the past year. For example, Rebuild L.A. would not deal with complaints that local minority residents and minority-owned construction companies were not being hired for cleanup and rebuilding projects. Instead of trying to redress these grievances, Ueberroth released a statement that Rebuild L.A. "is concerned that the cleanup and reconstruction in the neglected and devas-

tated areas be coordinated with full representation from community resources."

Ueberroth has explained that the focus of Rebuild L.A. is on "long-term" projects. Very long-term! Nothing substantial has been produced by the high-power Board of Directors, which has grown to 80. It is still issuing pie-in-the-sky visions of great things to come. In October 1992, for example, Ueberroth announced that over 500 companies from the U.S., Japan, and Europe were developing plans to invest more than \$1 billion in Los Angeles's inner city over the next few years.

In the first days and weeks after the 1992 social explosion, there were highly publicized promises of federal and state aid. But government agencies and politicians have provided scant help. A tiny bit of federal funding was allocated in 1992 for emergency relief, summer employment for youths, and some housing vouchers to assist low-income families. No monies were forthcoming for long-range economic revitalization — in fact, unemployment in California and in Los Angeles has been increasing over the past year and is currently the highest in the nation. Compounding the generally worsening economic situation, complicated paperwork discouraged thousands of persons seeking help from the Small Business Administration, and insurance companies used every possible loophole and excuse to refuse payments on claims. The results are: many employees who worked in destroyed small businesses remain unemployed, and housing conditions have become worse than before.

The conditions which fueled the fires of last summer not only remain but have been intensified.

## The "Pacification" Approach

Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley's "Neighbor to Neighbor" program was first announced in December 1992 and officially launched in January with \$331,000 from the city's Housing Authority and Community Development Department. Neighborhood teams composed of hundreds of volunteers, led by 23 organizers paid \$1,500–\$2,500 a month, are supposed to visit housing projects, shopping centers, and schools in order to keep residents calm during two related trials: one involves the police officers charged with violating the civil rights of Rodney King, the African American whose March 3, 1991, beating attracted worldwide attention; the other trial involves three Black men charged with beating white truck driver Reginald Denny in the first hours of the turmoil following the acquittal of the cops who assaulted King. The mayor's plan is designed to squelch rumors, hold calming discussions with community members during the course of the trials, and provide alternatives to violence. One of the hired organizers spoke about some alternatives: "If people are angry with the verdicts, we want that anger channeled into something else — a march, a letter-writing campaign, or even a work slowdown like the unions use, but not the destruction of property."

Well-known Black and Latino activists have expressed little confidence in Mayor

Bradley's plan for "peace." Burt Corona, an executive with Hermandad Mexicano Nacional, explained, "There is nothing evil about asking people to talk, but we've been talking for 30 years. I see very little hope if we don't have anything concrete to offer in terms of day-to-day problems." Anti-gang activist Chilton Alphonse turned down the invitation to join the "Neighbor to Neighbor" steering committee. He said that no amount of networking would erase the tensions if people continued to see a justice system poisoned with racism. Korean-Americans complained about being left out of the mayor's program, and pointed out that no Asian-Americans had been hired as



Los Angeles's "finest" in action

organizers when the program was put together.

### Top Priority Goes to Force

The "stick" approach was made public at almost the same moment as the "Neighbor to Neighbor" program. The Police Commission voted unanimously to ask the City Council for over a million dollars to purchase new riot equipment including: tear-gas bombs, rubber bullets, special helmets, face shields, bull-horns, television monitors, and 10 police vans. Extensive riot control training was instituted shortly after the new police chief took office last summer.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has already demonstrated its "riot control" readiness. Their actions have shown how they would respond to the kinds of alternatives proposed by the mayor's peacekeeping organizer: a protest march or a job action like the unions use. At the Police Commission meeting where new riot equipment was demanded, a report was released exonerating officers charged with beating striking dry-wall construction workers on July 23, 1992. Jose DePaz, executive director of the California Immigrant Workers Association, called the report a "whitewash" and said, "Every time Latino workers organize, every time Latino students demonstrate, every time that it's us, we feel the discrimination and violence and excessive arrests by the police."

On December 14, 1992, rounds of rubber bullets — called "knee knockers" — were fired at people following a peaceful action in the South-Central area. Police claimed they were breaking up an unruly crowd. The cops' version of the event was disputed by the group which organized the leaflet distribution, the Free the L.A. 4+ Defense Committee (an organization which serves as a support group for the African Americans accused of assaulting truck driver Denny). A member of the defense committee told reporters, "We were talking to people in the community about what had happened earlier when a police truck drove up and about 10 to 15 police jumped out and just started arresting people — people who were in their yards and on their front porches — for no reason." His description was echoed by neighborhood residents and businesspersons.

The co-owner of a chili dog stand complained that he was pushed to the ground, handcuffed, and dragged to a police car for "not moving fast enough" as he watched from the driveway of a nearby business. The owner of a car detailing business said police tore up the fence around his property, shot him with a rubber bullet, shoved him to the ground, and arrested him. A store security guard said, "The police kept pushing people back, hitting them with their billy clubs if they didn't move fast enough." A middle-aged homeowner de-

scribed what she saw: "Lots of people were running down the street and being chased by the police. Some of the people ran in my yard to get away from the police. I saw police hitting people for no reason. They hit my niece and nephew because they didn't go inside the house." Many residents said they were curtly ordered to go inside their homes by gun-wielding cops as police helicopters hovered overhead and police cars shone bright lights into their windows.

The police explanation was: "We didn't have time for niceties. We thought we might have another [riot] on our hands. People fail to realize when we tell them to go inside we are doing it for their own safety." Because of the persistent complaints about the December 14 attacks, Police Chief Willie Williams was forced to state on February 2, 1993, that an internal investigation was being conducted — although he maintained, "As the peaceful demonstration began to conclude, local gang members became involved...and escalated the peaceful demonstration into a major civil disturbance."

The *Los Angeles Times* promotes such police arguments with headlines proclaiming: "LAPD Show of Force Halts Violence at Riot Flash Point," and "LAPD Widely Saluted for Swiftly Quelling Incident."

### Law-and-Order Plans

As the date of the trial of the Los Angeles police came nearer and nearer, television news programs showed the California National Guard training for expected "riots," and the February 18, 1993, *Los Angeles Times* published a photo of combat-ready troops involved in a readiness drill. The accompanying article explained:

Rather than conduct its drills in secret, the Guard invited the world to watch....Allowing the media such access was part of a calculated strategy with extremely high stakes. State and local officials have concluded that by exposing the full force that law enforcement is prepared to use, they are in a far better position to prevent disorder.

It's not just the National Guard. The Los Angeles Police Department has given reporters almost unlimited access to its training drills at Dodger Stadium, and state emergency officials have granted access to the main operations center in Sacramento and provided detailed descriptions of their riot preparations.

On February 19, local TV news programs showed federal marshalls engaged in their drills. A spokesperson explained that they were prepared to fulfill their job of protecting the federal courthouse in the event of possible repercussions from the police officers' trial.

Both TV news reports and newspapers played up the potential for street violence which could be sparked by a strike of 28,000 Los Angeles public school teachers, coun-

selors, and nurses. The February 12 *Los Angeles Times* reported special plans being made by the city police department, Board of Education, and the union (United Teachers Los Angeles) if the strike takes place in

a city crackling with racial tensions....Complicating the situation is the tinderbox atmosphere in the city with racial tensions simmering and the second trial under way for the four police officers accused of beating Rodney G. King.

Tensions erupted on several district campuses last fall, with fights breaking out between black and Latino students. The prospect of picket-line confrontations and 650 campuses with thousands of students and little supervision adds to the potential for violence.

...The Los Angeles Police Department is undertaking detailed mobilization plans for Feb. 23 that include establishing an emergency operations control center in the basement of City Hall. In addition, the school police will open a command center at district headquarters downtown.

LAPD officers conducted training sessions with hundreds of union picket captains. Police told teachers that 20 specially trained labor relations officers would be assigned specifically to settle picketline disputes, and picket captains were given direct phone lines to police in the event of trouble. An additional 1,000 patrol officers will be on the streets, and school district police will patrol on campuses.

These kinds of preparations were absent during the last major strike by the UTLA four years ago (see *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, Number 65, July-August 1989, "Victory in Los Angeles Teachers' Strike"). But last summer's social convulsion is being utilized by the authorities to justify extreme measures in a wide range of cases.

### Trial of Cops Begins

The jury selection process for the officers' trial was accompanied by repeated government and media emphasis on the imminent danger of "riots." Prospective jurors filled out 53 pages of 148 detailed questions to determine their biases and fears. Key questions were, "Do you fear the prospect of social unrest following a verdict in this case? If so, in what respect?" and "If you serve as a juror in this case, how would you anticipate being treated by your family, friends, and acquaintances if the defendants are acquitted?" Oral questions by lawyers also highlighted possibilities of a riot "like last summer."

Jury selection was completed on February 22, and three days later opening statements were presented by the federal prosecutor and by defense lawyers representing the four Los Angeles police officers charged with violating Rodney King's civil rights. □

February 26, 1993



# Radical Politics Today

by Frank Lovell

Howe's comment in the wake of Clinton's election summarized traditional social democratic complacency, shared by top bureaucrats in the house-broken union movement. He is a recognized ideological leader in Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the dominant social democratic organization in the U.S. It lists among its members several prominent progressive union officials.

## David Moberg's Approach

A similar approach to the capitalist economic crisis was outlined by David Moberg, staff writer for the social democratic news publication *In These Times*. Moberg speaks with more urgency than Howe, but his message is also directed to the ruling class. Like Howe, he appeals to the self-interest of investment capital, urging government supervision and subsidies.

**I** Debates among and within some sectors of U.S. radicalism surged around the perennial "lesser evil" issue prior to the 1992 general election after Clinton won the Democratic Party nomination and have continued since the election of Clinton to the presidency. Two fundamental questions are central to these debates: Can the current worldwide economic and political crises be resolved under the capitalist system of production? And is the working class of the industrialized nations capable of reorganizing social production to meet basic human needs in the modern world? These questions are seldom debated, but they are implicit in all that is said and written by those who today still consider themselves radicals, especially by those who have abandoned in the short run the socialist perspective but remain social critics.

## Irving Howe's Position

On January 20, the day Clinton was sworn in as president, a comment by Irving Howe (co-editor of *Dissent* magazine) appeared on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* under the heading "Clinton, Seen From the Left." Howe saw a resemblance between Clinton's election and the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, based on similarities of the economic crisis then and now. He hoped Clinton would seize the "opportunity to assume the New Deal's legacy." Howe said that "most of us on the democratic left were pleased" with the outcome of the election, because they thought the new Clinton administration could cleanse the "political-moral atmosphere" in Washington. He said the previous twelve years of Reagan-Bush presidencies left "a shabby, mean-spirited legacy: Irangate, junk bonds, union-busting, savings and loan scandals, bloated military costs, neglect of minorities, a vast deficit."

Howe thought this could be wiped away under the two-party system. "For the next few years," he wrote, "the two great problems will be jobs and health care." The jobs problem can be solved, he said, by a government program to rebuild the infrastructure of U.S. industry at an estimated cost of around \$60 billion, as recommended by economist James Tobin. The health care problem calls for "a Canadian-style national health plan," Howe said.

Will this appeal be heard in Washington? Howe thinks not. "The Clinton Administration is not likely to embrace the outlook I have sketched," he wrote, "at least not as a whole." What then? "So the democratic left will look forward with a mixture of hope and skepticism, glad for whatever reforms are enacted, critical if the President falls back on tactical caution."

Writing in *In These Times* of January 11 this year Moberg offered the following suggestion:

A case can be made for repairing and upgrading traditional public infrastructure — paving streets, expanding sewers and water treatment plants, maintaining urban transit. Those projects are much needed and can quickly yield several hundred thousand jobs. ... Clinton needs to focus on the long term, providing patient capital for the economy's underpinnings and using the government to organize and build, where necessary, comprehensive systems in areas such as transportation, energy and communications. ...

[The] government can organize and encourage private investment to serve much the same function as public investment through regulation, standard setting, loan guarantees, government purchases and the kind of public/private partnerships that Clinton extols. ...

[Far] too little is being done to develop an appealing, efficient system of mass transit (including new ideas for more flexible public transit) or high-speed intercity trains. Such 150- to 200-mile-per-hour trains are deployed throughout France, Japan and Germany. Europe is undertaking a vast expansion of a continent-wide high speed train network. In the U.S., high-speed trains could displace a large part of air travel in the 100- to 600-mile range as well as much highway traffic with far greater efficiency (thus less environmental harm), lower cost, greater safety and virtually the same or greater speed. ...

[The] federal government should financially support research on efficiency technologies, from photovoltaics to hydrogen-powered vehicles, but even more important it should start using energy-efficient technologies itself (and stipulate the same in all federal infrastructure aid to state and local governments). ...

[We need] expansion of the concept of infrastructure. For example, federal support for basic research and for the commercialization of technologies as well as education and worker retraining should be seen as essential economic building blocks on a par with transportation, energy and communications. ...

[It] is crucial that the federal government insure that new infrastructure developments create a greater sense of inclusive community and reduce inequality. With that vigilant strategy, the new wave of public investment can be investment in a better society as well as a more productive economy.

These suggestions were developed and presented by participants in President-elect Clinton's two-day economic conference on the eve of his inauguration. The conference was staged as a media event, unrelated to the real economic plans of the new administration. Moberg reports these most liberal-sounding projections of what could be, fully aware that none of them are presently acceptable to what is now called "the market economy." It is true that some elements within the capitalist class favor some reforms along these lines, but they remain a minority with little political influence. Social democrats espouse and publicize such potential reforms in the expectation that the deepening economic crisis will force these measures upon the popular consciousness and convince growing numbers of Democratic Party politicians to endorse them. In this way social democracy, a deeply embedded working class political current, justifies its "lesser evil" strategy in electoral politics and rationalizes its support of the two-party system.

### **Manning Marable's View**

From another segment of U.S. radicalism, somewhat to the left but closely related ideologically to social democracy, comes a slightly different view of what ought to be done by radical forces to influence government policies and help create a more just society. The most sophisticated rationale to date for this position is presented by Manning Marable in the February 1993 issue of *the Progressive*, a long established liberal magazine that in recent years has tilted somewhat toward the left. Marable is a national cochairperson of the recently constituted Committees of Correspondence, consisting mostly of a rather large breakaway group from the Communist Party.

---

**"Can the current worldwide economic and political crises be resolved under the capitalist system of production? And is the working class of the industrialized nations capable of reorganizing social production to meet basic human needs in the modern world? These questions are seldom debated, but they are implicit in all that is said and written by those who today still consider themselves radicals."**

---

Marable presents *his* case for "A New American Socialism." He argues from the premise that despite the demise of the Soviet Union and the false impression of "capitalist triumphalism" over the world, the socialist movement for a new society endures and will become healthy again. He seeks to demonstrate that "Americans who identify themselves with 'the Left' — independent progressives, radical feminists, democratic socialists, Marxists, and others — have never lived in a more depressing, challenging, and potentially liberating moment." His prescription for recovery of the socialist movement is the following: an inside-outside approach to electoral politics; support of liberal office seekers in the Democratic Party (including Clinton); full support of all "nonsectarian" third-party efforts (including a new "progressive" party, that is, one that would not go beyond the framework of capitalism); serious work to reform the electoral system and overturn the two-party monopoly; popular voter-registration campaigns to bring African-Americans, Latinos, students, working

people, and the poor into the electoral process. Conspicuously absent is any direct reference to the effort now underway to create a labor party based on the unions.

Marable's view of radical politics at the moment is circumscribed by his own political odyssey, which he draws upon to illustrate what he now thinks must be done in light of past mistakes and failures. Marable, like Irving Howe, is a university professor and until rather recently was a prominent leader of DSA, associated with the late Professor Michael Harrington. Marable recalls this association. He says, "Michael Harrington's 'Democratic Agenda' efforts more than a decade ago developed some productive relationships between socialists and key liberals in Congress and within organized labor. Unfortunately, the emergence of Bill Clinton and the neoconservative Democratic Leadership Council clearly shows that the Democratic Party will never become a social-democratic or labor-oriented party."

Marable goes on to remind his present associates in Committees of Correspondence, former Stalinists, that they share the distinction of past political mistakes. "Harrington's well-meaning mistake was modest, compared to the profoundly flawed electoral strategy of the American Communist Party," he says. Quoting Erwin Marquit, formerly a prominent CP figure, Marable says, "implementation of the Party's program was reformist in content and sectarian in form." Marable further says that Communist Party electoral policy "extended nearly uncritical support to liberals and progressives in the Democratic Party but viciously attacked Marxists outside its own ranks as the 'phony left.'" He is careful, however, not to endorse the critics, remarking that "some Trotskyist-oriented parties and formations have denounced for half a century any relationship with progressives inside the Democratic Party, elevating sectarianism to the level of political principle."

Marable warns against "extreme conservatives on the Republican Right" who, he says, "are searching for a new political and ideological framework for their assault on American working people, racial minorities, and the poor."

He believes, at this juncture, that "the role of socialists is to get into the thick of the debates on all these issues." He contends that "by joining broad, mass organizations fighting for women's rights, against homophobia, for academic pluralism and multicultural education, we (socialists) increase the capacity of oppressed people to resist, and we strengthen democratic currents throughout society."

Marable recognizes that "the central questions confronting the Left aren't located within the Left itself but in the broader, deeper currents of social protest and struggle among nonsocialist, democratic constituencies — in the activities of trade unionists, gays and lesbians, feminists, environmentalists, people of color, and the poor." He counsels that socialists "must accept and acknowledge the reality that, for the foreseeable future, the essential debate will not be about 'capitalism versus socialism' but about the character and content of the capitalist social order — whether we as progressives can strengthen movements for empowerment and equality within the context of capitalism."

Marable is a Black activist who has had considerable experience in predominantly white radical groups. He describes some problems encountered and conclusions reached along the way:

As vice chairperson of the Democratic Socialists of America from 1979 to 1984, I helped to create DSA's National and Radical Minorities Commissions and raised my own funds to sponsor DSA's first gathering of socialists of color, which was held at Fisk University in Nashville in 1983. I also edited and largely financed a short-lived DSA publication, *Third World Socialists*. But much of

DSA's leadership was unenthusiastic about the publication, and the national organization committed relatively few resources to working with Asian-American, Latino, or African-American activists. The growing student groups linked to DSA on college campuses had serious difficulties recruiting students of color.

Marable has concluded that the reason white radical organizations attract few Blacks is because African-Americans and other people of color have not been well represented in the leadership of those organizations. But he must surely know from the history of the radical movement in the U.S. that masses of Black people have joined only their own all-Black organizations. He seems to think now that the healthy mistrust Black people have of white organizations and institutions can be negated by assigning African-Americans to leadership positions. He says that "some leftists are trying to learn from the errors of the past" and offers as an example the Committees of Correspondence, which he is promoting. He says, "A majority of the national executive of the Committees of Correspondence consists of people of color."

Later on, after listing several other small left groups and publications, he submits that "perhaps the most important step toward a new type of nonsectarian left unity has been the creation of the Committees of Correspondence, the merger of those Marxists who recently left the U.S. Communist Party with a number of independent socialists and activists." He says, "The leadership of the Committees embraces an unprecedented range of women and men who have struggled in various formations and socialist parties, for a democratic society: former Communist Party leaders Angela Y. Davis, Charlene Mitchell, and Kendra Alexander; former Socialist Workers Party Presidential candidate Peter Camejo; lesbian activist Leslie Cagan; Chicana activist Elizabeth Martinez; Arthur Kinoy and Carl Davidson." (Kinoy, a radical civil rights attorney, has been prominent in socialist education endeavors. Davidson was a leader of Students for a Democratic Society [SDS] in the '60s, who later became a prominent Maoist.)

Marable thinks the next step along this path is unity with DSA. "Nothing is more urgent than establishing practical joint activities and discussions between the two largest entities on the Left, the Democratic Socialists of America and the Committed of Correspondence," he says. How can this happen? What will it accomplish? Anticipating these questions, Marable responds: "Such unity should be based on the democratic right 'to agree to disagree' on certain questions, to respect the organizational autonomy and integrity of the various formations, but to seek areas of cooperative relations and joint action, striving for greater consensus about the character of our socialist vision for American society. Unity which rests on such practical accomplishments today may culminate in a unified, but pluralistic and democratic, socialist organization in the future."

