

Why Independent Politics?

By MALIK MIAH and
SUZANNE FORSYTH

Independent Politics is a new publication with a simple aim: to promote the need for workers, Blacks, Latinos, women, students and others to fight for their rights through independent political action.

You may ask, "Independent of whom and what?" Independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. Independent of big business. Independent of the owners of the wealth produced by working people. Independent of racists and sexists.

In other words, *independent* of all members and supporters of the only class that benefits from division and exploitation of working people here and abroad, the capitalist class.

We are not independent of the struggles of working people and the oppressed. We support the mobilization of workers, Blacks, women and others against the system of exploitation and oppression. We support the struggles of people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America against imperialist domination of their countries. We oppose the U.S. war machine. We side with the Cubans and Arab peoples, with the Irish and Kurds; with the Black South Africans and Palestinians in their fight for self determination. We are with the underdog against the bully. We are for solidarity, for democracy, and for socialism.

Lesson of presidential election

The 1992 presidential election is proof that working people urgently need and

want change. George Bush's and Bill Clinton's remedies for the economy and the ills of the country inspire little hope. The demagogue Ross Perot is seen, at best, as a "throw-the-incumbent-bums-out" candidate. It's hard to find many workers who buy into his program of massive tax increases and cuts in social programs as a way to raise the standard of living of the average American.

Most working people, in fact, will not even vote. And those who do will vote for the lesser evil and against whomever they consider the greater evil, not for someone they believe will improve the country or their lives.

We need our own party

Working people need our own political party. We need to rely on our own actions to defend past gains and to win new ones. We have no friends in the two major capitalist parties. Capitalist politicians cannot be trusted. Ross Perot is not a friend of working people either. He's a billionaire who made his wealth off the backs of workers.

The capitalist politicians tell us it is *voting* in elections that is key to bringing about change in policies. If you don't vote, they charge, you are not involved in real politics. In fact, they say, you deserve what you get by those in power if you don't vote.

This is false. Real or *effective* politics does not start with electoral politics. That's a myth propagated by the rulers. Political action is not equal to electoral politics. The election of candidates for city, state, and

federal office at best can only reflect a process that went on beforehand. Elections can only *register* the balance of forces in society for or against progressive or reactionary ideas or proposals. Elections can rarely initiate a process that has not already been set into motion.

Effective politics begin with what we as working people do for ourselves. What we do before elections ever take place is what determines our future.

Past struggles

There are many examples in American (and world) history that verify this perspective.

The modern organized labor movement was not organized by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s or the efforts of friendly Democrats or Republicans in

Continued on page 23

INSIDE:

WOMEN'S EQUALITY & POWER PAGE 3

WHAT THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT MEANS PAGE 8

FUTURE OF SOCIALISM PAGE 11

MALCOLM X and THE FUTURE OF BLACK POLITICS PAGE 18

CONTENTS

ATTACKS AGAINST THE GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY MUST STOP Anna Taylor.....	2
STOP THE U.S. BLOCKADE OF CUBA! Mo Harry.....	3
WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND POLITICAL POWER Claudette Bégin.....	3
EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK IN CALIFORNIA Gretchen Mackler.....	4
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SUFFERS SETBACK Claudette Bégin.....	5
THE ENVIRONMENT — CAPITALISM FOULS IT UP Adam Wood.....	5
OIL WORKERS ORGANIZE VICTORY AT CHEVRON PHILADELPHIA Dave Campbell.....	6
U.S.-CANADA-MEXICO FREE TRADE AGREEMENT REALLY FREE TRADE? Carl Finamore.....	8

PARC 55 WORKERS' VICTORY INSPIRES OTHERS Mary Doran.....	9
WHY WE NEED A LABOR PARTY Suzanne Forsyth.....	10
SOCIALISM AND THE FUTURE Ernest Mandel.....	11
ARE THE WORKERS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE BECOMING CAPITALISTS? Alex Chis.....	15
QUESTIONS ON THE COMING REVOLUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA Lee Artz.....	16
INDEPENDENT BLACK POLITICAL ACTION IN THE 1990S Malik Miah.....	18
REGROUPING THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT Barry Sheppard.....	21
BOLSHEVIK VISIONS — REVIEW Alex Chis.....	22

Attacks Against the Gay/Lesbian Community Must Stop

By ANNA TAYLOR

This October California governor Pete Wilson signed AB2601. While some see this as a victory, many gay and lesbian rights activists charge the governor with tokenism. AB2601 is a labor code bill that makes it illegal to not hire someone on the basis of their sexual orientation.

However, it exempts small business owners and non-profit organizations, which make up 60 percent of California employers. Also, it does not cover equal housing rights and it prohibits the use of quotas or other affirmative actions to enforce its provisions. Domestic partner benefits are not mandated by the bill. And there is no criminal penalty for violators. Current case law already gives gays and lesbians the right to fight discrimination in court. So in effect the bill changes nothing.

Last year Wilson vetoed AB101, a civil rights bill. AB101 would have included gays and lesbians into the already active civil rights bill for women and minorities and it also provided housing protection.

Attacks on the gay and lesbian community have been on the rise. In Oregon,

Measure 9 is up for voter approval this November. The measure declares homosexuality "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse." It also would prohibit the state from using its money or property to "promote, encourage, or facilitate homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism, and masochism." The amendment would require teachers to portray homosexuals as "perverted and abnormal."

Many open gays and lesbians that teach or work for the state are at risk of losing their jobs if the measure passes. Plus, the campaign alone for Measure 9 has already led to more hate crimes against the gay community in Oregon. Many predict that gay-bashing can only get worse if the measure passes.

The proposed amendment is sponsored by the Oregon Citizen's Alliance as part of a national movement that has also put an anti-gay referendum on the Colorado ballot and is gathering signatures for similar measures in three other states.

We are being told the reason that "our country" is in an economic crisis is because of the "decline of family values." This is yet another direct attack on gays and lesbians as well as women.

Today, when the gay/lesbian commu-

nity is under attack with the AIDS epidemic and an increase in gay-bashing, it is especially important we have an equal rights bill that will provide gays and lesbians with real protection from discrimination. We need to be conscious of the plight of gays and lesbians today and join in the struggle for their liberation. ▼

INDEPENDENT POLITICS

Independent Politics is published by Activists for Independent Socialist Politics (AISP). AISP's main objective is to promote the idea of independent political action and rebuild a mass socialist movement in the United States. Members of AISP are activists in the trade unions, women's and Black liberation movements, and many other social struggles.

Opinions expressed herein are strictly those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of AISP or *Independent Politics*.

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Women's equality and political power

By CLAUDETTE BÉGIN

We won't go back! We will fight back!

These are slogans women carried proudly at the mass demonstrations and protests in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and other cities across the country in the last year. They are the themes of the successful defense of the clinics under attack in Buffalo, Baton Rouge and New York City. All told, over a million women and men were in the streets during the last year demanding an unconditional women's right to choose.

Women are fighting against an onslaught of attacks — terrorist attacks, such as the continued harassment and destruction of clinics — and legal attacks, such as the “gag rule” preventing federally-funded clinics from talking about abortion, and the Supreme Court gutting of *Roe V. Wade's* protection against state encroachment of abortion rights.

Right wing leads attacks

This anti-woman, anti-democratic onslaught is most visibly identified with the most right-wing elements of society. The same right wing — encouraged by President Bush and the government — trumpets the moral superiority of the most reactionary versions of the patriarchal family. They are trying to drive us back into the days of back-alley abortions, when young women got pregnant because they didn't know the simplest facts about their own bodies, when the way to stop having children was “Just Say No,” and when women and children had no rights against abuse.

But if it is only the right wing supporting this attack, why wasn't the gag rule overturned? The primacy of this issue at this time is a testament to how important the issue of the right to choose is to public policy and the country as a whole.

It is women's place in society that is being attacked here. Why? Women have

won a more prominent, visible role over the last 25 years or so. The great majority of women now work, whether or not they have children. To determine their own lives, women must have the basic right to control their own bodies. To work outside the home, women must be able to decide basic aspects of their lives. And really, this is at the heart of the reason for the attack on abortion rights and the trumpeting of the traditional “family.”

The world economy is in a structural crisis, and the U.S. economy is in a period of prolonged stagnation with unemployment at a high after a decade of rapacious corporate greed. The richest one percent got richer and decreased their taxes while working people — especially women workers — got poorer and paid higher taxes. Many lost their jobs. And many workers, unemployed and underemployed, became homeless.

It is within this context that the right of equal opportunity for women and oppressed minorities is being attacked today. The heat is being turned up by the employing class on the less-than-equal partners who continue to pursue an equal share. The heat serves the interests of that richest one percent, those who rule America. It's part of the counterattack they wage against those who are implicitly challenging the legacy of their control of the pie. While they gobble the pie, they spout their morality, which is reminiscent of fascist tracts attacking the rights of women, ethnic groups and homosexuals.

False electoral strategy

The advantage that we in the women's movement have is the significant support for a woman's right to choose among the American people — among working people. And that's where the women's movement needs to be concentrating its forces. Any significant change has been won by the independent strength of the movement's decisive pressure on those in office reluctant to support our rights.

As part of its strategy of fighting back,

JEROME FRIAR/IMPACT VISUALS



Pro-choice demonstrators march in Washington D.C. in April, 1992.

many women's groups are endorsing pro-choice candidates as a way to get access to the seats of power where the laws are made. A certain excitement has seized women's rights supporters with the possibility of female candidates sweeping into office. This is a certain measure of the strength and breadth of pro-choice support.

However, the majority of these candidates are running as Democrats or Republicans. Supporting women who are Democrats and Republicans for choice is a false strategy. Women cannot protect our rights or extend them by depending on pro-choice capitalist politicians.

Those who believe in women's right to full equality need a new political party based on working people. We need independent candidates that are part of a political party based on the entire range of political and economic issues affecting women. Because when we vote, we are also voting on war, wages, budget priorities, the environment, child care, health care. If we just vote for “choice,” we may be getting more than we bargained for.

We have to take on those who are denying our needs. Mass action for our rights — in the streets, in the communities, and in the trade unions — is the fighting perspective of independent political action. ▼

Claudette Begin is a leading activist of the Bay Area Pro-Choice Coalition and a member of the East Bay chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Teachers and supporters fight back Education Under Attack in California

California teachers have been engaged in an explosive battle between the forces of public school advocates and those who would seek to privatize, using public money to support a private school voucher system. This privatization movement in California has been led by Joseph Alibrandi, CEO of a \$190 million-a-year aerospace supply firm, with the cooperation of other corporations. The outcome of this fight has national ramifications. These forces attempted to put an initiative on the California ballot in 1992 for the voucher system by collecting signatures statewide.

When these foes of public education declared their intentions, pro-education forces united into a coalition with the unions of the 250,000 California teachers in the lead, the CTA (California Teachers Association, affiliated to the independent National Education Association), and the AFT (American Federation of Teachers, affiliated to the AFL-CIO). Several million dollars were raised through a special assessment, and teachers were activated to educate potential petition signers across the state. The money was used to purchase ads and distribute thousands of fliers explaining the threat of this initiative to public education.

Incredible as it may seem, many critics of public education seem to believe that diverting already shrinking educational funds is the answer to improving America's educational system. They ignore the real needs of our children: a lower teacher-student ratio, adequate supplies, decent buildings, and attractive teachers' salaries.

California continues to grow in population, attracting working people from across the U.S. and beyond the country's borders. While the immigrant population nationally is only six percent, in California 20 percent of its five million students are from other countries. California's continued population growth, economic downturn, and its bottom ranking in the nation's pupil-teacher ratio make it a perfect

By GRETCHEN MACKLER

stage for the ensuing political battle. More resources for education are needed, not less.

