

# Report to Guardian readers

**By Irwin Silber**

The main impression one gets after a three-week cross-country speaking trip on behalf of the Guardian is of a new mood of serious politics on the independent left.

Meeting with Guardian supporters, readers and friends in 10 different cities in May and June, it seemed clear that a sizeable cadre of radical activists—many of them organized into small collectives based around factories or communities, others in groups like the Revolutionary Union (RU) and most not in any organized tendency at the moment—has emerged from the struggles of the past few years.

This left—for obvious reasons, one hesitates to call it a “new left”—has learned from its encounters with anarchism, adventurism, Trotskyism and revisionism and is now concerned with developing a coherent set of political principles and new revolutionary organizational forms corresponding to the objective conditions of the class struggle internationally and in the U.S.

## **Meetings with readers**

In the course of traveling from Rochester, N.Y., to San Diego, Calif., Barbara Dane and I had the opportunity to meet with several thousand people. In every city we found Guardian supporters whose comments on the paper—both favorable and critical—demonstrated the growing and continued relevance of the Guardian to the main questions confronting radicals today.

In Rochester, a group of Guardian supporters organized a fund-raising dinner in the Unitarian Church where we had a good exchange of views on the election campaign and other subjects. Several television appearances were also arranged for local talk shows. The people who publish “Bread, Peace and Land” organized our Cleveland programs which were largely based around Cleveland State University. This is a fascinating institution. A student body of 13,000 without a single dormitory, Cleveland State is typical of the new schools around the country with largely working-class enrollments. Here we spoke on current trends in Marxist thought, art and revolution, the nature of imperialism and the ethics of socialism. We also spent one evening at the city workhouse where Barbara sang for the prisoners (thanks to a radical rehabilitation worker) and where we investigated for ourselves the underlying class radicalism in the country's jails.

In Detroit we met young people working in the automobile

factories who are discovering their own working-class roots along with their political organizing. One worker in a Dodge truck plant told us of the discussion in his shop after he posted one of Wilfred Burchett's articles on factories in China on the union bulletin board.

Smaller meetings and concerts in Toledo, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City and San Francisco revealed a great hunger for the Guardian and a profound interest in what many described as the Guardian's more clearly defined Marxist-Leninist politics.

Southern California has always been a stronghold of Guardian readers. Thanks largely to the efforts of a hard-working collective of comrades at the Long March, we were able to speak at meetings and fund-raising parties throughout the Los Angeles area. Two meetings at the Long March—one on ideology and superstructure (part of a continuing Marxist seminar) and the other on Current Trends in the Left—drew several hundred people who engaged in a stimulating political dialogue.

## **Feedback**

Several radio interviews on KPFK, a meeting with Long Beach activists who work with GIs and another at the Center for Servicemen's Rights in San Diego—all concerned with one or another aspect of developing a left strategy for today—provided us with invaluable feedback for the Guardian staff.

In general, we were assured that the Guardian's general political view had a growing body of support throughout the country with particular appreciation expressed for our efforts to build unity in the antiwar movement and our refusal to be drawn into the anti-Chinese clamor which has overcome some sectors of the left—along with, of course, our factual coverage of developments within the People's Republic. In addition, we heard many favorable reports on specific Guardian articles.

Criticisms focused primarily on the need for more coverage of local and regional organizing activities, greater working-class coverage (although our increased coverage was favorably noted), the need for more ideological debate in the pages of the Guardian and the lack of material concerning Eastern Europe.

Overall, the trip was an important step in the direction of developing closer ties between the Guardian and our readers nationally. It will be the first of many to be made by other members of the staff as part of the process of making the Guardian into even more of an activist radical newspaper.