This version of "a new American socialism" concludes with a chilling reminder of what the old American capitalism is: "So long as corporate greed continues to destroy the environment, so long as several million Americans are homeless, so long as anti-Semitism, racism, sexism and homophobia are manipulated to divide neighborhoods and communities, so long as factories shut down overnight and corporations hold cities as economic hostages in their demands for concessions, the vision of socialism will continue to be relevant and essential to the construction of a truly egalitarian, democratic America."

This all sounds as if something ought to be done. Marable leaves open the key questions: If social change is needed, will it come through decisions of the employing class or actions of the working class? Or, perhaps, through collaboration, women and men of good will from all economic strata pulling together to overcome

those evil social influences that poison our civilized world? This third option seems to be Marable's preference, at least for the moment.

### The Committees of Correspondence

The Committees of Correspondence do not constitute a homogenous organization, have no clearly defined program of action to which all members adhere, and do not as yet constitute a measurable political weight either within the so-called Left or in the electoral arena. In practical terms, no candidate hoping to win public office would seek endorsement by the Committees of Correspondence. It may be a consequence of this weakness that Marable and others (in both DSA and the Committees) are committed to the practice of lesser-evil electoral politics. The popular justification is, "We don't want to waste our vote by voting for someone who can't win."

Within the Committees of Correspondence, described by Marable as a merger of divergent political tendencies and critical-minded individuals, there are those who may accept most of what Marable has written and what he represents but disagree with supporting "liberal Democrats" (such as Clinton). Among these dissenters are some who want to review the political past of U.S. radicalism, hoping to discover guideposts that may point the way to meaningful social change in which socialists become the decisive factor. This search leads directly and immediately to a re-examination of twentieth century working class politics, beginning with the condition of the socialist movement at the start of the century, its transformation in World War I and through the October 1917 revolution in Russia, leading on to the rise of Stalinism and its pernicious influence throughout the world, culminating finally in the declining influence of the socialist movement in the U.S. in the post-World War II period.

### Camejo/Sheppard on "Marxism versus Stalinism"

Two members of the Committees of Correspondence, Peter Camejo and Barry Sheppard, have undertaken to begin an examination of radicalism's heritage. Their article, "Marxism versus Stalinism" in the November 1992 issue of *CrossRoads* (a magazine close to the Committees), addresses the question of what caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe. They paraphrase the almost universally acknowledged history of the genesis of soviet power:

The two Russian Revolutions of 1917 inspired the exploited and oppressed throughout the world. The February revolution saw the overthrow of the Tsarist-landlord regime, and its replacement by a capitalist government. At the same time, workers and peasants had organized themselves into democratic councils (soviets). The failure of the capitalist government to carry out the demands of the workers and peasants for peace, bread and land led in October to those two joining forces under the leadership of a genuine revolutionary workers party to impose their own rule through the taking of power by the soviets.

The questions now posed are: How did the Soviets lose power? And why did the workers and peasants of the former Soviet Union come to see the Communist Party apparatus as their oppressor, not their liberator? In summary fashion, Camejo/Sheppard explain that the revolution came under attack from the armies of world imperialism after World War I; revolutionary uprisings in Germany and other European countries were defeated; the Soviet government was isolated, the economy in shambles; the revolutionary working class forces were exhausted and gave way to self-seekers in the government apparatus, and in the Soviet Com-

munist Party. The apparatus overshadowed the party and soon found a suitable representative in the party leadership in the person of Joseph Stalin. Under Stalin's guidance the increasingly voracious bureaucracy purged the party of its revolutionary elements and converted it into a counter-revolutionary instrument.

Camejo/Sheppard summarize the devastating early consequences inside the Soviet states:

The flowering in the arts that marked the revolutionary years was crushed totally by 1932.

And most important, the elemental rights of the workers were crushed. Unions no longer represented the workers; they became transmission belts for the control of the bureaucracy. The Soviets were turned into meaningless rubber stamps, and the Bolshevik party was destroyed through police measures. In the mid-1930s, Stalin proclaimed that not only could socialism be built in backward Russia, but that it had already been built! This in a country where the state was not "withering away" but becoming more bloated and all-powerful, in a country that had the death penalty for stealing, and that did not even legalize abortions!

Camejo/Sheppard explain briefly the uniquely deformed state structure that emerge from the Stalinist counter-revolution. "What happened," they say, "was that the privileged bureaucratic layer succeeded in destroying the Bolshevik party, crushing workers' democracy, and installing its representatives in power through a police state. But they did not destroy the economic foundations laid down by the October Revolution, the nationalized production, monopoly on foreign trade, etc. The counter-revolution did not yet go all the way back to capitalism."

They stop short, however, of mentioning that the bureaucracy retained the Communist International and through it used the Communist parties in the capitalist world as border patrols, serving the needs of Soviet foreign policy. In this way Stalinist counterrevolutionary ideology penetrated the labor movement in all countries and became a brake on the revolutionary impulse of the working class in all social crises. Thus the Communist Party USA was mainly responsible, in the 1936 general election, for portraying and popularizing lesser-evil electoral policy as a weapon of the working class against the employers. The CP wanted to support Roosevelt in that election but could not do so openly. They coined the slogan, "Defeat Landon At All Cost." And they have used this slogan in every presidential election since, the only change being the name of the candidate. Most recently it was "Defeat Bush At All Cost."

Camejo/Sheppard conclude their article with a plea for further study on the causes and consequences of Stalinism:

Finally, we should recall that the Stalin faction did not take power without a struggle. Tens of thousands of socialists resisted, and their struggle should be part of our heritage. Of course, the most famous and therefore the most hated and feared by the Stalinists was Leon Trotsky. The antics of many so-called Trotskyist sects should not blind us to the need to overcome prejudices against Trotsky as we come to grips with Stalinism. His analysis in books like *Revolution Betrayed* go a long way in helping us understand the rise and fall of Stalinism.

Both Camejo and Sheppard are products of the Trotskyist movement in the U.S., and learned something about the dynamics of class struggle as youth leaders in the Socialist Workers Party and prominent activists in the anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s. They are typical of that political current as it has since evolved. Whether the cross-fertilization of Trotskyist and Stalinist ideas (as acquired in the American experience) can bear fruit in the Committees of Correspondence is beginning to be tested. The proof will come when the Committees are forced to face up to and

identify with a new working class radicalization, probably in the near future. In preparation for this further development, Trotsky's *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* ought to be required reading. One of his last and most encompassing major works, it is the programmatic document upon which the Fourth International was founded in 1938.

### Paul Sweezy's Position

The legacy of socialism is the richest chapter in modern history, and in all of recorded history for that matter. It is woven inextricably in the fabric of our contemporary society, and so must be felt and understood as an essential part of our life. The socialist idea, when it finds material expression in the political action of suffering millions, changes the world. This conviction has animated for more than 40 years a pedagogic explanation and application of Marxism, sometimes tainted with the residue of Stalinist ideology, by Paul M. Sweezy and associates. Sweezy's tenacious search for new ways to explain and apply the basic concepts of Marxist political economy and historical materialism has helped over the years to educate and radicalize more students and political activists than is generally recognized. Sweezy's magazine, *Monthly Review*, now in its 44th year, continues to influence and reflect the U.S. radical movement.

Recently Sweezy spoke at an International Karl Polanyi Conference in Montreal. His topic was "Beyond State and Market." The talk is published in the January 1993 issue of *Monthly Review* under the title, "Socialism: Legacy and Renewal." Here Sweezy takes up two topical questions: Has socialism really been tried and failed? Can the obstacles to a better future be meaningfully addressed within the capitalist framework? His answer to the second question is, predictably, no. But his straightforward way of answering can be useful to radical activists in movements of social protest and to others in unions:

No fundamental changes in the structure of capitalism have taken place in the last three quarters of a century. It is the same system that gave us the 1920s and 1930s. Its normal mode of operation was interrupted by the half-century-long war economy of the 1940s through the 1980s. If it is true, as I believe it is, that this period has now come to an end, the explanation of our present predicament can be summed up by saying that we are back in the 1930s.

Is there any way out of this within the framework of capitalism? I do not believe there is. To be sure, a logically coherent plan can be devised and written down on paper. But it would involve a drastic redistribution of income and wealth and a basic reordering of the way society's economic surplus is utilized. Changes of this kind would be perceived by capitalism's power structure as the equivalent of socialism. And the truth is that they would be right. No bourgeois politician or political party would ever dream of making such proposals.

Sweezy says the answer to the first question — "Has socialism really been tried and failed?" — is easy. (This is the question most persistently being pressed today.) Look at history, he says: "The Middle Ages witnessed not one but several false starts for capitalism. But despite promising beginnings, they lacked the stamina to survive in the predominantly feudal environment of the period. It was not until several centuries later that a new conjuncture emerged in which a budding capitalism could take root and grow powerful enough to fend off its enemies. Once fairly under way, as we know, it grew and spread to global dominance. That something happened once does not mean that it will happen again, but it certainly lends substance to the argument that it can happen again."

Sweezy had a word of advice to those radicals who live in the world of electoral politics and cling to their "lesser evil" shib-

boleths. "If I am right," he said, "the time has come for those of us who are serious about wanting a better future for humanity to say openly and frankly that it cannot be achieved under capitalism. In other words, it is time to revive and renew the historic legacy of socialism as the only realistic and realizable alternative to capitalism."

### The Approach Taken by Solidarity

Among the myriad U.S. Left groups, sects, and cults — all claiming some attachment to "revolutionary Marxism" and none with an active membership exceeding 500, and for the most part with less than 100 — the one that tries most seriously to define itself, to participate in the union movement and the movements of social protest, and to relate in some meaningful way to others in the radical movement is Solidarity. It began in 1986 as a merger of several revolutionary socialist groups with the general idea that radicals ought to coalesce and work to overcome the evils of capitalism instead of dissipating their forces and splitting over theoretical issues. They avoided pretending to be another "Marxist party" and launched what they called "the Solidarity project," which they hoped would appeal to other U.S. radical groups. They also hoped to maintain and broaden contacts with radicals in other countries, especially Mexico and elsewhere in South America. Some founders of Solidarity were recent expellees from the Socialist Workers Party with ties to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. By agreement they constituted themselves as a sympathizing Fourth International Caucus in Solidarity when the project was launched.

Among the members and supporters of Solidarity are trade union activists with many years experience in such formations as Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the New Directions caucus in the United Auto Workers (UAW), and the Hell on Wheels caucus in the New York City transit union, as well as on the monthly publication Labor Notes, which is quite popular in many sectors of the union movement. (For more on the TDU and its role in the fight against the corrupt leadership of the gangster-ridden International Brotherhood of Teamsters [IBT] and in the victory of the Ron Carey slate in the 1991 IBT election, see my article "The Transformation of the Teamsters Union" in BIDOM No. 93, February 1992; and for more on Labor Notes, see my "Report on 1991 Labor Notes Conference" in BIDOM No. 86, June 1991.)

While Solidarity members have been important participants in all of these efforts, they have avoided anything that might compromise the autonomy of the union caucuses or Labor Notes, which are independent of Solidarity and are supported by trade union militants with varying points of view.

The bimonthly magazine, *Against The Current* (ATC), in which Solidarity members are also centrally involved, exists "to promote dialogue among the activists, organizers, and serious scholars of the left." A long list of 40 advisory editors, of diverse political opinion, includes Perry Anderson, Noam Chomsky, Daniel Singer, Ernest Mandel, and other prominent writers and educators.

In 1992 it appeared that the Solidarity project was doing better than other sectors of U.S. radicalism, and in mid-year the leadership of Solidarity invited the Trotskyist group, Fourth Internationalist Tendency (FIT), which had been expelled almost a decade earlier from the Socialist Workers Party, to join Solidarity. A majority in FIT then voted to accept Solidarity's invitation to merge, but with the expressed aim of reconstituting a U.S. sympathizing section of the Fourth International, United Secretariat, and continuing to publish this magazine, *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*.

### An Awareness of Changes in the Radical Movement

During the few months of discussion and debate on this matter of merger the realization emerged among members of both groups that the radical movement in all sectors was undergoing drastic changes. Solidarity held its 1992 convention in St. Louis, August 1-3. In a discussion piece for Solidarity members, Kim Moody, a longtime Solidarity leader, suggested that the Solidarity project had run its course. He said that "the left in the U.S. has decayed beyond the point where a regroupment of some or all of its elements holds out much hope as a perspective in creating a socialist movement in the U.S. in the foreseeable future."

Moody proposed "that Solidarity adopt an active perspective toward the creation of a new working class/social movement-based party of the left in the U.S." He said the role of Solidarity, at that point, should be to "educate on the need for such a party and to work actively within existing social movements, other left tendencies, and 3rd party efforts to build such a new mass party from the local up to the national level." He motivated this, in part, as follows: "Because of the growing diversity of 3rd party efforts, it should be possible for Solidarity and its branches to do this work on the campus, in the community, in movement organizations, and in the unions. Furthermore," he said, "placing independent political action (IPA) at the center of our work will allow us to work with other organizations or tendencies with whom regroupment is not yet viable."

At the convention, David Finkel, a member of Solidarity's Political Committee and editor of ATC, reported on the condition and prospects of Solidarity after six years. He began with the assertion that "a new period has begun" (after the end of the Cold War in 1989) and went on to say, "An assessment of the state of Solidarity six years after our founding convention must take into account the transformation of the political world we live in."

He saw this transformation as conducive to "a new potential for independent political action."

Work around independent politics would not only offer a certain common project for our widely diverse work and branches — and thus both the necessity and the market for Solidarity leaflets, pamphlets, etc. on the subject of IPA — but would also give meaning to the sense of "regroupment" as seeking common projects with other forces on the left. Indeed it is difficult to see what kind of common projects the left could have (not counting short-term anti-war or anti-racist mobilizations responding to particular emergencies) except to work toward the formation of a new independent party of some kind. Such an effort could bring us together with elements of the traditional CP and DSA milieus, militants from people-of-color movements, Green radicals, etc., with whom we might never be in the same small revolutionary group.

This has a similar ring to what Manning Marable has since written in his article for *the Progressive* magazine. Finkel added that "what Solidarity wants to be in this period is a revolutionary socialist organization of activists, with a perspective on rebuilding the workers' movement, maintaining activism in the key social and campus movements, and looking toward a possible sustained movement for an independent labor party."

At the same time he urged Solidarity members to seek cooperation and joint action with such groupings as Committees of Correspondence and supporters of the magazine *CrossRoads*. "We should seek every possible opportunity for such collaboration," he said, "without letting ideological differences or organizational boundaries stand in the way." This is good advice, providing there are issues on which radical groups with different ideologies can agree. And there are many such issues: imperialist war, police

brutality, neglect of the homeless, race prejudice, homophobia, etc.

But collaboration in electoral politics between those who support "lesser-evil" capitalist candidates and those who don't is impossible. This is when, in Manning Marable's phrase, "the democratic right 'to agree to disagree'" must be exercised. But this is not easy in hotly contested election campaigns, as the one between Clinton and Bush seemed to be. Some enthusiastic voters thought this was a contest between good and evil, not between two capitalist politicians pledged to maintain the system of exploitation and oppression.

Social pressures, under present political conditions in industrial nations, bear down on the side of "voter participation," which in the U.S. means vote for either the Democrat or the Republican. Those who understand the capitalist political structure, the restrictions of the two-party game, and the predictable outcome are always challenged to explain why they refuse to participate in the main arena but choose instead to cast a protest vote against the system. On-the-job debates during general elections are opportunities for socialists to explain how the system is rigged and why, and to make recruits to the socialist cause. Some well-meaning socialists find this unpopular and, in the present antisocialist political climate, sometimes embarrassing. They take shelter in the readymade lesser-evil theories, adding new wrinkles as circumstances indicate.

Solidarity members offer solid answers to these questions, arguing that socialism is the only solution to the deepening economic crisis. While this logic is incontrovertible, such explanations were unconvincing to those voters who felt they should vote for change, if for nothing else. There are many reasons for this typical response, but beneath it is the deep-seated conviction that workers are unable to do much for themselves and voters should help put "good guys" in government who will make changes, maybe for the better. This is one of the aims of the U.S. electoral process: to convince as many as possible that the system is the best ever devised; it just needs better people to run it. But for all the millions of campaign dollars spent to promote this idea, about half of all eligible voters stay home on election day. Experience teaches not to expect anything good from Republican or Democratic party politicians.

## II

The question of electoral politics has a different history in the union movement than in the mass working class political organizations, the Socialist Party before World War I and after that the Communist Party. Consequently the idea of a labor party based on the unions is not associated in the popular consciousness with radicalism, partly because the union movement has become institutionalized and tied to the two-party system. Nonetheless, the time-honored union practice of endorsing and campaigning for lesser-evil capitalist candidates is seriously challenged today within a growing number of AFL-CIO unions. The labor party idea is regaining some of the popularity it enjoyed in the 1930s in the formative years of the industrial union movement.

In 1991 a small group of union leaders and sympathizers began to organize what they called "Labor Party Advocates," headed by Tony Mazzocchi, a longtime leader of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (OCAW). They began with a most modest goal, to find out how much labor party sentiment existed among union members. Polls showed that in 30 OCAW locals 65.7 percent responded "yes" to the statement: "Both parties (Democratic and Republican) care more about big business than working

people." To the question "Who best represents the interests of working people?" 49.7 responded "neither party," while the Democrats got 44.2 percent and the Republicans 4 percent. The statement, "It's time for Labor to build a new independent party of working people," was affirmed by 52.8 percent. These results were duplicated in several other unions, leaving no doubt about the extent of labor party sentiment.

Labor Party Advocates (LPA), at its inception, circulated an invitation among unionists to become charter members and pay a \$20 initiation fee to help get the organization started. Wherever LPA meetings could be organized around the country Mazzocchi was on hand to explain that the organization in its beginning stage was limited to the single task of recruiting more members, and had no plans to issue a statement of purpose or endorse candidates for public office. He explained that at some point, when several thousand labor party advocates have joined up, they would call a convention, draft a constitution, and decide what they could do to improve the quality of life for working people.

LPA elicited mixed response from most radical groups, many seeking assurance that if and when a labor party is formed it will be revolutionary, not reformist. Writing in this magazine (January 1992) David Riehle, a founding LPA member, expressed an optimistic view.

While Labor Party Advocates is and will remain for the foreseeable future a propagandistic effort in the unions, it is one that takes place on a far wider scale than past efforts to disseminate the labor party idea by tiny aggregations of socialists, precisely because an element of the union officialdom is impelled by the current crisis to look for alternatives. Since this idea is being revived for the first time in many decades among union activists it is inevitable that there will be many different conceptions of what this should be and what it can become. Mazzocchi's projections are only one of many, and what is important at this point is not whatever castles in the air are being built about future conventions representing 100,000 dues-paying LPA members but the fact that this idea is getting a hearing, and a favorable response, among real, indigenous, rank-and-file trade unionists, and even that actual trade union functioning committees are being established to advocate the idea. So much the better that it is brought forward at the convention of a significant and influential industrial union like the OCAW, endorsed and treated seriously, whatever the reformist illusions of OCAW leaders.

Within the year LPA had grown to a few thousand members, had won endorsements from scattered unions and central labor bodies, and had formed some city-wide recruitment committees that were holding regular meetings. It had begun circulating a bimonthly newsletter to keep its members informed of LPA activities. And two LPA recruitment committees, one in Cleveland and the other in Detroit, had begun to jointly organize the first LPA educational conference which was held in Detroit, December 5-6.

The January 1993 LPA newsletter carried a full report of the Detroit educational conference, summarizing the remarks of many panel speakers, including Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC); Frank Valenta, director of the United Steelworkers District 28 and president of the Greater Cleveland AFL-CIO; Millie Phillips, chairperson and shop steward in the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) local 1245; Lynn Henderson, a working member of United Transportation Union local 1000 and editor of *Straight Track* (a railway workers publication that reaches 25,000 readers); Art Kube, former president of the British Columbia Federation of Labor and currently the director of Special Projects of the Canadian Labour Congress; Norm Leavens, past president of Com-



munications Workers of America (CWA) local 1040; James Gibbs, president of United Mine Workers (UMWA) local 2490 and a leader of the 1989-90 miners strike against the Pittston Company; David Riehle, president of United Transportation Union (UTU) local 650; and others.