For the first time, the state's teachers' unions are actively campaigning to prevent the voucher initiative from qualifying for the ballot. This resulted in a partial success, preventing a Fall 1992 ballot status. However, enough signatures were gathered to put it before voters in November 1993.

Funds for public education

Funding public education is key to improving the schools; critics who say good education shouldn't cost a lot of money are denying reality. Good books, good equipment, and good teachers cost money. The reliance on property taxes is an outdated method for school funding. After Proposition 13 passed in California in the 70s and lowered property taxes for most homeowners, teachers in the 80s were forced, out of survival, to conduct a successful petition campaign to require a guaranteed base of funding for public schools. Proposition 98, as it is known, has forced the legislature to stop financing other state budgets from educational money.

The road to get more funds for education is not to raise property taxes for working people who are buying homes. Working people already pay too much in city, state, and federal taxes. The big corporations and rich don't. They must be taxed to the fullest. Instead the Democrat and Republican lawmakers seek to outdo each other in finding new ways to justify less for education.

We are witnessing an all-out attack on public schools. This war is in progress behind the banner of "vouchers" and "parental choice" (not to be confused with reproductive choice). Two components comprise the enemy camp: the elite, who have never sent their children to public

schools, and the fundamentalist anti-choice/pro-prayer-in-the-schools-people.

Both conservative groups proposing private schools are using the

critical situation in public education and the deep economic crisis as a wedge to advance their agenda to destroy public schools. Class sizes are on the rise and budgets have been hard hit. The recent budget fight over the summer in California resulted in over a billion dollar loss to public schools at a time when California ranks 50th in the nation in teacher-pupil ratio.

Unfortunately, some people behind the school "choice" movement seem to think that choosing a school would be like choosing a restaurant with a gift certificate. They mistakenly believe that vouchers are going to magically create utopian schools for their kids.

Educational Industrial Complex

What right wing pro-privatization forces really want is an Educational Industrial Complex, according to prominent educator Jonathan Kozol. He writes in his latest book, *Savage Inequalities*, that the gap between rich and poor schools has widened in the last 30 years. Kozol believes this privatization move headed nationally by former Yale University President Benno Schmidt, and the Edison Project, is aimed at breaking the teachers' unions and destroying public schools.

There's a crying need for working people to organize behind full funding measures to guarantee equitable access for the country's 45 million school children. The teachers' unions can play a leading role in this fight by organizing a national campaign with other unions and social groups demanding an end to the massive military budget and raising the taxes of big business and the rich. The battle is just beginning and the stakes are high. ▼

Gretchen Mackler is a state council member of the California Teachers Association/National Education Association from the city of Alameda.

The environment Capitalism fouls it up

By ADAM WOOD

Environmental consciousness has grown dramatically over the past 10 years. The number and membership of "Green" parties and organizations has swelled across Europe and the United States, and the debate on how best to protect the environment has reached the highest levels of government.

Despite this progress, the destruction of the Earth goes forward at full speed. One example of this is the U.S. coal industry.

Coal mining and processing involves the release of sulphur into the atmosphere which causes acid rain. Carbon emissions from coal production are theoretically partly responsible for global warming. Strip mining techniques used to reach coal deposits destroy the nation's forests and cause severe soil erosion.

Yet U.S. coal production is expected to exceed one billion tons this year, a new record. As for the environmental hazards posed by coal mining, industry spokesperson John Crasser says, "If you're against carbon emissions, well, I'm afraid that's us. But we're always trying to educate and make new friends." One aspect of this "education" is the amazing discovery (by the coal industry) that while global warming may have its down side, it could "help some farm crops"!

The reason behind coal's success is its profitability. With its low exploration costs and easy accessibility, U.S. electrical utilities have called coal the cheapest fossil fuel. When money's at stake, especially during a recession, the environment goes out the window.

The government and corporations are trying to balance the need of energy companies to profit against the need to protect the environment. This same balancing act takes place in every industrialized country. Essentially, the needs of one percent of the world's human population are weighed against the rest of humanity and

every other living thing on Earth. Strangely enough, in a society based on profit first, the needs of that one percent come out on top.

This conflict of interest between profit and the environment is what prevents any attempt by the capitalists to police themselves from succeeding. The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, last summer failed to make any meaningful change in the way imperialist nations approach the environment. Citing the need to maintain competitiveness, the government delegations from Europe, North America, and Japan eliminated all language from resolutions that laid out specific limits on greenhouse gases and other pollutants. As Wolfgang Lohbeck, Greenpeace's climate expert put it, "The industrialized nations will carry on as before."

Defenders of the environment must expand their goals to taking power from those who have a material interest in ignoring dangers to the Earth. Until we have a society where human needs, including environmental protection, come before profits, all life on Earth will constantly be in jeopardy.

Eliminating the profit motive alone will not guarantee a cleaner planet, as demonstrated by the massive pollution generated by the former Soviet Union and countries of Eastern Europe in their impossible drives to create "socialism in one country." But a *democratic* socialist society would allow environmental debate to take place insulated from the deep pockets of the capitalist class. The responsibility for protecting the Earth would rest on working people around the world. ▼

Affirmative Action Suffers Setback

BY CLAUDETTE BÉGIN

In October, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) found that Boalt Hall Law Schools' efforts to achieve ethnic diversity violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The federal government ruled the U.C. Berkeley law school to be out of compliance essentially because Boalt's treatment of racial minorities was too favorable.

As a result of this finding, Boalt Hall Law School no longer can, or will, consider applications in racially separated batches, a procedure federal investigators described as "designed to ensure that the affirmative action percentage goals would be met." OCR objected to this method because it "had the effect of...excluding applicants from consideration for available positions based on their race or ethnicity."

The assumption that the school was out of compliance because they were biased in favor of minorities demonstrates just how tenuous affirmative action has become. Thirty years ago the enrollment at Boalt was all white and male. Currently the first year class is 39 percent minorities and 40 percent women.

The contested portions of the affirmative action admissions policy have made

it possible for the school to meet its modest minority enrollment goals since 1978, and in the last few years to actually exceed them. The changes dictated by the OCR will hamper the school's ability to meet its minority enrollment goals.

Student leaders of La Raza Law Students Association, Law Students of African Descent and the Asian-American/Pacific Islander Law Students Association all decried the Bush administration's move as a "Willie Horton" type of intervention in the elections. Dana Chiu said, "We condemn the blatant manipulation of the Office of Civil Rights by those elements that seek to see our society divided. It is not 'legal racism' as certain enemies of diversity and equal access to education insist."

The "equality" arguments against affirmative action are a complete sham. They seek to mask the extensive history of racism and consistent discriminatory exclusion of those who were not white and male. Let's not forget our country's long legacy of racism when those attackers try to embarrass supporters of affirmative action. We must stand firm and fight for the retention of effective affirmative action programs until complete inclusion of minorities into all areas of employment and education is achieved. ▼

International union lends support Oil Workers Organize Victory at Chevron Philadelphia

By DAVE CAMPBELL

Workers face tough times. The U.S. economy is in a prolonged period of stagnation. The government,

courts, and employers are all anti-labor. There are few friends of labor elected to office. There are fewer strikes and less victories because workers aren't confident in the economy or their leadership.

Not surprisingly, organized labor is in decline. The percentage of workers in unions is less than 16 percent; and even fewer are unionized in manufacturing. A big task facing the trade unions is to organize the unorganized and defeat attempts by employers to destroy unionism.

Victory at Chevron-Philadelphia

In this context how the organizing victory was won by Chevron workers in Philadelphia is instructive for unionists.

On Friday, September 11, 1992, 150 people gathered in a parking lot at the Chevron refinery in Philadelphia. Inside a small trailer where two days of voting had just taken place, a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) agent was counting the ballots.

Chants and cheers went up among the crowds as they waited for the final count. The vote total: 276 yes to 154 no. Out of 439 eligible to vote, 430 had voted. Another cheer went up. Then came the victory party at the Local 8-234 union hall.

The effort was led by rank and file workers at Chevron-Philadelphia. But the international union came to their support. The victory put Chevron's bosses and their fellow refinery owners on notice. At the end of January 1993, most oil refinery contracts expire. The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) leadership is now preparing for those negotiations.

Chevron's abuse of worker sparks organizing drive

Ed Podgurny was a scalehouse operator. With 23 years of service Ed was known within the refinery as a super-con-

scientious guy. His job was to weigh trucks coming into the refinery and weigh them again on the way out.

Some employees from a contract oil hauler figured out a way to bypass this system. Chevron alleged that a million dollars of product was stolen. During the investigation Ed was suspended for four weeks without pay. Because the bosses never proved Ed was part of a conspiracy, he was told to come back to work. But they wouldn't pay him for the four weeks he was off. Ed consulted a lawyer. The lawyer told him that without a union contract there was nothing the legal system could do. Ed was so humiliated that he quit.

The rest of the refinery was outraged. Majority sentiment was that if something like that could happen to someone like Ed, then no one was safe. Other incidents had also occurred. A lab supervisor had ordered a lab technician to clean up a mercury spill with her hands. A maintenance supervisor had punched a pipefitter in the mouth. But Ed's case was the rallying point.

In contrast, the same oil hauling outfit had pulled the same scam at the nearby British Petroleum refinery in Marcus Hook. The scalehouse operator there was represented by the OCAW. Absolutely nothing happened to him because he was just as innocent as Ed Podgurny and because he had a union to make the bosses accountable for their actions.

A Top-notch Organizing Campaign

For the fifth time in 11 years Chevron Philadelphia workers approached the OCAW about getting the union into their plant. Two Blending and Shipping employees, Gus Bautista and Ron Westenberg, met with the president of OCAW Local 8-234, Denis Stefano.

Stefano, well aware that the four previous attempts (in 1981, 1983, 1985, and 1987) had failed, had Bautista and Westenberg form an in-plant organizing com-

mittee and got them petitions for employees to sign. About 320 employees signed within a matter of days.

Chevron of course denied recognition, forcing an NLRB-supervised election.

The organizing campaign was very well run, backed by substantial effort and commitment from workers inside the plant, Local 8-234, the International Union, and other Chevron units.

The in-plant committee had about 20 members. To get the word out in the plant, the committee published their own newsletter, called *One Voice*. By the end of the election campaign, the in-plant organizers assembled 75 volunteers to leaflet the plant gates.

The International committed money and personnel to the Philadelphia campaign. Stefano, whose local is too small to have a full-time officer, was put on temporary International Union payroll. Four International Representatives (campaign director Roger Bradley, Kevin Geddes, Lawrence Graham, and Robert Burdick) were assigned to Philadelphia.

Union activists at Richmond and El Segundo, California, expressed interest in helping with the campaign. The International Union agreed. Three rank-and-file workers were put on temporary International Union payroll and assigned to the Philadelphia campaign: Clyde Williams, Unit Chairman at Richmond; Rouelle Parker, Secretary-Treasurer at Port Arthur, California; and myself, a Chief Steward at El Segundo. Kathleen O'Nan, a former Chevron employee and OCAW member, also volunteered to help. She was effective in organizing spouses to aid in the campaign.

