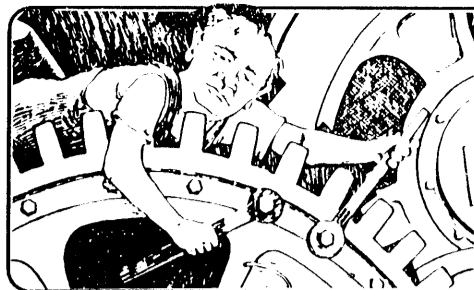


# A Socialist ACTION



Soviet party congress,  
See pp. 8-10

AUGUST 1988

VOL. 6, No. 8

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## Democrats band together to deceive working people

Eugene Richards



No matter who wins, Bush or Dukakis, working people will lose. Above: Vietnam vet scrounging for food. Below: Nicaraguans wounded in U.S. contra war.



By JOSEPH RYAN

Now that the TV extravaganza known as the Democratic Party convention is over, working people should assess what they got out of it. The answer is clearly absolutely nothing.

With a carefully rehearsed script in hand, the Democratic Party, the so-called "party for working people," told police to sweep the homeless of Atlanta under the rug and proceeded with the coronation of Michael Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen.

Jesse Jackson, whose feathers were ruffled by Dukakis's failure to consult him when he chose Bentsen as his running mate, was mollified by being given a full evening of prime time to make an

### U.S. presses for contra aid, See p. 13.

impassioned speech. His theme, "We're all in the same boat," was delivered with demagogic skill. The Democratic Party leadership was reassured that Jackson, certainly, was still "in the same boat." Except now, Jesse Jackson was one of the "insiders."

Jackson used his speech to describe all the social ills of capitalist America, all the aspirations of working people, the oppressed, and the poor. And then he used his speech to inextricably tie these people to the Dukakis-Bentsen ticket, the presidential ticket of a party that will do nothing to alleviate the misery Jackson described.

Jackson's challenge now is to stampede his many supporters into voting for these less-than-inspiring candidates of the rich.

#### The "Stop Bush" scare tactic

Dukakis and Bentsen could have very easily been nominated by the *Republican* Party convention. Liberal Dukakis picks conservative Bentsen, a "Reagan Democrat," to be his running mate. After all, the capitalist class must preserve continuity in its presidential administrations.

Even *Newsweek* (Aug. 1, 1988) noted that the Democratic Party ticket should be renamed *Dukakis-Bush*. "Dukakis, who savaged Richard Gephardt [in the primaries] for merely voting for Reaganomics," *Newsweek* stated, "has chosen one of the architects of Reaganomics."

Those who were looking for progressive direction from the Democratic Party will now have to campaign for a man who supports aid to the contras, supports Star Wars, opposes federal funds for abortions, and endorses the death penalty.

Of course, Dukakis, who a week earlier justified the U.S. downing of an Iranian airliner and the consequent loss of 290 lives, will certainly have no problems running with a soul mate who advocated using A-bombs against North Korea during the Korean War.

The millions of people who supported  
(continued on page 5)

# Rocket's red glare—bombs bursting in air



By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

On July 3, 1988, as the United States was getting ready to celebrate our Declaration of Independence from the colonial rule of Great Britain, the U.S. cruiser Vincennes shot down an Iranian civilian airplane.

Two hundred-ninety men, women, and children were killed.

The vast majority of people throughout the world were horrified by this senseless slaughter of innocent people

thousands of miles from the shores of the United States.

Ever since the overthrow of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi (the hand-picked puppet of the United States) in 1979, the United States has been on a rampage against that country and its people.

For 40 years, the United States and its giant oil cartels have fought for the right to control the oil of the Middle East. It now has 29 naval vessels with 10,000 to 15,000 naval personnel in the Persian Gulf.

Persian Gulf nations—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates—possess nearly two-thirds of the known oil resources in the non-communist world. Over 7 percent of the oil used in the United States is imported from the Gulf area. Japan imports 50 percent of its oil from the Arab countries, while Western Europe imports 30 percent of its oil from the Gulf.

The U.S. oil companies want

to extort higher profits from this "liquid gold."

James H Webb Jr., Secretary of the Navy from April 1987 to February 1988, (who supervised the deployment of ships in the Gulf) has expressed some concern about where this action will lead. "The operational environment takes on a momentum of its own," he said.

"In the space of a year," he continued, "our mission has changed from defense of sea lanes to a rather aggressive neutrality, to the protection of allied ships to, apparently, the protection of all neutral shipping."

And even though Webb didn't say it in so many words, the United States is prepared to blow up commercial airplanes in order to control all traffic in the Gulf area.

### An accident?

"It was an accident," the headlines screamed. For a whole week, officials tried to blame this "accident" on the Iranians.

The capitalist media lied when it "reported" that the plane was outside of the commercial flight path. It lied when the commercial plane was accused of concealing an Iranian F-14 fighter. It lied when it said that the commercial plane was sending out "military" radio signals.

What became very clear, however, was that the Aegis air defense system—installed in U.S. naval ships at the cost of \$9 billion dollars—is not worth diddley-squat.

I don't call the shooting down of the Iranian aircraft an accident. If a mounted policeman rode his horse through my living room, and his horse dropped a load of manure on my rug, I would not call that an accident. I would want to know why this cop was riding his horse through my living room.

And that's the question we need to ask. What is the United States doing in the Persian Gulf? What right does this government have

to be killing men, women, and children thousands of miles from the United States? Why must it murder innocent people in the interest of profits for the gigantic oil cartels? Who gave it that right?

In the meantime—in this country—6 million people are sleeping in the streets because they cannot afford a home, 45 percent of adults in the U.S. are illiterate or semi-literate, millions of children are living in increased poverty, and healthcare is non-existent for millions of people. Our roads, bridges, and mass transportation are crumbling. Pollution is killing our rivers, streams, and forests.

It is criminally insane to spend trillions for imperialist wars but crumbs for human needs.

We demand that U. S. imperialism get out of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Central America, and everywhere else it doesn't belong! No more "accidents!"

By MAY MAY GONG

On March 4, 1988, Mark Curtis, a member of the Socialist Workers Party in Des Moines, Iowa, was arrested and beaten by the local police. The arrest occurred only a few hours after Curtis had left a meeting to protest the arrest of several immigrant coworkers at the Swift/Monfort packinghouse where they work.

The police claim they interrupted Curtis trying to rape a 15-year-old Black woman. He is charged with first-degree burglary, which carries a 25-year mandatory sentence, and third-degree sexual abuse, which carries a five-year mandatory sentence.

If convicted, Curtis would probably be put behind bars for at least 25 years. And because one of the crimes involves physical violence, a conviction would put Curtis in jail without bail during the appeals process.

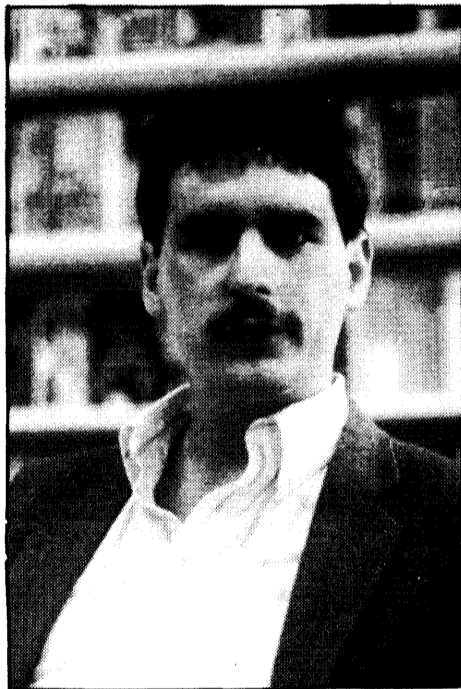
While the charges against this political activist are for alleged criminal activity, thousands of individuals and organizations have recognized that the case is a political frame-up.

Curtis is a former national chairperson of the Young Socialist Alliance—the youth organization in political agreement with the Socialist Workers Party. Later on, he moved to Des Moines. He got a job at Swift and joined Local 431 of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

### Packinghouse workers arrested

In an interview with *Socialist Action*, Curtis said that he had been a participant in a fight to defend several of his coworkers

## SWP activist fights police frame-up



Mark Curtis

from victimization by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

On March 1, 1988, several INS agents

raided the Swift packinghouse and arrested one Salvadoran and 16 Mexican workers on felony charges of using false documents. On March 4, Curtis went to a meeting to protest the arrest of his coworkers.

Afterward, while he was on his way to the supermarket, a woman ran up to his car at a stop light. She pleaded for a ride home, saying that a man was after her. After arriving at the house, she asked Curtis to wait on the porch while she looked inside. Moments later, the police ran onto the porch, arrested Curtis, and charged him with attempted rape.

At the city jail, police attempted to make him confess to the "crime." Curtis told *Socialist Action* that when he asked to see an attorney, one of the cops remarked, "You're one of those Mexican-lovers aren't you?" The cops then beat him, breaking his cheekbone and cutting his face.

As soon as Curtis's friends, coworkers, and fellow political activists learned of his arrest, they went right to work. They raised \$30,000 to get him out of jail, formed a defense committee, and found lawyers.

### Union officials support defense

To date, more than 4000 individuals have signed petitions against the frame-up and

cop-beating. Dozens of union officials from around the world have expressed their outrage over this incident.

Curtis's trial was scheduled to begin on July 6, but in a June 30 hearing, a motion was granted to his lawyer to move the trial back to Sept. 7. This victory gives Curtis's supporters more time to demand that the charges against him be dropped, that the police who beat him be prosecuted, and that the entire frame-up come to an end.

The Mark Curtis Defense Committee is requesting all supporters to help by sending messages to Polk County Prosecutor James Smith and to Police Chief William Moulder demanding that the charges against Curtis be dropped and the cops who beat him be prosecuted. Write to James Smith, Polk County Prosecutors Office, 500 Mulberry St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

Though the defense committee has already surpassed its goal of raising \$45,000, more funds are needed to cover ongoing expenses. Contributions and copies of messages should be sent to the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. Telephone (515) 246-1695.



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# News media, N.Y. state authorities, wage smear campaign against Tawana Brawley

By SANDY DOYLE

Tawana Brawley, a Black teenager from upstate New York, was found last Nov. 28 bruised, burned, and wrapped up in a plastic bag. Feces were smeared all over her upper torso and head, chunks of her hair were cut off, and racist epithets were scrawled on her chest. Her assailants, who she says were six white men, have yet to be apprehended.