This partial list of union officials and activists on the panels of speakers at the two-day conference is indicative of its character. It was an educational conference to begin to build a labor party

---

**“The legacy of socialism is the richest chapter in modern history, and in all of recorded history for that matter... The socialist idea, when it finds material expression in the political action of suffering millions, changes the world.”**

---

leadership in the union movement. Harold Mitchell, president of AFSCME local 100 in Cleveland, was an initiator of the conference, as was Russ Leone, financial secretary of Ford UAW local 600 in Detroit. Both are LPA members.

Of the 245 who registered for the conference most were LPA members, but the newsletter reported that “three dozen people who had not yet become members did so by the end of the weekend.” The conference was larger than expected and accomplished more than could be measured. Everyone present gained new insights on the condition of the union movement and new understanding of what is needed to strengthen it organizationally and politically. One union activist remarked that he heard more discussion of working class needs at this conference than at all the regular union meetings he has attended in the past several years.

The organizers of the conference were anxious to have union officialdom represented and were particularly interested in the talk by Frank Valenta, head of the Cleveland AFL-CIO. Their interest was not limited to the fact that it helps legitimize labor conferences of this kind when union officials participate, but because in Valenta’s talk there seemed to be a shift in political perspective as a result of recent experiences. “I am an advocate of a labor party,” Valenta said, “but I am also a realist. The truth is that, except in a few exceptional circumstances, labor can’t run its own candidates and win. Most people just won’t vote for an independent.” The LPA newsletter noted that Valenta concluded on a somewhat different theme. “The current leadership might not accept the idea of a labor party,” he said, “but the day will come. And thanks to Labor Party Advocates it will come sooner rather than later.”

One of the main panelists, following Valenta’s remarks, was the coal miner James Gibbs [the text of his talk was printed in BIDOM February 1993]. He described the grass roots campaign that elected UMWA leader Jackie Stump to the Virginia state legislature. But the lesson he stressed was the need to prepare a solid foundation for a labor party that is controlled by working people and serves the needs of working people. As he put it, “We started to build our foundation for the next time.”

Lynn Henderson described the despicable role of congressional Democrats in the government attacks on rail unions and warned of the dangers that threaten the entire labor movement. His talk is published in the January 1993 issue of the newspaper *Socialist Action*. Henderson also made interesting comments during one of the general discussions that was an important part of each of the

three conference sessions. Henderson speculated on the future for labor under the Clinton administration.

Much of the labor movement and even some in LPA are convinced that labor is going to have an easier time now that we have a Democratic president and Congress.

But the response of rank-and-file union members to this will certainly be a growing hatred of the Democratic Party, as is already the case among many railroad union members. Union officials who want to maintain their orientation to the Democratic Party may find LPA attractive as a left cover and a way to deflect rank-and-file disgust with the Democrats while continuing to put their hopes in them.

Such speculation makes for interesting discussion and in this instance served as a warning against false hopes in the Democratic Party, and against other political formations of the employing class, the Perot phenomenon being only one example of what may yet be in store.

While this LPA educational conference may not have been as representative of opinion and sentiment in the union movement as appeared to those who were present and participated, it certainly was a welcome departure from the usual gathering of union activists, including opposition caucus formations.

What distinguished this conference was the conscious effort to understand the present economic and social crisis and find some practical solution, which only a mass-based working class political party is capable of introducing and implementing. The “other panelists,” especially Elaine Bernard, director of Harvard University’s trade union program [whose talk was printed in BIDOM, March 1993], introduced new dimensions to the discussion on the political role of unions in capitalist society.

When organizers of the LPA Detroit conference met to evaluate their work and project future LPA actions, they agreed that the conference had exceeded their expectations and attributed its success largely to the selection of able, well-informed speakers. The conference was genuinely educational. Mazzocchi agreed with others at the organizers’ meeting that the conference marked a big advance for LPA over anything previously undertaken.

A fact not considered was the relationship between sectors of the radical movement and LPA, even at this early stage of its development. In the case of this particular local conference, minuscule by comparison with what the labor party movement must become to be a major factor in U.S. politics, it was initiated by radicals in Detroit and Cleveland who are the most conscientious and determined builders of their LPA recruitment committees.

Another contributing factor is the shifting political sentiment and the growing fears of millions of working people. This is transmitted through the unions and to a lesser extent through the radical movement. Undoubtedly decisive sectors of the working class will radicalize as the social crisis grows more acute, and out of this radicalization a new leadership will emerge as the unions are transformed through strike struggles and political actions. But how these developments unfold and how the union transformation occurs will be determined by the way masses of working people shed their sense of dependency on the employers and conclude that only they can solve their problems, and the problems of this society.

The new leadership of this movement will draw upon the legacy of revolutionary Marxism, but whether the present radical groups, or elements within them, can relate to the coming radicalization and contribute much to the struggles ahead remains an open question. □

February 3, 1992

# Revolutionary Socialists and the Committees of Correspondence

by Alex Chis and Malik Miah

*The following article on the importance of the Committees of Correspondence for revolutionary socialists was written by Alex Chis and Malik Miah, members of the BIDOM Editorial Board and elected leaders of the Northern California Committees of Correspondence. Chis and Miah are also members of Activists for Independent Socialist Politics, which publishes the quarterly magazine, Independent Politics (\$8.00 for four issues; send to: P.O. Box 78241, San Francisco, CA 94107).*

**W**hy should revolutionary socialists join and build the Committees of Correspondence (CoC)? The CoC was formed one year ago by former members of the U.S. Communist Party. It held a national conference in Berkeley, California, in July 1992, attended by 1,300 people. It has since grown to nearly 2,000 members, a majority never having been members of the CP. Activists from most left traditions are members, from Trotskyist and Social Democratic to Maoist and anarchist. The former CP leaders openly reject Stalinism and advocate democratic functioning.

Yet there are many socialists not from the CP tradition who reject the CoC as nothing more than Stalinism in a new set of clothes. They believe people can't change, or if they can, it isn't for the better. The fact that the Soviet Union has split apart, with Stalinism worldwide in retreat and disintegration, is irrelevant to these self-proclaimed pure socialists.

An example of this sectarianism toward the CoC was seen in a letter published in the February BIDOM. "These oppositionists," writes Marc Viglielmo, "recently booted out of the CP by their fellow Stalinists, are bad news. They're just as bad as, if not worse than, Gus Hall and company. These are the same people who have preached class-collaboration at every election season, misleading workers into voting for 'lesser-evil' imperialists. There's no sign that they're going to change. If anything, they're going to imitate their fellow Stalinists in the East European and West European CPs by turning into social-democrats." Clearly, for Viglielmo past errors are permanent. Once a Stalinist always a Stalinist.

## Facts Are Stubborn

But facts are stubborn things. Change is possible and is occurring. People from all political traditions are being influenced by the historic changes in the world and are now re-examining previously long held beliefs. They are discussing the lessons of the demise of the Soviet Union. They are discussing whether the end of Stalinism as we've known it means the end of socialism. Was the 1917 Revolution a mistake? Does Leninism lead to

Stalinism? And many other fundamental questions.

All serious socialists are involved in these discussions. Those who simply say, "There is nothing new to discuss because Stalinism never was socialism," are missing the point. The world changes mean a serious discussion on Marxism is possible. What type of socialism are we for? What type of organization is needed to lead the revolution? What type of party and state after the revolution has won? These are not simple questions. Why? Because the urgent task of the working class and the oppressed is to end capitalist rule. The aggression of Washington around the world and the international recession makes that clear.

It is in this context that those calling themselves revolutionary socialists must reject dogmatism and sectarianism. We must work with other socialists to rebuild a mass socialist movement — here and worldwide. That must be our number one objective.

The Committees of Correspondence is seeking to begin that process in the United States. That's its objective. Considering the divisions on the left, it is a huge undertaking. The CoC leadership, an evolving formation, doesn't pretend to have the answer to how to do it. But it openly states that old methods are not the solution. That the left needs to get together and talk it out. We don't need a debate over our past errors and views. What we need now is a discussion of how we can move forward. We need to discuss politics and how to recapture the socialist perspective that has been "stolen" by the Stalinists like Gus Hall, or the sectarians, like the ex-Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party and other self-proclaimed "communists." Unless we do so it will be impossible to rebuild a mass revolutionary movement.

In the "Declaration of Principles" adopted at the July 1992 conference this vision of the CoC is outlined clearly: "The initiators of the Committees of Correspondence are predominantly people with a socialist vision and a Marxist view of history. Yet we are convinced that we can and must build an organization that is pluralist, embracing members who have theoretical frameworks other than Marxist. Recent history makes us believe that there must be tolerance, and even more,

genuine mutual respect and equality among differing activist views."

"Therefore," it adds later, "we are both Marxist and pluralist. We believe different strands of socialist and democratic thought can coexist and enrich each other within the context of a shared political program and practice."

It is for this fundamental reason that the members of Activists for Independent Socialist Politics, initiated by a group of former members of Socialist Action last August, joined the Committees of Correspondence and are actively building it. In the six months that we have been doing so, primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area, the results have been impressive. They confirm our belief that all serious socialists, all those from the Trotskyist tradition, should be members and active builders of the CoC. We should take responsibility for the future direction of the organization. We are not "member observers" of the former CP leaders. It is our organization as much as theirs. That must be our approach. Not to do so is sectarianism and would lead to missing an historic opportunity.

## Our Experiences

What have been our experiences?

In the Bay Area there are over 550 members of the CoC. We are organized into 11 branches and many task forces. These task forces include labor, youth, women, gay and lesbian, environmental, peace and solidarity, African-American, Asian/Pacific, and Latino.

The San Francisco branch meetings are monthly. Most political traditions in the city are represented. We have social democrats, ex-Maoists, Trotskyists, anarchists, and of course ex-CPers. We have greens and independent activists from the solidarity movements and other community struggles. The steering committee is made up of volunteers who prepare the meeting agenda. No one is excluded from leadership tasks.

Our political discussions are wide ranging because of the newness of the group. Most of us have never worked together before. It is a learning process. The emphasis is on democratic discussion. All of us have experienced

bureaucratic functioning in previous organizations.

A case in point concerned the National Coordinating Committee adopting an anti-Bush position before the last presidential elections. Our branch voted to send a letter of protest to the NCC for not consulting with the entire membership first. The proposal came from a young former CPer.

While most of our first six months has been devoted to getting ourselves organized and setting up structure, members are reaching out to win new recruits and are involved in activity. Most activity is done wearing other "hats" but the CoC is raised. Everyone knows that their individual radical activity is not enough to change society — a national left/socialist formation is needed. That's why they have joined the CoC, with the aim of building such a formation. Few youth joined socialist groups in the 1980s, so the average age of the CoC is on the older side right now. But the prospects for growth are there, especially when the CoC starts doing things in its own name and begins actively trying to recruit members.

It has to be realized that the growth in the CoC, about 100 members a month nationally, has been almost entirely without any specific organizational effort. People from around the country hear about this development and send in their money. In some areas CoC chapters have been formed that have no ex-CP members in them at all, and this fact was reported as a positive development at the recent NCC meeting. This year for the first time the CoC is going to start a membership drive and conduct more activity in the name of the CoC.

The first public forum in the CoC name in the Bay Area was organized in January by the Labor Task Force, one of the best organized of the CoC task forces. It was a forum on "Independent Politics," with speakers from five of the independent party formations, and some 200 people attended, with new members signing up for the CoC.

The Oakland CoC is an example of how the CoC combines activity and discussion. There was a discussion around the November 1992 elections. Although there was no common position that could be taken on the major races, comrades still wanted to do something around the elections. We decided to do a human billboarding for the "Tax the Rich" proposition on the California ballot. It was something everyone agreed on, and helped us come together around a common project.

Oakland's most recent activity has been the Pro-Choice Rally in Redding, CA. More than a dozen CoC members from the Oakland chapter alone traveled over 200 miles to Redding for the rally, with other CoCers coming from San Francisco, Sacramento, and other

areas. A Bay Area-wide women's action task force has resulted from this work. This is an example not only of how vital work can be carried out through the CoC, but also concretely how the CoC is clearly not the same as the old CP. The Redding action and the Bay Area Women's Action Task Force are welcomed in the CoC, in contrast to the CP's past positions. This is also noticeable in the support given the National Lesbian/Gay Task Force.

In the Oakland chapter we have many political tendencies: ex-CP recent, ex-CP from decades ago, ex-RCP, ex-Line of March, former members of different Trotskyist groups, and people who have never been involved in a general left organization before. Our task is to continue to welcome those from all perspectives and to begin to reach out to the youth. We've had discussions from the situation in Somalia to the prospects for change in Oakland. With 110 members, we have never tried to recruit anyone yet, having concentrated until now on getting ourselves organized and beginning public activity. Our next job is to reach out to the campuses, have more forums, and start to build the kind of organization the left needs in the U.S.

### National Debate and Convention

The political debate in the CoC is just getting under way. It will be a discussion on the character of the organization and its perspectives. The NCC voted to hold the founding convention in late spring or early summer of 1994. For even this relatively small change from the originally projected date for the conference of the winter of 1994, the NCC voted to have a membership referendum. If this new date is approved by the membership, it will mean an 18-month preconvention verbal and written discussion.

That discussion has already begun informally in the branches in the Bay Area. It took a more formal turn at the February 20 Northern California all-membership meeting of the Committees. The meeting was organized to complete the process of electing a new leadership for the region, to bring together area CoCers, and to begin the discussion for the 1994 convention. At a panel discussion was organized where different points of view on the relationship of the CoC to the left were presented, including what type of organization the CoC should be.

Three of the contributions touched on the main issues facing the national organization. One comrade, a former member of the ex-Line of March (Maoist) organization, outlined her view that the CoC should not be an organization. Instead it should be a network. And that it should do little activity in its own name over the next 18 months until this issue is resolved. She raised questions about call-

ing the CoC socialist since most progressives don't use that term.

A former CP leader and the main leader of the Bay Area CoC indicated her view was that the group should be for the socialist vision but wasn't sure that the name socialist should be in our name. She said the CoC should be an activist organization and multinational in its makeup and aims. She also rejected the CoC being a Leninist vanguard party.

The third view, which we support, outlined seven points. First, the CoC should be explicitly for socialism. This is crucial because of the attempts of Stalinists like Gus Hall to keep the mantle, and because socialism is the only world view to counter capitalism. Second, the CoC should be internationalist and reach out to other organizations fighting for similar objectives. Third, the CoC should be an activist organization. That is the only way to recruit youth and other militant-minded people. Fourth, the CoC should launch a national newspaper. In January, Northern California leaders of the CoC launched a monthly newspaper called, "News for a People's World." It is not a CoC publication but is being used by CoC members in an aggressive manner. Two members of the AISP are on the editorial board of the paper. Fifth, the CoC should be democratic and controlled by its membership. It should not be democratic-centralist in the way that has been practiced by vanguard organizations. It must be open and allow members to express differences as they build the group. Sixth, the CoC should be an organization, and not a network. And lastly, the CoC should have a working class base and orientation.

The discussion at the meeting focused on many of the seven points. In general most speakers agreed the CoC should be an activist organization, and not a loose network. There was more give-and-take on whether it should be explicitly socialist. Everyone agreed this is an important discussion and should be seriously organized nationally and by the Northern California leadership body. Almost every speaker stressed the need for the CoC to do more in its own name.

These type of discussions will continue to take place in the CoC prior to the founding convention. The national CoC will publish written discussion bulletins. Discussion pieces have already appeared in the "Dialogue & Initiative" quarterly. There are ample opportunities for progressives and socialists from the Trotskyist traditions to join this discussion. The question is, "Do we want to?" We say, "Yes!" If we want to be listened to and be effective, revolutionary socialists must be members and builders of the CoC □

*February 28, 1993*

*Jamie Gough is an economic researcher who has been a political activist in London, and is currently teaching at the University of Sydney in Australia. Mike Macnair teaches law at Oxford University. Both have been involved in the gay liberation movement since the early 1970s. This article is composed of excerpts from the book **Gay Liberation in the Eighties**, written by Gough and Macnair, and first published in 1985 by Pluto Press Limited in London and by Pluto Press Australia Limited. The authors deal with questions which are being discussed and debated by lesbian and gay rights activists. In the introduction to the book, Gough and Macnair explain their purposes, which include: an attempt to answer questions posed about the connection between issues of sexuality and political struggles; why revolutionary socialists should be involved in and concerned about lesbian and gay liberation; and how the struggle for homosexual rights and liberation is part of and inseparable from the revolutionary struggle for socialism.*

# Examining the Roots of

# Lesbian and Gay Oppression

by Jamie Gough and Mike Macnair

## Discussion

**W**hy are gay people oppressed? This is really two questions: why are there gay people, and why does society oppress us?

It's common to try to discuss psychology and society apart from the physical world, apart from technology, and apart from history. We reject this approach. The physical circumstances and social relations which shape our lives and our psychology from the day we are born are produced by earlier events of the same sort: they are part of history. "Timeless" psychology and "timeless" sociology leave out of account the fact that the world is changing around us.

Our nature [as a species] endows us with a homosexual capacity, but it does not define how it is used. There are records of both lesbian and male homosexual activity in a great variety of different societies: those societies without classes ("primitive societies"); the free citizens and aristocracy of Imperial China, classical Islam, ancient Greece and Rome; medieval Europe; seventeenth-century England; as well as in virtually every country of the world today. What is striking is the enormous variation in the status of gay sexuality in these societies. The status of lesbian activity was quite different to that of male homosexual activity in virtually all cases. Each was fiercely repressed in some cases, condemned but tolerated in others, and in other societies regarded as an integral part of social life. The "natural revulsion" to gay sexuality felt by many people is anything but "natural."

Even more varied than the degree of "tolerance" was the meaning and significance of lesbian and gay sexual activity. For example, in modern Britain all sexual activity between men is regarded as falling into essentially one category, "homosexuality." Whatever the ages and classes of the men involved, and whatever sexual activities they engage in, it is equally "homosexuality" (and as such, equally to be condemned). We can contrast this with Renaissance times, where male homosexual relations were lumped together with men having sex with underage women or prostitutes under the heading "sodomy" (and therefore equally

sinful). Even more striking is the contrast with primitive societies. In these societies male homosexual behavior is integrated in two typical ways. One is where some males are reared as females, often attributed religious or magical powers, and often married to another man. A second is where sexual relations between boys or young men and older men is part of the process of teaching skills. In these societies sexual relations between males may have meant "magic," or it may have meant "adulthood." For us, it means "taboo," "excitement," or "true love." The same physical activities have a completely different significance.

Gay sexual activity has not always been the preserve of a distinct group of people — lesbians and gay men. The existence of a group of people identified as "gay" is specific to capitalist society. Gay sexual activity has in the past been seen as a universal potential, not as something embodied in particular individuals. Our present-day notion of "a homosexual" would have been recognized in mercantile London in the eighteenth century. But in medieval Europe or ancient Greece, the notion of "a homosexual" would simply not have been understood. The notion of "a lesbian" or "a gay man" with a whole set of particular inbuilt personality traits would have been even more incomprehensible. We can see then, that both the practice of homosexuality and its repression have varied enormously between different types of society.

## Repression and Male Power

Although the repression of gay sexual activity has been variable throughout history, it is possible to discern a more or less constant thread. Two kinds of sexual activity have been consistently condemned and penalized: lesbian sex of any kind; and adult men who are penetrated, sexually "passive" or otherwise "effeminate." The notable exceptions to this pattern are some primitive societies; ancient Sparta; and some cases sanctioned by religions. Thus certain societies (classical Athens; Imperial China; Islamic societies) approved of boys and youths acting the passive part; but not after they reached adulthood. Other societies condemn homosexual acts in theory, but tolerate pederasty in practice (ancient Rome, medieval England).

The "natural order" offended by these tabooed practices is the system of male power and female submission, which feminists have called "patriarchy." Lesbian sex is women without men, and it is women seeking sex, not being passed passively from the hand of the father to the hand of the husband. Lesbianism implies

comradeship between women, where the social order prescribes their isolation. An adult man who is penetrated or is effeminate, on the other hand, acts like a woman and thereby symbolically betrays his sex's right to power.

We do not think that male power arises from the organization of sexual activity in any direct sense. But male power and sexuality are closely entangled. Our sexual capacity is enormously "elastic": almost any social relationship (and indeed, almost any physical or emotional state) is capable of being erotic. But why do power relations so often have a sexual aspect? A part of the answer is that our sexual capacity implies, in the most general sense, a sexual need. The variety of forms of sexuality shows that this need is not at all specific.