Chevron's Response

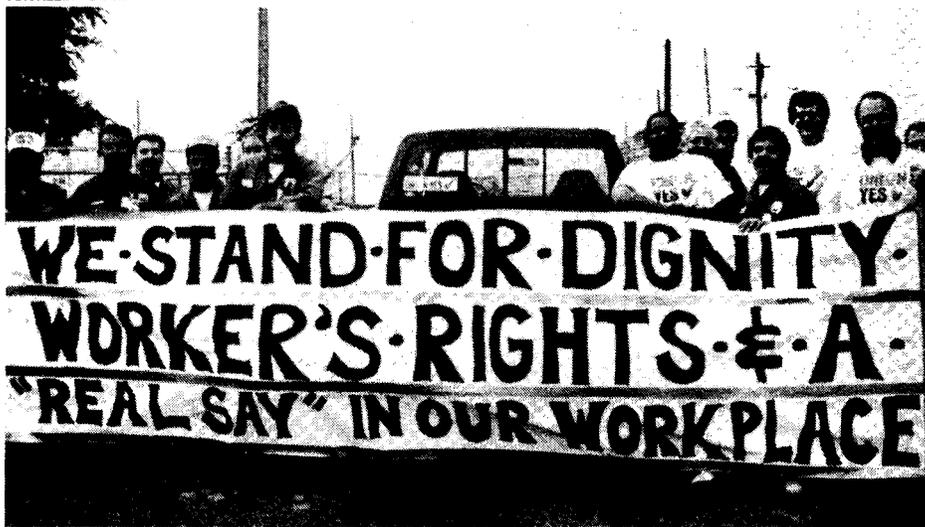
Chevron-Philadelphia general manager, Jerry Moffit, issued so-called "Fact Sheets" which claimed that the OCAW/Chevron

relationship at other company facilities was "adversarial," that the OCAW were "outsiders" intent on fomenting strikes, and that they were just interested in collecting dues, initiation fees and fines.

In fact, when union strength was low at the El Segundo and Richmond refineries, we fought Chevron tooth and nail on a constant basis.

The El Segundo group has been rebuilt from 43 percent union in 1986 to 100 percent. The organizing program was pretty simple. It rejected reliance on grievances, arbitrations, lawsuits and politicians and called on workers to fight for their interests with shop floor action.

KATILEEN O'NAN



Philadelphia Chevron organizing drive August and September 1992.

In 1990, Chevron decided it had had enough shop floor action. They proposed a contract package which exceeded the national agreement by over a dollar an hour and a new "cooperative" relationship with the OCAW. The contract was ratified on the condition that the union's participation in the cooperative was on a day-to-day basis. There were other rules, too. For one, the company was supposed to maintain neutrality to union organizing efforts.

Chevron workers at the Richmond refinery also organized to strengthen the union there. Richmond went from 50 percent union to about 86 percent by the time of the Philadelphia campaign, and union strength is still climbing. In response, Richmond management had also come to a new "cooperative" relationship

with the OCAW.

Moffit's "Fact Sheets" were faxed to El Segundo and Richmond, where union leaders confronted local management. They charged the company with violating the cooperative's rules against organizing neutrality, and threatened to end the co-operatives. Moffit was forced to reverse himself and admit in a later "Fact Sheet" that Chevron and the OCAW had a very "cooperative" relationship at other units.

Town Hall Meetings

The in-plant committee organized us (Clyde, Rouelle, and myself) to make house calls on prospective union broth-

ers and sisters. Teamed with local volunteers, we visited workers and their families at their homes to talk about the union.

We spoke at "Town Hall" meetings of Chevron employees at a local hotel. We explained how the union functions, how the grievance procedure works, how we are treated by the company. We answered questions about safety, job security, and many other concerns.

We were able to answer the charge that union organizers are "outsiders." Since the three of us all work for Chevron, and deal with the company every day, we could explain what a union means inside the gates.

I was repeatedly told by workers in Philadelphia that they were inspired by the video of El Segundo union members explaining what we accomplished. One

guy thought that maybe it was all a put-up until he met me and realized that people in California really did feel good about their union and that the bosses treated people with some dignity and respect.

Chevron challenges vote

On Friday, September 18, Chevron notified OCAW Local 8-234 by telephone that it was challenging the result of the election. They cited four violations to the voting process which were all but nonsense.

Local 8-234 leafletted the Philadelphia refinery within two hours of receiving the call. By Wednesday, the Philadelphia workers staged a plant gate demonstration of over 100 people.

The September 25 National Oil Bargaining Conference welcomed new participants from the Chevron Philadelphia group. All the delegates to the National Oil Bargaining Conference (over 250) signed a petition which called for backing up the new Philadelphia brothers and sisters "by any means necessary." International President Bob Wages notified Chevron that he was meeting at the conference with all of the leaders from Chevron units throughout the country and that if Chevron didn't see the merit of cooperation at Philadelphia by Sunday night there would be no cooperation anywhere.

Wages later reported at the conference that Chevron had notified him that the election challenge was being dropped. On October 2 Chevron formally notified employees of the withdrawal.

In addition to everyone already mentioned above, a good deal of credit belongs to unpaid rank-and-file volunteers from the British Petroleum refinery at Marcus Hook and the Sun Oil refineries at Marcus Hook and at Philadelphia. We noticed that the participation of women was much greater than their proportion among the employees. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of the volunteers were women. ▼

Dave Campbell is a chief steward for the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union Local 1-547 at Chevron's El Segundo Refinery in southern California.

*Working people need international solidarity
to protect our interests*

U.S.-Canada-Mexico Free Trade Agreement: Really Free Trade?

By CARL FINAMORE

The North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) is undoubtedly the most talked about political issue in the unions today. But

unlike other questions being discussed, such as national healthcare, the 2000-page NAFTA document has generated a tremendous amount of controversy.

The biggest concern among militant unionists is that AFL-CIO opposition to NAFTA is a replay of the union Federation's racist "Buy American" campaign. This dead-end foreign-worker bashing claims to help save jobs but actually prevents the kind of international labor solidarity so vitally necessary in a global economy.

It is, in fact, precisely this fundamental issue which NAFTA raises. How do workers in every country mount an effective, united response against an international corporate strategy which increases divisive competition among the working class for a declining number of jobs?

But addressing this broader political question doesn't make sense to most workers if we dodge the immediate issue of NAFTA, as some labor activists have.

NAFTA is not free trade

First, NAFTA must be considered as a piece of legislation and as such it utterly fails to represent the interests of workers anywhere. It has absolutely nothing to do with 19th century "Free Trade" where national tariffs and import duties were abolished to allow for the most liberal exchange of goods and services across borders.

On the contrary, NAFTA trade privileges only apply to the three signatories of the agreement — the U.S., Canada and Mexico. All other countries will continue to face stiff import taxes and quotas imposed by these three nations.

"Free Trade" rhetoric notwithstanding, the U.S. and Canada unabashedly seek to establish favorable terms in the North American market to the disadvantage of all others. NAFTA policy is modeled on

tions are being forced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to open their borders even more to foreign capital seeking trading privileges and a low-wage work force.

This imbalanced equation between rich and poor nations gives a decided edge to the export-oriented advanced economies. When matched up with Mexico in a "Free Trade Zone," U.S. and Canadian businesses will hardly be threatened by the import of Mexican goods.

And since the U.S. already dominates the Mexican economy with exports reaching \$40 billion this year, it's clear that the real goal of U.S. and Canadian business is to tap into the "Free Labor" pool of Mexico's depressed working class in order to obtain a world-trade advantage over European and Japanese competitors.

So NAFTA has nothing to do with "Free Trade" at all. Just the opposite, it is another regional component of global "Protectionism."

In this situation, workers in the advanced capitalist countries are not only subsidizing "their" capitalists by paying higher prices for domestic products which are "protected" from competition, they are also losing jobs which move to "Free Labor" zones. The AFL-CIO estimates over 350,000 manufacturing jobs will be lost in the next few years because of NAFTA.

For the capitalists, it is a win-win situation.

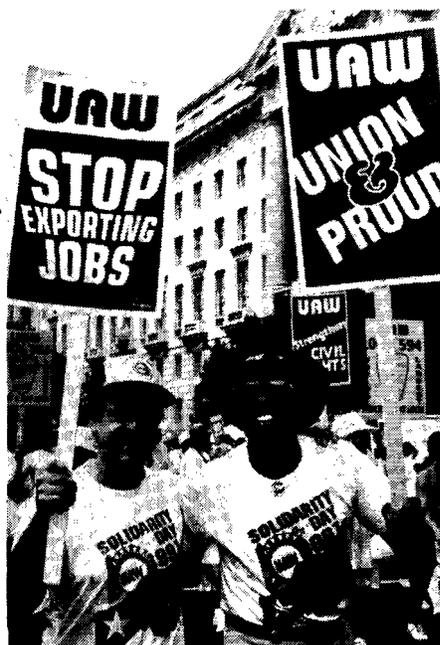
But does the Mexican worker gain by having a job even if it is low-paying? This is a social and political question and cannot be answered correctly in simply economic terms.

Do we condone the actions of the employers because at least they are providing jobs to an oppressed sector of the work force? Absolutely not!

While one could say the establishment of "Free Trade" zones has led to jobs for millions of impoverished workers, it has also most emphatically increased their exploitation.

Wages in Maquiladora plants which

JIM WEST/IMPACT VISUALS



UAW members at Solidarity Day '91.

the even more restrictive European capitalist market which, for example, all but excludes the import of automobiles — that's why Ford and General Motors have built factories in Europe.

Trade restrictions are even more strict in Japan where the government keeps out most agricultural products and guards against foreign competition and imports in other major industries such as semiconductors.

Every major capitalist country is reacting to the global economic slump by "protecting" its own domestic market and by establishing beyond its own borders what can more properly be termed "Free Business Zones" or "Free Labor Zones".

"Protectionism" is a tax on workers and consumers

Higher tariffs, import quotas and other "protectionist" measures are on the rise in the advanced capitalist countries while desperate debt-ridden underdeveloped na-

line the U.S.-Mexican border average 55 cents an hour. But it's not only slave wages which attract U.S. capital. Of over 600 factories in Tijuana, only seven had their application approved by the Mexican environmental regulatory agency; their operation is not contingent on receiving approval.

Environmentalists are among the loudest opponents of NAFTA. And for good reason.

Nothing bars the three nations from weakening their safety and environmental laws to lure capital. Scientists have already discovered in Mexico that "75 percent of the [Maquiladora] sites were discharging toxic chemicals directly into public water ways." [Boston-based National Toxic Campaign]

NAFTA is a trap for workers on both sides of the border. It is a formula to increase competition of workers for a declining number of jobs in a depressed world capitalist economy.

A working-class program must include proposals to expand economic growth. For example, Mexico's enormous foreign debt payments to international banks consume almost all of its export earnings. This debt should be cancelled and used to develop the country's infrastructure.

Solidarity not competition

U.S. and Canadian workers should cooperate and not compete with Mexican workers. If these impoverished workers can raise their standard of living it will be more difficult for employers to play the workers of different countries off against one another.

This problem was offset in this country several decades ago by negotiating master union contracts in several major U.S. industries covering all the work places, big and small. Uniform labor conditions were established everywhere.

Unity was thereby forged throughout the work force, despite numerous regional and job differences and ethnic diversity among the workers. This broad negotiating approach has to be extended internationally to spread the gains of workers in the advanced capitalist countries to the struggling workers in the developing nations.

A fight to eliminate the blight of "Free

Labor" zones places U.S. workers in unity with other workers. Employers will be prevented from running away to cheap-labor areas because everyone will enjoy similar working conditions.

This will of course require a major turn around in labor's current orientation. In the short term, if employers do succeed in closing plants and moving to low-wage havens, we must once again place the onus on the greedy capitalists and not on the exploited workers they hire in other countries.

We should urge that all displaced workers receive unemployment compensation at full union scale until placement in a comparable job. We should call for a reduction of the work week with no reduction in weekly take home pay. Over one million unemployed could return to work for every one hour reduction in the

work week.

But we can't stop there.

An international Bill of Rights for working people which demands decent wages and working conditions for all is needed. If we accept the perspective of a depressed economy for us while the employers enjoy super profits from "Free Labor" zones, we will be condemned to fighting each other over an ever declining number of jobs and benefits.