In the ensuing six months, however, a virtual full-scale offensive has been waged to transform Tawana Brawley from a victim into a criminal. And, in the process, the state authorities are using the case to attack the legitimate claims of the Black community for justice against racist attacks.

"There may not have been any crime!" New York Attorney General Robert Abrams told reporters on July 15. Abrams concentrated his fire on Brawley's team of advisors.

"What we're saying to them is put up or shut up," he went on. "If the grand jury does not receive any information, we can assume that there is no information." Abrams, appointed by Governor Cuomo as special prosecutor on the case, would like everyone to share this assumption.

Indeed, in the wake of a sensationalistic media blitz, the public in general has begun to accept the main contention of government officials that the Brawley family and their advisors are simply lying about the events that transpired during the four days Tawana Brawley was missing.

A June 27 *New York Times*-CBS News poll indicated, for example, that the majority of New Yorkers, both Black and white, felt that this was the case.

## Half-truths in the media

The barrage of media coverage came in response to statements by two men, Perry McKinnon and Samuel McClearse, aimed at discrediting the Brawleys and their advisors. National magazines ranging from *Newsweek* to the magazine of the supermarket check-out lanes, *People*, prominently featured their allegations.

But when the testimony of the two men collapsed within days, the prominent coverage was not repeated. McKinnon assured the *New York Times* on June 21 that he "never alluded in this whole thing that [he] knew what happened to Tawana." McClearse's much-vaunted tapes were found to be blank.

Unfortunately, government officials and the media have been able to utilize mistaken tactics employed by the Brawley family and their supporters. Refusing to cooperate and testify at this time only deepens the doubts that people are expressing. (See the July issue of *Socialist Action* for more on this topic.)

The involvement of the Rev. Al Sharpton as a central advisor to the Brawley family also adds to the confusion. Sharpton has admitted to having been an occasional FBI informer—a fact that has caused serious militants to distrust his actions.

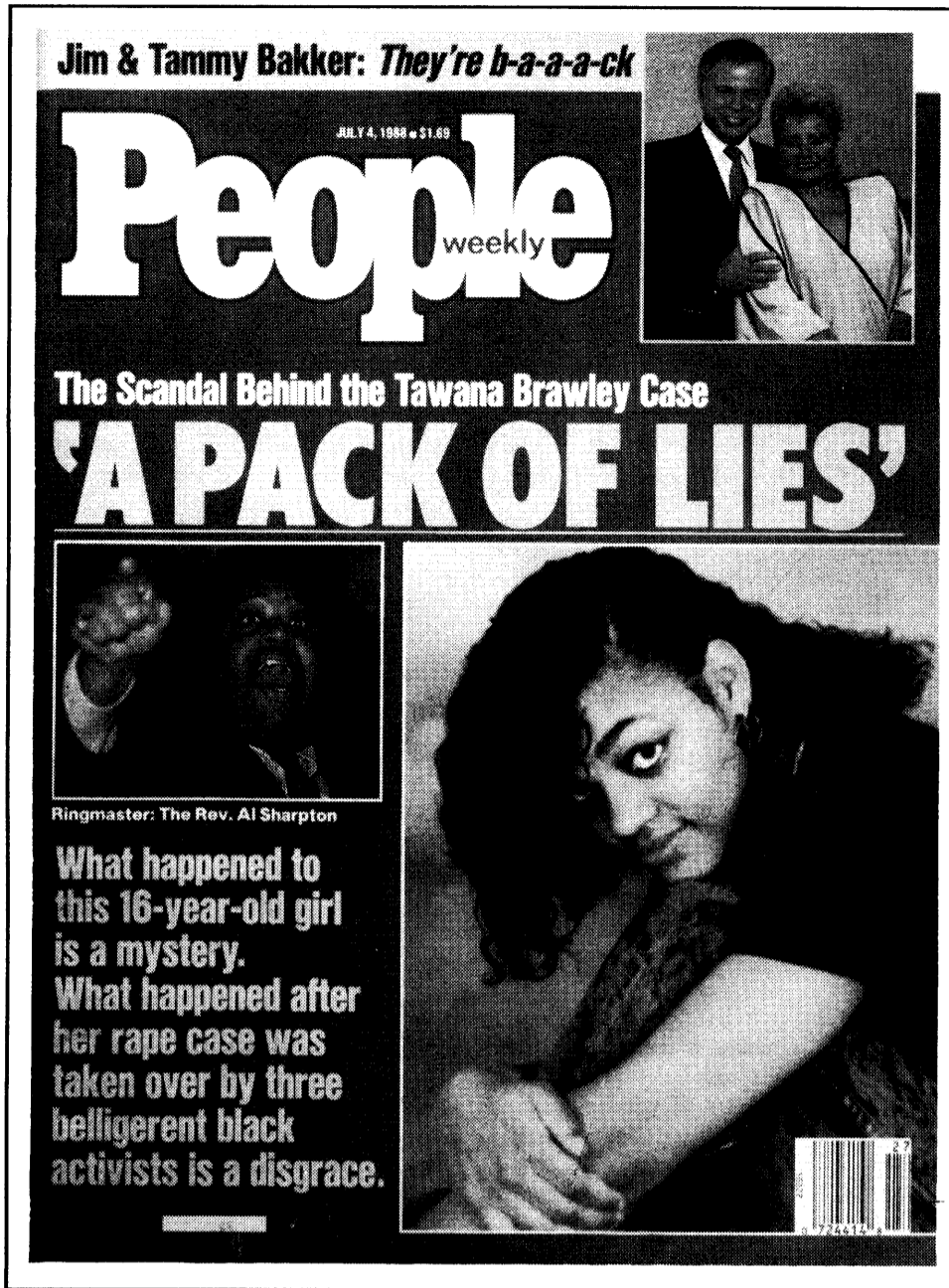
However, the most important questions about this case have been left unanswered—not by the Brawley family but by local, state, and federal officials and the major capitalist-owned media.

## "What are officials hiding?"

While *People* magazine, with a circulation of 26 million, concentrated its resources on printing partial truths and innuendoes, *The City Sun*, a weekly paper circulated mostly in New York's Black communities, offered readers a two-part investigative report and an exclusive interview with Tawana's mother, Glenda Brawley. (Mrs. Brawley still faces a fine and 30-days imprisonment for failing to appear before the grand jury.)

To those who wonder whether anything happened to Tawana, her mother says, "If Tawana is lying, the Dutchess County officials would have handled it that way—as a lie—and the case would have been done with. What are the officials hiding?"

"Obviously," she continues, "they must



Fourth of July issue of *People Magazine* transforms the victim into the criminal.

believe her story because they dropped it like a hot potato. They didn't want to get involved or be connected to the case in any way." (She is referring to, among others, the county officials who were excused from the case, stating that they had "conflicts of interest.")

Brawley ends her interview with the following statement: "Television pictures showed the state of mind and physical condition my daughter was found in—and yet the public suggests that she did that to herself. If anyone out there can go out and do the same things to themselves that were done to her and make themselves unconscious at the same time, then write me and call me and say my daughter is lying."

"But," she concluded, "until anyone can do that and get all the facts related to this case, no one can be in a position to say my daughter is lying."

## The medical reports

*People* magazine repeats the idea that the teenager was away from home "partying" and "perhaps invented the abduction story to avoid the wrath of her mother and step-father." But this statement totally stretches credibility in light of the articles in *The City Sun* that include details of the early medical reports on the case.

The report summary from Sharon Brantingham, medic-in-charge of the ambulance crew, includes the information that the patient was "unconscious, unresponsive."

She was found "in a fetal position inside a large plastic bag," the report states. "Patient's head was wrapped with a sweater-jacket and a belt around that which was in patient's mouth....Patient was covered, head to toe, with what appeared to be dried feces. Patient did not respond to pain, voice, or ammonia."

St. Francis Hospital's emergency-room physician, Dr. Lanwehr Pena, recorded similar facts and concluded that she had several contusions, "a small amount of white material in her tonsils" and "words written on her chest."

According to his report, her vaginal area

was swollen and he detected a "white discharge." Dr. Pena's initial diagnosis, made at 2:50 P.M., was "possible sexual assault."

By 4:00 P.M., the record shows "police (sheriff's department) present. Pictures taken." A half hour later, a "complete bath was given." At 8:00 P.M., a "pelvic exam with rape protocol followed."

Four days later, Tawana was seen by two doctors at Westchester County Medical Center. Dr. John Wix wrote that the patient showed medical problems including, "slow in speech," "headache," "hip pain," and "inability to walk." The discharge diagnosis on Dec. 4, 1987, listed "multiple contusions."

## A strange twist

Over two months later, in a strange twist, the words "multiple contusions" were crossed out on a report by the gynecologist, Dr. Marcia Nackerson. An undated summary of the case signed by Nackerson states that Tawana's discharge diagnosis was "alleged sexual abuse" and "conversion reaction" (a syndrome common

to people suffering from a traumatic experience).

But an article in *The City Sun* states that Nackerson's "correction" is untrue. The final diagnosis shown on a hospital computer printout was not "alleged sexual abuse." It was "rape."

Also, among the earliest notations from St. Francis Hospital, is one that indicates that the young woman was interviewed by the police, told them she had been attacked, and gave them descriptions of her assailants.

Glenda Brawley states in *The City Sun* that she had interviews with police on about a dozen occasions during December but became frustrated when no action was taken.

## Suspects on the police force

No one ever showed Tawana any pictures of local law-enforcement officers for identification—despite her indications that at least one man who assaulted her had a badge.

The sheriff's department officer present at St. Francis Hospital at 4:00 P.M. on the day Tawana Brawley was found appears to have been George Brazzale, who signed the hospital records as the investigator in charge at the time.

Brazzale was given the rape kit and Tawana Brawley's clothing. Exactly what became of the rape kit is not clear. But the next day, the county sheriff's office reported to the local media that there was no evidence Tawana had been raped.

It should be noted that Brazzale, an arson investigator in the Dutchess County sheriff's office, works closely with the assistant district attorney in charge of arson prosecutions, Stephen A. Pagones—who has been named as a key suspect in the case.

One of the other men whom the Brawley lawyers and advisors have identified as being involved in the attack was a part-time police officer in nearby Fishkill, N.Y., who reportedly committed suicide four days after Tawana was found.