All social relations tend to have a sexual aspect. But this is particularly true of relations of power, because the conditions for sexual activity are dependent on power. At the extreme, sex is dependent on getting enough to eat. If, in order to get enough to eat, society is organized in a way that gives some people power over others, that power will be used sexually.

Male power, then, is sexual. How does the repression of women without men and of "passive" men arise from this? The objection to them is not that they fail to do something that dominant men want them to do. (Indeed, the latter may relish lesbian sex as a "turn-on," or may want sex with an adult man: sexual pleasure propped upon power.) The most that can be said is that they do something *different* from what the dominant man may want. Rather, the reason for the hostility to lesbianism and passive men is that *they are psychologically threatening to the rationalizations of male power*. Male power is not natural. The physical and mental abilities of the sexes are much the same. Gender differences in society as it now exists are the products of upbringing, not genetic codes.

From this perspective, patriarchy — and indeed the exclusion of any group from social decision-making — appears completely irrational. The rationalization of male power is contained first of all in ideas about gender roles — about the appropriate behavior for the sexes. Independent women and effeminate men seem to throw doubt on men's prerogative of power. Gender roles and the sexual taboos reinforce each other: independence in women implies lesbian sex and is therefore wrong; lesbian sex implies independent women and is therefore wrong.

## The Family System

Male power has economic roots. It is a part of the way society organizes the production of everyday necessities and the reproduction of the species. Moreover, the way we get food, warmth, shelter, is up to the present the dominant element in our lives: it shapes and sets limits on everything else we do, including the reproduction of the species. Male power is not the result of men's and women's biology, nor of an inherent male drive to dominate. It can therefore be overthrown, as part of changing the economic system. We hope now to justify this claim.

By "family" we mean social arrangements under which the biological parents of children are primarily responsible for feeding and housing children and for part of their socialization up to the age of puberty. Family in this sense is a special sort of social division of labor: *societies* have to ensure that children are brought up with a family system; *parents* do the job. There is much more to the family, in different societies, than this; but this, in our view, is the bare bones on which the rest is hung.

"Class," too, is a special sort of social division of labor. To say that classes exist within society is to say three things. First, that different groups of people get incomparably different shares of the surplus produced by the society: the food, etc., left over after everyone has had enough to carry on working from day to day. Second, that different groups of people participate to completely different extents in social decision-making. Third, that the group you fall into is determined by your birth; that is to say, that most people end up in the same class that their parents were in.

Class requires a family organization of society through which class position can be passed on from parents to children. A society in which the rearing of children was the responsibility of the community could not have classes.

So why did the family and women's oppression come into existence? It seems likely that class society emerged from primitive hunting or cattle-herding society. [Societies in which there was a need for prolonged breast-feeding and nurturing due to the long childhood of human beings; mothers bore the responsibility for these needs and, thus, were prevented from engaging in hunting and cattle-raising activities.] As far back as we go in history we have stories of barbarian conquerors of settled agricultural peoples becoming their rulers and their ruling classes. It is likely that the conquering peoples were more strongly male dominated than those they subjected. We can guess that this is how class society came into existence.

The oppression of women, therefore came before (and in one sense helped to "cause") class society. But it was not caused by human or by male "nature" except in some very indirect sense. It was the product of the demographic and technical constraints of primitive society. Why then has the oppression of women not already disappeared?

To start with, the demographic constraints are, as far as the mass of people in the world are concerned, only now disappearing. From the mid-nineteenth century in the most developed countries, infant and general mortality fell rapidly, and the incentive for many pregnancies disappeared. The twentieth century has given us more effective methods of contraception, safer methods of abortion, and bottle-feeding. These technical changes establish some of the material conditions for women's liberation.

The second reason for the persistence of the family is that it suits the ruling class for the major part of childcare to be the private and unpaid responsibilities of families, and within families, of women. There is no technical reason why this should not have been a social, communal responsibility. But this would have implied a permanent shift in socially organized resources towards meeting the needs of exploited classes (as it would now). While ruling classes have been willing to take some responsibility for childcare at certain times, it is a much more flexible and prudent policy from their point of view that this should remain essentially the private responsibility of families.

Thirdly, the family remains important to and in the class system. For a male member of the ruling class, enslaving women ensures that *his* descendants will get his property after he dies, or will get his social position. The same is true of artisans, peasants, and petty traders. In the imperialist countries (the U.S.A., Japan, and Western Europe), many working-class men have been able to acquire property in the form of houses, cars, furniture, and so on as well. And through the family system skilled manual and nonmanual workers are often able to pass on their advantage in the labor market to their children. Only the underclass of the poor, particularly those in the Third World, are truly propertyless. A desire

to prevent their children falling into this underclass, and the hope that they can improve their social position, is common among members of subordinate classes in capitalist society. It implies a commitment to inheritance which, in turn, implies a commitment to female monogamy. And it implies the family upbringing of children.

Fourth and simplest: the family system gives men power over women.

Finally, the state in modern society is concerned to preserve the social order. The division between families, between men and women, between parents and children that the family involves is a means by which the state can do this: “divide and rule” is a very ancient maxim of statecraft. This is one reason why the state maintains a series of artificial incentives to the formation and maintenance of families: tax allowances, the legal regime of marriage, and so on.

To sum up: women’s oppression and male power originated in material, technical conditions in primitive society. It has continued because a number of those technical constraints have only recently been overcome, because it is functional for class society and for individuals in class society, and because men get certain benefits from it.

We can now see more precisely what kind of threat lesbian and passive male adult sex have posed to the family and the system of male power. The fact that people have practiced these types of sexual activity in numerous male-dominated societies shows that male power has never been absolute, that all these societies have contained rifts and tensions that have allowed the forbidden practices to take place. The greater these tensions, the greater the instability of the society, the greater the threat posed to the rationalization of male power by the tabooed form of sex.

But this disturbance of patriarchal ideas has not in itself threatened patriarchy. The only threat to the *existence* of this system is that an alternative way is possible of controlling reproduction and organizing child care, that there is no longer a need to organize economic inequality and the inheritance of private property, and that women are aware of this alternative and organize to fight for it. This is indeed now the situation. But it has only been so for a hundred-odd years: only recently in human history has the existence of male dominance as such been threatened.

## Working-Class Families and the Market

The family plays a crucial part in the regulation of sexuality in all class societies. But within capitalist society, the development of the economy increasingly strips the working-class family of its reasons for existence. The working-class family is eroded and in some cases actually smashed up by the market. A tremendous tension is set up between the family and the market and the two systems of sexuality that they involve. We will argue that the heterosexual, lesbian, and gay male identities are a product of this tension.

But first, what do we mean by the “erosion” of the family by the market? As capitalist society has developed, the tasks involved in regulating the number of children, in child rearing and in “housework,” previously the responsibility of the family, increasingly come to be performed outside the home: they are either purchased on the market or obtained as a service from the state. An early example of this was wet nursing: from the beginning of the period of manufacture — the late seventeenth century in England — and throughout the industrial revolution, women were paid to breast-feed infants not their own. The post-Second World

War has replaced this by bottle feeding. From the late nineteenth century schools have performed an increasing part of the education of children. Marketed products have also played an increasing role — toys, books, now home computers. During the twentieth century, fertility has become regulated by more effective contraception and safe abortion techniques, available on the market or provided by the state.

Other “household” tasks have been removed from the household. The making of clothes and the growing of food have been almost totally removed. Caring for the sick, the preparation of food, the washing of clothes have been partly removed. Other tasks have been lightened by domestic appliances and new chemicals — though these have also had the effect of locating more of the work in the home: the laundry and launderette replaced by the family washing machine.

The work removed from the household in these ways is now performed by paid labor within firms or the state. It thus becomes part of what is conventionally accounted as “the economy,” the labor time that is measured and organized by society, rather than the hidden, uncounted hours of work performed by women within the home. We may say that this work has ceased to be private and become “socialized.”

Another way in which capitalism tends to erode the working-class family is through its thirst for new sources of labor. For this reason, capitalism has abolished the legal right of the husband to determine whether his wife works outside the home. By creating new and far-flung employment opportunities for young people it cuts down the power of parents to determine whether, when, and whom their children will marry. For some parts of the working class this has taken extreme forms. In the industrial revolution in England, female and child labor, and high mobility of labor tended to break up family organization. Individual factory owners themselves organized important “family functions” by providing tied housing and the “truck” system of payment in goods, not money. The unemployed were sex-segregated in workhouses and deported from parish to parish. Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* commented that:

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation between parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting the more, by action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

Further steps in this direction were taken by factory owners in the northern states of the U.S.A. in the 1830s and 1840s who accommodated their “hands” in barracks segregated by sex, and provided meals as part of wages.

Nor were these practices nineteenth-century aberrations. The South African apartheid system enforces separation of black men and women, making marriage and family household meaningless. Migrant workers in Germany, France, and Switzerland have been similarly housed in barracks and hostels, and separated from their families for long periods. In the search for cheap labor, employers and governments in Britain have happily torn apart families of black people. As long as the supply of labor is by some means assured, the individual business pursuing its economic interests is unconcerned whether the family exists or not.

A further aspect of the erosion of the family is that the market affords scope for sex outside the regulation of the family. Before the end of the seventeenth century people who did not form their own family households still lived in other family households, as

servants, apprentices, lodgers. The rise of the market has included the growth of a market in accommodation, food, etc.; and the growth of urban, industrial, impersonal employment. This makes it possible to live — at least in the big cities, and during this century in most towns — wholly outside the family, and therefore outside of the intimacy and social control involved in family life. That this implies more sex outside the family can be seen by the appearance of the gay scene in early eighteenth-century London and the steady rise of illegitimacy figures in the same period (the latter reaching a peak during the dislocation of the family during the industrial revolution). These trends have continued this century and particularly in the last twenty years [1965–85].

Finally, over the last hundred years or so, the tensions surrounding the family have allowed women to form a movement for their liberation, and this has further prised open the jaws of the family.

These developments have not, of course, abolished the working-class family. The family still organizes inheritance for all but the poorest; and much childcare and “housework” is still done within it. And during the twentieth century, leisure has become increasingly home- and family-based. The market has replaced collective facilities — the theatre, the cinema, the pub, the football match — with private ones — radio, TV, video, computer games.

Moreover, capitalism always acts in an uneven way: it radically erodes the family in some periods, reconstitutes it in others; it builds the family of one part of the world working class while it destroys it in another. The consequence is a continuous tension between the direct operation of capital and the market on the one hand and the family system on the other.

## Sexuality and Capitalism

A result of this tension is that *people increasingly enter into sexual relations with each other as “free” individuals*. By “free” here we mean free of arranged marriages, of parental direction, of control by the church, of legal restriction, even free from “conjugal duty.” “Free” also in the sense of economically independent from a father or a husband. Of course, this freedom is still massively circumscribed by the family, especially for women and youth. And it is purely individualistic freedom — an absence of constraint, not a freedom to collaborate with others. In short, it is typical capitalist freedom.

The freedom to choose sexual partners has significantly increased for men during the development of capitalist society, but it has increased massively for women. More choice for women means that they lose their subjection to their fathers and husbands — but tend to “gain” subjection by the male sex as a whole (just as the end of serfdom meant freedom from your particular lord but subjection to the capitalist class as a whole). You don’t have to marry Smith — but you’ve still got to marry someone.

The importance of sex to human beings has meant that the space opened up by these new freedoms has been used. And indeed, sex seems to have acquired an additional symbolic importance in our individualistic society. It has become a token of our individual control of our bodies, and of the limits of that control. In sex we assert our individuality but also lose control of our bodies to ourselves or to another — a contradiction which entices us. The result has been the increasing sexualization of our society.

The increase in freedom to choose sexual partners has been the most obvious in sex outside the family, both heterosexual and gay, and in the way in which people enter into marriages. But it has also entered into the family itself. The removal of the link between heterosexual activity and childbearing, and the reduction in the

total length and intensity of the (paid and unpaid) working week, allows sex more space within marriage; it particularly allows women more sexual freedom. Thus marriage, too, has become sexualized. During this century this has been evident in the rise of sexual marriage counseling, the sales of sex manuals, and the growth of “sexual incompatibility” as grounds for divorce. This at the same time cements and destabilizes the family.

More choice in a situation where there is still massive constraint, massive alienation, means more fetishism. Women’s sexual capacity becomes more sharply fetishized by men. And, as women come to choose between men, male attributes, too, begin to be fetishized. In a market society people’s capacity to produce appears to others in the form of commodities that they sell, of objects. In an analogous way, in a capitalist society, people’s sexual capacity increasingly appears to others as fetishized attributes.

With the increasing sexualization of marriage, and the growth of “markets” for lesbian and gay sex, the most important fetish becomes the *gender* of the sexual partner. The main division is then between heterosexual activity of whatever kind and homosexual activity of whatever kind, between “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality.” A sharp distinction is no longer made between passive adult male homosexual behavior and other male homosexual activity: male “homosexuality” as such is now repressed. And, increasingly, lesbian and male homosexual behavior is put into the same category, “homosexuality” — although lesbianism and male homosexuality in reality must remain distinct while women are repressed as a sex.

But that is not all. Capitalist society not only makes us freer to choose our sexual partner, but the object of our desire is freer to meet our fantasy, to fit in with our fetish. *I* am attracted to men; *you* become the type of person who responds only to men. Thus we come increasingly to be *carriers* of particular fetishized sexualities: this sexuality is both what we desire, and what we want others to desire in us. We acquire a “sexual identity.”

Each sexual identity develops in relation to the others. The more the heterosexual identity has developed, the more our capacity for homosexual relations and other forms of sexual pleasure show up as separate categories of people: *non*-heterosexual people, people who can’t or won’t perform. Thus we become a heterosexual, a lesbian, or a gay man.

We can see this in the process of entering into marriage. In peasant societies the man selects the woman on the basis of her strength, her ability to work. In our society, marriages are increasingly contracted not just on the basis of sexual attraction but precisely on the basis of each partner’s “heterosexual nature.” As the productive rationale of marriage declines, this reason attains more prominence. Formerly, the obscurity of the real reasons for the formation of marriage meant that it appeared as a religious duty. Now the (ever increasing) obscurity of the reasons for marriage mean that it appears as a sexual arrangement, through a fetishized heterosexual identity.

The appearance of sexual identity is thus neither simply a product of capitalist freedom, nor simply a product of the restriction of sexual capacity by capitalism: it results from their uneasy combination. It is not a product simply of the market, nor of the family, but of the tension between them.

This complicated relationship can be seen in the history of the homosexual identity. The periods of capitalism when the homosexual identity has become sharper have not been those when

*Continued on page 34*

---

## All out for the April 25 Lesbian/Gay/Bi March on Washington!

---

# Socialism and the Struggle for Lesbian/Gay Liberation

by Paul Lefrak

---

On April 25, 1993, in what will probably be one of the largest demonstrations for equal rights in U.S. history, hundreds of thousands of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and their supporters will march on Washington, D.C., to demand an end to homophobic bigotry, violence, and all the continued legal, social, and political obstacles to their full equality and liberation as human beings.

Organized as a broad united front of hundreds of local and national groups, the national organization of the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation has adopted what is clearly the most left-wing platform and set of demands of any national mobilization in recent U.S. history. The "Action Statement Preamble" to the Platform for the March indicates the breadth of the concerns that will bring hundreds of thousands of people into the streets on April 25:

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender movement recognizes that our quest for social justice fundamentally links us to the struggles against racism and sexism, class bias, economic injustice and religious intolerance. We must realize if one of us is oppressed we all are oppressed. The diversity of our movement requires and compels us to stand in opposition to all forms of oppression that diminish the quality of life for all people. We will be vigilant in our determination to rid our movement and our society of all forms of oppression and exploitation, so that all of us can develop to our full human potential without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation/identification, identity, gender and gender expression, ability, age or class.

### The Lesbian/Gay Movement and the April 25 March on Washington

The March on Washington comes at a time when crimes of violence against lesbians and gay men, both in this country and internationally, are greatly increasing. Legal reforms — and the attempts to reverse them — also dominate the news. While a particularly hateful referendum failed in Oregon during the November elections, a referendum that prohibits equal-rights laws in the state of Colorado was approved. Immediately, non-discrimination ordinances were struck down in Denver, Boulder, and Aspen.

Recent national attention has been focused on the machinations of President Bill Clinton, Congressional leaders, and top Pentagon officials concerning the modest reform that would remove legal barriers that prevent gay men and lesbians from serving as cannon fodder for U.S. imperialism.

After recovering from the initial shock of a renewed right-wing offensive in the early to mid-1980s, along with the devastation of the AIDS epidemic, the lesbian/gay movement emerged from the 1980s with an increased strength, vitality, and militancy. Following the 650,000-strong October 11, 1987, March on Washington, new organizations like ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) and Queer Nation sprang up with local chapters all over the country.

The struggle against the firings of lesbians and gay men at the Cracker Barrel restaurant chain mobilized lesbian/gay activists to organize politically across the South for the first time and helped regenerate the movement elsewhere. Attempts were made to link the struggle for lesbian/gay rights with the struggle against racism, the labor movement, and the fight for women's rights. The racial demographics of the AIDS crisis, increased organizing among Black, Latino, Asian, and other minority lesbians and gay men, and the right wing's "divide-and-conquer" assault on racial minorities and women, as well as lesbians and gay men, underlined the need for the unity.

Under pressure from its ranks, even the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), an accommodationist "Washington-insider" group, made a shift to the left and began to involve itself in grassroots organizing. The National Organization for Women (NOW) also began to devote more resources to the struggle for lesbian/gay rights and organized Young Feminist Conferences that attracted many young lesbians committed to a break from mainstream politics and a turn toward mass action. This layer of youth, mobilized from the abortion rights and lesbian/gay movement, pressured the NOW leadership to go much further than it wanted toward a break with the two capitalist parties.

The organizing for the April 25 March on Washington is taking place in this context of a renewed lesbian/gay movement.

### The Lesbian/Gay Movement and the Left

Lesbians and gay men are one of the most oppressed sectors of capitalist society; they are mainly working-class, and their resistance and rebellion continue to grow. As lesbians and gay men are — reflecting US society in general — more working-class than, say, American college students, it would seem logical that the lesbian/gay movement would attract the attention of revolutionary Marxists, if only out of a narrow desire for recruitment. However, the historical attitude of the revolutionary left toward the lesbian/gay movement — including those forces that consider themselves Trotskyist — has generally been marked by abstention and arrogance and often by homophobia.

It is not the intention of this article to document the problems of the intersection of the non-Trotskyist left with the lesbian/gay struggle, particularly the disgusting positions taken by the traditional Stalinists and Maoists, who generally have viewed lesbians and gay men as degenerate products of bourgeois society. It also is not my aim to offer a critique of the majority of the middle-class leaders of the lesbian/gay movement, who have failed to develop an anticapitalist perspective and link the struggles of lesbians and gay men with the struggles of the working class and of Blacks, women, and other sectors of the oppressed.

I do, however, want to discuss the positions Trotskyists have taken and, in my opinion, should take on lesbian/gay liberation. Among international Trotskyist forces, the record has been mixed, although generally getting better over time. Like the little girl with the curl, when they've been good, they've been very, very good. But when they've been bad, they've been terrible.

Prior to 1970, lesbians and gay men were excluded from the ranks of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). This and the continuing "closet rule" of the Spartacist League prohibiting gay members from being open are part of the terrible side of this legacy. On the positive side, adherents of the Fourth International have often been the only left-wing political force to consistently defend the rights of lesbians and gay men and have often played a positive role in building united



fronts to lead struggles for lesbian/gay equality.

### The "Vulgar Marxist" View of Lesbian/Gay Oppression

Among Marxists, concrete political perspectives and the carrying out of actual tasks in any arena flow from a theoretical understanding of the economic and social conditions of class society. An analysis of the origins of lesbian/gay oppression under capitalism is necessary to reach the political conclusions that would lead revolutionary Marxists to fight for leadership in the struggle for the emancipation of lesbians, gay men, and all sexual minorities, and to view that fight as a necessary and completely interwoven part of the fight for socialist revolution.

Failure to develop a historical-materialist analysis of lesbian/gay oppression — a failure that is itself a product of adaptation to bourgeois ideology — has led many Trotskyists to take abstentionist positions toward the fight for lesbian/gay liberation. In the absence of real theory, what passes for "theory" goes something like this: the victimization and social stigmatization of gay people is just part of a ruling-class attempt to divide the working class, to prevent all workers from seeing their real enemy in the capitalist class.