Defending our standard of living is a fight which can only be effectively fought in unity with workers everywhere. These are the stakes raised in the NAFTA debate. ▼

Carl Finamore is the Chair of the Shop Stewards Committee at International Association of Machinists Local Lodge 1781 in Burlingame, Ca.

Parc 55 workers victory inspires others

By MARY DORAN

The workers at the Parc 55 Hotel in San Francisco finally won the right to union representation after a federal judge ruled against the hotel owners in September. Three years ago employees at Parc 55 went to Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 2 wanting to join the union. Although U.S. law says that workers have the right to union representation the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) gives bosses the right to make it as difficult as possible.

When the owners at Parc 55 heard talk of the union, they told one of their supervisors they were going to ignore the law and do every thing to keep the union out. And they tried. They spied on their employees, followed them to union meetings, tried to bribe them, interrogated them in linen closets, threatened them with firings and shutting down the hotel. A couple of employees were actually fired for union activity.

Despite the harassment and intimidat-

tion, it took three years for the NLRB to rule that it was impossible to hold a fair election. A bargaining order to recognize the union was ordered.

But three years was not long enough to discourage these dedicated workers. Union activity is still going strong at Parc 55, as they go into contract negotiations. Local 2 is still calling for a boycott on the hotel until a fair contract is negotiated.

Many workers, including non-union employees at other hotels and restaurants in San Francisco, have been inspired by the Parc 55 example.

The Parc 55 workers need active solidarity. They aren't getting the support they deserve from the government agency that is supposed to protect them from unfair practices in the work place. We need to continue to support the employees at Parc 55 in their fight for better working conditions so they can continue their struggle to win a contract. ▼

Mary Doran is a member of the Teamster Union.

Why we need a labor party

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

“Enough is enough. The bosses have two parties. We should have at least one. It is time for the labor movement in this country to organize its own independent party of working people.”

These are the words of Tony Mazzocchi, a former International Secretary-Treasurer for the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union (OCAW) and founder of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) an organization whose purpose is to organize a labor party in the United States. According to Mazzocchi, LPA will “agitate for a new economic, social and political agenda for working people. And it will serve as an organizing committee for a new Labor Party.”

Despite the millions of dollars contributed to union political action funds and hours of labor donated by union members to political campaigns, every day more working people are realizing they have no voice in society. In fact, the United States is the only industrialized country without a labor party to represent its workers, the people who make the country run. It is reflected at election time when only 35 percent of the people even bother to vote. And for how many of those who vote is it only a question of which candidate is the “lesser of two evils.”

Impact of no political power

The results of this lack of political power are obvious: increasing unemployment and a decline in the standard of living for those who are employed, homelessness, lack of the most basic affordable healthcare, profits at the expense of the environment and workers' health, laws which make it increasingly difficult for non-union workers to organize and union workers to maintain their hard-won benefits. The list goes on and on. Most anyone can tell you what's wrong in this society. But the solutions offered by the

Democrats and Republicans always end up benefiting the rich at the expense of those who are suffering: wage concessions, contract take-aways, corporate tax breaks and decreasing vital social services.

LPA's objective is to ensure that all working people — both Black and white, Asian and Latino, women and men — are equally represented in a viable organization based upon the strength and resources of the labor movement. Because for working people, collective action is the greatest weapon.

A labor party must be based upon the unions because they are the main organizations of the working class in this country. They have the resources to organize and the tradition of challenging big business through the collective strength of workers. Both socialists and other progressive-minded people aim to turn these organizations into thoroughly democratic and radical instruments for social change. The LPA's efforts to promote the idea of independent working class politics through a labor party is part of the process of changing workers' ideas and the unions themselves.

Now is time

Now is the time to build a labor party. LPA quotes a *New York Times*/CBS News Poll which reported that when asked if “the country needs a new political party to compete with the Democrat and Republican parties in offering the best candidates for public office,” 58 percent said yes.

Recently, Carl Finamore, chair of the Shop Stewards Committee of 13,000-member International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local Lodge 1781 in Burlingame, California, invited Tony Mazzocchi to come to the San Francisco Bay Area and speak to IAM members and other unionists on the urgent need to build a labor party. Finamore is coordinating the Bay Area tour which is scheduled for January 18 through 22, 1993.

Rank and file meetings planned

Already, supporters of LPA have begun organizing meetings within their own unions. In addition to the IAM, these include locals of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, American Federation of

Teachers, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and Service Employees International Union. Walter Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council, and Stan Smith, Secretary-Treasurer of the local Building Trades Council, are part of the effort to reach as many Bay Area working people as possible with the LPA message.

The Bay Area tour is part of a nationwide membership drive which will lead to a founding convention. The June 1992 LPA newsletter announced a goal of creating recruitment committees of union activists in 100 cities to sign-up 1,000 members each. The idea is based on union organizing: to build support from the bottom up, among the rank-and-file of working people, creating a real independent movement for a third political party based on the unions.

This focus is key to the tour organizers as well. A successful tour means meeting with as many rank-and-file union members as possible and building a real base of support for a labor party here in the Bay Area. We want to sign up members at every union meeting where Mazzocchi speaks. Where enough people join, recruitment committees can be set up within unions. The more people we can reach and sign up as LPA members, the greater the momentum that will be created to continue with other recruitment methods such as house meetings and forums.

In addition to the meetings with union members, a city-wide public meeting with broad-based support by local unions is planned as well as interviews and coverage by the local and labor press.

Anyone interested in arranging for a meeting with members of their union or getting involved with the LPA recruitment effort is encouraged to come. To join LPA or get more information, contact Carl Finamore at (415) 695-9921 or Carmen Martino, LPA National Organizer, P.O. Box 1510, Highland Park, NJ 08904. ▼

Suzanne Forsyth is a member of LPA and an Alternate National Executive Board member of the Coalition of Labor Union Women representing the Office and Professional Employees International Union.

SOCIALISM and the Future

What are the prospects for socialism after the collapse of the self-styled socialist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe? In the following article Ernest Mandel, an internationally known Marxist scholar and a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, gives his answer.

This text is based on the speech Mandel delivered to the third meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum held in Managua, Nicaragua, July 16 to 19, 1992. The Sao Paulo Forum is an annual meeting of left wing political parties and movements of Latin America and the Caribbean. The first meeting took place in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in July 1990 at the initiative of the Workers Party (PT) of Brazil, hence the name. Mandel's speech is reprinted from the September 14, 1992, issue of International Viewpoint, a bi-weekly review of news and analysis published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. See ad for International Viewpoint elsewhere in this issue.

By ERNEST MANDEL

Since the mid-1970s a deterioration of the balance of forces between the classes has taken place on a world-wide scale. The main reason has been the onset of a long-lasting depressive wave in the capitalist economy with a continuing increase in unemployment. In the imperialist countries, unemployment has increased from 10 to 50 million people; in the Third World it has reached 500 million. In many of the latter countries this means that 50 percent or more of the population find themselves without work.

This massive rise in unemployment and in the fear of unemployment among those who have jobs, has weakened the working class and facilitated the world-wide capitalist offensive aimed at increasing the rate of profit through pushing down real wages, and cutting social and infrastructural costs. The neo-liberal and neo-conservative offensive is only the ideological expression of this social and economic offensive.

The large majority of the leaderships of the mass parties who claim to be socialist have capitulated before this capitalist offensive, and have accepted austerity policies; this has been seen in countries as diverse as France, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Venezuela, and Peru. This has disoriented the working class and, during a whole period, has made it more difficult for the masses to undertake defensive struggles.

Crisis of credibility

This capitulation of the Social Democracy has been coupled with the ideological and political impact of the crisis of the systems in Eastern Europe, the ex-Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and in Indochina, which is fomenting a profound and near universal crisis of the credibility of socialism.

In the eyes of the great majority of the population of the planet, the two principal historical experiences in constructing a classless society, the Stalinist/post-Stalinist/Maoist and the Social Democratic, have failed.

Of course, the masses understand very well that this is the failure of an overall radical social objective. But that does not imply a negative assessment of the important concrete changes in social reality in favor of the exploited that have taken place. In this latter sense, the balance sheet of more than 150 years of the activity of the international workers' movement and all its tendencies, remains positive.

But this is not the same as a belief by millions of workers that all immediate struggles will increasingly lead to the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the advent of a classless society without exploitation, oppression, injustice, or mass violence. In the absence of such a conviction, immediate struggles are fragmented and discontinued, without overall political objectives.

The political initiative is in the hands of imperialism, the bourgeoisie and its agents. This is clear from what is happening in Eastern Europe where the fall of the bureaucratic dictatorships under the impact of broad mass struggles has led not to a political initiative in the direction of socialism but rather, towards the restoration of capitalism. The same thing is beginning to happen in the ex-Soviet Union.

Stalinism and Marxism

The masses in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, not to mention countries like Cambodia, identify the Stalinist and post-Stalinist dictatorship with Marxism and Socialism, and they reflect all of these equally. Stalin murdered a million Communists and repressed millions of workers and peasants.

This was not the product of Marxism, socialism or of the revolution; it was the result of a bloody counter-revolution. But the fact that the masses still see these things differently is an objective fact that bears heavily on international political and social realities.

This crisis of the credibility of socialism explains the principal contradiction of the world situation at a time when the masses are fighting in many countries, often on a larger scale than ever before.

On the one hand, imperialism and the international bourgeoisie are not capable of crushing the workers movement as they did in the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s in the big cities

Continued on page 12

of Europe, Japan, and in many other countries. But, on the other, the working masses are not yet prepared to fight for a global anti-capitalist solution. For this reason we are in a period of worldwide crisis and disorder in which neither one of the principal social classes is capable of assuring its historical victory.

The principal task of socialists and communists is to try to restore the credibility of socialism in the consciousness of millions of men and women. This will only be possible if our starting point is the immediate needs and concerns of these masses. Any alternative model of political economy must include these proposals. Such proposals must give the most concrete and efficient aid to the masses to fight successfully for their needs.

Immediate objectives

We can formulate these in near biblical terms: eliminate hunger, clothe the naked, give a dignified life to everyone, save the lives of those who die for lack of proper medical attention, generalize free access to culture including the the elimination of illiteracy, universalize democratic freedoms, human rights, and eliminate repressive violence in all its forms.

None of this is dogmatic nor utopian. Although the masses are not ready to fight for the socialist revolution, they can wholly accept these objectives if they are formulated in the most concrete way possible. They can unleash broader struggles in the most diverse forms and combinations. For this we must try to be as concrete as possible in our propositions. What type of food production is possible? With what agrarian techniques? In which places? Which materials can be produced? In which localities or nations on the largest international scale? And so on.

But when we examine the conditions needed to achieve these goals, we arrive at the conclusion that such a program implies a radical redistribution of existing resources and a radical change in the social forces that hold the decision making power over their use. We should be convinced that the masses who are struggling for these objectives will not abandon the struggle when reality demonstrates these implications.

Herein lies one of the historical challenges facing the socialist movement: to be capable, without prior conditions, of leading the broadest mass struggles to achieve humanity's most pressing current needs.

Is such an alternative model possible in today's society without a short or medium term goal of taking or participating in concrete power, in the short or medium term? I believe that this is the wrong way to put the question. It is clear that there is no way of avoiding the problem of political power. But the concrete form of the struggle for power and, above all, the concrete forms of state power, must not be decided beforehand. And above all, the

formulation of concrete objectives and concrete forms of struggle for definite needs must not be subordinate to objectives realizable on the political plane in the short term.

On the contrary, the objectives and forms of struggle must be determined without any political prejudices whatsoever. The formula must be that of the great tactician Napoleon Bonaparte which was repeated many times by Lenin: "on s'engage et puis on voit" (we join the battle and then we'll see).