His body was found by a friend, a state trooper who removed the gun and the suicide note from the scene. The note's contents have not been made public. The dead man's description matches one that Tawana Brawley gave officials.

Obvious questions about this case abound. From Tawana's being given a "complete bath" hours before she was examined for rape, to the failure of the sheriff's office to aid her in identifying her attackers, it is clear that authorities have been interested only in covering up this crime.

If the coverup succeeds, it will only embolden the racists. The best method of insuring that the perpetrators of this heinous attack are brought to justice is to arm supporters with all of the facts known so far.

Mobilizations of all supporters of civil rights are required to demand that the appropriate authorities begin to investigate the case of Tawana Brawley in earnest. ■

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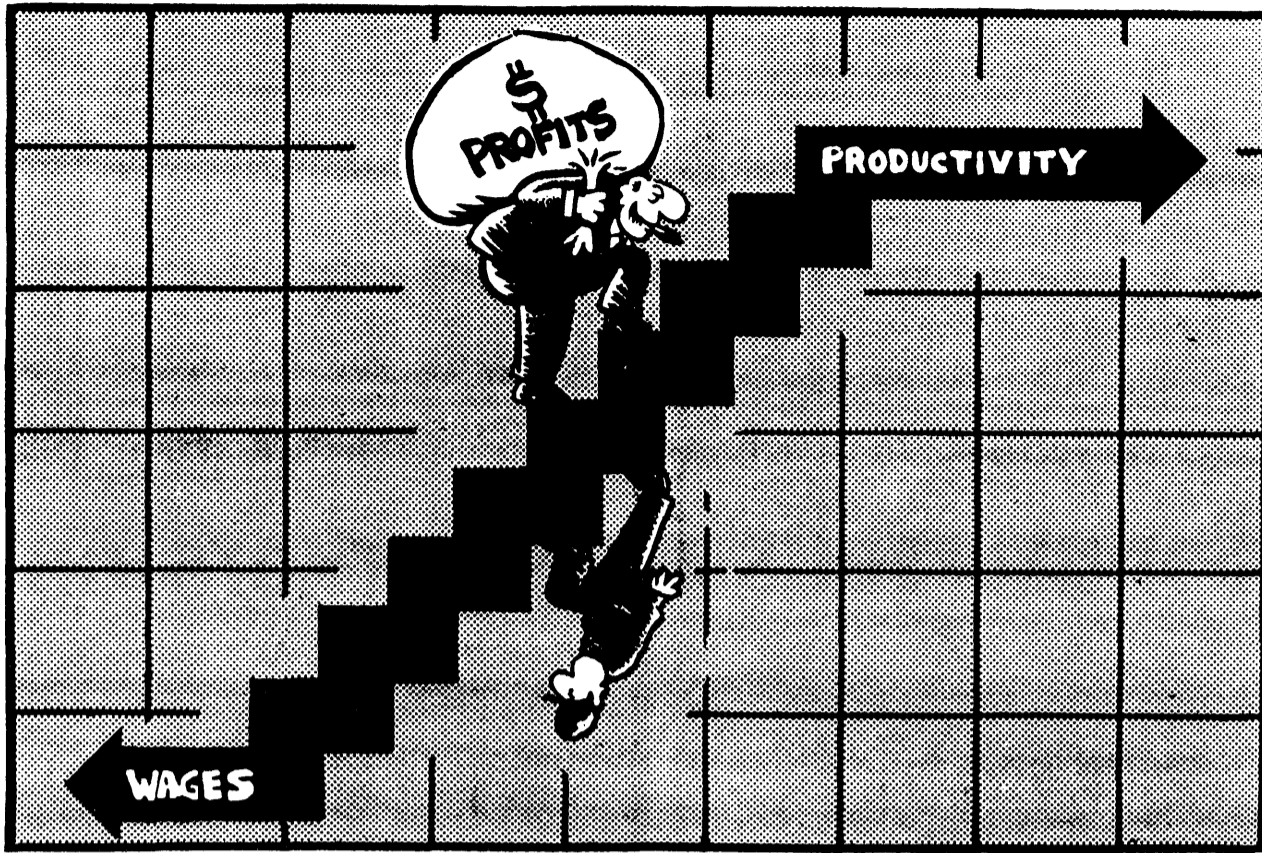
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# An answer to economic propaganda of railroads



By LYNN HENDERSON

Lynn Henderson is a member of United Transportation Union Local 1000 and works on the Burlington Northern Railroad. In September 1987, he participated on a panel of speakers at the Upper Midwest Rail Solidarity Conference. We reprint major portions of his speech below.

The entire speech appeared in the June 1988 issue of *Straight Track*, a newspaper published by the Inter Craft Association of Minnesota (ICAM). To subscribe to the newspaper or for more information on ICAM, write *Straight Track*, 3948 Central Ave. N.E., Minneapolis, MN 55421.

The topic of this panel is "Answering the economic propaganda campaign of the railroads." We've been subjected to a very intense campaign on Burlington Northern (BN).

They paid thousands of BN union employees \$100 to watch their economic propaganda video. A very slick, professionally produced film. The arguments laid out in that economic video, I'm sure, are the same that you're hearing—no matter what railroad you work for.

They tell us that the railroad industry in general and BN in particular are doing very badly, are in very bad economic shape. There are too many employees, their wages are excessive, worker productivity is unsatisfactory, featherbedding is rampant.

[They say that] profits are low and the rate of return to investors is inadequate to attract necessary capital.

These conditions, combined with deregulation—big bad deregulation which of course the railroads were the biggest proponents in pushing through—mean the railroads in general and BN in particular are being beaten to death by their competitors, especially the trucking industry, which is gobbling up traditional railroad business.

## "Here come the truckbusters"

What are the real facts here? Not too long ago, *Forbes* magazine printed a very revealing article. The article was called, "Here Come the Truckbusters."

The major theme of this article maintains that the railroad industry 10 years ago stopped losing business to trucking firms and in the next 10 years is going to start beating the trucking firms to death in competition.

They also had some other interesting things to say. I'll just read a couple of the opening paragraphs from this *Forbes* article: "When World War II ended, 1.4 million people manned the U.S. railroads. This year, that same industry will carry 35 percent more tonnage than it did four decades ago, but with only 300,000 workers.

"One worker today does the work it took six to do. Because of this almost incredible explosion of productivity, the railroads (an industry that predates even the smokestack era) have not only survived but flourished."

*Forbes* continues: "Whereas the Dow Jones industrial average increased some 80 percent over the past decade, Standard and Poor's index of railroad stocks has increased some 200 percent. Instead of dying, the railroads have shown astounding vigor. Sheer productivity has made the difference."

Where did all the "featherbedding" go that BN and the other carriers are always crying about? You see that when the corporate owners are talking among themselves and

laying out the real facts—you get quite a different story.

## What about "low profits?"

What about some of the other arguments that BN makes in its propaganda campaign? What about low profits?

Well, if you examine *Fortune* magazine—another business publication written for businessmen—you find that BN's profits are not low. They're high, and over the last decade they've gotten a lot higher.

According to *Fortune* magazine, BN's profits in 1978 were \$113.5 million, and in 1985 they had increased to \$551.3 million. A huge increase in profits.

Once a year, *Fortune* puts out a special issue in which they compare and rate the economic performance of the largest U.S. corporations. If you go through the figures presented in *Fortune*, you can show that every one of the claims that BN makes is a flat lie.

## What about "low productivity?"

In that special issue, *Fortune* rated the top 800 corporations in terms of labor productivity. How much profit did each individual employee produce for the corporation and how did that compare with other major corporations?

In labor productivity, out of the 800 largest corporations BN came in 235th—near the top 25 percent.

For those of you who work on the Burlington Northern, you will be happy to know that you and every other employee on the BN—each and every one of you—produced an after-tax profit of more than \$14,000 per employee.

In *Straight Track*, we then took that figure and compared it to the per-employee profit rate in the trucking industry. We did this because of [President of Burlington Northern] Gaskin's constant claim that in order to be competitive we have to reduce rail wages to truckers' wages, and engineers shouldn't be paid any more than a truck driver, etc.

In the trucking industry the top four trucking firms produced profits of only from \$3700 to \$2682 per employee.

BN's most strident and persistent theme in their

economic propaganda campaign is the claim that their rate of return on investment is insufficient to attract necessary capital for the railroad.

Again, the facts tell a different story. In comparing the rate of return on investment for all major U.S. corporations *Fortune* rated Burlington Northern in the top 20 percent. And over the last 10 years, BN averaged a rate of return on investment of 27.57 percent.

This rate of return was the sixth highest of all 50 major transportation companies, which includes trucking firms, barge lines, pipelines, and airlines.

## Are workers and bosses "partners?"

But in thinking about it, is that really the principal direction we should go in answering these economic arguments? I don't think so.

These companies, BN and the other railroads, come to us and say, "Look, our profits are down this year. You're going to have to take a wage cut, you're going to have to give some concessions."

Our attitude should be: "We're not even interested in looking at your balance sheet. What's that have to do with us? We're not owners of this railroad. We don't care whether your profits are up or down. You're going to pay us a living wage."

You see, this is part of a philosophy that the companies have been working very hard to indoctrinate us in, especially in the last 20 years. And even some of the unions have bought it.

It's a philosophy that says: "We're partners together in business. Me the owner and you the worker. If the business does well, you'll do well. And if the business does badly, you're going to have to make sacrifices."

Historically, the wages of workers have very little to do with how individual businesses are doing financially. Sometimes businesses make high profits, and the workers in that particular industry get very low wages. Sometimes businesses make very low profits for a period of time, and the workers are still very well paid.

The day that corporations willingly share with their employees' big profits when they make them, I've got to see that. It's never happened, it never will. That's the bald truth of the matter.

What historically determines the wages workers get paid is not how well the balance sheet of a particular corporation is doing. It's how strong the union is in that plant, in that industry. That's what determines your wages.

## Are railroads "overbuilt?"

The fact of the matter is that the railroad industry and the railroads are going to have to continue to function in this country and be manned by railroad workers.

You could make an argument maybe 20 years ago that the railroads were overbuilt, that there were too many railroads. That's certainly not true today. On the contrary, what's clear (and all the independent studies show it) is that there's an inadequate rail system in this country.