While this dynamic is certainly a *component* of the dialectic of lesbian/gay oppression, this "vulgar Marxist" analysis fails to offer an historical-materialist perspective on why homosexuality has been singled out by the bourgeoisie and its ruling institutions for so much vilification and hatred. This perspective is fundamentally incapable of answering the questions of the most thoughtful and militant left-wing lesbians and gay men, who understand that there has to be a deeper reason for their oppression, beyond the divide-and-conquer tactics of the ruling class.

In failing to explain why sexual orientation and not, say, left- or right-handedness, is a category "chosen" by the ruling class to divide the working class, proponents of the "vulgar Marxist" school leave the door open to the bourgeois sexual morality that says there must be something very wrong about gay sexuality that leads so many people in this society to revile it. Why else all the fuss?

The vulgar Marxist analysis fails to answer why lesbian/gay sexuality must be repressed and gay people closeted under capitalism. It fails to answer why the repression of homosexuality also existed in many precapitalist class societies, why the intensity of the oppression has varied in different societies, why a distinct lesbian- and gay-identified subculture arose in certain societies and not in others, and why the lesbian/gay movement has developed where, when, and how it has.

The vulgar Marxist analysis is an abstention from real political theory that leads almost invariably to an abstention from real political practice.

### The "Democratist" View of Lesbian/Gay Oppression

Another inadequate approach is to see the lesbian/gay struggle as one that begins and ends with purely bourgeois-democratic demands for equal rights. This begs the question of whether it is possible to eradicate lesbian/gay oppression under capitalism through legal equality, and if not, why not?

This question has practical implications. If it is not possible to eradicate lesbian/gay oppression under capitalism, then merely bourgeois-democratic demands are inadequate. A system of transitional demands is necessary to provide a bridge between today's "single-issue" struggles of separate sectors of the oppressed and the future *unified* struggle of all the exploited and the oppressed, under the leadership of the working class, for socialist revolution.

Revolutionaries must raise transitional demands to connect the lesbian/gay movement and its most farsighted radical vanguard with the fight for socialist revolution. The proletarian revolution needs lesbian and gay leaders in its vanguard and its party. These cannot be won through the illusion or pretense that the lesbian/gay question will be solved as a byproduct of the resolution of the class question, anymore than Black or women leaders can be won through analogous illusions or pretenses. Radical and potentially revolutionary lesbians and gay men know that the struggle for lesbian/gay liberation will continue *after* the revolution and that legal equality is not enough. They will only join or remain in a revolutionary organization that acknowledges this.

Revolutionaries must intersect the lesbian/gay movement with transitional demands that speak to the political tasks at hand in this epoch of rapidly decaying capitalism. The slogan of worker-community defense guards to combat racist, sexist, and antigay violence is one such demand. Another is the demand for free, nationalized healthcare under the control of workers and clients, which has great potential for linking the struggles of gay people, Blacks and Latinos, and others fighting government and corporate inaction on AIDS and the struggles of workers and the poor to get and maintain healthcare.

As the betrayals of Clinton and the Democrats becomes ever more apparent, the demand for an independent labor party, a party of the workers and

the oppressed, will gain increasing popularity.

As most lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are working-class, they will be drawn into political struggle around class demands as well. Fighting against lesbian/gay oppression in the workplace and for language in union contracts against anti-lesbian/gay discrimination can further build the links between gay people and the working class as a whole.

### Capitalism and Lesbian/Gay Oppression

A Marxist analysis of lesbian/gay oppression must begin with the understanding that just as the economic mode of production changes and develops, so too does the social mode of reproduction. The oppression of both women and lesbians and gay men under capitalism is rooted in the bourgeois nuclear family, a relatively recent product of human history.

That is not to say that women's oppression and the repression of homosexuality did not exist prior to the development of capitalism. Monogamous heterosexual marriage went along with the overthrow of mother-right (the matrilineal determination of familial descent) in order to ensure that the male-controlled, privately owned wealth was passed on to sons.

Private property also led to the first forms of the state as an instrument of control by those who owned property over those who did not. Laws and social mores that ensured the domination of men over women followed. As Engels put it in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*:

The first class antagonism that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.

Under capitalism, the nuclear family is needed by the capitalists as the cheapest possible way to reproduce the next generation of workers and class society in general. The cost of childrearing and domestic labor is borne not by the capitalists or society as a whole, but is supplied free by women in atomized family units. The nuclear family provides the services (food, shelter, sex, companionship, etc.) that enables workers to do their jobs.

The nuclear family also teaches workers submissiveness and socializes children to fit into the existing class structure. It gives the semblance of a "private sphere" as a refuge in a cruel competitive world. The nuclear family allows the male worker to feel like "king of the castle" and take out the pressures of work life upon his wife and children.

Finally, the nuclear family gives the capitalists millions of individual markets for their consumer goods and services. Every family unit that can afford it must buy its own automobile, its own washing machine, etc.

Lesbian and gay sexuality, because its very existence challenges the myth that the capitalist nuclear family is the only way of human relating, is a threat to the continued existence of the monogamous heterosexual nuclear family as the backbone of the capitalist system of reproduction. Lesbian and gay relating challenges the sex roles of capitalist society and is a threat to the social order.

Capitalist society needs the traditional nuclear family, but at the same time the strains

*Continued on page 36*

# Salinas's Mexican Miracle Begins to Fade

by Rosendo Mendoza

The last decade has witnessed the emergence of a series of charismatic political figures that have embodied the neoliberal project in Latin America. Most were hailed internationally as political saviors who had come to usher in a new age of free trade, economic modernization, and political reform.

Most have quickly fallen from power, such as Collor de Mello in Brazil, or found themselves immersed in the chronic political instability that the neoliberal agenda inevitably entails.<sup>1</sup>

The one seeming exception has been the Mexican regime of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. His economic and political policies have been hailed in boardrooms around the globe, praised as a model not only for the rest of Latin America but even for the restorationist regimes of Eastern Europe.

In its "Man of the Year" issue *Time* magazine hailed Salinas as "the real revolutionary" (sic), while somewhat more aptly adding that he is reversing Mexico's history.

Despite the comical efforts of Argentina's Raúl Menem to replace him as Washington's key ally in the region, Salinas continues to serve as pointman for imperialism's free trade, privatization, and austerity agendas.

Not only has he been the chief promoter of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), he has developed parallel initiatives in the rest of the region and promoted U.S. foreign policy.

But 1993 marks the beginning of the end for Salinas's six-year term. Later this year he must name his successor to preside over the dictatorial regime that has ruled Mexico for well over half a century.

The battle for succession has already begun, and with the Salinas economic "miracle" beginning to run out of steam and the government's efforts to create a new long-term model for assuring political stability not yet complete, the next period could produce unprecedented social and political tensions.

## The Salinas Miracle

Upon taking office, Salinas pledged to bring Mexico into the ranks of first-world countries. To a certain extent he has kept his promise, at least vis-à-vis his closest associates in Mexico's increasingly powerful ruling class.

His multibillion-dollar privatization program<sup>2</sup> has filled government coffers and armed his cronies with some of the country's largest and most viable businesses.

Much like what has happened in Argentina and Brazil, the main beneficiaries have been

presidential associates who snapped up the country's banks, lucrative phone monopoly and other key industries in operations in which winning bids were arbitrarily decided by administration officials.

The Mexican Stock Market (BMV) became a speculator's paradise, offering some of the highest returns available on any exchange in the world.

But there are clear signs that what David Rockefeller termed the new "Mexican miracle" is running out of steam. With oil prices dropping and the prized maquiladora industry failing to deliver on promises it would reactivate national industry,<sup>3</sup> the country's trade deficit has grown 350 percent in the last three years.

Shortly after taking office, the Salinas administration successfully turned the country's favorable trade balance with the United States into a multimillion-dollar deficit, a fact for which Bill Clinton rather tactlessly thanked him during their recent meeting in Austin, Texas.

Despite government projections that the deficit would largely reflect imports of capital goods destined to modernize domestic industry, new data indicate consumer goods represent the lion's share of imports, growing 35.8 percent in 1992.

Efforts to offset the trade deficit by continuing to attract foreign investments are floundering, since the largely speculative capital that flowed into Mexico in recent years is beginning to evaporate as the BMV suffers a major decline.<sup>4</sup>

And leading business groups who are among Salinas's most enthusiastic supporters have begun to openly express serious fears about the regime's refusal to implement major adjustments in economic policy.

## The Other Mexico

From the beginning, Salinas's policies have meant growing poverty and social despair for the vast majority of people. Today more than 40 million Mexicans — half the population — live in conditions of absolute poverty. Workers' incomes have been slashed to less than a third of their 1977 levels, the year in which average income reached an all-time high.

It is estimated that close to 40 percent of the workforce earns the minimum wage or less while less than five percent made as much as five times that rate. The official minimum wage is currently running at 13.3 new pesos, or about \$4.00 a day.

Promises that free trade policies would result in greater employment have proven

totally false. Despite official claims that Mexico enjoys one of the world's lowest unemployment rates<sup>5</sup> only 40 percent have a regular job, with the rest reduced to part-time employment or forced to scratch out an existence in the country's massive informal sector.

A complacent trade union bureaucracy has promoted the Salinas policy of trading wage increases for productivity schemes in which the bulk of workers' incomes are tied to piecework payments and exhausting overtime schedules. As a result many unions are becoming administrators of restructuring programs under which workers are encouraged to compete with one another to boost output and for reduced job vacancies.

At the Telmex phone monopoly, for example, 60 percent of workers' incomes are a product of overtime pay. Despite incredible speedups in recent years, telephone union leader Francisco Hernandez Juarez, a Salinas favorite, recently promised he would keep wage demands well below inflation rates and focus on additional plans to subject workers' salaries to productivity.

## Revamping the Perfect Dictatorship

A key aspect of Salinas's project has been an effort to revamp the bonapartist political system that has provided the Mexican bourgeoisie with Latin America's most stable regime.

The man who many doubted would ever take office after "winning" the 1988 presidential vote through a massive fraud operation, staged one of the most impressive political comebacks in modern Mexican history.

He quickly turned to his advantage his opponent's<sup>6</sup> postelectoral blunders and refusal to seriously lead a massive antifraud movement and accelerated the snail's-pace reform process of his predecessor, Miguel de la Madrid, in an effort to overhaul the system by which the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has enjoyed more than 60 years of uninterrupted rule.

Despite claims to be undertaking a modernization of the system, much of what has been done is a repeat of the system's most antiquated and corrupt methods of functioning.

Through a policy known as "concertación" he has combined a major assault on social movements with an effort to domesticate the leaderships of most political parties and social organizations through clientelist schemes and the direct cooptation of opposition figures into lucrative government posts.

Since 1991 he has rammed through constitutional initiatives, thereby eliminating major social gains dating back to the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1917, such as the country's now defunct agrarian reform. In the process he has opened up Mexico's countryside to massive private and foreign investments for the first time in half a century and has pressured campesinos to sell off their collectively administered farms, known as *ejidos*.<sup>7</sup>

He has even begun to try to rewrite history, ordering new textbooks for public schools in which the history of the 1910 revolution and the role of key revolutionaries such as Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata are downplayed in favor of such "liberal" favorites as turn-of-the-century dictator Porfirio Diaz.

Under a fictitious democratization process, the system once described by Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa as "the perfect dictatorship" has been partially revamped. Salinas has bypassed sectors of the party's gangly bureaucracy and greatly weakened even official unions and other social organizations that were key to the regime's corporatist structure dating back to the 1930s.

### Solidarity Forever?

In their place Salinas has tried to stimulate a modern and pliable trade union and agrarian bureaucracy to replace the costly "dinosaurs" that have proven too inefficient for his restructuring efforts. But as his administration comes to a close he has yet to create his long-promised New Campesino Movement, and the battle to totally remake the unions still lags far behind schedule.

Where he has made most headway is with his prized project, the National Solidarity Program (Pronasol). Initially derided as little more than a new electoral patronage scheme, Pronasol has proven a key, long-term weapon in the neo-liberal agenda. Praised by the World Bank and the IMF, most Latin American governments are now striving to set up similar projects, and the Organization of American States (OAS) has created a special department to attend to Solidarity-type programs.

Salinas has created thousands of "Solidarity Committees" in which residents of poor communities receive funding for building schools, roads, sewer systems, and other public works projects in exchange for free labor and community donations.

The government saves millions, and in the process a national network of committees, directly tied to the presidency, are created, which help to undermine the role of existing social organizations. Though initially focused on rural communities, the program has been expanded to include industrial workers, small business projects, and neighborhoods in the main cities.

Pronasol programs also have the effect of integrating large sectors of the population into the market in line with the government's overall economic program, thereby

strengthening state control, boosting tax rolls, and "formalizing" the informal economy.

The project has proved multifaceted and politically beneficial for the regime. Its accompanying "solidarity" theme has been used to hide the greedy and competitive philosophy underlying the neoliberal project.

Despite all the demagoguery about democratizing the country and eliminating the traditional corporatist machinery of the system, Salinas's reforms have served to reinforce the most antidemocratic features of this hypercentralized "presidential" system.

### Will 1994 Prove to be a Replay of 1988?

Deprived of their own mass political expression, working people have been unable to seriously challenge the Salinas offensive and go beyond very partial and limited struggles, most of which have resulted in defeats. As a result, much of the popular discontent has been expressed on the terrain of the country's highly fraudulent elections.

Following the 1988 setback suffered by PRI candidates, opposition parties have mounted serious challenges to the PRI in successive state elections, most of which have been accompanied by mass antifraud protests.

Salinas has tried to use the conflicts to his advantage in endless replays of his '88 strategy. In what political commentator Jorge Castañeda has termed Mexico's "second round," Salinas has pretended to play the role of the supreme arbitrator, winning acclaims from ideologues of a peaceful transition to democracy within the framework of the current system.

Directly intervening in the disputes, he occasionally offers gubernatorial and municipal posts to loyal "opposition" parties, such as the conservative National Action Party (PAN), while taking a brutal approach to the left-wing Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Scores of PRD activists have been killed by PRI gunmen during the course of post-electoral protests.

But more often Salinas has taken advantage of the conflicts generated by his own party's fraud to impose interim officials that are drawn from the top ranks of the PRI.

Nevertheless, expectations are growing that a new mass opposition movement can be built for the 1994 presidential elections that could seriously rock the system and challenge the PRI dictatorship.

Within the mass movement most hopes are focused on the possibility of a repeat of the 1988 confrontation at a time when the growing weakness of the Salinista project will be compounded by the difficulties of transferring power to a new bonapartist leader.

But any possibility of inflicting a serious setback against the dictatorial regime and its policies will depend on the ability of the mass movement to develop superior forms of coor-

dination and its own independent political expression.

Trade union and neighborhood groups have begun to seek ways to coordinate efforts to oppose the main features of government policies, including wage caps and educational counterreforms.

Growing tensions within the official trade union bureaucracy, including an open dispute over wage policies, are creating an opening of which workers are seeking to take advantage in key contract revisions scheduled for this year.

And the effects of Salinas's counterreform in the countryside are already generating rising social tensions and protests from even the most loyal sectors of the agrarian bureaucracy.

Though still limited, initial efforts to establish links between unionists and social activists in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, in the context of the NAFTA debate, are laying the basis for the sorts of multinational movement tactics that must play a key role in any serious response to the multinational interests of big capital.

The 1994 scenario is far from clear. Much will depend on Salinas's ultimate choice of a successor and on how that choice may generate new fissures in the PRI. Rumors abound as to the possibility that Salinas may field a hand-picked opposition candidate from within his ruling circle as a way to undercut the Cardenist threat and strengthen the official heir.

But despite the enormous strides Salinas registered in his political agenda, decisive aspects of his program remain incomplete. He has yet to tackle the question of Mexico's existing labor legislation, many aspects of which were won in the important class battles that occurred in the 1930s.

And the ruling class has yet to create the sort of alternative political model needed to replace the one created during the heyday of populist and protectionist regimes which gave birth to Mexico's "perfect dictatorship." □

### Footnotes

1. Repeated coup attempts, mass protests, and constitutional crises have characterized the regime of populist-turned-neoliberal Carlos Andrés Pérez since he took office in Venezuela in 1989. Despite major setbacks imposed on the mass movement, Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori was forced last April to impose direct presidential rule to shore up his governmental authority. Similar scenarios have been played out in several other Latin American countries in recent years.
2. Since 1982, when Miguel de la Madrid, Salinas's neoliberal precursor, began to dismantle nationalized industry, the government has sold off or dismantled all but 212 of an original 1,155 state-owned companies. The government has taken in more than \$20 billion in the process, including \$16 billion in Salinas's first four years in office.
3. The Mexican government promised that its strategy of promoting largely foreign-owned maquiladora plants geared toward exports would

*Continued on page 34*

# Labor Needs an *Organizing* Party

by Baldemar Velasquez

*The following is a talk given by Baldemar Velasquez, President, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), at a Labor Party Advocates conference in Detroit, December 4-6, 1992*

I'm going to give you an overview of our experience with the Democratic Party, and I want to add the Republican Party as well, because there's got to be some comparison there. As a matter of fact, I like the Republican Party better than the Democratic Party because those guys don't pretend to be on our side. At least they are more honest about their position and come right out and tell you where they stand. The Democratic Party consistently talks about how much they support us and how much they believe in what we do, and then turn around and work against us. I just don't see any future in that relationship. I want to add labor as well, because labor is like a party. It's separated into factions and unions and all kinds of things; it's politics all over the place. As farm workers, we are in a particular situation; we're not included in any of these things. We're not represented in the Republican Party or the Democratic Party, and neither are we represented by organized labor. We're trying to open the door to organized labor. Just recently we got a charter issued to FLOC as an official AFL-CIO union. That's the first step.

I think there is a need to network, organize, and perhaps even structure the groups of people that are around the issues that are important to working men and women in this country. One example is the response that's been given by political parties, and even by labor, on the question of free trade. I'm very disappointed with Clinton's response to this. I'm very disappointed with labor's response to this. I'm very disappointed with even some of the progressive people's organizations response to this. When free trade became an issue, everybody fell over themselves trying to create coalitions to oppose the fast track method of approval of these negotiations. All the environmental groups in the country teamed up with labor and the progressive groups and progressives within the Democratic Party saying that they were going to put a stop to this. They poured thousands of dollars and organizers into stopping the organized conferences. They talked about it until they were blue in the face.

What was the purpose of it? The purpose of it was that they were trying to get the negotiations amended to include safeguards for the environment and labor rights and that sort of thing. I was thinking that this didn't make any sense. For instance, as farm workers we have had laws on the books to protect migrant workers, very few laws, but of the

few laws that exist none of them are enforced. There's no seriousness in giving any kind of implementation or personnel or funding for the execution of these laws. The response to free trade was a political response. Even if they were successful beyond their dreams and got the negotiations and the agreements with Mexico and Canada to protect environmental rights and workers rights, what makes people think that those laws are going to be enforced any better than the laws that are already in the books?

America has no economic, political, or social will to implement the laws that protect working men and women. What makes people think that they're going to protect working men and women with some international law that they don't have the least control over? They're not going to do it.

What we need to do is to make an *organizing* response to this issue, as opposed to a political response. Those are the issues that I'd like to see people advocate whether it's in a labor party or a labor movement; call it a party, call it a union, call it anything you want to, but that's a collection of human beings that need to come together and address these issues. Get out there and organize. Stop talking and messing around with conferences. We need to get down to work and organize our neighbors and friends.

In 1986 FLOC had its big breakthrough after fighting with Campbell's Soup for eight years. We were on strike for eight years, and there was a national boycott of Campbell's Soup for seven years. That boycott was successful thanks to many of you crazies who supported us even though nobody thought we could win. You did it because it was the right thing to do and I thank you for it. Right after Campbell's Soup signed the agreement in 1986, during the negotiating of our first contract they said, "If you guys make tomatoes too expensive in Ohio and Michigan, we're going to bring in more paste from our paste factory in Mexico." I turned to my vice president and said, "Fernando, let's go to Mexico and talk to those brothers. At least down there they speak our language."

So we went and met with the workers down there, who happened to be organized in a union. To make a long story short, after two years of negotiating, we came up with an international agreement with them to organize the Campbell's Soup workers in Mexico and the United States together, and to coordinate our negotiations with Campbell's Soup.