This is how the international workers' movement in the period of its most impressive mass activity conducted its campaigns for two central objectives: the eight-hour working day and universal suffrage.

The weight of imperialism

Cannot imperialism today or more accurately, imperialism allied with big capital, impede the realization of these same objectives in the countries of Latin America? Cannot imperialism block the influx of capital and the transference of technology even more than is already being done through the pressures of the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and World Bank?

Again, I believe that posing the question in these terms can lead us into a trap. The truth is that nobody can give an answer to this beforehand. In the final analysis, all depends on the balance of forces. But these are not predetermined and are constantly changing. Furthermore, the struggle for realizable, precise objectives by mass action is precisely one way to change the balance of forces in favor of the workers and all the exploited and oppressed.

It must not be forgotten that imperialism is undergoing a profound crisis of leadership. While consolidating its military dominance, Yankee imperialism has lost its technological and financial dominance. It is no longer capable of imposing its will on its principal competitors: Japanese and German imperialism. Neither can it control the possible reactions of the masses in the United States nor on an international scale.

Under these conditions there are many possible forms for a successful struggle for the immediate cancellation of payments on the foreign debt. It is highly unlikely that the Latin American governments and those of the "Third World" will take any such step. But if a country like Brazil in the event of a PT [Workers Party] victory were to do so, we cannot beforehand predict the reaction of imperialism. They could impose an economic blockade, but it is far more difficult to blockade Brazil, the most developed country in Latin America, than smaller countries like Cuba, not to mention Nicaragua.

And Brazil has the capacity to respond with a political offensive, with a politico-economic Brest-Litovsk and to lead many countries and masses of all countries by saying: do you agree that our people are being punished for wanting to eliminate hunger,

The principal task of socialists and communists is to try to restore the credibility of socialism in the consciousness of millions of men and women. This will only be possible if our starting point is the immediate needs and concerns of these masses.

sickness and violations of human rights? The answer of the working masses of the world is not a foregone conclusion; it could be insufficient, it could be positive. But it is a great battle that could change the world political situation. It could allow a further change in the balance of forces; it could help restore faith in a better world.

These themes are the fundamental methodological approach of Karl Marx: the struggle for socialism is not the dogmatic and sectarian imposition of some pre-established objective on the real movement of the masses. It is only the conscious expression of this movement out of which the constituent elements of a new society can grow out of the seeds of the old.

Multinational companies

We can illustrate these themes in relation to the central problems of today. Multinational companies exercise a greater and greater domination over ever larger sectors of the world market. They represent a qualitatively superior form of the international centralization of capital. This leads to a greater internationalization of the class struggle.

Unfortunately, the international bourgeoisie is much more prepared and coherent in this sense than the working class. In a fundamental sense there are only two possible answers for the working class to the actions of the multinational: either it retreats into protectionism and defense of so-called national competitiveness, that is, class collaboration with the bosses and the government of each country, depending on the case, against "the Japanese," "the Germans," or "the Mexicans"; or solidarity with the workers of all countries and against all national and international exploiters.

In the first case, an inevitable downward spiral of cuts in wages, social protection and labor conditions in all countries would occur, because the multinationals could always exploit a country with lower wages, transfer production there, or blackmail the workers' movement into giving concessions beforehand.

In the second case, there is at least the possibility of a rising spiral that can steadily raise wages, increase social protection of the less developed countries and reduce differences in living standards in a positive direction.

This second possible response is not at all opposed to economic development or the creation of jobs in the Third World. It implies rather, another mode of development which is not based on the exportation of low wages, but rather, on the growth of the national market and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the people.

The struggle for this internationalist response to the offensive of the multinational companies requires immediate common concrete initiatives on the union level, especially between delegates;

and independent and militant rand-and-file initiatives in all the factories of the world that work for the same multinational or in the same industrial branch. This has already begun in a small but real way; the North American Free Trade Agreement, the attempt to transform Mexico into a vast Maquiladora [low-wage "free economic"] zone, opens the road to this response and can be extended to all of Latin America in opposition to the so-called Initiative for the Americas [advocated by imperialism].

New social movements

At the same time, the so-called new social movements merely reflect the anguish of large social layers abandoned by the dynamics of late capitalism. This dynamic involves the danger that these layers will increasingly de-politicize and could constitute a social base for right-wing attacks, including neo-fascist ones, against democratic freedoms. Any policy of "social peace" or of pseudo-realistic consensus with the bourgeoisie produces the im-

pression that there are basically no other political options, and thus makes the danger worse. This is why it is vital for the workers' movement to establish structural alliances with the "underclass," the unorganized and help them organize, defend themselves and achieve dignity and hope.

In all of these instances, this must be done in a non-dogmatic way, free of the attitude that one possesses all of the truth—the definitive answer. The building of socialism is a huge laboratory of new experiences which are still undefined. We must learn from practice, especially from these same masses. For this reason, we must be open to dialogue and fraternal discussion with the entire left, with all firmly defending the principles of their current and organization.

In a larger sense, we must take into account the fact that the stakes in the world today are dramatic: it is literally a question of the physical survival of humanity. Hunger, epidemics, nuclear power, the deterioration of the natural environment; all of this is the fundamental reality of the new and old capitalist world disorder.

In the Third World, 16 million children die of hunger or curable diseases a year. This is equivalent to 25 percent of the deaths the second World War including Hiroshima and Auschwitz. In other words, every four years, there is a world war against children. This is the reality of imperialism and capitalism today.

Inhuman reality; inhuman effects

This inhuman reality produces inhuman political and ideological effects. In Northeast Brazil, the lack of vitamins in the diet of the poor has produced a new species of pygmies, of men and

A coherent vision of socialism cannot be defended without systematically opposing selfishness and the pursuit of individual gain in spite of their consequences for society as a whole. Priority must be given to solidarity and cooperation.

Continued on page 14

women who have undergone physical changes that make them 30 centimeters smaller than other people in the same country. There are millions of these unfortunates, called by the ruling class and its agents "human rats," with all the de-humanizing implications of such terms, reminiscent of those developed by the Nazis.

With the gradual restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union, everything that is barbaric and socially retrograde is beginning to be reproduced. The privatization of the large enterprises could produce up to 35-40 million unemployed and a 40 percent fall in worker's earnings.

Socialism can regain its credibility and validity if it is ready to totally identify with the struggle against these threats. This supposes three conditions:

- The first is that under no circumstances does it subordinate its support for the social struggles of the masses to any political project. We must be unconditionally on the side of the masses in all their struggles.
- The second is that we carry out propaganda and education amongst the masses for an overall socialist model that takes into account the experiences and new forms of consciousness of recent decades.

We must defend a model of socialism that will be totally emancipatory in all areas of life. This socialism must be self-managing, feminist, ecological, radical-pacifist, pluralistic; it must qualitatively extend democracy, and be internationalist and pluralist — including in terms of a multi-party system. But it is essential that it emancipate the direct producers, which is impossible without the progressive disappearance of the social division of labour between those who produce and those who administer.

Control by producers

The producers must hold the real decision-making power over what they produce and receive the best part of the social product. This power must be exercised in a completely democratic manner; that is, it must express the real aspirations of the masses.

This is impossible without party pluralism and the possibility of the masses to choose between various concrete variants of the central economic plan. It is also impossible without a radical reduction in the daily and weekly work load.

More or less everyone agrees about the rising level of corruption and criminalization in bourgeois society and the disappearing post-capitalist societies. It is utopian and unrealistic to hope for the moralization of civil society and of the state without a radical reduction in the importance of money and market economies.

A coherent vision of socialism cannot be defended without systematically opposing selfishness and the pursuit of individual gain in spite of their consequences for society as a whole. Priority must be given to solidarity and cooperation. And this presupposes precisely a decisive reduction in the importance of money in society.

- The third condition is the total renunciation on the part of socialists and communists of all substitutionalist, paternalist and top-down practices. We must reflect upon and transmit Karl Marx's principal contribution to politics: the emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves. It cannot be done by states, governments, parties, supposedly infallible leaders or experts of any kind. All of these are useful, even indispensable for the struggle for emancipation. But they can only help the masses to free themselves; they cannot be a substitute for them. It is not only immoral, but impractical to try to secure the happiness of people against their own beliefs. This is one of the principal lessons that can be drawn from the collapse of the bureaucratic dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

The practice of socialists and communists must be totally consistent with their principles. We must not justify any alienating or oppressive practices whatsoever. We must in practice, realize what Karl Marx called the categorical imperative: to struggle against all conditions in which human beings are alienated and humiliated. If our practice is consistent with this imperative, socialism will once again become a formidable political force that will be invincible. ▼

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*As ex-Stalinists turn towards capitalism workers resist;
international solidarity is urgently needed*

Are the workers in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe becoming capitalists?

By ALEX CHIS

It's not always easy to keep the events in the former Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe in perspective. In the newspapers and on radio and television in this

country, we continually hear how these countries are embracing capitalism. The October 1 *New York Times* proclaims on its front page, "Russians to Share State's Wealth In Start of a Shift to Capitalism," and goes on to comment on the voucher system by which the Russian government hopes to transfer 5,000 to 7,000 factories from state ownership into joint-stock companies.

The British magazine, *Economist* of September 19, contains a half-page ad in its 'Executive Focus' section advertising for a Polish-speaking financial controller, touting an "exceptional opportunity... to play a key role in building a substantial group of companies in Poland. Significant earnings and promotion prospects." The company says it is "committed to acquiring a portfolio of Polish investments" and boasts that it is "already active in Poland and poised for substantial growth."

On television and radio we see and hear interviews with budding entrepreneurs, all of whom have big plans and most of whom speak English. Since the Russian republic alone has over 125 million people in it, most of whom probably don't speak English, this might lead you to believe that the hard-working news gatherers for the capitalist media aren't exploring all their potential sources.

What is really happening?

What is actually going on here? Are all the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe now going to become capitalists? Having lived in wealthy capitalist countries all my life, I know that even here most of the people I meet aren't capitalists, but are workers trying, with increasing difficulty, to make a living. So how can these countries that are much poorer than the United States transform

their population into capitalists? The answer of course is that they can't. The vast majority of the population will continue to be workers, trying to make a living in increasingly uncertain economic conditions.

The Russian voucher system is a case in point. Everyone is supposed to get a voucher worth 10,000 rubles, which sounds like something until you realize that's about forty dollars, which isn't really very much even when you realize that's two months pay for the average worker in Russia! In contrast, the salary offered from the British company for the Polish-speaking controller referred to above is about \$72,000 per year, plus benefits and options. That one-year salary is equal to 30 years salary for 10 people in Russia.

So obviously the people of Russia aren't going to become capitalists. They need far more than the measly 10,000 rubles just to get them back to the position they were in last year as poor workers, and they know it. The *New York Times* thinks the biggest problem facing the privatization project in Russia "is public ignorance," and they quote a poll in which "38 percent of the respondents said they thought the voucher program was 'just a show-piece, and as such will not change anything.'" With some people trading their vouchers for a bag of sugar, and others pointing out that they can't find any non-bankrupt enterprises to invest their vouchers in, privatization has a hard row to hoe ahead of it, and the *New York Times* shouldn't be too quick to call others ignorant.

What will introducing capitalism mean?

But the pro-capitalist governments now

in place in these countries will keep on trying plan after plan. Vladimir Pozner, the Russian media personality who has a show with Phil Donahue, proposed in a talk heard on National

Public Radio in late September that the major capitalist countries loan Russia large sums of money and put it under control of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Everyone knows the IMF's major purpose is to see that countries pay their debts to the bankers no matter what hardship that causes the people. They have already managed to force countries in Latin America and throughout the third world to adopt "plans" that have reduced their population's living standards to World War II levels.