Even other corporations that are dependent on a decent railroad system in order to make their own profits, are screaming about it. There's going to be no further reduction of railroad mileage and number of trains run in this country—that's not going to happen.

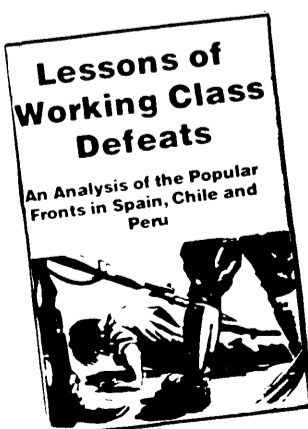
And our position should be we don't care what the profits of individual companies are. Workers who work on those railroads are going to be unionized, and they're going to be paid a decent wage. Their wage is not going to be tied to the competence of particular managements or the skill of their business decisions or the economic manipulations of individual boards of directors of individual companies.

That's got to be our position. That's why I disagree when somebody said yesterday that maybe we should negotiate railroad to railroad.

One of our strengths, one of the results of that long strike period where we won a whole series of victories and the railroads had to make concessions, one of the concessions they had to make, was a national contract. That was a huge gain for us.

And frankly, if they can't run this railroad industry themselves effectively—the takeover artists and whatnot—then we shouldn't hesitate to call for it to be nationalized and turned into a public utility. ■

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## A farmer's predicament in the face of drought

Dean Oeltjen is an award-winning dairy farmer who resides and works with his wife, Anita, and their four children in Pope County, Minn. Dean agreed to be interviewed by *Socialist Action* and talk about the adversity he faces from the drought.

**Socialist Action:** What are some of the consequences you'll suffer on account of the drought?

**Dean Oeltjen:** We're experiencing decreased yields in potential harvests. We're

always uncertain as to how many animals we should ship to market. Just yesterday, we unloaded three semi-loads of hay, costing \$135 a ton—adding up to \$2800 per trailer-load.

We had to order hay from the Missouri River Valley and Canada. There is just no hay to be had around here. If the corn we have out in the fields doesn't get any higher, we'll have to import more.

**S.A.:** So who is going to benefit from this drought in the long run?

**Oeltjen:** Not us—we're on the paying end of this deal. The price of milk won't rise fast enough to cover the costs of what we've invested into importing feed we normally grow on our own. If anyone is going to benefit, it'll be the paper shuffler.

**S.A.:** You put in all the work, seven days a week, and it's the middleman who is going to benefit.

**Oeltjen:** Yeah, but isn't that how it's always been? My neighbor down the road sold 3000 bushels of oats this spring at

\$1.75 a bushel. Now it's going for \$4 a bushel. If he'd held out just a while longer, he would've made an extra \$2.25 a bushel, but it's awfully hard to play the market this time of year.

**S.A.:** Why aren't you irrigating your crops?

**Oeltjen:** It's too expensive to invest in an irrigation system, especially if this is the only year we'll have a drought of this magnitude. It would be a waste of money to have equipment that expensive just sitting idle in the shed.

Hell, if I had enough money to sink into an irrigation system, I'd just get out of farming all together. It's a lot of work you know, but I wouldn't trade it for life in the city. I like having my own place.

**S.A.:** Dean, what do you think about the possibility that this drought could be man-made?

**Oeltjen:** Yes, I think the "greenhouse effect" could be the cause of these problems we're having now. But what are we going to do about it? We all have bad habits; we rely on machinery and the factories that produce them. All this contributes to pollution.

It may not matter much to me whether or not they correct this "greenhouse effect," but what is going to happen to these guys? [Dean gestures toward his son Alan, who is listening to our conversation.] After all, they have to live here after we're gone.

**S.A.:** Do you feel the government is doing an adequate job of helping farmers through this drought?

**Oeltjen:** Well, they've allowed us to cut and bale grass from C.R.P. acres [i.e., land taken out of production and paid to stay unproductive by the government]. There is a catch though! You have to have access to these acres in order to benefit from them. We have no such acres in this area.

*This story was put together by Phil Beckwith, Jake Cooper, and Brian Schwartz.*

The phenomenon known as the "greenhouse effect" has passed from the status of an obscure theory into the public spotlight. NASA scientist Dr. James Hansen states: "It is time to stop waffling so much and say that the evidence is pretty strong that the 'greenhouse effect' is here."

Many scientists agree. They explain that the cause is directly related to the astronomical increase in the use of fossil fuels in the last century.

The waste products resulting from the industrialization of large areas of our world, coupled with the massive destruction of the earth's few remaining forests (which had acted as huge planetary air filters), have pushed our planet's ability to sustain atmospheric balance and purity beyond

## The Greenhouse effect: Capitalism won't solve it

ecological limits.

No longer an event seemingly limited to underdeveloped nations, the realities of drought have come home to a major bread basket of the world—the American Midwest. Withering under the highest average temperatures and lowest rainfall levels since the first records were kept 130 years ago, farmers are already preparing to accept that this year there may be no harvest.

In an international conference at Toronto, Canada, a panel of scientists and government officials concluded: "Steps taken to halt deterioration of the atmosphere must be compatible with economic growth." This statement clearly illustrates the degree to which most government officials hesitate when the call for action conflicts with immediate financial gain.

Workers and farmers in the United States

must insist through their organizations that the government give them immediate assistance to combat the economic effects of the drought.

A popular outcry for *immediate* steps to ensure environmental planning must be heard. In the long run, a government led by working people will finally place the cause of human survival ahead of the quest for private profit.

### ... Convention

(continued from page 1)

Jesse Jackson because he promised jobs, justice, and peace will now be told to vote for Dukakis, who promises nothing and whose "economic miracle" in Massachusetts was based on cutbacks, layoffs, and a massive infusion of non-union labor.

Many who thought the Democratic Party was a political vehicle for "progressive" ideas will now have to be quiet and support a candidate who rejects "ideology" altogether and believes his best qualifications are based on "management skills."

All the workers and oppressed who catapulted Jackson into national prominence will now be expected to rationalize, be pragmatic, and convince themselves to vote for "the lesser evil" so they can stop the "bogey man," George Bush.

Malcolm X exposed this game 24 years earlier during the 1964 presidential race between Democrat Lyndon Johnson and Republican Barry Goldwater: "The shrewd capitalists, the shrewd imperialists, knew that the only way they could get people to vote for the fox [Johnson] would be if you showed them the wolf [Goldwater]. So they created this ghastly alternative."

Similarly, people today are told to vote for Dukakis if they don't want the ghastly alternative of Bush.

#### Compromises for "unity"

By far, the high point of the Democratic Party lovefest in Atlanta was the speech by Jackson. The only factor that made this convention interesting was a new emerging force in American politics—millions of

"resources for education, childcare, and jobs" were added to the Democratic platform. But when it came to taxing the rich, or self-determination for the Palestinians, or rejecting a first-strike nuclear policy, the true reactionary face of the Democratic Party showed itself. The Jackson delegates lost on all these votes.

Yet when Jackson spoke that night, everybody was one big happy family again.

**'Similarly, people today are told to vote for Dukakis if they don't want the ghastly alternative of Bush.'**

Blacks, Latinos, workers, and farmers who galvanized themselves around Jackson's minimum reform program for social justice and peace. To keep these people in the Democratic Party, convention organizers had to go through the motions of "tipping their hat."

But even before Jackson was given his evening in the spotlight, all the compromises and back-room deals that subordinate the interests of working people had already been made.

To assuage the Jackson delegates, vague non-committal planks regarding the need for

"The relationship I am going to have with the campaign must be defined by Gov. Dukakis," Jackson said. "I have put an awful lot of energy, a tremendous investment, into expanding our party ... and I intend to follow through."

Michael Dukakis expects a lot. He had said earlier that "[Jackson] won the votes of 7 million Americans, and we want the votes of every one of them." For Jackson, this won't be as easy to accomplish as he may think.

But the phony respect that the Democratic Party showed Jackson at the

convention and the prominent media coverage he received were designed to accomplish much more than just get Dukakis elected. By bringing Jackson into the inner circle, they have waiting in the wings a demagogic politician who will seek to capture and neutralize all sizable left-wing developments among the masses and keep them bottled up in the Democratic Party.

Not much imagination is necessary to picture what the impact on the American political scene would be if the 7 million people who voted for Jackson moved in the direction of supporting a labor party that was based on the unions and the oppressed communities.

A labor party built around a fighting program to meet human needs would appeal to many more millions. The capitalist class wants Jackson to be the antidote against this kind of development both this election year and in the future.

We need a presidential campaign that advances a program that fundamentally represents the interests of the exploited and oppressed in this country. The socialist ticket of James Warren and Kathy Mickells, the Socialist Workers Party candidates for president and vice president, points in this direction.

# AIFLD 'road show' fails on West Coast

By GRETCHEN MACKLER and HAYDEN PERRY

Trade unionists in San Francisco were recently given a glimpse into the cloak-and-dagger world of AFL-CIO intrigue in the labor movements of scores of nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The occasion was the arrival of a travelling show-and-tell exhibit by the AFL-CIO Department of International Affairs.

These foreign-policy "experts" have been travelling across the country trying to whip up support for their project to turn the international labor movement into cheering squads for U.S. business interests.

The speakers did not present their case in these terms, however. There was much talk about the need to raise the standard of living in the Third World, to foster democracy, and to oppose apartheid.

They were not acting as agents of the CIA, the speakers insisted in response to criticism from the audience. Their funds did not come from the CIA, they said. Nor did they slavishly carry out Reagan's policies when operating abroad. They were only unionists spreading the message of labor solidarity to the less fortunate people overseas.

Unionists on a picket line outside the hotel challenged these claims. "The AFL-CIO International Department spends \$28 million in 'overseas organizing,'" they said in a written statement. "The money is spent to bribe foreign unionists, set up right-wing union federations, and subvert governments throughout the world, such as Nicaragua, Chile, and Guatemala."

## Manipulating unions of Europe

The International Affairs Department (IAD) had its beginning at the close of World War II, when unions in Europe were emerging from the ashes. AFL chiefs William Green and, later, George Meany viewed the radical mood of European workers with alarm. They determined to pull these unionists away from Soviet and radical influence.

They set up the Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC) and proceeded to offer money, food, and mimeograph machines to any trade unionist who would help build a conservative pro-American labor movement.

At first, FTUC operated with AFL and

CIO money, but projects got bigger and bigger—splitting the French labor movement, installing an anti-communist regime in the Greek unions, and freezing out communists in the German movement. More money was needed—from somewhere.