Just like the auto unions across the country when they coordinate their bargaining with GM, or whatever, why not coordinate bargaining with brother and sister unions in Mexico with the same international company? These international robbers go from one country to another to steal from all of us, so why don't we get together and form one united union against them in both countries?

That means that some of us have to take off our shields and stop being so protective of our turf and start advocating to help get a better deal for somebody else. Because when they get a better deal, we're going to get a better deal.

When I went to Mexico, I was ready to answer two questions that I anticipated being asked. Even though I'm Mexican, I'm still a North American, and they had every right to have some doubt and suspicions of me, since they were being blasted by labor in the United States about how they're stealing all our jobs. They asked me, "What do you want?" and "What's in it for you?" I said, "I want your guys to get a better contract, and if they get a better contract, we're in a better negotiating position to get more for ourselves up here." They went for it and they fought for it and with that contract with Campbell's Soup in 1989 we helped them get the best contract that Mexican union ever got. They got fifteen percent over their government's limit on wage increases in that contract. The next time we negotiated with Campbell's Soup in Ohio, they didn't say one word about cheap Mexican paste. That's the way it ought to be.

So, what kind of party are you going to have? You need an *organizing* party. That's the kind of party I'm interested in. First you start new relationships, then you start to figure out what rules you need to institutionalize those new relationships. That's what a party's for; that's what I advocate and that's what I'd like to see. If a party's not going to do that kind of organizing, then I don't want to have anything to do with it. Oh, I'll come, I'll be nice to people and things like that, because you're all my brothers and sisters and I love you all. Just because I don't agree with someone doesn't mean I don't love them. But at the same time, I've got to spend my active time organizing. I don't have any time to waste, because the farm workers are so far behind everybody else.

If I had to wait for what people are advocating in Washington, nothing would ever happen for the farm workers. It hasn't happened yet. It's been sixty years since they adopted the National Labor Relations Act and agricultural workers are still excluded. Now, it's gone so far downhill that we don't even want to be included in that any more. We need something new. We need something to do.

They just won a public policy for the farm workers in Washington: three years ago they finally ordered the field sanitation standards for farm workers. Do you know what that is?

*Continued on page 29*

# The Chicano Struggle Against Racism

by Saturnino Gonzales

---

*The following is the text of a talk given at a July 1991 socialist educational conference at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, organized by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.*

**A**s a Mexican-American and revolutionary socialist, my view of the overt discrimination which my people suffer can only be understood properly when we see the Mexican people of the United States as an oppressed nationality. Our culture was born in the literal rape of one culture by another: when the Spaniards imposed their domination over the native populations of Mexico and the southwestern part of North America.

In my state, Texas, history offers a revealing overview of the race hatred inflicted on my people. Texas was colonized at the behest of the Mexican government in 1821, when Stephen F. Austin established the settlement of San Felipe de Austin. Fleeing the depression of 1819, Anglo settlers swarmed into the region. By 1830 20,000 settlers with 2,000 slaves resided in the area. Conflict began almost immediately. Austin was going to "redeem Texas from the wilderness," but this redemption meant "whitening" Texas and making it a carbon copy of the United States. The Anglo settlers, filled with ideas of what would later be called "Manifest Destiny," regarded the Mexican population as uncivilized. Xenophobia against Catholics and Spaniards intensified suspicions against Mexicanos. The abolition of slavery by Mexico on September 15, 1829, further aggravated the situation, and exposed the white supremacist plans of the southern slavocracy.

The Texas Revolution led to greater racism against the Mexicanos. It was a war fought more over Mexico's enforcement of import laws and the emancipation of slaves than it was over freedom-loving settlers embracing the Declaration of Independence. Myths of a slaughter at the Alamo would inflame white hysteria. The Battle of San Jacinto, where a sleeping army of soldiers, many of whom were conscripts who spoke only Mayan, were murdered in a methodical slaughter, created the Republic of Texas.

The Republic of Texas made things even worse. Discrimination was organized against Mexicanos as it was against Blacks in the Deep South. The continuing myths of the Texas Revolution fostered white supremacy, and the new flood of Anglos with slaves created an almost constant hysteria in the white population ever fearful of an alliance be-

tween the Mexicans and the oppressed Blacks.

The Mexican War was an overt outpouring of the racist attitudes inherent in Manifest Destiny. Zachary Taylor's artillery leveled the city of Matamoros, killing hundreds of innocent civilians. Catholic churches were desecrated. Nuns were raped. In fact, Taylor's army was so undisciplined that many of the Irish immigrants who had enlisted in the U.S. Army deserted. No doubt they felt they had seen enough of this back in mother Ireland. On February 2, 1848, the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded to the USA the present states of California, New Mexico, Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Arizona, and Utah. Articles VIII and IX of the treaty guaranteed rights of property and protection under the law to Mexican inhabitants. In practice this part of the treaty was ignored, and during the nineteenth century most Mexicanos in the U.S. were considered as a class apart from the dominant race. For instance, in Texas in 1855 the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *McKinney v. Saviego* that Article VIII of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had made no reference to Texas and that U.S. citizenship did not belong to the Mexican citizens of the state.

Between the time of statehood and the outbreak of the Civil War, Mexicanos in Texas showed their antislavery feelings by helping slaves escape into Mexico. Mexicanos in Texas were burned and lynched for their antislavery views. Many suffered the same fate as the oppressed African Americans, who were locked in a constant battle for their freedom. During the Civil War the Texas army of the Confederacy spent more time dealing with antislavery, pro-Union Mexicanos, who had an atypical alliance with German and Irish immigrants, than it did in fighting the Union.

I wanted to give this brief history of these early years so you might understand some of the origins of racial discrimination in the Southwest. After the Civil War and the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, the fate of Mexican Americans was often tied to the fate of African Americans. Often there was tension between these two oppressed nationalities, fostered by white supremacy,

especially through the Democratic Party, and the divide-and-rule policies of the ruling class. Both Mexican Americans and African Americans organized against oppression from the beginning.

Let me briefly give some examples of how Mexican Americans have fought back against oppression and discrimination.

The **United Farm Workers** pitted an organizing drive of Mexican labor in the most demeaning of conditions against American agribusiness. Although too often aligned with Democratic Party politicians and taking a stand with reactionary AFL-CIO bureaucrats against undocumented workers, the UFW nevertheless offered hope and organization to the struggling masses of Mexican workers.

The **Raza Unida Party** offered many Mexicanos the independent political action my people so desperately need. In California and Texas the RUP emerged from a militant student movement. The RUP took over the school board in Crystal City, Texas, in 1970 and fought a battle against racist teachers and the hated Texas Rangers. They helped organize Mexican workers at the Del Monte cannery into a union, and they fought against price hikes by the oil and gas companies.

In Colorado, Mexican Americans organized the **Crusade for Justice**. Led by Corky Gonzales, the Crusade fought a battle on every level against police oppression and race hatred by the Denver authorities.

Another example was the **Chicano Moratorium** against the Vietnam War. In 1970 thousands of Chicanos in Los Angeles protested the devastation of the war by a huge outpouring of rage against American imperialism. Brutally suppressed by the Los Angeles Police Department, *Los Angeles Times* reporter Rubén Salazar was murdered during the protest.

Let me finish by saying that the Mexican people are a proud people with a noble and rich history. We are not "greasers." We are not "spics." We are not "wetbacks." **We are La Raza! La Raza United Will Never Be Defeated!** □

# Impressions of a Cuban Journey During the Special Period

by Rubén Berrios

After a month-long stay in Cuba and numerous discussions with Cuban economists, there is no question in my mind that the Cuban economy is in serious trouble. The transportation system, which is mainly East European, is in need of spare parts. Many bus routes have been eliminated, so waiting for a bus sometimes takes up to two or three hours. Fuel and spare parts shortages have taken nearly half of Cuba's bus fleet out of operation. To get to work there are now about a million bicycles circulating in the streets. Major infrastructure like telephones are constantly down; water and electricity are off for hours at a time; garbage sometimes goes uncollected. There is also a shortage of medicines, and food has been rationed even further. This has caused disgruntlement among Cubans, who have to stand in line longer hours. Growing shortages are also undermining the motivation to work, and for the first time there are visible signs that there is real unemployment and underemployment.

One reason for the economic contraction and why living conditions have become severe is because of the collapse of the so-called socialist countries of Europe. East European countries abandoned central planning and adopted market-oriented economies; the CMEA was dissolved, and the Soviet Union disintegrated. Not only was trade reduced but also Soviet and East European aid was cut off. Being a small island nation, Cuba was very trade dependent, and this was evident with its heavy reliance on the CMEA market. In 1989, 84 percent of Cuban imports came from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Compounding the problem of supplies, the price of raw sugar in the world spot market fell from 13.6 cents per pound to 9.1 cents per pound. On top of that, and partly due to imported input shortages, Cuba's sugar harvest decreased since 1990.

Another issue that has aggravated the current crisis is the U.S. trade embargo, which has been in place for more than thirty years but was recently tightened with the Torricelli Bill. Cuban ships have to travel thousands of miles away to bring the goods when they could easily buy these goods 90 miles away. Even leading Cuban dissidents have denounced the bill as abusive and absurd because it hurts people the most. The Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba, the Ecumenical Council of Cuba, the EC, Mexico, Canada, and many other countries throughout the world have condemned the U.S., saying the bill is counterproductive.

Although the bill is intended to weaken Castro, politically it is having the opposite effect. Many find it absurd that after East-West rivalry has come to an end, the Soviet Union no longer exists, and long after the Cold War is said to be over, the U.S. continues its hostile approach to Cuba. On November 24, 1992, the General Assembly of the United Nations overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for an end to Washington's embargo against Cuba. The United States has taken a recalcitrant attitude on the Cuba question, and it is unlikely that President Clinton will lift the embargo any time soon.

Part of Cuba's severe economic contraction is a product of its own dynamics and inefficiencies of the centrally planned system. But measures have been taken to correct mistaken policies. The Cuban government has put in place an emergency economic program to allow for subsistence, the maintenance of social programs, and the gradual reintegration of Cuba into the world economy. The Cubans call it "Special period in time of peace." The measures implemented include rigorous energy conservation, factory closings, restrictions on social programs, and cuts in consumer goods and services.

Despite chronic shortages, most Cubans know that living conditions are generally far worse in most of the Third World. Most Cubans seem convinced that their best chance for a better life is with the present socialist government. Although hardships have worsened since late 1989 and Cubans have become more critical of their government, the size of the force ready to defend Castro, Cuban sovereignty, and the social gains of the revolution remains strong. Fidel Castro is still viewed by a large number of Cubans as the legitimate leader of the revolution and defender of Cuba's sovereignty.

The existence of the Soviet Union was seen as a necessary condition for the survival of the Cuban revolution and a deterrent to U.S. aggression. As a result of the disruption of trade with its most important partner, production levels have fallen by 40 percent or more. But despite all these problems, not a single day-care center has been shut, not a single school has been closed, and no hospitals or clinics have had to close.

Although the disruption of trade ties with the former Soviet Union has caused Cuba considerable inconvenience, it has not threatened the country's basic economic structure. An important element of the short-term strategy is the development of a wide-ranging

food program to meet the basic basket of consumer goods. Thousands of urban workers are being mobilized for two-week stints of voluntary labor in the countryside. It is estimated that Cuba will be able to produce locally between 30 to 40 percent of the food previously imported. Castro has emphatically rejected the idea of reintroducing the farmers' markets as a way of alleviating food shortages because they breed greed and corruption.

Cuba's current economic difficulties have encouraged the government to start aggressively courting foreign investment. One thing is clear, though: Cuba is inviting foreign capital on its own terms and without giving up its revolutionary principles. In a sense, the Cuban government wants to integrate the Cuban economy into the capitalist world market while simultaneously salvaging socialism. Although capital is not forthcoming in large numbers, there are some 60 joint ventures set up with European, Canadian, and Latin American investors. Specifically the government is encouraging the creation of economic enclaves in which capitalist rules apply. The strategy was initially limited to tourism, but it is now being expanded to virtually all economic activities, including mining, agriculture, and services. At present, half of foreign investment is in tourism. The Cubans are showing a great deal of flexibility as regards investment, repatriation of profits, and trade relations.

The disappearance of the Soviet Union, the weakness of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the resurgence of neoliberal economic policies in much of the Third World leaves Cuba isolated and vulnerable. Cuba's influence in the Third World as a champion of anti-imperialism has declined because it has less of an audience. But despite this reality, Cuba retains considerable Third World sympathy and even admiration for its social and economic achievements as well as for its internationalism. Cuba is still seen as an alternative model of development for many poor countries, but much of its success will depend on whether the Cubans can pull out of the current crisis and whether the new American administration finally lifts the embargo.

The survival of the Cuban revolution in its present form will depend upon the continued ability of its revolutionary leadership to maintain popular support. The struggle for economic viability under extremely unfavorable conditions, or what is known as "survival economy," appears poised to provide the basic needs of the population. I got the impression that despite the disgruntlement about distribution problems, support for the leadership remains particularly strong. Despite the deficiencies of central planning, Cuba will remain an important test case in the 1990s of socialist economic development and self-determination under the new world order. □

# International Struggle Against Racism

by Roy Rollin

*The following is an edited version of remarks made by BIDOM editorial committee member Roy Rollin to an antifascist demonstration held on December 4, 1992, at the German consulate in New York City. The demonstration was organized by a coalition of left groups in response to a series of fascist provocations and racist attacks on immigrant workers in Germany that culminated in the cold-blooded murder of several Turkish workers. In Germany hundreds of thousands of antifascists took to the streets in protest. Among those participating in the New York demonstration were the International Socialist Organization, the Freedom Socialist Party/Radical Women, the Spartacist League, Solidarity, the Trotskyist League, the League for the Revolutionary Party, and the Bolshevik Tendency.*

Comrades, the air over Germany hangs heavy with the stench of fascism and counterrevolution. The restoration of capitalism in what used to be East Germany has brought with it untold misery and destitution for the vast majority of the population there. Almost half the work force is now unemployed and many are threatened with homelessness as former counts and capitalists flock to the east to reclaim "their lost" possessions; property that includes homes as well as factories that were expropriated along with their state when the Soviet army sent the Nazis packing after World War II. What they lost with Hitler they can now get back with Kohl because they never lost their power as the ruling class in the west even though they lost the war. Hitlers may come and go but the I.G. Farbens remain. Unemployment and homelessness; this is the real face of "western style democracy" in the east. So too is the racist violence that daily claims the lives and limbs of immigrant workers and German antifascists.

With no end in sight to the immiseration brought by the miracles of the marketplace, is it a surprise that we now see a rightist rebirth? And is it so shocking that the same capitalist authorities who ushered in the Fourth Reich with an orgy of nationalism now should turn a blind if not benign eye to the violence meted out by their Nazi offspring. The response of the government of Helmut Kohl, aided and abetted by the housebroken Social Democratic "opposition," has been to blame the victims for the crimes. Their answer is to tighten up restrictions on immigration and impose limitations on the right of asylum. There can be no doubt as to what our response should be: a united front of all workers organizations that fights for the right of asylum and full citizenship rights for all immigrant workers and which mobilizes en masse to stop the fascists now while they are relatively few in number. We must never forget the words of Hitler and Goebbels, "They could have crushed us when we were small." Well, we know that they could have, but they didn't. Today however

we still can. The tens, if not, hundreds of thousands of antifascists that have mobilized on the streets of Germany are proof of that.

But when it comes to dealing with Nazis we have to remember that the argument of force takes precedence over the force of argument. The workers movement has got to let the Nazis know that it doesn't have a short collective memory. It must acquaint them with the pavement before they acquaint the workers with the underside of their jackboots. The liberals and reformists may want to debate the Nazis. Genocide, however, is not debatable; fascism is not about ideas, but about death camps. To be really effective the workers movement has to advance a bold social program, a program that poses a real alternative, a socialist alternative, to the misery that is all that capitalism has to offer all workers. That, along with determined and decisive action, can cut the ground out from under the fascists by winning over as many of their ranks as possible. After all, it is the horrors brought by capitalist restoration that has caused the fascist ranks to swell and racist sentiments to rise; that and the lack of any viable left alternative on the part of the reformists who only offer more of the same stuff served up by the bosses' parties.

The struggle against racist reaction is not just confined to Germany. Right here in the U.S. we know all about racism and reaction. How many thousands of Haitians are being turned away and sent to concentration camps by the U.S. government, just as that same government sent thousands of Jews back to the Nazis and certain deaths during World

War II. And after World War II that same government pulled out the welcome mat for any and every Nazi, Ustashi, gusano, or so-mocista torturer it could find. That's because the capitalist system needs these gangsters to use against the struggles of working people all over the world including in this country. The labor movement right here must champion the rights of all those of our fellow workers that the government seeks to deny entry and citizenship rights to. Blacks and Latinos in this country know just as much about racist terror as Turks, Gypsies, Vietnamese do in Germany, probably a lot more. How many of them have been shot down in cold blood by the racists in white sheets or blue shirts in this country? And how many white workers have been driven into the arms of the David Dukes by the liberals in the Democratic Party who are complicit in every crime of the Republicans. Whether it's Germany or the U.S., capitalism breeds fascism; it's the last line of defense for the bosses when the normal methods of control don't work anymore. You can't fight fascism with the same bankrupt system that gave birth to it and you can't fight racism with the Democrats, whose cops kill black people and smash picket lines no less than the Republicans do. You need a workers party based on the trade unions that fights for the rights of all the exploited and oppressed and you need a socialist revolution that does away with the whole rotten capitalist system that places private profit for the few ahead of the needs of the many and will stop at nothing to do so. □

## Labor Needs an Organizing Party

*Continued from page 26*

Toilets and water in the fields. Right now they are all celebrating that they won this big breakthrough for farm workers. Great breakthrough, right? And they debated that issue for twelve years with hearings all over the country. If that's the status of public policy debate in Washington for farm workers, forget it.

So, you see what I mean about political processes and politics. We don't need political responses to questions any more. We need organizing responses. And a party better well be based on organizing programs and organizing standards and organizing issues. If it's not, we're wasting our time again: we're going to create another Republican Party and another Democratic Party. Thank you. □

# In Defense of Black Nationalism

## A Reply to Peter Johnson

by Steve Bloom and Claire Cohen

The February issue of this magazine carried an article by Peter Johnson, rejecting the pro-Black nationalist position adopted by the SWP in the 1960s under the leadership of George Breitman. Instead Johnson supports the viewpoint that was counterposed in the SWP discussion, called “revolutionary integrationism” and promoted by Richard Fraser.

In part, Johnson’s critique of the SWP is a quibble over terminology: how to properly define “a nation” and the concept of “self-determination.” But, and this is far more important, he also badly misunderstands the dynamics of Black liberation in the United States and what policy revolutionary socialists should follow to forge an alliance with the Black movement. These problems were at the heart of the discussion inside the SWP.

In this article we will deal with the question of definitions first, in order to lay the basis for better understanding this second, and more crucial aspect of the debate.

### What Is a Nation? What Is “Self-Determination”?

The starting point for Johnson is a “scientific” definition of “a nation” and “self-determination” as classically understood by Marxists. He quotes “Marxism and the National Question” by Joseph Stalin — a work which, he points out, both Lenin and Trotsky praised: “A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.... It must be emphasized that none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation.”

Based on this approach, then, Blacks in the U.S. do not qualify. Johnson concludes that therefore it is completely unacceptable to talk about “self-determination” for Blacks as Marxists have traditionally applied that idea — the actual creation of a separate state by an oppressed people.

Johnson also objects to the way Breitman and the SWP used the term “self-determination”: “Most revealing, ‘self-determination’ is redefined. It is no longer used in the Marxist sense of the decision by a nation whether to secede and form a separate state, but rather

in the ‘Bundist’ sense of ‘control of the Black communities and all the institutions within them.’”

To begin let us mildly protest Johnson’s unqualified endorsement of Stalin’s definition of a nation. Despite the testimonials for his general analysis from Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin is too rigid in this. Another Marxist of the same period, Nikolai Bukharin, in his work *The ABC of Communism*, for example, gives a similar definition but reveals a bit more flexibility: “A nation or a people is the name given to a group of persons who are united by the use of a common tongue and who inhabit a definite area” (p. 192). But Bukharin adds a footnote to his text: “Long ago, the Jews inhabited a definite territory and possessed a common speech; today they have no territory, and many of them do not understand Hebrew. The gypsies have their own language, but they do not inhabit any definite territory. The non-nomadic Tunguses in Siberia have a territory, but they have forgotten their distinctive tongue.”