The common thing all these plans for privatization contain is the idea that the working class of these countries will have to pay for the countries to become capitalist, and also pay for the previous mismanagement of their economies by the bureaucrats. Already the childcare and healthcare systems are breaking down because they don't pay their way and therefore don't help the move to capitalism. Obviously someone earning \$20 a month can't afford to pay for health care, so the budding capitalists look on that as a burden, just like the capitalists in the United States look on healthcare not as a right but as something only those with enough money deserve. With price controls lifted on basic foods, inflation is rising. So life for the average worker is harder and harder.

The only sensible answer is that these countries *not* become capitalist. After all the biggest burden on all these countries was the Stalinist bureaucracy, which usurped all political control and enforced an undemocratic regime, leaving workers no control over their lives or their country. The bureaucrats mismanaged the economy and paid for a swollen bureau-

Continued on page 20

By LEE ARTZ

In South Africa, the past has prepared the revolutions of today. That past is a 300-year history of colonialism. It's also the history of social power. The question of power remains central to the coming revolution in South Africa.

Rise of apartheid

By the late 19th century, Dutch and British settlers controlled mining and agriculture through a system of forced, migratory labor. Later, the Native Lands Acts of 1913 and 1923 prohibited Africans from owning land outside "native" reserves. Then, as Africans were physically pushed off their lands and industry grew following WWII, the white alliance of "gold and maize" extended the system of coerced migrant labor throughout society.

Legalized as "apartheid" following the National Party electoral victory in 1948, a broad system of segregation in education, housing and employment denied Africans land, property and political rights while ensuring inferior education, substandard living conditions and a job "color bar." Consequently, South African industry grew rapidly through the re-investment of the massive wealth produced by forced labor. Given its small domestic market, South Africa soon became an exporter of goods and capital to Namibia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and other regional countries.

But things would not continue to go well for the white capitalist class. Industry needed an army of labor: semi-skilled, accessible and stable. The subsequent rapid growth of the Black working class dramatically changed the relationship of social forces. The African masses became proletarianized and urbanized, their social position changed and their economic and political power increased. Militant actions against apartheid were in the offing. In other words, the pre-requisites for social revolution were met by the late 1960s.

Class character of state

Of course, when considering the coming revolution, this capsule history leaves a number of important questions unanswered. What *precisely* is the class character of the current South African state?

What *exactly* is the class composition of the population? What is the level of class consciousness and political organization? What about the organized leadership of the working class?

Political tasks of the day depend in large part on our understanding of the current situation. Hard, empirical answers are necessary before appeals to Trotsky's and other's theories of revolution are made.

From afar, South Africa appears to be a hybrid, sub-imperialist power with a now indigenous colonial capitalist ruling class. The colonial rulers are white capitalists. The colonized are Black Africans. Having converted pre-capitalist economies into domestic capitalist production and market relations, the capitalist class now exploits raw materials for production and export through the labor of a largely Black working class. Institutions of apartheid have helped South African capital appropriate labor and wealth, but apartheid is not necessarily the only form by which capital might rule.

Beyond recognizing the central conflict between white apartheid rulers and oppressed Black African masses, a thorough understanding of the class composition is necessary for determining the revolutionary tasks of the day.

At least since the early 1970s, the Black population has been overwhelmingly proletarian and primarily urban. Agriculture in South Africa is almost exclusively capitalist — food is produced by farmworkers, not sharecroppers or peasants. Few African peasants live outside the homelands; relatively small-scale farming is done in the homelands. The population of Ciskei (an "independent homeland" created by the South African government), for instance, is less than 4 percent peasant.

Worker-peasant alliance?

Significantly, social struggles and political demands have reflected the changed

QUESTIONS on the coming revolution in South Africa

The following article on South Africa raises some important questions regarding strategy. These issues are being discussed and debated by revolutionary forces in South Africa. But they are of relevance to democratic and socialist activists around the world.

social composition of South African society. Campaigns for human rights, social services, political freedoms and economic issues have predominated since the 1960s. While demands for land have been raised periodically, and appear in the Freedom Charter, the transformed social structure would indicate that "land to the peasants" does not reflect objective conditions.

Has the difference in degree become a difference in kind? Is a worker-peasant alliance possible, let alone necessary for the South African revolution? In that regard, land reform follows the needs of the rural working class and the interests of society as a whole. "Land to the peasants" in 1992 would require re-creating a peasantry out of the working class. Is that necessary, desirable, possible? This is not a moral question: What are the political goals involved?

Obviously, other questions of alliances are important. While Black workers do not *directly* compete with whites for jobs due to the job reserve laws, there are divisions between white workers and the capitalist class over wages, working conditions and social benefits. To what extent can or do demands of Black workers speak to the interests of white workers? We should not assume that white workers will be supporters of the coming revolution — without considerable propaganda effort by the revolutionary forces. Is the alliance of Black and white workers *necessary* for overthrow of apartheid? For



Trade unions are leading the fight to end apartheid. Congress of South African Trade Unions called a National general strike and stayaway in November 1991 in protest of the government's unilateral decision to implement value added tax.

the socialist revolution?

Impact of international politics

Other domestic, regional and international relations of force must also be considered when discussing the tasks and prospects of the anti-apartheid struggle. What is the current and developing relationship of forces between other class sectors, the urban masses and various national groups like the Zulu? What about the economic power and political influence of Black, Indian and Colored merchants, traders, managers and government agents? What are their social, political, familial and ethnic ties with the rest of society?

In the fight for liberation and national independence from the white "colonial" power, the African masses will need to construct a unified "nation" out of dozens of national identities. Politically and physically the "colonial" power must be overthrown and democratic rights extended to the entire population — African, Indian, Colored and white.

The call for a "non-racial" South Africa speaks to these dual tasks. Nonetheless, "Black majority rule" may still find a place in the rhetoric of the revolutionary forces.

It seems largely a tactical question related to the concrete situation — especially considering the move by Colored and Indian radicals to call themselves Black.

Political Leadership

Finally, for revolutionists, the central concern must be the political leadership of the class and its allies. We know of the large membership and militant actions by trade union federations like COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). We know of the extended history of mass struggle and opposition to apartheid by the ANC (African National Congress).

The Freedom Charter codifies the objective tasks of a democratic society, providing a transitional program for social revolution — to the extent that it is carried out through the independent political mobilization of the Black working class and its allies. Thus, the membership composition, leadership, program and practices of the ANC will affect coming events. Is the ANC more than a revolutionary-democratic organization with a centrist leadership and working class base? If not, is the ANC an "adequate instrument" for leading the revolution?

The political goals of the coming revolution are the abolition of apartheid, full democratic rights and national independence. How can these goals be realized? What are the immediate tasks of the revolution? The next decisive stage must be and will be the convening of some form of constituent assembly. What activities and actions will secure such a political formation?

Does the ANC not call for elections on its own because of the current relationships of force? What is it doing to alter those relationships? Negotiations can be a brilliant tactical maneuver if the time is also used to confuse and confound the enemy and mobilize, train and arm defense forces for the revolution. It is also a time to recruit allies and forge broader united fronts. The ANC needs the alliance with other anti-apartheid forces like the PAC, AZAPO, the churches, ethnic and regional leaders, white workers, as well as sectors of the middle class.

The coming revolution in South Africa is in part a colonial liberation struggle, but it is not a revolution to root out the last vestiges of feudalism. South African capitalism has already completed that process, albeit in a racially-designed manner. Given the character of the state and the society, the "democratic" revolution will be led by the working class — in its majority Black. I suggest that if and when a party of the Black working class enters a new government, the democratic revolution opens the socialist revolution, as immediate tasks of the day are implemented: jobs, housing, food, political freedoms and social reforms.

More questions than answers

Obviously this short treatise raises more questions than answers. Further discussion is needed — not because we will determine the outcome in South Africa, but because we need to understand how a revolutionary situation unfolds and how a leadership could and should respond to events and propel the movement forward. Our collective task is to study, investigate, analyze and discuss. And of course to continue to organize solidarity.

We need more information. I was invited to teach some communication classes for the South African socialist group, WOSA (Workers Organization for Socialist Action). I hope to go to South Africa next summer as part of a Loyola University research project. If the proposal is funded, it affords us an opportunity for first-hand discussions with the ANC, WOSA, trade unionists and others in South Africa.

In the meantime, we all should follow the events and study the lessons of past revolutions — including those that failed. Collectively we will learn. Our positions will become clearer, stronger, more valid and more persuasive. ▼

Lee Artz is a longtime supporter of the freedom struggle in South Africa. He is currently a Professor of Communications at Loyola University in Chicago and a member of Activists for Independent Socialist Politics.



*African American
Day Parade
in Harlem,
September 1992.*

Lessons from Malcolm X Independent Black Political Action in the 1990s

By MALIK MIAH

We won't organize any Black man to be a Democrat or a Republican because both of them have sold us out. Both of them have sold us out; both parties have sold us out. Both parties are racist....

Malcolm X spoke these words to the founding meeting of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) in June 1964. The OAAU was formed by Malcolm to be the political action organizer of the Black community to fight for full equality. After his assassination in February 1965, however, the OAAU never got off the ground.

Yet its program for independent Black self-organization and political action remains relevant for the 1990s. While Black Americans have legal equality on paper, every economic and social statistic (income levels, health care, education, etc.) paints a picture of second-class status. The current world recession — a depression for a majority of Blacks — has exacerbated an already bleak situation.

Blacks need an independent political party to fight racism and to achieve full equality. The question is: can the major capitalist parties be reformed to represent our interests or must we join with labor and others to build a new party independent of the powers that be?

What course should Blacks follow in the 1990s?

It would be a mistake to apply 1960s analysis to the 1990s. There have been many important changes since then, most importantly the end of laws supporting legal segregation. These are significant changes that make it easier for the Black community to forge alliances with others and thus it is in a stronger position to fight for full political and economic equality. The potential for

Black and white unity in action is at its greatest point since the end of slavery in the mid 1800s. A majority of whites are opposed to racist laws. This was not true before the rise of the civil rights movement.

Under the free enterprise system, however, inequality is a given. The employers seek to rule working people by dividing us in as many ways as they can. For example, they use ethnic and sexual divisions. The fight of working people is to improve our situation against the wealthy owners of business until we are strong enough politically to establish our own government controlled by workers and the oppressed.

For Blacks to win full equality will require a revolution against the capitalist system. The road to that revolution, however, will be travelled by fighting to win reforms such as affirmative action, the right to vote, and full political representation. We fight for reforms not as an end but as a step toward winning complete control of the government and society.

Where are we at today in this battle? Much further than we were in 1964. That's why it is false to simply look at average statistics — negative or positive ones. While the number of Black poor is similar to the 1960s, there have been some major social-economic changes in the United States that have led to a bigger division within the Black community between the haves and the have-nots.

At the same time a new Black middle class based outside the urban areas exists that identifies less and less with the unemployed and underemployed workers in the largest Black communities. This Black middle class includes the mayors of major cities, police chiefs, school administrators, accountants at big firms, many other professionals. Life has significantly improved for this layer since the 1960s. While still suffering from doses of racism, this social layer in the main can "live" with it. The majority of working Blacks, however, can't.

What hasn't changed since 1964 is the truth about the two party system. There may be more Blacks in both parties — the head of the national Democratic Party is Black — but the objectives of the two major parties remain the same: protect the big business interests of the rich against the welfare of workers, farmers and oppressed minorities particularly Black Americans. Both Clinton and Bush, for example, appeal to the backward fears of whites, not the interests of Blacks to win elections.

The issue today is not whether the Democratic and Republican parties will select Blacks to lead the armed forces, join the U.S. Supreme Court, become mayors of cities. They have and will expand Black faces in high places. The question is: will these "gains" benefit the lives of most Blacks? After 30 years we have a clear answer: so far they haven't.