Thomas W. Braden, CIA agent in charge of anti-communist fronts from 1950 to 1954, wrote of the key role of FTUC in setting up the conservative Force Ouvriere in France—an expensive operation.

"When they ran out of money," Braden wrote, "they appealed to the CIA. Thus began the secret subsidy of free trade unions. Without that subsidy, postwar history might have gone very differently."

## "An end to class struggle"

Soon FTUC's operations spread to Africa

and Asia. They spawned a plethora of subsidiary organizations on the way. Typical was the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), set up in 1961.

Meany and other union chiefs sat on the board of directors of AIFLD. But so did representatives of the Rockefellers, Juan Trippe of Pan American Airways, and J. Peter Grace—who has vast holdings in Latin America.

Grace set the agenda for AIFLD, which was to preach "cooperation between labor and management and an end to class struggle." AIFLD also aimed to "prevent communist infiltration and, where it exists, get rid of it."

AIFLD's area of operation is Latin America. Similar subsidiaries were set up for Asia, the Pacific, and Africa.

To oversee these projects, other organizations were established. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is one where Republicans, Democrats, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the AFL-CIO sit together to dole out funds for operations from Africa to the South Pacific. Another agency, the Agency for International Development (AID) channels direct government grants to these projects.

In 1985 the AFL-CIO spent \$41 million for overseas "organizing." This is more than is spent at home for 13 million union members. A hundred full-time operatives all around the world supervise a network of local agents and mercenaries.

AIFLD maintains a training school in Virginia for Latin American union leaders. The school is considered an ideal source of recruits for the CIA.

## Radosh vs. Radosh

A keynote speaker in San Francisco was Ronald Radosh, Professor of American History at the City University of New York. Radosh lauded Reagan's goal of "preventing Nicaragua becoming a Soviet base." He supported aid to the contras if outside aid to the Sandinistas was not

(continued on next page)



Susan Meiselas/Magnum

Repression of Salvadoran workers has increased dramatically since beginning of year.

*Americas Watch, an organization monitoring human-rights abuses, has thoroughly documented labor-rights violations in El Salvador. Its findings were published in March 1988.*

*Many officials from international unions including the United Food and Commercial Workers, the United Auto Workers, and the United Steelworkers expressed strong support for the report. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees passed a statement in support of labor rights in El Salvador at its recent national convention.*

*Nevertheless, last June, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), released a scathing attack on the Americas Watch report.*

*On July 5, Americas Watch responded to AIFLD in a critique that exposes AIFLD's disinformation policies on El Salvador. The labor-rights report (\$8.00) and the critique are available from Americas Watch, 36 West 44 St., New York, N.Y. 10036.*

*Following is an interview with James Goldston, co-author of the Americas Watch report. The interview was conducted on July 18, 1988, by Nancy Elnor, president of American Federation of Teachers Local 1474, and Gretchen Mackler, state-council member of the California Teachers Association.*

**Socialist Action:** In your report, you say that unionists and organized peasants affiliated with the UNTS (the National

## Activist documents repression of Salvadoran trade unionists

Unity of Salvadoran Workers) have been victimized by more government repression than the AIFLD-affiliated unions. Why do you think this is so?

**James Goldston:** According to the Salvadoran ambassador to the United States, Ernesto Rivas Gallont, 77 percent of the collective-bargaining contracts registered with the labor ministry in 1987 were between employers and UNTS affiliates.

It would be fair to say that the repression is because their affiliates are more active, or perhaps more persistent in making demands that the government feels are illegitimate or destabilizing—and must be responded to with force.

**S.A.:** Can you give an example?

**Goldston:** For the employers at the Mike Mike factory, the very act of organizing was a challenge to the employers' authority. Apparently, the Ministry of Labor seemed to agree.

[On Nov. 9, 1987, union members struck and occupied the Mike Mike factory to protest the firing of several unionists and to gain wage increases and other improvements. The National Police surrounded the plant. The next day, the union ended the strike when the employer agreed to recognize the union, reinstate the fired

workers, and give a 10-percent wage increase.]

The Ministry of Labor decertified the union about three months after the employers had recognized the union. The rationale was given that this is a leather-goods factory and the union is a textile-workers union. The government said that the textile workers union could not have recognition in a factory that made leather goods.

[After the Ministry of Labor decertified the union, Mike Mike fired 49 workers, including several union leaders. The plant remains under military occupation.]

**S.A.:** How do you feel about AIFLD's characterization of the UNTS as "linked" to the "Marxist-Leninist" guerrilla movement?

**Goldston:** The State Department and the AFL-CIO agree with this point of view, which is essentially that there is a process of guerrilla manipulation of UNTS affiliates.

The argument seems to be that union leaders who are somehow linked with the FMLN [Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front] are manipulating the majority of the membership—who are unwittingly, therefore, in collaboration with the guerrillas.

The focus of the Americas Watch report was on labor rights in El Salvador and the extent to which they are protected. Therefore, when a union member, a union leader, or any organized worker is subject to violence, the relevant question is not what that person's political views are. The relevant question is whether rights were violated in that case.

**S.A.:** It seems clear that the AIFLD's critique chose to focus on this issue in order to try to discredit the UNTS.

**Goldston:** It's a dangerous thing to throw around accusations of being a guerrilla collaborator in the El Salvador context. If one does that, one is effectively putting someone's life in danger.

**S.A.:** Does the UNTS take a position on the popular struggle in El Salvador?

**Goldston:** UNTS affiliates have called for a dialogue between guerrillas and the government, respect for human rights, and prosecution for those who have violated them in the past.

UNTS leaders feel that the confederation must represent workers in a broad way. They feel that issues of government and of human rights affect workers directly, and that workers must have a role in determining policy. ■

By JAMES MARSHALL

# UAW members fight for union democracy

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Autoworkers have seen both the quantity and the quality of their jobs deteriorate during the 1980s. While the auto companies have stolen tens of thousands of jobs, the remaining workers labor harder and faster. Less people are doing more work.

Strangely, these vicious attacks have come under the guise of management and the United Auto Workers union (UAW) "working together." How has this bizarre situation happened?

Since the UAW helped bail out Chrysler Corporation from near bankruptcy in the late 1970s, other companies have cried louder and louder, "me too!" If the union would agree to job elimination and wage cuts for Chrysler—why not for General Motors or Ford?

The new catchword has become "competition." Auto executives plead that for their companies to survive, the union must help them cut costs. Otherwise, "foreign" automakers in places like Japan and Korea will have an unfair advantage. And then U.S. auto companies will go belly up, as Chrysler almost did.

At first glance, some of this seems reasonable. After all, isn't it possible to price one's goods out of the market? Doesn't a business have to turn a big enough profit to keep paying its bills? Isn't that how "free enterprise" works?

The trouble is, the world's auto industry is much closer to being monopolized than to being a free marketplace. U.S. auto companies financially interlock with foreign companies. Likewise, the companies' arguments have all been heard before. But, at an earlier time, the UAW rejected those lies!

## The UAW's early years

Back in the 1930s, management in the auto industry also spoke of "working together." But, unlike today, it was a time in which they were trying to keep the upstart UAW out.

Working conditions were horrible. Pay was inadequate, benefits non-existent. Favoritism and racial prejudice, not seniority, determined who worked which particular job. So when management spoke of "working together" and "not killing the goose that laid the golden egg," they offered the bosses' paternalism as an alternative to union power.

In response to these unacceptable conditions, autoworkers organized into the fledgling UAW. Union members had their own kind of "working together." It was called union solidarity.

Bitter struggles took place. The young UAW discovered that there is just one genuine way to make the bosses listen—shut off their flow of profits.

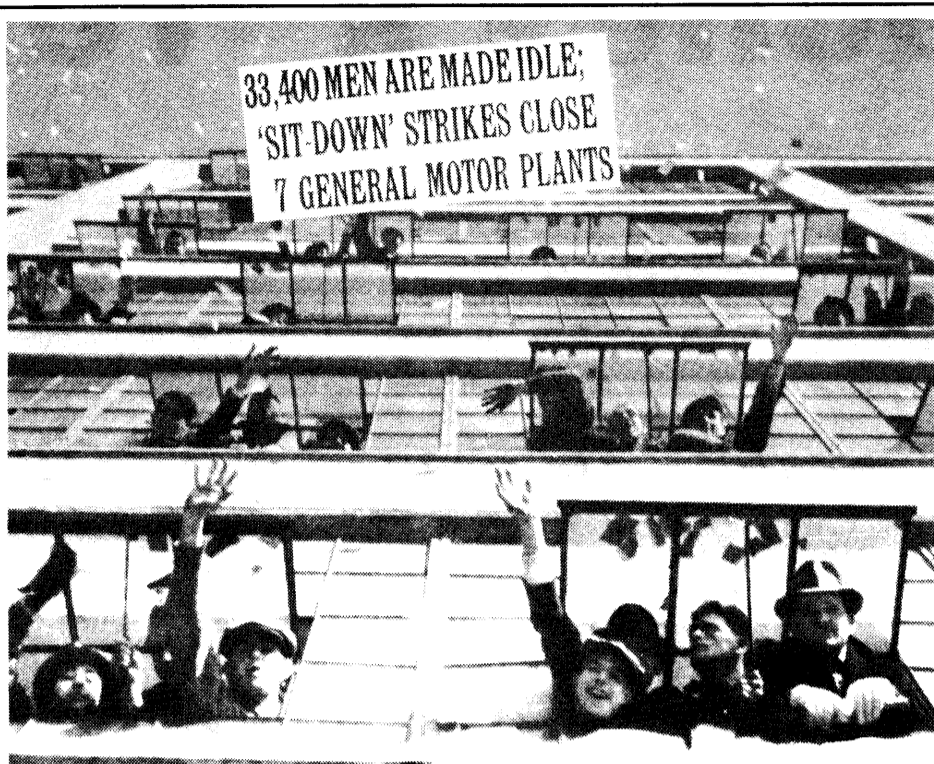
Auto workers by the thousands halted the assembly lines, locked the factory doors, and occupied the plants. They fought company goons and cops in the streets. And they succeeded in getting the UAW recognized—despite the earlier boasting by Henry Ford that he'd never allow a union.

By flexing its muscles, the UAW obtained contracts. It improved working conditions, wages, and benefits, and established seniority rights.