Unlike Stalin, and unlike Johnson, Bukharin recognizes that the boundaries of what is and what is not a nation are fuzzy. They cannot be rigidly determined by abstract laws. The Jews, gypsies, and Tunguses are nations even though they lack either a common language, or territory, or both. In this he is far more dialectical, and therefore far more Marxist, than Stalin.

Blacks in the U.S. are “a historically constituted, stable community of people” which does, in fact, live in a common territory — though they share it with other groups (to the extent that they are not segregated into ghetto communities). They suffer a common economic oppression and have their own “psychological makeup manifested in a common culture.” Even the question of whether there is a distinct “Black English” is a hotly debated topic. If such a people wants to think of itself as a nation, haven’t they the right to do so? Why should the revolutionary Marxist movement object?

As far as “self-determination” is concerned, Johnson is technically right but still wrong on the substance of the matter. Marxist terminology, like everything else, can change under changing circumstances. Before 1914 “social democrat” meant one thing. After the capitulation of the German party at the begin-

ning of World War I it meant quite another. The term “workers’ and peasants’ government” has had five different meanings since it was first introduced by the Bolsheviks — in different contexts and in different periods.

During the 1960s the Black community itself began to use the idea of “self-determination” as synonymous with “Black control of the Black community.” This was not a theoretical innovation of Breitman or the SWP, but merely the adoption of a new meaning for old terminology resulting from the evolution of a particular struggle. Would it have been better for the SWP to sit on the sidelines and lecture Blacks about the proper use of words?

So the real question that needs to be addressed is not whether the SWP was sufficiently orthodox in its definitions when it made its turn toward Black nationalism during the 1960s, but whether that turn was right or wrong. And this takes us to the real substance of our disagreement with Johnson’s article.

### What Are the Actual Dynamics of the Struggle?

Johnson contents himself with a discussion of national self-determination as a general historical abstraction. He doesn’t say much about the dynamics of the struggle that is actually under consideration: Black liberation in the United States. It is essential to correct this oversight.

But before we do it is also necessary to take a quick look at why Marxists support the right of oppressed nations to self-determination. There are two reasons: first, because it is a legitimate demand for basic democratic rights on the part of an oppressed people; and second, because the revolutionary struggle for national liberation, or the achievement of national independence by an oppressed nation, weakens the ruling class of the oppressor nation and thereby aids the workers’ struggle for socialist revolution.

Whether or not the Black community in the U.S. is a nation in the strict scientific meaning of that term, and whether or not true “self-determination” in the Marxist sense of a separate Black state is possible, *the revolutionary struggle of Blacks to control their own communities, to shape their own destiny as a people, is, in these two respects, 100 percent analogous to the dynamics of national liberation as properly defined by Peter Johnson.* The campaign for “Black Self-Determination” as understood and defined by the Black community itself is both a basic struggle for democratic rights and human dignity of an oppressed people, and a fight which, if waged in a revolutionary manner (or if it is victorious even in part), can seriously weaken the U.S. ruling class. It is therefore a struggle which all working people in this country should encourage and support.

This simple idea is the essential meaning of the Breitman position adopted by the SWP



in the 1960s. It remains a correct understanding of the relationship between Black liberation and the struggle for socialism in the U.S. today.

### How Will We Forge the Necessary Alliance in Struggle?

At times, Johnson presents his argument as if this were essentially a discussion about what kind of future society might be best for working people — Black and white: “If a population regroupment should occur and large sections of the Black working class should demand the right of national self-determination, Trotskyists should support that demand, although almost certainly we should oppose actual secession, since separation of the Black and white working classes would limit what either could do.”

And: “The object of the socialist revolution is freedom, however, which includes the freedom to separate, as well as to unite. We can leave it to future generations that have grown up without political, social, or economic coercion to decide for themselves how they, as truly free people will relate.”

It is hard to imagine why “future generations that have grown up without political, social, or economic coercion” will see the need for separate national states — or even for a state at all if we want to talk about a classical Marxist appreciation of terms. Our problem is not deciding how people should live a hundred years or so after the revolution, but rather *how we are going to make the revolution*. And in dealing with this very real, present-day question revolutionaries cannot avoid the actual “political, social, economic,” and we might add *national* coercions that exist in the U.S.A., and every other country.

Simple appeals to national unity based on objective needs of “workers of all nations” are completely insufficient. The concrete experience of Blacks in the U.S. — in the union movement, for example, as well as in other struggles — tells them that such slogans are raised by those who want Blacks to set aside their own demands and their own struggle for equality in the name of some higher “unity of the workers.” Of course, Trotskyists like to think that we are different. But even if that is true, it isn’t enough for us to be different. We have to *prove* that we are different.

If genuine working-class revolutionaries are going to forge a real alliance with genuine Black revolutionaries, our task is to convince Blacks that we are not simply trying to use, manipulate, or sacrifice their struggles for our own ends, as so many have before us. And the only way we can do that is to unconditionally support whatever legitimate demands emerge from the Black community — up to and including the demand for a separate national state. That support cannot be half-hearted: “Yes, well, we acknowledge your democratic right to decide this but we really think its a bad idea.” No, it will have to be militant and wholehearted support: “If that is

what the Black community democratically determines, that is what we want, too, with all our heart and soul. And we will fight to the last drop of our own blood alongside of you if that is necessary to achieve your objective.” White workers, and white revolutionaries, who think like that will prove that they are worthy of the trust and collaboration of the Black community.

Unity of workers can only be real if it is the unity of equals. Today, Black workers are not the equals of whites. In order for them to gain their equality, a period of disunity, of Black independence, may well be required. And only Blacks themselves have the right to decide if that is the case.

Above all we cannot make a socialist consciousness by Blacks a prerequisite to our support for their movement. And yet the very idea of “revolutionary integrationism” poses just such a demand because the revolutionary Marxist movement cannot forge an alliance with Blacks on that basis *unless there is already a mass socialist consciousness within the Black community*, that is, unless Black people already understand and agree with our basic ideas about the future society we are fighting for.

### What Does the Historical Record Show?

Johnson asserts that Fraser’s document “was correct in its main propositions.” Yet he cites one such proposition that would be proven wrong in only a few years’ time: “Essentially, only the complete victory of fascism in the U.S. could transform the movement for direct assimilation through immediate equality into one of racial independence.”

But it did not require a fascist takeover for a significant Black Power movement to develop out of the integrationist civil rights struggle of the 1950s and early ’60s, only a bit of experience with how little the victory over legal Jim Crow would actually mean for Black people. And how can Fraser’s thesis account for the most important development of Black consciousness to date, identified with the ideas of Malcolm X? Wasn’t this clearly based on the concept of racial independence rather than direct assimilation? (We might also ask how one can simply ignore the strength of the Garvey movement during the 1920s.)

Later, Johnson cites the following observation by Trotsky: “Under the condition that Japan invades the United States and the Negroes are called upon to fight — they may come to feel themselves threatened first from one side and then from the other, and finally awakened may say, ‘We have nothing to do with either of you. We will have our own state.’” He then sums up: “Japan did not invade... and fascism did not triumph.” Ergo, Blacks have no right to a nationalist consciousness.

But what happened during the Vietnam war when Blacks were “called upon to

fight”? Didn’t they, indeed, “feel themselves threatened first from one side and then from the other”? Wasn’t this a genuine stimulus for the growing nationalist consciousness of the time? And wasn’t that, in turn an important factor in the decision by the U.S. ruling class to bring the Vietnam war to an end? Doesn’t this bear a striking resemblance to the theoretical possibility laid out by Trotsky, even if it did not follow precisely the same historical script? The substance of these social developments clearly bears out the thesis, adopted by the SWP and denied by Fraser, that a growth of Black nationalist consciousness in the U.S. was (and remains) a reasonable historical expectation.

Finally, can anyone deny that, today, those who promote an “integrationist” vision in the Black community tend to be the most classically reformist forces, while those who maintain a revolutionary perspective, no matter how ideologically incomplete, continue to move in a nationalist direction? Is this purely accidental? Or is there some lesson here for the revolutionary Marxist movement?

### Let’s Define Things Clearly

Johnson summarizes the differences between the two positions he is discussing as follows:

Revolutionary integrationists argue that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to Black equality and integration, so that Black people, individually and collectively, can decide how they want to participate in building socialism in a unified workers’ state. Revolutionary nationalists argue that the concrete goal of the struggle for Black liberation is to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to a separate Black nation-state, so that Black people can exercise the right to self-determination in the Marxist sense, the right to secede or not to secede as they decide.

But if Breitman and others in the SWP who advocated a pro-nationalist position had, indeed, accepted the Black movement’s own definition of “self-determination,” understood more broadly than the simple question of a separate state, then Johnson’s counterposition is simply inaccurate, and there is no need to choose between these two goals for the struggle as he defines them: “to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to Black equality and integration,” or “to remove by revolutionary means the obstacles to a separate Black nation-state.” Rather we demand the removal of *all* obstacles to *both integration and separation*, so that Blacks can truly decide — freely, for the first time — what path they want to take.

Johnson comes closer to the real counterposition two paragraphs later when he poses the following question:

What should Trotskyists say to young Blacks who have fought the cops in the streets of Los Angeles or have seen Spike Lee’s movie “X” and are trying to come to grips with the legacy of Malcolm X. Do we say that the key

to Black liberation is the separatist struggle for an independent Black nation-state somewhere in North America? Or for community control of the impoverished Black ghettos? Or do we say that the key to Black liberation is the integrated struggle of Black and white workers, based on shared self-interest, for socialism, racial equality, and an end to economic and social as well as legal Jim Crow in the U.S.?

Here there is some recognition that the idea of “self-determination” might be applied more broadly. (In passing we should note that the way it is posed by Johnson — “community control of the impoverished Black ghettos” — reveals his generally static appreciation of reality. Any struggle by Blacks which is powerful enough to actually gain a real measure of community control would also be powerful enough to demand a redress of the economic inequities that so severely impoverish the Black community.)

Still, the actual answer to his question, “What should Trotskyists say?” is: none of the above. Rather, our answer should be that Blacks themselves have a right to define the parameters of their own struggle. We will support demands for integration, for community control, or for separation, as long as they represent the will of the most active and

conscious layers, and are fought for from a perspective which promotes militant mass action and makes direct demands on the U.S. ruling class and its oppressive state.

Certainly we will need to explain our conviction that whatever course Blacks choose — integration, community control, or a separate state — only the socialist transformation of this society can lead to genuine freedom and equality for Blacks and other oppressed peoples. Some Blacks who come to understand this will participate in the construction of a multiracial revolutionary socialist movement. And we can be confident that in the course of its struggles, and as a direct result of the support they will receive from the ranks of the revolutionary workers’ movement as a whole, a majority in the Black community will see for themselves that we are right about the necessity of a socialist solution. But this may not happen before the revolution itself, and we cannot require, in advance, that Blacks in their majority recognize the validity of “revolutionary integrationism” or any other scheme that depends on a successful struggle for workers’ power in the U.S.A.

Throughout his article, Johnson fails to pose the questions that were really at stake in

the SWP’s discussion. The material existence of Black people in the United States, and the struggles that they have undergone in recent decades, have clearly begun to forge a nationalist consciousness among a significant layer. Should revolutionary Marxists welcome this developing consciousness because it can become an important source of additional militancy for the Black liberation struggle? Or should we deplore it because it doesn’t correspond to our preconceived notions about what “a nation” and “self-determination” are, or because it is somehow divisive to the “unity of the working class”?

The SWP chose, correctly in our opinion, to recognize the reality and welcome the tendency to deepen the struggle. Peter Johnson attempts to deny that nationalist consciousness among Blacks has any validity whatsoever and suggests that revolutionary Marxists should counterpose themselves to this trend. Though we profoundly disagree with his conclusions, we strongly agree when he says that this remains a crucial question for the revolutionary movement in the United States today. □

## Clinton Unveils Economic Program

*Continued from page 2*

### There Is No Reformist Solution

Taxing working people to pay interest on the federal debt is nothing more nor less than outright theft. However, the continued existence of the capitalist economic order requires that debt obligations — including interest — be met and met on time. If not, the obligations will be in default, and the agency which issued the debt instrument will be required to borrow at much higher rates of interest or will be unable to borrow money at all. So this is one spending item which absolutely cannot be cut. Though working people did not incur the debt, though in general we did not benefit from the money, and though our signatures certainly do not appear at the bottom of the contracts, we nevertheless have to pay it back. Within the context of capitalist politics there is absolutely nothing we or anyone can do about it. The only fair solution is to repudiate the government debt, and that can only be done when the government has become *ours*. The simple idea that we should not have to pay the bills for government deficit spend-

ing leads inexorably to one conclusion: there must be a transfer of state power from the bankers and businessmen who hold power now to those who must work for a wage and pay the taxes.

An even larger proportion of the taxes extorted from the working class is spent on war. So-called “defense spending” is in reality money devoted to imposing U.S. capitalism’s will on the entire earth by force, and as the bombing of New York’s World Trade Center on February 26 proves, it provides no real physical defense to the U.S.’s working citizens. There is no state on earth that would dream of launching an attack on the United States of America, and yet Washington continues to spend obscene amounts of money on enormous standing military forces and ever more expensive (and sometimes *less* effective) weapons. The Soviet Union’s collapse has made it politically unjustifiable to continue war spending at the levels of the 1980s, and Clinton is proposing cuts in the Pentagon’s budget. However, even if the cuts were drastic — which they are not — it would not change the fact that working people have

no interest in *any* war spending at all. *We* are not being defended.

Obviously, however, *no* capitalist administration, Clinton’s or anyone’s, is going to eliminate the war budget. Capitalism’s continued existence requires its ability to impose its will by force on the world’s masses, most of whom are kept in a state of desperate poverty thanks to imperialist greed. Putting an end to the war budget — and, more importantly, to war itself — requires a social transformation, the overthrow of the capitalist class and its state, and its replacement by a government of, by, and for the working people.

When Clinton’s economic proposals fail to deliver what he has promised, as they inevitably must, revolutionists, trade-union militants, African-American nationalists, and feminists will have an enhanced opportunity to organize politically in their own interests. The Democrats — like the Republicans — have nothing positive to offer. □

*February 27, 1993*

# Hoffa: Hollywood Trashes the Teamsters (Again)

by Mike McCallister

A co-worker of mine at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, when complaining about the inevitably slow and painful bargaining process public employees have to undergo, often notes that the Teamsters have shown interest in organizing civil servants.

“Wouldn’t it be great if we could show up at the table threatening to break some legs?” she asks.

It’s a joke, but it reflects the all-too-common view of unions, especially the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, as gangster organizations. Hollywood is particularly enamored with this image, as noted in William J. Puette’s recent study, *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor*.

As early as the 1938 Humphrey Bogart film, *Racket Busters*, the movies have loved tying Teamsters with gangsters. Of course, real life has often cooperated with the fictional image, with nearly all of the post–World War II Teamster leaders spending time in prison.

The most famous of them all, however, was James Riddle Hoffa. He is the subject of the most heavily-hyped labor film in recent years. It’s just too bad director Danny DeVito only saw the story as just another “action” movie.

As entertainment, *Hoffa* isn’t the worst way to spend a couple of hours, but this may be why the film’s message is so insidious.

The central image of the film is retold twice at different points by Bobby Ciaro (DeVito), Hoffa’s fictional bodyguard. Early in Hoffa’s career as an organizer in Detroit, an Irish colleague firebombs a scab laundry. He doesn’t quite escape the laundry in time, and is mortally burned.

He is rushed to the hospital, where a priest asks him to confess or burn forever in hell. While it is virtually impossible to decipher his response in the film, Ciaro reports that the bomber just mouthed obscenities at the priest, thus becoming Ciaro’s role model.

Hoffa’s story, such as it is, is told via flashbacks from Hoffa’s (presumed) last day. Each story, generally ripped out of historical context except for a general chronological approach, focuses on the Teamster leader (Jack Nicholson), his job ties and penchant for violence.

The film moves from the laundry to Hoffa showing the Detroit Mafia how working with the Teamsters will benefit both sides, followed by Hoffa defying International President Daniel J. Tobin by calling a march in the midst of martial law, reminiscent more of the

second Minneapolis Teamster strike than of anything in Detroit.

In no time at all, Hoffa is running for IBT President and making deals with the job on the Central States Teamster pension fund. From there Hoffa confronts Robert Kennedy, first in the midst of the witchhunt of the 1950s denying he knows any Communists (which never happened in real life), later denying corruption in the IBT.

Before long, Hoffa and Ciaro are sent to jail, with a Teamster honor guard honking along the road. He is then released, plots to regain the presidency and is abandoned by his best friends in the mob.

The script, by renowned playwright David Mamet, never gives the audience a clue as to why Hoffa moved from uncompromising working-class fighter to right-wing defender of the system. The ultimate impression is left that union leaders are inherently corrupt, it’s just part of the territory.

So what is Hoffa’s real story? What made the Teamsters the most conservative and corrupt union in the country while still organizing more workers than any other?

Hoffa was the last Teamster president before current leader Ron Carey to have actually worked as a Teamster. He joined the union while working at a Kroger grocery warehouse in Detroit, and organized a successful strike at the age of 16. Five years later, he was a business agent. Shortly after that, he helped out in the over-the-road organizing drive led by Farrell Dobbs.

Dobbs, one of the leaders of the Minneapolis Teamster strikes of 1934 and of the American Trotskyist movement, set up the North Central District Driver’s Council to organize Midwestern truckers. Hoffa was called in to help win a key battle in that struggle in Omaha.

Hoffa, assigned by Detroit Local 299 to the NCDDC, helped shut down terminals against the combined power of the trucking bosses and the National Guard. Despite the differences in their politics, both men respected each other’s organizing skills and worked well together.

Dobbs built the Teamsters as a fighting organization, one that could strengthen workers’ struggles as a means to win power. Hoffa simply thought that workers needed unions as a buffer against the excesses of capitalism. He was also interested in building his own career, and was willing to make any alliances toward that end.

There are several stories on how Hoffa made his deal with the Mafia, but none of them really matter. *Hoffa* uses the story of the

1937 Detroit citywide strike detailed in Dan Moldea’s book, *The Hoffa Wars*. Moldea reports that Hoffa contacted mob strikebreakers to prevent them from scabbing. Local 299’s president at the time, R.J. Bennett, said of Hoffa, “[the strike] would never have come off without him.”

Hoffa became IBT general president in 1957, when Tobin’s successor, Dave Beck, went to prison for tax evasion (he hadn’t cut the government in on the money he plundered from the IBT treasury).

While labor bureaucrats as a layer identify more often with the bosses they negotiate with than the workers they represent, Beck himself was a businessman. He was a real estate baron in Seattle, member of the Chamber of Commerce, and a visceral anticommunist. He was even known to lend Teamster money to his corporate friends to break strikes!

The pugnacious Hoffa promised to bring more of a working-class sensibility to the union and a single freight contract covering trucking companies nationwide. Many working Teamsters loved him for it.

To achieve the Master Freight Agreement, however, he had to centralize power in the union itself. Power in the IBT had traditionally been diffused among the local unions and their district councils, allowing for much autonomy from national headquarters.

This setup permitted the revolutionary socialists leading the Minneapolis Teamster Local 544 in the 1930s to wage its successful battles in the face of active opposition from Tobin and his henchmen. Yet it was no longer to the workers’ advantage when they needed to build a strong, united national organization.

Centralization was a double-edged sword, however. It made it much more difficult for opposition groups in the union to develop and win credibility among the ranks on a local level, since there was very little any local leadership could do without the support of the higher levels in the “Marble Palace.”

Throughout the 1950s and early ’60s, the government sought to break the power of the IBT. This attack took the form of Senate investigations into racketeering. Robert Kennedy made his career out of chasing Hoffa and trying to jail him.

DeVito’s film has but one strength: its unremitting hostility to the federal government and its efforts to intervene against the union. Whether it’s Nicholson exposing Robert Kennedy’s vendetta against the Teamsters, or FBI agents trying unsuccessfully to recruit Ciaro as an agent, the government is viewed as the enemy.

While the film fictionalizes the actual case in which the government finally succeeds in convicting Hoffa, it tells the truth about the union's failure to campaign for its leader's release.