The Democratic (or Republican, for that matter) Party can't be reformed to make it a Black or labor or pro-women's rights party. It can become less racist in the sense that it doesn't promote racist candidates of David Duke's ilk. But it must continue to defend a system based on oppression and exploitation — that is, keeping racial inequality alive and well — to be an effective party for the capitalist class.

We need fundamental reforms. But they won't come by strengthening the two-party system. Nor will they occur by backing "independent" big business candidates like Ross Perot who still refers to Blacks as "you."

Return to ABCs of effective political action

We need to return to the ABCs of politics as outlined by Malcolm X—begin now to organize and build a new party and educate on why it is an urgent task for political activists, socialists and progressive-minded people to form such a party today. We must build protests and demonstrations to win reforms.

We must do what Blacks and their supporters did in the civil rights movement of the 1950s. The movement leaders didn't focus on electing "good" Democrats or Republicans, but demanded that Black civil rights be guaranteed. This meant breaking immoral laws across the country. The new civil rights laws only came after the rulers saw that this independent political action was getting too massive to ignore. Mass action — not electoral politics — brought change.

Fundamental change will only come through education, organization and mass political action. Our true representatives will be the leaders of these fights. Some will eventually get elected to office as independents or members of a Black or labor party formed in battle. But they will not win reforms for us as politicians. Our own independent organization will be decisive to bring radical change.

Not surprisingly because of the lack of real electoral choice more and more Blacks are not participating in the presidential elections. It is not disinterest. It is frustration. They want a choice. They want to vote for something that they agree with, not a lesser-evil.

Lessons of LA Rebellion

Others are taking more drastic action. The Los Angeles rebellion during the spring is the best example of how outrage over lack of jobs, racism, and a future with few prospects for a better life can ignite mass protest.

There are many lessons we can draw from the LA uprising. It was against the racist nature of a typical American police force that could brutally beat up a Black motorist, Rodney King, and claim the victim was the criminal. That anti-cop sentiment runs deep among many Blacks, Latinos and poor whites. The protests were multiethnic, reflecting deep class-based anger at cops.

The racist justice system was exposed widely because of the King verdict. This also led to multiracial condemnation. The jury could only see a Black thug and law-abiding cops doing their job. The complicity between cop justice and court injustice was brought home to millions.

Yet one of the more fundamental lessons of the rebellion concerns the change brought in U.S. society since the end of Jim Crow segregation and the rise of the new Black middle class. The rebellion exposed the role of Black politicians who showed their true colors as administrators of capitalist justice against the Black community. While sensitive to the actions of racist cops (the Black mayor of New York City David Dinkins faced a racist cop protest against his administration in September), they neverthe-

less carried out their function with flying colors. Tom Bradley, the 20-year Black mayor of LA, quickly focused his fire after the rebellion began on the street violence of Black gangs — the Crips and the Bloods — and not the injustice of the cops.

Mayor Bradley and the other Black politicians were exposed as part of the problem to young Blacks, Latinos, Asians and whites. The Black middle class, who are the main social base of the leading Black politicians and benefit the most economically from the victory of the civil rights movement, were outraged by the racism of the cops and courts. But like their white middle class counterparts, they generally blamed the Black victims for "burning their own areas" and attacking others.

The LA rebellion was a rebellion precisely because it wasn't just poor Blacks and Latinos rioting randomly, but many whites and middle class Blacks joining in to express their conscious rejection of the status quo.

Leadership role of Black gangs

The politicization of the gangs was and is one of the most important results of the rebellion. Mike Davis, an LA author, made this observation in an article he wrote for the *The Nation* magazine. "When the arrest records of this latest uprising [the last one occurred in Watts in 1965 and involved thousands of working class adults and their teenage children — MM] are finally analyzed," Davis wrote in the June 1 issue, "they will probably also vindicate the judgement of many residents that all segments of Black youth, gang and non-gang, 'buppie' as well as underclass, took part in the disorder."

"Yet if the riot had a broad social base," Davis continued, "it was the participation of the gangs — or, rather their cooperation — that gave it constant momentum and direction...The ecumenical movement of the Crips and Bloods is their worst imagining: gang violence no longer random but politicized into a Black *intifada*."

While the gang leaders have no clear political program to fight racism, they do recognize that the current leaders of the Black community are not helping to solve the economic and social crisis in their communities. They identify with the most militant pronouncements against the system and status quo, This strikes fear into the Black and white politicians of the ruling parties and government. They know that anger is very deep among Black and Latino youth.

Malcolm X is very relevant

Malcolm X's speeches and analysis become very relevant in this context of potential social explosion and rebellion. The Black Democratic and Republican Party politicians don't speak the language of the poor. Malcolm X still does.

Malcolm was assassinated 27 years ago but his ideas are alive and well. Malcolm X said Blacks must organize ourselves first to fight inequality. We must recognize that the source of this inhumane system is called capitalism. We must recognize that the two major parties are run for the rich and not for Blacks even if they let a few Blacks be their spokespeople. It is not the individ-

Continued on page 22

Ex-Soviet Union

continued from page 15

cracy that dissipated the wealth the working class created. That bureaucracy was what had to be overthrown and crushed, so that the workers themselves could democratically run the country. The revolutions that took place in these countries overthrowing the hated ruling Stalinist bureaucracies were a necessary first step to enable them to organize a real socialist society.

However during those struggles, the working class didn't develop its own independent voice. The speed of the victories, due to the widely recognized complete corruption of the regimes, didn't allow time for that process to develop. So what you have now is many of these same bureaucrats in new governments saying that capitalism is the only way to go, since they put the economy in such bad shape with their bureaucratically driven command economy.

The working class needs another answer

This solution too is to be paid for on the backs of the workers. Even though it's not working and is causing tremendous hardship, the governments in these countries are going to continue trying to privatize the economy no matter what until someone stops them. The working class needs another answer, that the bureaucrats should go and the budding capitalists should go and the workers should run the country themselves. A return to the policies begun by the Bolsheviks after the working class took power in 1917 under democratic soviets is what is needed. The workers

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U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee

The U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee put out its first Bulletin in April 1992. Their statement of purpose says, "The democratic openings in the former Soviet Union allow the workers and pro-socialist movements and activists for the first time since the 1920s to establish direct links, exchange information and support one another in a spirit of true internationalism..." and they see among their tasks "soliciting and translating materials from the

workers', pro-socialist and national movements, circulating them and seeking to have them published..." and "organizing visits and speaking engagements...[and] timely campaigns to focus on specific issues..."

This is an extremely important initiative and we encourage all our readers to support this work. You can endorse, volunteer to help, and make contributions (\$25 allows you to receive six issues of both the KAS-KOR *Information Digest* and the USSWIC *Bulletin*) to: USSWIC, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009 Phone: 718-636-5446

and peasants ruled the Soviet Union until 1924 when the Stalin-led bureaucracy seized political power from the working class.

What are the prospects of rebuilding a revolutionary leadership of the working class? This answer is coming forth in only a small voice now, but it's appearing. The job of socialists is to publicize this answer and help those coming to this conclusion.

It's essential to listen for the actual voices of the workers in these countries. They are after all the vast majority and whatever plans are made will directly affect and depend on them. It is not strange that the capitalist press doesn't publicize these voices, they don't publicize the struggles of the working class in this country either. But that doesn't mean that these voices don't exist here or that they don't exist in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

It's also not strange that it has taken a little time for these voices to come out. One thing that the bureaucrats learned from the Russian revolution was that workers and cities and intellectuals together are an explosive combination. So major industrial plants were located outside major cities, and communication between these new industrial cities was made difficult. They existed in many ways like separate company towns, except they were gigantic enterprises. In the last couple of years we have for the first time communication between the workers of these cities and the major political centers. There are now links even being forged between countries on a limited basis.

Revolutionary-minded workers and others are putting out papers and contacting workers and youth in their countries and the imperialist countries in the West. A committee has been formed in the United States to publicize Soviet workers' struggles, the U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee (USSWIC) [see box for details]. One of the main sources of news is the KAS-KOR (Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalist-Correspondence, an information agency) which started publishing a monthly information news digest in English in January 1992. In Poland, revolutionary socialists put out *Dalej!*, a newspaper which started in April 1991. A Russian edition of *Inprecor*, *Inter-Vzglyad*, which contains the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, started in the summer of 1991. And many more initiatives are beginning every day.

To really know what is going on in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, workers have to know where to look for information and whose information to trust. The people that lie about strikes in the United States are not the people you can rely on for information about the Soviet Union. The fact that so many papers publicizing workers' struggles have started just since 1991 is an important indication of what is really going on, and a cause for optimism.

Capitalism is far from conquering the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We need to learn about and support the struggles of the working classes of those countries. Their struggle is ours and together we can construct a socialist world. ▼

Committees of Correspondence

Regrouping the Socialist Movement

By BARRY SHEPPARD

In the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in the Soviet Union last year, Stalinism has disintegrated as a force in the world socialist movement.

This is not to say that the bureaucracy in the states that formerly made up the USSR has ceased to exist. But this bureaucracy no longer makes any pretensions to socialism. It has become the driving force within these countries, along with the nascent bourgeois layers the bureaucracy itself fostered, toward capitalist restoration.

No other similar formation on a world scale, whether from China, Vietnam or North Korea, has stepped forward to attempt to take the place of the former Soviet bureaucracy, to try to become a force comparable to what Moscow used to be in the world socialist movement.

This has caused a crisis within most of the world's Communist Parties which used to look to the Kremlin. In this country, this crisis led to a major split in the Communist Party, USA.

One wing, which keeps the old name, is attempting to continue in the old way with Stalinist ideas. It is led by Gus Hall.

The other wing has openly repudiated Stalinism and its anti-democratic practices and launched an important initiative that challenges all who seek to rebuild a revolutionary socialist party in the United States.

Earlier this year, the anti-Hall wing launched a new organization, the Committees of Correspondence (CoC), named after the revolutionary network that helped prepare the first American revolution. At the end of July, the CoCs organized a conference on the theme of the fight for democracy and socialism in the United States, to which all currents on the left were invited.

The conference was a success, drawing some 1,400 people. The discussions were completely open and comradely — sectarian closed-mindedness was expressed not from the former CPers, but from some of the various self-proclaimed "Trotsky-

ist" groups. These groups were all tolerated, however, and were able to make their points, as was everyone else. About 400 people joined the CoC at the conference, many from the San Francisco Bay area where it was held.

The conference projected an 18-month discussion period, leading up to a convention or conference to found a new organization. All on the left are invited to join the CoC and participate in this discussion. This is a great opportunity for the kind of discussion within the left that the rise of Stalinism precluded for decades. Through it we can hope to overcome divisions from the past and think through what should be done next.

Two key questions that will be discussed are what Stalinism actually was and the need for independent working-class political action. Obviously, the whole problem of what went wrong in the Soviet Union is one that must be grappled with. A contribution to this discussion

continued on page 22

Stop the U.S. Blockade of Cuba!

By MO HARRY

On September 28, around 100 people showed up at the Bush/Quayle campaign office in San Francisco to protest the Torricelle Bill that was just passed by Congress. This bill, called the "Cuban Democracy Act" by President Bush, represents an intensified attack against the sovereignty and well-being of Cuba by blockading the island from doing trade with any country in the world. This bill has been passed regardless of the fact that it goes against international law and is a declaration of war against Cuba.

Already, the U.S. has continually harassed the Cuban people (since the revolution that kicked capitalism off their island some 30 years ago) through economic sanctions, Radio Marti, and

C.I.A. - sponsored crop-burning and food poisoning. An outright military attack by the U.S. has been avoided due to Cuba's long-term partnership with the Soviet Union. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union most support of and trade with Cuba has been discontinued and the small country is struggling to survive.