## The union today

The top union leaders no longer pay more than lip service to the early methods of struggle. Times have changed, they say. "Foreign" people are stealing American jobs. Strikes don't really work—they just help foreign competitors.

So instead of fighting to maintain jobs and working conditions, the UAW is allowing the classification system to be gutted and the "team" concept to be introduced. "Innovative" contracts, such as those at GM's NUMMI and Saturn sub-



The UAW yesterday and today... Above: 1937 sit-down strike. Below: Assembly line at a GM-Isuzu auto plant in the 1980s.

sidiaries, have become the norm.

Jobs in auto are rapidly disappearing, softened inadequately by job banks and retraining programs. On July 7, the *Kansas City Times* ran an article about these retraining programs. Interestingly enough, it obtained the story at a lake resort at a joint management/union four-day conference.

In a city where over 6000 General Motors jobs have been lost in just two-year's time, the Kansas City UAW/GM Resource Center and the tax-supported

CARE program expect to help only 675 laid-off autoworkers find new jobs over a 30-month period. An official of this program told the *Times* that most of these new jobs pay just two-thirds of auto wages.

Another official said, "If you can get 25 percent of these people to come into a self-help program, that's great." He complained of apathy and "unawareness" as reasons for low interest in the UAW/GM program.

But maybe laid-off autoworkers are aware. They are aware that their union is allowing good-paying jobs to go down the

drain and presenting them with job resumés for quality jobs that don't exist.

## Ferment in the union

But while top UAW officials remain out of touch with the needs of their members, lower levels of the union show signs of unrest.

Examples of autoworkers seeking solutions are sprinkled around the country. UAW Local 645 in Van Nuys, Calif., threatened to organize a boycott of GM, if it should close the plant. A Plant Closing Committee in Detroit sought a legislation package that would declare a moratorium on plant closings.

In UAW Region 5—which includes Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas—a caucus called New Directions has sustained a two-year battle around union democracy and accountability.

When New Directions leader Jerry Tucker was cheated out of the regional director's seat in an election at the national 1986 UAW convention, the courts eventually found in his favor for new elections in Region 5. New Directions also benefited from the full support of UAW co-founder and leader Victor Reuther, who has become a critic of the "new" UAW.

Tucker's New Directions movement has been strong on criticism but short on solutions. It debunks the "competition" argument but distances itself from proposals such as industrywide nationalization.

Still, New Directions has afforded activists the opportunity to air their ideas, and it claims to want a return to traditional unionism—as opposed to the "company" unionism of today.

## A big challenge ahead

Tucker has publicly claimed victory in the recently completed Region 5 delegate elections. The victory will be short-lived, of course, if the international union "persuades" delegates to change their allegiance at the August mini-convention in Tulsa.

A Tucker victory would not decisively change the UAW as a whole, but it would demonstrate that UAW members can fight for a more democratic and accountable union.

As for making the UAW into a fighting class-struggle union, the rank and file has a big challenge ahead. The auto companies will continue to try to destroy workers' gains from struggles of yesteryear.

Socialists in the UAW must continue to present a program of international labor solidarity against the capitalist bosses. We can point to the massive strikes and plant occupations by "competing" South Korean auto workers as an example of the kind of union power we need to coordinate our struggles worldwide. ■

## ... AIFLD

(continued from page 6)

terminated. He charged that the FMLN in El Salvador was killing children and its own members.

While listening to Radosh's pro-State Department diatribe, his audience had an unusual opportunity to read excerpts from his book, "American Labor and United States Foreign Policy," written in 1969. At that time Radosh held an exactly opposite opinion of the American labor movement's collaboration with the State Department.

Radosh said in 1969: "Rather than identifying with the forces for social change in Europe, Latin America, and Asia, the AFL and CIO union leaders have offered their support to any anti-communist regime."

Radosh has changed his opinion, but the truth of what he wrote in 1969 was confirmed by William Doherty, director of AIFLD: "I was proud to be involved in

overthrowing Arbenz (in Guatemala), Goulart (in Brazil), and Allende (in Chile)," he boasted to the conference.

Doherty had no mandate from American unionists for setting up dictators. All decisions have been made by the top echelons of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, without any vote from the ranks of labor.

## Opposition in the unions

But opposition has been expressed by a number of unions. As long ago as 1966, United Auto Workers union leader Victor Reuther declared, "They [the AFL-CIO] have permitted themselves to be used by the CIA as a cover for clandestine operations abroad."

This year, the California Federation of Teachers passed a resolution opposing any further funding of AIFLD. Teachers also spoke against AIFLD at the national convention of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which was held in San Francisco at the same time as the international-affairs conference.

For example, AFT Local 957 from San Jose, Calif., called on the teachers

convention to authorize cutting all ties to AIFLD "until such time as AIFLD makes public its budget, its employees, and the activities in which it is engaged."

AFT President Albert Shanker helped engineer the international-affairs conference in order to try to counter the opposition to AIFLD expressed by many teachers-union members and locals. Shanker sits on a number of boards that run the overseas operations in which the AFL-CIO is involved. He sees no contradiction in sitting with such anti-labor members as Henry Kissinger and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

In spite of Shanker's effort to build the international-affairs conference, virtually no local labor leaders from other unions bothered to attend. And many rank-and-file members of his own union, who had been roped into coming to the conference, took the floor to refute the speakers.

Some unionists pointed out that, rather than subvert the unions of other countries, the U.S. labor movement has an obligation to solidarize itself with all unions that are engaged in the fight for broad social progress. ■

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# Party congress backs Gorbachev's 'reforms'

By ROLAND SHEPPARD

The recent conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was designed to codify Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (economic restructuring) programs.

The June 28 to July 1 meeting of close to 5000 delegates was the first delegated party conference since 1941. When Gorbachev first proposed the conference in January 1987, his goal was to go over the head of the CPSU's Central Committee in his effort to block opposition to his "reform" program.

But in the weeks leading up to the conference, it became clear that the "hard-line" wing in the party leadership headed by Yegor Ligachev was determined to use its role in the party apparatus to prevent Gorbachev's supporters from being elected delegates.

Many of Gorbachev's closest friends and allies, such as Yuri Afanasyev, the chief anti-Stalinist historian, were not able to get elected. This led to a momentary rift in the bureaucracy which the Soviet masses were able to take advantage of to express their own independent demands.

For example, in the Siberian city of Omsk, 8000 people assembled at the initiative of pro-Gorbachev party members to protest the selection of delegates to the party conference. In Sakhalin, Kuybyshev, and Yaroslavl similar mass demonstrations took place.

But in a few instances, the rallies did more than demand the annulment of the mandates of the "hard-line" delegates. They also called for the removal of unpopular party officials, the legalization of independent unions and political organizations, and an end to the monopoly on political power by the ruling party. These demands, which hit at the very heart of bureaucratic rule, went far beyond the intentions of the Gorbachev reformers.

These rallies confirmed the fears of the bureaucrats who oppose *glasnost* on the grounds that the workers will seize the democratic openings and push them beyond the limits set by Gorbachev.

At the conference itself, the inter-bureaucratic contradictions and squabbles also surfaced. Politburo members were criticized from the floor, and for the first time since the early years of the Russian Revolution there were split votes on the

conference resolutions.

## Inter-bureaucratic conflict

But it would be extremely shortsighted to think that the party conference reflected the new "socialist renewal" which, according to Gorbachev's fellow-travelers, is supposedly sweeping the Soviet Union.

The severe limits on democracy were immediately apparent. Criticism of the past was tolerated by Gorbachev, but criticism of the present that goes beyond the limits set by the ruling bureaucracy was shunned.

This was evident in the "debate" between Boris Yeltsin, the former Moscow party chief, and Yegor Ligachev. Even though Yeltsin was allowed to present his views, his demotion in the party was upheld.

Yeltsin's differences with Ligachev are not ones of political principle. Both uphold the basic institutions of bureaucratic rule. If, however, Yeltsin had defended the democratic rights of the workers to control and manage the production and distribution of goods—or if he had defended the Leninist principle of self-determination for the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh—his fate would most likely have been similar to that of Paruir Airikyan, the Armenian dissident

who was stripped of his citizenship and expelled from the Soviet Union.

The conference was called to reorganize the ruling Communist Party bureaucracy to adjust it to the developing political unrest of the workers and masses of the Soviet Union. A central aim of the conference was to gain support for the new economic policies introduced by Gorbachev. To accomplish this task, the party leadership found it necessary to grant a limited and tightly controlled democratic opening to the Soviet people.