Hoffa placed Frank Fitzsimmons, a long-time crony, in the general president's chair upon his conviction. Once in office, Fitzsim-

mons grew to like it. So when Fitzsimmons persuaded Richard Nixon to parole Hoffa, he forced Nixon to include a ban on Hoffa's union activity for ten years.

In 1975, Hoffa disappeared, presumably the victim of a Mafia hit squad and his old friend Fitzsimmons.

Jimmy Hoffa left a mixed legacy. He helped make the Teamsters Union what it is, both

good and bad. Many of his supporters in the ranks went on to build Teamsters for a Democratic Union; others were bought out by the old guard.

Perhaps someday we will see an accurate picture of this complex individual hit the popular consciousness. Hoffa isn't it. □

## Examining the Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression

*Continued from page 21*

family morality was waning but those when the family — and thus the heterosexual identity — has been strengthened. The gay man first appeared in early eighteenth-century London. This was during the boom of family-based artisan production, family production freed from the land. The age of marriage was falling and child spacing decreasing. The gay male identity was further sharpened, and the lesbian began to appear, in the late nineteenth century. At this time the working-class family was being reconstituted from its shake-up during the industrial revolution. Child labor ended; women were driven out of factory work; the male "family wage" made its appearance, and contraception began to be widely used.

The third "quantum jump" was during the early part of the post-Second World War boom. This was the age of family consumerism, the "affluent society," but before the boom itself had started to erode the family once more. It is no coincidence that he Cold War ideology of the time focused so insistently on homosexuals as "security risks." The converse to this is that during the industrial revolution, when the working-class family was radically weakened, distinctions between heterosexual and gay sex appeared less prominent. This was the era of the Napoleonic code [in Europe], which took an extremely liberal line on sexual deviation.

The natures of heterosexual and homosexual identities have also changed in

connected ways. From the eighteenth century up to the late nineteenth century the male heterosexual and the male homosexual were as much categories of gender as of sexuality. The eighteenth century "molly" or the nineteenth century "invert" was above all effeminate. To the extent that he was identified by his sexuality, this sexuality was that of the traditional taboo — *passive adult* homosexuality; and this was seen first and foremost as an outrage to masculinity. But during the twentieth century, and especially since the Second World War, the male homosexual, and increasingly the lesbian, too, have more and more been defined by our sexuality, just as marriage has become increasingly sexualized. We are now as much an outrage to "natural sexuality" as to gender roles.

We thus arrive at the greatest paradox. Within capitalism our sexual capacity, by its very nature social, has been thoroughly individualized and fetishized. Capitalism has freed our sexual capacity more than any other society before it. Yet in doing so it has alienated it from us more thoroughly than ever before. This paradox is what now makes possible — and necessary — for sexuality to be a political issue.

### Ending Oppression of Lesbians, Gay Men

We pointed out earlier that there are really two questions involved: why are there gay people? and, why are we oppressed? At-

tempts to give biological answers to both questions don't work. We have sexual capacity and human needs which are given by biology, but which don't in themselves imply any preference for heterosexual over homosexual behavior. [As the above historical material attempts to demonstrate] both the existence of gay people and our oppression have their origin in capitalist society.

[Our] book is written as an argument: that lesbian and gay liberation is a necessary part of making a socialist society, and that this liberation cannot come about except through this wider project. We therefore take issue with those people who see themselves as socialists but who think that defending the rights of lesbians and gay men is something of a tactical liability, or a luxury, or no more than a matter of philanthropic concern for a "disadvantaged group." We also want to argue that lesbians and gay men who are concerned for our rights and our liberation should organize their activity in a socialist way and should look for allies and connections with other organizations fighting for socialism. The connections which have started to appear between lesbian and gay politics and the socialist movement need to be developed and deepened. □

*Commentaries and/or critiques can be sent to: Bulletin IDOM, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003.*

## Salinas's Mexican Miracle Begins to Fade

*Continued from page 25*

- stimulate domestic industries by creating increased demand for raw materials and parts. Official estimates indicate, however, that only two percent of the materials used by the massive maquiladora industry come from inside Mexico.
4. Enormous speculative returns in the first years of the Salinas administration have been followed by a totally lackluster performance in 1992 and a major decline in early 1993. At the same time paper issues from Mexican companies such as Telmex, once considered hot property on international markets, have begun to lose investor appeal.
  5. Official unemployment statistics for 1992 indicate that between 2 and 3 percent of the economically active population was out of work at any one time. But such calculations are arrived at by excluding anyone engaged in the most tenuous efforts to survive, including those who eke out an existence selling chewing gum or washing windshields at

public street corners. Internal government documents put the true figure somewhere above 20 percent, and many analysts recognize similar figures even for Mexico City.

6. The July 6, 1988, vote was actually won by left-nationalist Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who built a broad electoral coalition following his 1987 split from the PRI. During his campaign his opposition to neoliberal policies and identification with the radical social policies of his father, former president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), generated mass mobilizations and the support of virtually the entire independent left, which dissolved into the Cárdenas political project.

Though the dimensions of the government's fraud make it difficult to offer precise figures, some estimates indicate that Cárdenas defeated Salinas by a margin of 51-32 percent.

Hundreds of thousands of outraged citizens staged marches and takeovers of government

buildings while peasant communities in many regions took up arms, awaiting orders from Cárdenas to defend their electoral victory. But protesters were chastised for their radicalism and told to dedicate their efforts to building a new political party (the Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD) and prepare for new (equally fraudulent) elections.

7. It is estimated that as many as two-thirds of Mexico's five million campesino families will eventually be forced off the land under the new reforms in a move that will seriously aggravate the country's severe urban crisis, boost migration to the United States, and result in increased poverty for millions of Mexicans. Under the reforms, the country's 29,951 ejidos and communal agrarian communities can be sold to private investors, and Mexican banks have begun to greatly restrict farm loans to small-scale farmers.

# Letters

## Delighted with BIDOM

I am delighted that there is such a publication as yours. But I seriously doubt that Marxism needs any defense at all. If Karl was alive today, would he have a heart attack or laugh himself into a hernia? With the national debt, the S-and-L bail-out, the oil war, the drug traffic, prostitution, high utilities, minimum wage slaves (i.e., fast food workers), unemployment, homelessness, political action committees, deregulated trickle-down rampant, international banking interest, and the mentality of the mall rat “shop ’til you drop; buy ’til you die” consumerism, I seriously doubt that anything Marx wrote needs any defense at all. This is his wildest nightmare on an LSD trip.

Please send the price and list of your publication’s back copies and the subscription cost. Plus any other reading material having to do with Karl Marx. Thank you.

Ronald DeViney  
Arkansas

## Correction

Part of a sentence was left out in the article “Working Women in the United States Today,” which appeared in the March issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. On page 11, the sentence was published as: “Among household domestics (cooks, babysitters, housekeepers, cleaning people, etc.) male workers earned a measly \$411 a year more than women.” The sentence *should* have read: “Among household domestics (cooks, babysitters, housekeepers, cleaning people, etc.) male workers earned more than females in every category but child care — where women earned a measly \$411 a year more.”

Evelyn Sell  
Los Angeles

## Correction

In the editing of my article on “Race, Class, and Gender” [*Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, #104, March 1993], a small but significant change was made that unfortunately confuses or obscures the very point I was trying to make. The problem occurs in the following sentence on page 35: “In particular, this involves a fuller recognition of women and people of color as vital members of the working class, whether or not they are immediately engaged in wage work or central participants in the class struggle.” It should read as follows: “In particular, this involves a fuller recognition of women and people of color as vital members of the working class, whether or not they are immediately engaged in wage work, and as central participants in the

class struggle.” The point I was trying to make is that women and people of color can be involved in important forms of class struggle even if they themselves are not wage workers. Compared to white men, women and people of color more often find themselves working at home without pay, being unemployed, or having to create their own jobs that are outside of the formal wage-work system. This does not mean, however, that such people are not part of the working class or that their struggles — which may be based in a community rather than a workplace or around issues other than those involving relationships between employers and workers — are not class struggles. The central idea is that we need a broadened understanding that will recognize such forms of activism as vital and central aspects of the class struggle itself.

Carol McAllister  
Pittsburgh

## Dobbs and Kerry

I noticed something peculiar in your article, “The Purge of the Trotskyists from the Socialist Workers Party.” Michael Frank writes, “Le Blanc in fact provides a detailed account of organizational practices that, in his opinion, paved the way and contributed to the party’s degeneration. For example, Barnes was selected, groomed, and elevated to his current position by the former leadership team of Dobbs-Kerry on the basis of their assessment of his potential. His leadership position was not the result of a consensus reached by his peers on the basis of actual accomplishments.” (*Bulletin IDOM*, Feb. 1993, p. 30). If this is true then the degeneration of the SWP could not have started with Barnes. It would have started, as Le Blanc would imply, with Dobbs and Kerry. Any “Barnes clique” is really only the continuation of this Dobbs-Kerry clique.

Now if Dobbs and Kerry were running the SWP in this anti-democratic way, “selecting” and “grooming” leaders, how could they do this without the knowledge and approval of Cannon? By what Le Blanc is saying, it is implied that the SWP was degenerate from birth, and that Barnes is the result of this long tradition.

Now if this Dobbs-Kerry group were operating in this way, why didn’t Cannon fight it, or even mention it? Was he educated in a tradition that approved of such organizational methods? And who educated him in political and organizational methods but the founder of the Fourth International, Trotsky? And the party and the party methods that Trotsky advocated in building the FI were those of Lenin.

So I find something peculiar in this article, and you give me the impression that it is not Barnes and his program that you are questioning, but something else.

Stansfield Smith  
Chicago

## Paul Le Blanc Replies

Stansfield Smith seems to suggest that it is “not Barnes and his program” that we are questioning, but rather the traditions of American Trotskyism as represented by Farrell Dobbs, Tom Kerry, and James P. Cannon — in fact, even Trotsky and Lenin! As he will discover if he actually reads the book under review, however, my long essay in *Working-Class Democracy and Revolutionary Principles*, and the entire book, advance precisely the opposite argument. Part of Smith’s misunderstanding may arise from the fact that Michael Frank’s succinct review obviously cannot convey all of what is presented in the book. On the other hand, Smith himself makes a few leaps in his formulations that are not warranted by what appears in the review.

For example, I do not write (and I do not believe) that there was a “Dobbs-Kerry clique” or that there was any continuity between the Trotskyist politics of Dobbs and Kerry in the 1950s and ’60s and the anti-Trotskyist politics of Barnes in the 1980s and ’90s. I *do* believe — and state — that Dobbs, Kerry, and other comrades made a very serious (though, given the difficult conditions of the time, understandable) mistake in the manner that they elevated Barnes into a leadership position, and also made serious errors in the SWP organizational resolution of 1965, which opened the door for Barnes’s grotesque distortion of Leninist norms.

As my essay and other materials in the book indicate, all of this was inconsistent with the revolutionary organizational practice represented by Cannon. In my opinion the Cannon tradition provides a useful and positive model for revolutionaries of today. The book documents that Cannon sharply criticized negative organizational developments of which he was aware, up to 1967. When Barnes moved forward in the SWP leadership, however, Cannon (now in his 80s, living in a semi-secluded retirement in California) was not in a position to oversee, let alone lead struggles against, developments in the SWP leadership transition unfolding in New York.

I agree with Smith’s comment that “the degeneration of the SWP could not have started with Barnes.” I think aspects of it can be traced back to the 1950s and ’60s, and can best be understood, as Michael

Frank puts it, with an analysis “which integrates broad social, economic, political, and cultural perspectives with organizational history and psychological dynamics.” Especially decisive was the disintegration of working-class radicalism in the late 1940s and the 1950s. This provides the key to what happened, not some alleged succession of “cliques,” and not some alleged (I think non-existent) “original sin” in Cannon’s or Lenin’s organizational perspectives.

The issues which concern Smith are vitally important for serious revolutionaries in the United States, who will obviously want to learn from both positive and negative experiences of the past. Hopefully this book and the other two in the series “In Defense of American Trotskyism” will be a useful resource for such comrades.

### **Election Coverage**

Thanks to Bill Onasch for his election summary (December BIDOM). It is excellent for the most part. However, I would like to make two comments.

First, the groups he mentioned who made Clinton’s victory possible may very well get some small measure of benefit in the short term. Labor may get less union busting and more government contracts. Feminists will probably see at least legal abortion rights strengthened and some

greater movement toward equal pay and opportunity. Blacks might make some strides in terms of education, with a few crumbs scattered around the urban centers in an effort to keep things from getting too much worse than they already are. Students may get an improved system of college loans and public education might not sink completely. Indians — a group that Bill does not mention, no doubt because of their relatively small numbers — can expect a greater respect for treaty promises and nationhood.

It’s not much, really, but at least its better than the last twelve years and, besides, the American people weren’t really ready for anything different. That brings me to my second point.

If we look at the 1992 election from a broader vantage point than people are usually willing to do then it can be seen not simply as a lost opportunity for something better, but also as a necessary stage in the growth and development of class consciousness in this country.

People in the U.S. are not yet willing to admit that Prince Charming isn’t coming to solve all their problems. Clinton seemed like a better choice to fill that role than Bush or Perot. What’s more, U.S. economic and military power controls the world, and everyone — including Russia and

China — are scrambling to emulate and imitate the power of capitalism. At least, that’s what we are told, and there’s little obvious evidence to the contrary coming through in the mass media. In certain respects, the U.S. ruling class has never exerted a greater hegemony than it does today.

But things are not always as rosy as they seem. A look at appearances can be deceptive, obscuring contradictions that are working below the surface. And as the effects of these contradictions become more and more tangible in the coming months and years some of the same realities that worked in favor of the system during this election — the vitality and anger of many people, the renewal of political interest on campuses, the expectations for improvement and change among Blacks, women, and others, and especially the release of the genie of the third political party concept, now loose in our land again — can turn into their opposites, becoming important forces working to bring about the system’s demise.

We should remind ourselves that an apple is most beautiful just before it falls from the tree. Time is on our side.

*Jack Bresée  
Fordland, MO*

## **Socialism and the Struggle for Lesbian/Gay Liberation**

*Continued from page 23*

of capitalist society pull the family apart. Women entering the workforce gain economic independence from their husbands and begin to question the inequality of “women’s work” and women’s oppression in general. As great urban centers develop, youth are able to escape family life and sell their labor power on their own.

The rise of industrial cities also allows lesbians and gay men to escape rural villages and to begin to develop the urban subculture that gives rise to gay people’s perception of themselves as a self-identified community.

Capitalism exacerbates lesbian/gay oppression, but at the same time it also creates another detachment of its own “grave-diggers” through the development of lesbian/gay communities, the spontaneous fightback against lesbian/gay oppression, demands for legal and social reforms, emerging political consciousness, and eventually recognition of the need to end lesbian/gay oppression by overthrowing capitalism and developing social alternatives to the bourgeois nuclear family.

### **Socialism and Lesbian/Gay Liberation**

A hundred years ago revolutionary Marxists began to realize that the development of a revolutionary working-class movement required the involvement and leadership of women workers. Today revolutionary Marxists must learn the necessity for the involvement and leadership of lesbian and gay workers.

Revolutionary-minded lesbians and gay men will want to be in the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle, as the oppressive weight of capitalist society continues to bear down on them and the growth of a fascist movement gives them no choice for their survival. Trotskyists should do everything possible to draw these vanguard fighters into our movement. “Vulgar Marxist” abstentionism or a purely “democratist” approach to the lesbian/gay struggle cannot do this, since it leaves the leadership of the lesbian/gay movement in the hands of the reformists and does nothing to raise socialist consciousness within the movement as a whole.

Revolutionary communists — in the political tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, and Trotsky — have something important to say to the vanguard of the lesbian/gay struggle, and we should say it. Our

materialist analysis can dissect capitalist society and offer the only real explanation for why lesbian/gay oppression exists in class society and how it can be eliminated under socialism.

The movement for the liberation of lesbians and gay men is just beginning to awaken worldwide, not only in the imperialist countries but also in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. On April 25, the eyes of millions of lesbians and gay men around the world will be on Washington, D.C., watching the most important lesbian/gay political event of 1993.

Will these watching eyes see Trotskyists among the hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men marching in downtown Washington? If so, it will help them and the marchers increasingly to see their fate as bound up with the fate of the only truly revolutionary class, the working class, and with its vanguard.

The revolutionary fury that arises from the oppression of lesbians and gay men is a powerful force that can and must be channeled into the coming world socialist revolution. □

*January 31, 1993*

## Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin In Defense of Marxism

- 1 year — \$24** Plus, your choice of one of the following:
- American Elections and Issues Facing Working People*
  - The Transitional Program — Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the U.S.*
  - A Year of Decision for U.S. Labor — The Hormel Strike and Beyond*
- 6 months — \$15**       **3-month introductory — \$5**

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail and make checks payable to: Bulletin IDOM, 27 Union Square West, 2nd Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003

## International Viewpoint

A unique monthly magazine with news and analysis of the international class struggle from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, published in Europe.

- Single trial issue: \$4.50.**
- 1 year: \$48 surface mail — or \$60 airmail.** Plus, your choice of one of the following:
- Fifty Years of the Fourth International* (a \$10 value).
  - A Tribute to George Breitman: Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Write *International Viewpoint*, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003

## BOOKS & PAMPHLETS

### Pamphlets, \$1.00 Each

*Our Bodies! Our Choice! Winning the Fight for Reproductive Rights*, by Evelyn Sell

*The Marxist Case for Revolution Today*, by Ernest Mandel

*Revolutionary Internationalism and the Struggle for Socialism in the United States*

*The Actuality of Socialism*, by Ernest Mandel

*Vanguard Parties*, by Ernest Mandel

*Two Essays on Leninism and Trotskyism*, by Ernest Mandel

### Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States

*Trotskyism in America, the First Fifty Years*, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.50

*Organizational Principles and Practices*, Edited with an introduction by Evelyn Sell \$3.50

*Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism*, Edited with an introduction by Paul Le Blanc

\$5.00

**Full Set of All Three:**

**\$10.00**

### Books and Other Literature

*The Fourth International: Fifty Years*, Talks given at the New York City celebration, October 1988, plus other relevant contributions \$10.00

*Trends in the Economy — Marxist Analysis of Capitalism in the Late 1980s*, by Carol McAllister, Steve Bloom, and Ernest Mandel \$3.00

*The Transitional Program — Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the United States*, by Evelyn Sell, Steve Bloom, and Frank Lovell; Introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$4.00

*Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua*, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.00

Order from and make checks payable to:

Bulletin IDOM, 27 Union Square West, 2nd Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003

☞ SPECIAL DISCOUNT FOR BULK ORDERS ☞

Write to Bulletin IDOM or call (212) 633-2007

Complete Three-Volume Series — ONLY \$25.00

# In Defense of American Trotskyism

---

**Volume One:**

***The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979-1983***

*edited by Sarah Lovell, 328 pages (1992) — \$10.00*

---

This book consists of selected documents mostly produced by a political tendency that was organized in the Socialist Workers Party to defend and advance the revolutionary perspectives of Trotskyism. This tendency, which began to develop in the party in 1979, waged a struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party until the expulsion of its adherents in 1984, when they established a new group called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Also represented here are oppositionists who became prominent in other groups — Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. Included are materials produced by two of the oldest and most prestigious veterans in the SWP, Tom Kerry and George Breitman. A substantial introductory essay by Frank Lovell, "The Meaning of the Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party," provides valuable background information and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

---

---

**Volume Two:**

***Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy***

*edited by Paul Le Blanc, 412 pages (1992) — \$12.00*

---

This book focuses on the waves of expulsions which hit the Socialist Workers Party from 1981 through 1984. It provides an inspiring record — and reaffirmation — of the revolutionary ideas and commitments of those who were being forced out of the organization to which many had given "the whole of their lives." also included are: substantial pieces by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Larry Seigle defending the expulsions; a critique by representatives of the Fourth International; letters and a talk by pioneer Trotskyist James P. Cannon, originally published under the title *Don't Strangle the Party*. A substantial introductory essay by Paul Le Blanc, "Leninism in the United States and the Decline of the Socialist Workers Party," relates the 1981-84 experience to broader questions of "the vanguard party" and Leninism, the history and character of American Trotskyism, the development of the U.S. working class, and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

---

---

**Volume Three:**

***Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party***

*edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages (1990) — \$9.00*

---

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.

---