Nonetheless, no one in Cuba is without food, shelter, or medical care though their resources are minute compared to those of a country like the U.S. where poverty and homelessness are rampant. Havana's infant mortality rate is only half that of Washington D.C!

After a picket at the Bush/Quayle office, the group marched to the Clinton/Gore campaign office nearby, because Clinton issued a statement urging Congress to pass this anti-Cuban Torricelle Bill.

Though Cuba, like any country, can and should be questioned for some of its policies, it cannot exist as a perfect state (particularly considering its size) while surrounded and harassed by the capitalist powers of the world. Cuba is far more responsive to the needs of its people than any capitalist state. Cuba's government has created much more for its population than any Latin American country has under U.S. puppet regimes.

Bush said he wants to see a "free Cuba" if and when he is re-elected. What he means is that he wants to return Cuba to the exploited condition it was in before their revolution. Clinton promises the same thing.

Whether the U.S. government intends to overrun Cuba through blockade or outright invasion remains to be seen but Cuba needs our help now more than ever. We must step up our efforts to defend Cuba through mass action. Defend Cuba! Stop the blockade! ▼

If you live in the Bay Area and want to join Cuban support efforts, contact the U.S. Cuba Friendship at 510-655-4562. The group is sponsoring a Peace Caravan to supply Cuba with much needed medical supplies and other donations. Global Exchange, at 415-255-7296, is also sponsoring a Delegation to Cuba November 21-29 — MH

Creating a new society The early years of the Russian Revolution

Bolshevik Visions, First Phase of the Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia, edited by William G. Rosenberg, two volumes, second edition, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1990. 268 pages & 308 pages.

By ALEX CHIS

We sometimes forget how massive a change the Russian Revolution was, how it affected every aspect of society. Especially today, when the entire history of the revolution is being lumped together with its Stalinist betrayal, it's important to go back and see what was actually being thought, said and done in the early years after the Bolshevik victory.

Bolshevik Visions collects writings by early Soviet critics and theoreticians on the process of creating a new society. Grouped in nine major themes, from "What a Communist Ought to Be Like" and "The New Man and the New Woman: Sex Roles, Marriage and the Family" to "Architecture and City Planning: Constructing the New Socialist Collective" and "Creating Proletarian Cultural Forms: Art, Music, and Literature," each section has a separate introduction placing the debates and ideas in the context of the period.

A very welcome aspect of this anthology is the breadth of the contributors represented. Although we know that the Bolshevik party was large and contained many writers and thinkers, it sometimes seems that only Lenin and Trotsky wrote anything, if you go by what has been published in English. While there are articles by Lenin and Trotsky here, the overwhelming majority is by authors most of us won't recognize at all.

This also helps us to have a better understanding of the different ideas being presented. For example, not only can we read Alexandra Kollantai's 1923 article

"Make Way for the Winged Eros," but also a reply in that same year by Polina Vinogradskaya, who was on the editorial board of *Communist Woman* and a member of Zhenotdel, the Bolshevik party's Women's Section.

This careful selection of texts is evident throughout this anthology, so that in reading it one gets a real feeling for the debates and the way everyone was grappling with the idea of how to create a communist society. Also clearly evident is the free-flowing character, openness, and liveliness of the exchange of ideas in this early period of the revolution.

Of course that freedom of ideas didn't continue. With the coming to power of Stalin, and his crushing and physical elimination of the Bolshevik party of the revolutionary years, this open and democratic period came to an end.

But the mere existence of these articles gives the lie to the equation of the period of Lenin with that of Stalin. Reading this anthology lets one feel the joy and energy the early Bolsheviks brought to the task of creating a new society, where the workers and peasants of Russia came first. ▼

Malcolm X

Continued from page 19

ual that Malcolm condemned. It is the purpose of these parties, which are used by the rich to keep Blacks in a second-class status.

Malcolm X urged Blacks to participate in effective politics: street protests, strikes, meetings, as well as supporting candidates independent of the two party system.

The ongoing controversy about Black film director Spike Lee's new movie on the life of Malcolm X is really about politics. Racists and liberals both fear that if Blacks know the truth about Malcolm's views it may lead to more Los Angeles rebellions. But the reality of Blacks' condition and that of the working class as a whole is why social rebellions take place. Movies don't do that.

As Malcolm X so accurately put it 28 years ago: "The only real power that is respected in this society is political and economic power. Nothing else." ▼

Socialists regroup

continued from page 21

based on Trotsky's views has been written by myself and Peter Camejo, and appears in the November issue of *Crossroads* magazine.

Within the CoC, there is a wide range of views on the question of the Democratic Party and what road to take to achieve the creation of an independent mass workers' party. While this discussion already reveals great diversity, the CoC is the framework where it can be held without name-calling and rapid hardening of positions and splits.

A possible area of agreement in the next year or so could be to run open socialist CoC candidates. The disaffection with the Democrats and Republicans shown in the current presidential elections is an argument in favor of such candidates. Isn't it too bad that talk of a third party has come mainly from the right? United socialist campaigns could make an impact and reach out to workers who are becoming disgusted with the two imperialist parties.

Such campaigns could complement helping Labor Party Advocates to popularize the idea of a labor party in the unions.

In any case, the leadership shown by the Committees of Correspondence in seeking to create a real center for the whole left to join together in common action and debate should be applauded, and socialists should join together in this effort. We have only sectarianism to lose, and the possibility of a rebirth of socialism in this country to gain. ▼

Barry Sheppard is a member of the Oakland Committees of Correspondence.

To Join the Committees of Correspondence

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Why Independent Politics?

Continued from page 1

Congress. It began when industrial workers rose up against the greed of the bosses and organized themselves into trade unions. They fought not only the bosses' goons but the courts and the two major party machines to win the right to organize. It was only after workers began to take over the work place and force the bosses to recognize their unions that the government passed legislation "allowing" the legal right to organize unions. It was only then that some capitalist politicians, opportunistically jumping on a bandwagon, began to speak out for labor.

Another example involves Blacks fighting for their civil rights. The two-party system historically opposed full equality for African-Americans. Laws against the rights of Blacks were adopted and carried out with brute force. Apartheid-like conditions existed for Black Americans.

During the rise of the industrial unions in the 1930s, for example, Black Americans still faced sharp racism and legal segregation. The Jim Crow laws put up a major roadblock to labor's ability to organize workers across the North and South and eventually break with the major parties and form a labor party. The race card was always a weapon of last resort that the bosses used, appealing to racist sentiments among white workers to divide the working class and the oppressed.

Nevertheless, Blacks used mass political action to fight back. During World War II Blacks fought against racism and for equality. This civil rights battle continued after the war and led to the rise of the modern civil rights movement of the 1950s whose most prominent leader was Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was mass independent political action by Blacks against immoral and unjust laws that eventually led the major parties in the 1960s to support civil rights legislation. The new laws, however, came after the Jim Crow segregation was broken in life, not before. The racist laws were already crumbling before Lyndon Johnson signed the historic Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts.

Women did not rely on "friendly" capitalist politicians to win the right to vote after World War I, or for other rights in the late 1960s and 70s. The rise of the second wave of feminism was against the status quo and the policies of the Democratic and Republican parties. Independent street protests led to abortion rights and affirmative action gains in employment for women. It was only after the movement rose up *insisting* on women's rights, inspired by the victories of the civil rights struggle, that the "friendly" politicians came on the scene. The major parties have never been pro-women. At best they may give lip service to women's rights. That's why women can only rely on independent actions and alliances with labor and other social groups to protect and extend their gains.

The method of independent mass struggle is how change has been brought about. Not only for labor, Black, and women, but also for working farmers and other minorities. These methods of struggle win reforms. They are what constitute the most effective political action. They are genuine independent politics.

Labor Party Advocates

The response by voters to Ross Perot, especially early in his presidential bid, shows what was possible if the labor movement had fielded its own candidate in the 1992 presidential election. An independent labor candidate would have galvanized working people to defend strikes and push for real democratic reforms. That's how an election campaign could be used to aid independent struggles.

Although it didn't happen, that's the direction the labor movement must go. The initiative by Tony Mazzocchi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union calling for a Labor Party points in the right direction. The Labor Party Advocates (LPA), launched by Mazzocchi, has great potential. A mass labor party will be formed with the democratic transformation of the trade unions. Without a revitalized labor movement, a new party of labor can only be propagandistic. The discussion started by the LPA in some unions is a step forward and can aid unionists desiring reforms in their fight to

change the unions. (See article on LPA on page 10)

The formation of the Committees of Correspondence (CoC) is also a positive development for those favoring a revitalized labor and socialist movement. It is an attempt to regroup the socialist left after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crisis of the world communist movement. (See article on page 21.)

AISP

Independent Politics is published by Activists for Independent Socialist Politics (AISP). AISP is composed of activists seeking to transform the unions into instruments of struggle for all of society. We are participants in the Black and women's liberation movements. We are activists in a wide spectrum of social protests against attacks on the environment, gays and lesbians, and immigrants.

We are also revolutionary socialists. We believe genuine independent political action means organizing against capitalism, the system responsible for exploitation and oppression. We are for a new system, one based on human needs and not profits.

Capitalism is not the answer. Nor is Stalinism, the system of bureaucratic control of the workers' states which the workers and farmers of Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union overthrew.

The only country in the world trying to build socialism with the workers involved is Cuba. It is why the U.S. rulers have surrounded the island for more than 30 years and seek to overthrow the Castro government.

AISP is an inclusive and democratic organization. The articles in this first issue are written by AISP members. They reflect our broad range of activity and how we see advancing our program of independent politics. With the many crises in the world today and the deepening crisis of the capitalist and imperialist system, the time is rotten ripe for great change. That is what we in AISP are striving for. If you agree with our statement of purpose on the back page, please join us. ▼

Malik Miah and Suzanne Forsyth are national coordinators for Activists for Independent Socialist Politics.

JOIN Activists for Independent Socialist Politics

We are entering the worst capitalist crisis in over sixty years. The collapse of the Soviet Union only exacerbates this process. Sudden and severe international and domestic conflicts are inevitable as the rich compete with each other for control of markets and resources, tightening the screws on the poor to raise profits. The bulk of the economic and social burden falls immediately and most heavily on the working people and oppressed of the world. In the United States, increased attacks on working people in general are disproportionately affecting women, African-Americans, Latinos, Asians/Pacific, Native American Indians and youth.

Only a consciously organized and militant mass response can resolve the deepening crisis in the interests of the immense majority of humanity. The key is independent political action of, by, and for the working class. We need to break out of the framework of the two party system controlled by the rich. Activists for Independent Socialist Politics (AISP) seeks to rebuild a socialist movement in the United States through collaboration and democratic discussions with other activists and groups fighting for fundamental social change. We are activists in trade unions, feminist groups, Black liberation organizations, Latino and Asian groups, student groups and other movements for social change.

We are

- ⊃ For independent political action, both electoral and in the street, by the working class and its allies.
- ⊃ For affirmative action and Black liberation, and the rights of all oppressed nationalities. No to racism.
- ⊃ For the right to choose and women's liberation. No to sexism. No to discrimination against gays and lesbians.
- ⊃ For democratic, militant trade unions. For a labor party.
- ⊃ For a fight to save the environment.
- ⊃ For international solidarity with national liberation struggles.
- ⊃ For a socialist America and world.

If you agree with this approach and you would like to participate in effective political activity in the central social struggles of the day, collaborate through open and democratic discussions with other activists and

groups in the unions and social movements, and work to rebuild a non-sectarian, fighting American socialist movement, contact Activists for Independent Socialist Politics for more information.

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I want to join Activists for Independent Socialist Politics. Enclosed is \$10.

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