## Reviving the sagging economy

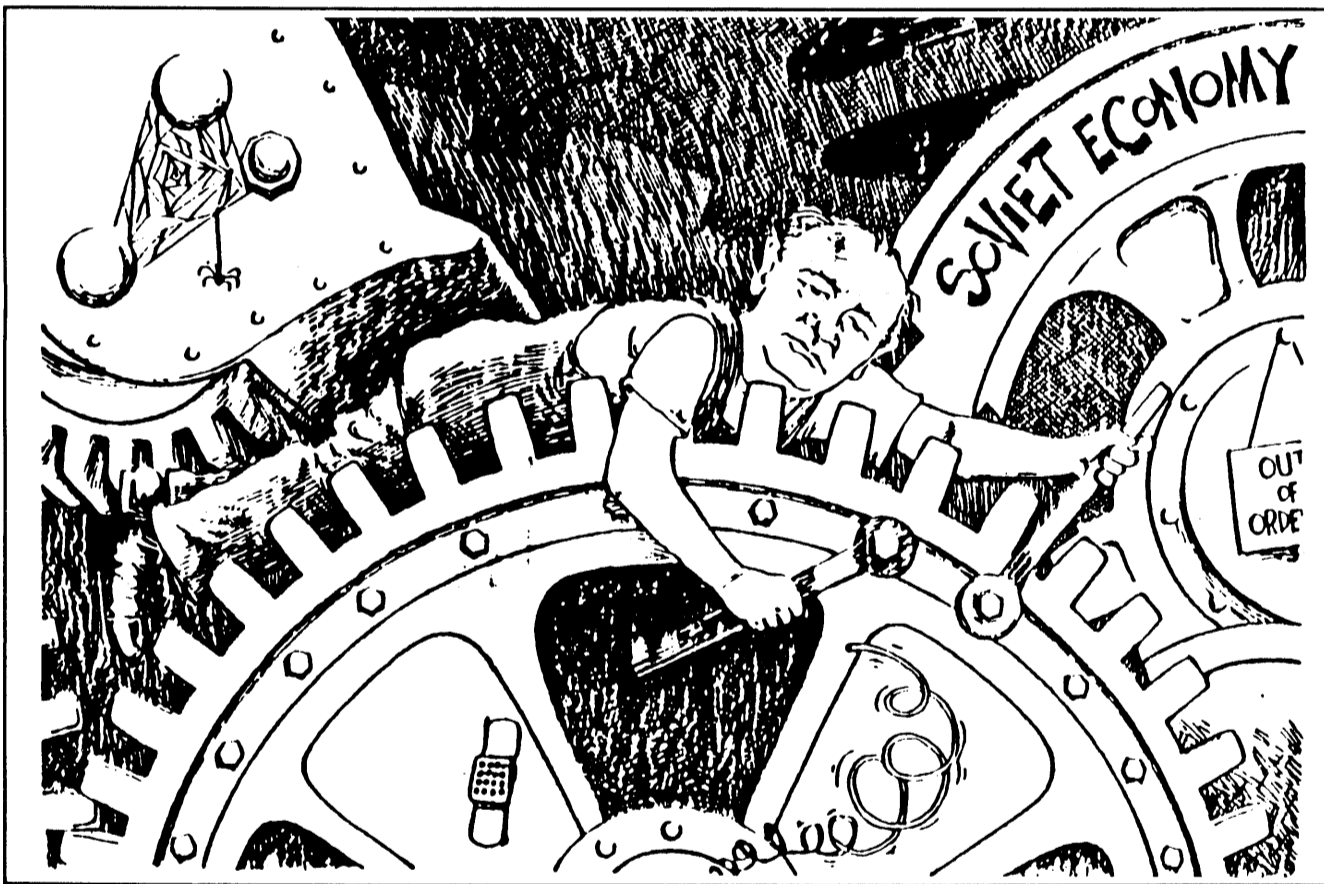
Following the examples of China and the Eastern European workers' states, the Soviet leaders are trying to revive the Soviet economy by making profitable offerings to world capitalism. This has entailed allowing the development of private enterprise in the Soviet Union and the use of capitalist "incentives" such as piece-work, inflation, and unemployment to increase the productivity of the Soviet workers and farmers.

The Soviet bureaucracy is hoping that the current weakness of the world capitalist system, together with guarantees for repatriating large profits, will encourage the imperialists to risk investing in the Soviet economy. Gorbachev is gambling that his new economic policies will increase the production of consumer goods to quiet the discontent of the masses.

In his conclusion to the party conference, Gorbachev warned that "there is no alternative to *perestroika*." He also called for "serious critical analysis to work out the policy of *perestroika* and later to transform it into practical decisions on the main directions."

What Gorbachev means by "serious critical analysis" has been spelled out in numerous recent articles in *Novy Mir*, the Soviet Union's leading political and literary journal. These articles contend that the centralized planned economy is the basis for the bureaucratic mismanagement of society—not the bureaucracy itself. The articles call for the introduction of a Soviet market economy.

In a recent article in *Novy Mir*, one author, Vasily Selyunin, goes so far as to criticize V.I. Lenin for abolishing private property (*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 7, 1988). The author also accuses Lenin of laying the basis for the forced labor camps under Stalin, though he praises Lenin's flexibility in promoting the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the early 1920s. [During



## Perestroika means hardship for workers

Discontent with the economic policies promoted by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is rapidly mounting as the Soviet workers realize that *perestroika* means nothing more than austerity and belt-tightening.

The bus drivers' strike in the industrial town of Chekov in September 1987 was a dramatic example of the workers' refusal to take pay cuts imposed under a new wage system. Other signs of discontent are regularly reported in the underground, semi-tolerated, and even official press.

One revealing account of the situation of the Soviet economy was provided by Alexander Amerisov, editor of the *Soviet-American Review*, who recently returned from the Soviet Union. Amerisov writes the following in the June 1988 issue of the *Review*, which is published monthly in

Chicago:

"The three years of Gorbachev's rule so far have been a flop as far as a majority of the Soviet people are concerned. Gorbachev's policies, which aim to reduce government interference in the economy, ... have backfired, producing misery for the Soviet people, rather than benefiting them.

"Wages are down. Prices are up. Shortages are even greater than under Brezhnev. Even sugar, of which the Soviet Union is the largest producer in the world, and which was never in short supply, is now rationed. During the nearly four months I spent in the Soviet Union, only once was I able to buy fish—a commodity that was always plentiful and cheap there.

"In a country with no unemployment insurance, Gorbachev's badly thought-through "staff reduction" poli-

cies are inflicting great hardship on the people. What's worse, a lay-off in the Soviet Union may mean not only a temporary loss in income, but the devastating loss of one's place on the waiting list for many of the vital necessities that are distributed through one's place of employment. Housing is one of them.

"An old friend of mine, Uncle Vanya, a blue-collar worker who is over 50 and lives with his wife and four children in a one-room apartment without running water, toilet, or shower, took his present job as a production worker because if offered him the opportunity to get a bigger apartment. That was eight years ago. Now he is faced with the possibility of a lay-off, a new job, and a spot at the bottom of the waiting list for

housing—another eight or more years' wait. 'Bastard' is what he called Gorbachev.

"The wife of another friend of mine took a low-paying job as a technician in order to get their daughter placed in a kindergarten offered by that state-owned company. It was a year ago. Now she is laid off and looking for another job. Her husband asks: 'Will we have to wait another year to get our daughter into kindergarten? She will be ready to go to regular school in one year.'

"Gorbachev is violating the social contract: The state pays people very little for their work, but takes upon itself the obligation to provide them with some vital services. Gorbachev wants the state to do less, but he gives people no more money to do it for themselves." ■



the NEP, the Bolsheviks leaders allowed the introduction of limited capitalist market mechanisms to revive a war-torn economy.]

The reference to the NEP is, of course, used by the pro-Gorbachev intellectuals to justify the present economic policies and to give them Lenin's stamp of approval. But Selyunin ignores the fact that the workers' and peasants' "soviets"—or councils—under Lenin were the pillars of the most democratic form of government in the history of the world.

Selyunin also overlooks the defeat of the revolution in Germany and the poverty—caused by the civil war and the invasion by thirteen capitalist countries, including the United States—which forced the retreat to the NEP and laid the material basis for the eventual rise of Stalin.

Stalin had "red professors" to justify himself as the continuator of Lenin. Now Gorbachev has his own "red professors" for the same purpose. In fact, the present policies more accurately reflect the views advocated by Nikolai Bukharin in the late 1920s. Bukharin's recent rehabilitation is a reflection of the rehabilitation of his economic policies.

#### An organ of the bourgeoisie

An accurate description of the Soviet bureaucracy was written by Leon Trotsky in "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" exactly 50 years ago. Trotsky wrote:

"The Soviet Union emerged from the October Revolution as a workers' state. State ownership of the means of production, a necessary prerequisite to socialist development, opened up the possibility of a rapid growth of the productive forces. But the apparatus of the workers' state underwent a complete degeneration at the same time: It was transformed from a weapon of the working class into a weapon of bureaucratic violence against the working class and more and more a weapon for the sabotage of the country's economy.

"The bureaucratization of a backward and isolated workers' state and the transformation of the bureaucracy into an all-powerful privileged caste constitute the most convincing refutation—not only theoretically but this time practically—of the theory of socialism in one country.

"The USSR thus embodies terrific contradictions. But it still remains a degenerated workers' state. Such is the social diagnosis. The political prognosis has an alternative character: Either the bureaucracy, becoming ever more the organ of the world bourgeoisie in the workers' state, will overthrow the new forms of property and plunge the country back to capitalism; or the working class will crush the bureaucracy and open the way to socialism."

Gorbachev's economic reforms clearly reveal the bureaucracy's role as the transmission belt of the world capitalist class inside the workers' state. They represent a danger to the soviet workers and to the soviet workers' state.

In China, similar reforms have progressed to the point where illegal private banks have been allowed to exist, where special capitalist economic zones have been

(continued on page 10)



Armenians continue struggle



## Leon Trotsky must be rehabilitated!

By PAUL SIEGEL

The series of exonerations by the Soviet government of the Moscow Trials defendants—culminating in the recent exonerations of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov, and Radek—constitute a victory of historic significance for world Trotskyism.

It is a victory, though, that still awaits the even greater victory of the exonerations of Trotsky himself and of his son and chief collaborator, Leon Sedov.

The acknowledgement that the trials were a gigantic frame-up of the men who were the founders of the Soviet Union serves to illuminate the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism, whose most implacable and far-sighted opponents were the Trotskyists.

The dispelling of the mythology of the trials—in which Trotsky was represented as the devil with whom the other defendants and entered into a hellish pact—is bound to arouse interest in the Soviet Union and in what Trotsky actually said about the course being taken by Stalin's regime.

What Trotsky had to say, not only about Stalinism but about the trials themselves, has been borne out by events.

#### Need for socialist democracy

Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism helps to explain not just the trials but the process by which the verdicts of these trials have been reversed under Gorbachev.

In his book "The Revolution Betrayed," Trotsky stated that, thanks to the nationalization of the means of production and economic planning, the Soviet Union made a tremendous advance in industrialization even though bureaucratic methods entailed enormous waste and human costs.

But, Trotsky said, in the next stage of development the quality of products (which cannot be achieved through bureaucratic centralized planning) and creative initiative will become all-important. For this, socialist democracy is necessary.

What Gorbachev has to say in his book

"Perestroika" at times reads like a plagiarism of this comment of Trotsky's. This is not due, however, to Gorbachev's having secretly read Trotsky—whom in his speech at the 70th anniversary of the revolution, Gorbachev denounced as "anti-socialist." It is due to Trotsky's having so well understood the course that the Soviet

## Soviet officials meet Moscow Trials Comm.

By RUSSELL ZANCA

NEW YORK—On June 29, six members of the Moscow Trials Committee met with several Soviet officials. The meeting took place in the offices of the Permanent Mission of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Nations.

We presented a list of demands to the delegation, which included clearing the names of all the victims of the Moscow Trials, publishing the works of the Bolshevik leaders whose writings have been suppressed, and restoring Leon Trotsky to his place in history.

One official expressed the opinion that the Gorbachev wing of the Soviet Communist Party is in favor of "rehabilitating" Trotsky. It goes without saying that he knew of Trotsky's life and work only through secondary (obviously anti-Trotsky) sources.

Other officials agreed that Trotsky's writings will "eventually" be published. But they argued that their

economy must take under the bureaucracy.

The reform section of the bureaucracy now dominant in the Soviet leadership, in seeking to cope with these crucial problems of the economy, has found it necessary to pursue a policy of greater openness concerning the past as well as the present. To deal with the restrictions of the command system, it was necessary to deal with the trials as a turning-point in history that enabled the command system to be built.

However, just as Lenin said of Alexander II's freeing of the serfs in 1861, "Reforms carried out by feudal landowners cannot help but be feudal in nature," so it can be said that reforms carried out by bureaucrats cannot help but be bureaucratic in nature.

#### Movement from below

The reforms of Gorbachev, coming from above, have been halting, incomplete, and taken often at the expense of the workers. They have, however, begun to stimulate movement from below. In the continuation and acceleration of this movement against bureaucratic opposition by the masses lies the hope of the future.

So, too, the process of rehabilitation has proceeded slowly, evidently not because of a meticulous examination of the evidence—the trials had long ago collapsed of their own weight—but because of political uncertainty and a prolonged struggle behind the scenes.

Today, the big issue is the formal exonerations of Trotsky and the publication of the writings of the defendants, particularly the analyses of the rise of the bureaucracy in such works as Khristian Rakovsky's articles and Trotsky's "The Revolution Betrayed." But this is precisely where the greatest bureaucratic resistance is encountered.

When the historian Yuri Afanasiev called at a recent news conference for the rehabilitation of Trotsky and the publication of his writings, not a single Soviet newspaper reported it. When the economist Otto Latsis said the same thing at a subsequent news conference, it was again ignored by the Soviet press, with the sole exception of the newspaper of the Komsomols (Young Communist League).

Nevertheless, the fact that leading intellectuals called for the rehabilitation and publication of Trotsky—even though they took care to say that they were opposed to his views—and that even a single newspaper printed this is of great significance. The genie of free inquiry is out of the bottle and cannot be put back into it. ■

economy is in such straits that they barely have enough paper to satisfy present book-publishing demands. At that point, a member of our delegation remarked that now they "won't have to waste so much paper printing up anti-Trotskyist publications."

The affair turned into a sort of forum on topics ranging from the effect of market mechanisms in the Soviet Union to the lack of freedom for lesbians and gays in the country.

At the end, Yuri Chizhik, the Permanent Mission's press secretary, joined us to talk about increasing the power of the local soviets and politicizing the masses. But his remarks, on the whole, were superficial.

We think that the decision of the Soviet representatives to meet with us was in line with political happenings in the *glasnost* era and was probably not made at the local level. Although it may have been an exercise in pure public relations, the Moscow Trials Committee welcomed the event. We hope our demands will be accepted and expedited quickly. ■

# Why the Prague Spring threatened Stalinism

Aug. 21, 1988, will mark the 20th anniversary of what has come to be known as the "Prague Spring." On this day the Kremlin, gripped with hate and panic, decided to send armored divisions into Czechoslovakia. The Soviet leaders wanted to combat a situation that they felt, if allowed to develop, could encourage the Czech workers to undertake a full political revolution.

The events which took place in Czechoslovakia 20 years ago still have worldwide importance today. There is no other way to establish a system of socialist democracy in the Soviet Union and the other Eastern European states than to destroy the bureaucratic social layer of those countries and dismantle the repressive apparatus through which it exercises power.

The Prague Spring, however limited in scope, pointed the way toward such a revolution. Following are excerpts from an article by Richard James, which first appeared in the British magazine *Socialist Outlook* of May/June 1988.

Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia on Aug. 21, 1968, as part of an invasion which included token units from other Warsaw Pact countries. It was a military walkover.

But the process of "normalization" of political and social life was to take place over months and years.

What the Soviet tanks were there to crush was a mass movement for reform and democratization, encompassing the broadest layers of society, which in the course of a few months had totally transformed the Czechoslovak political landscape. Spring in Prague had posed the possibility of an alternative to Stalinist bureaucratic despotism.

A wing developed in the bureaucracy which advocated far-reaching economic changes: blame was attached to the centralized nature of the system, and decentralization was advanced as a remedy. A key problem was seen as the inefficiency of the cumbersome bureaucratic planning apparatus.

In order for the economic reforms to work, it was necessary to change the "image" of the party—to try to overcome the unpopularity of the state authorities that had developed under party leader Antonin Novotny's hardline Stalinist approach.

## A bureaucratic project

Novotny was removed from his position in January 1968 to be replaced by the reformer Alexandr Dubcek. The balance of power in the ruling elite had shifted decisively in favor of the reformers.

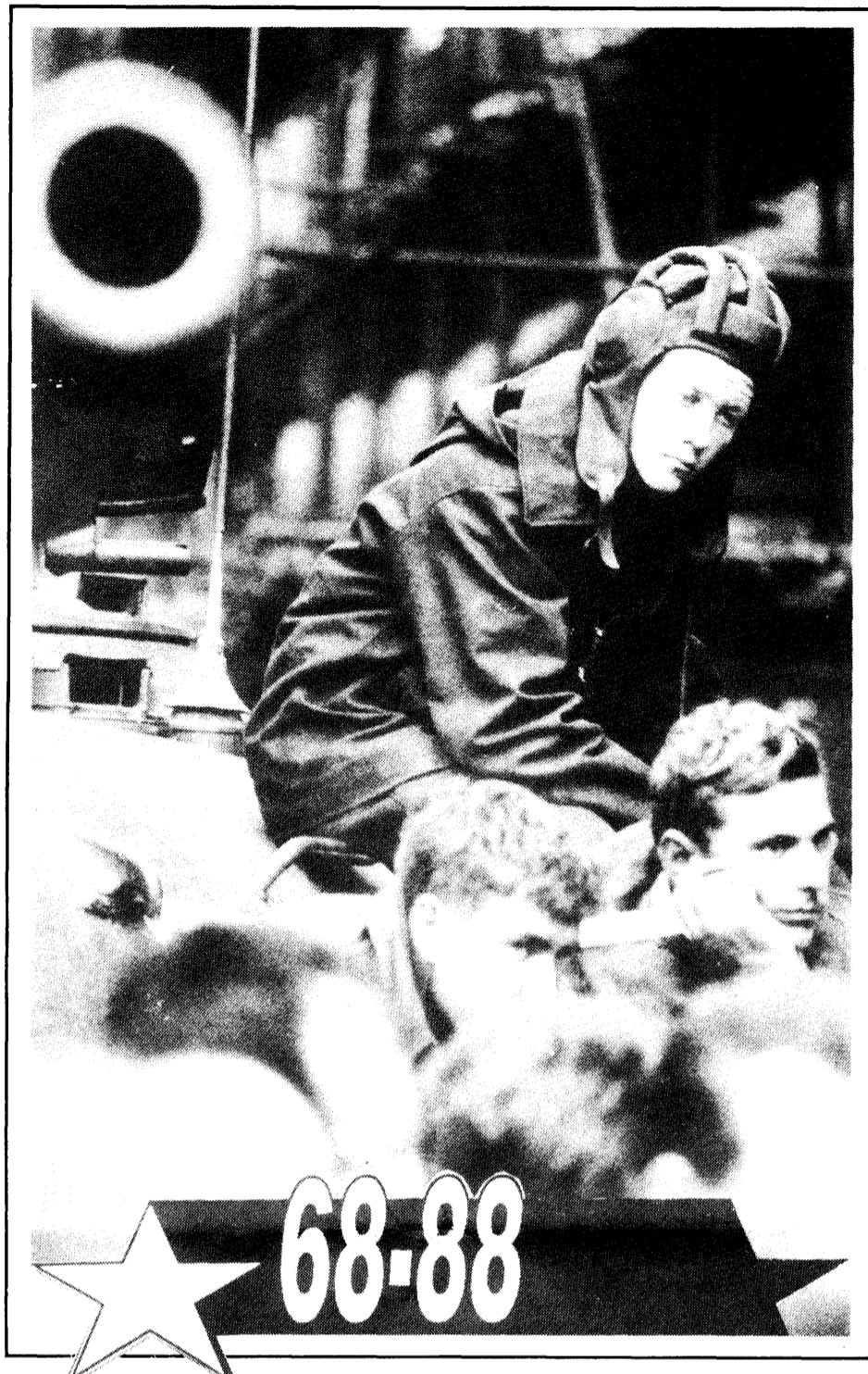
The project of the reformers was conceived entirely within the bounds of the social and political system established after 1948. It was neither an attempt to restore capitalism nor a challenge to the fundamental elements of the Stalinist system. In other words, it was a thoroughly bureaucratic project.

One effect of liberalization was to unleash powerful social forces whose dynamic was towards independent political expression, outside of the direct control of the bureaucracy. There was a mushrooming of open political debate, criticism, and activity spreading far beyond the official structures.

The slowness of the industrial working class to become involved deserves some explanation. An important reason was that the proposed economic measures (whose aim, after all, was increased productivity to enable economic growth) were viewed with apprehension and suspicion.

However, workers soon began to use the opportunity of the political thaw to make demands on local managers for increased wages and better conditions, backed up in some cases by strike action and the beginnings of independent trade-union activity.

For the Soviet bureaucracy, the dangers in the Czechoslovakian situation were not



so much in the intentions or character of the Dubcek leadership: the Czechoslovak bureaucracy maintained its hold on the structures of the state throughout.

The danger was perceived as being the broader social forces and political tendencies unleashed in the course of the reform

project and the possibility that developments in Czechoslovakia would spill over into the other East European countries and even into the Soviet Union itself.

That is to say, the Prague Spring, if allowed to continue according to its internal logic, could develop into a challenge to

## ... Gorbachev

(continued from page 9)

established, and where corporations formed by the government in Hong Kong have been given over to the sons and daughters of the Chinese bureaucracy.

From Eastern Europe to China, the workers' states have been allowing the penetration of capitalism. In so doing, they have introduced unemployment, inflation, and more anarchy in industrial planning.

Austerity in Poland, demanded by the capitalist banks, gave rise to Solidarnosc. The development of Solidarnosc, although not yet victorious, confirms the prediction by Trotsky of the working class rising up against the political and economic policies of the bureaucracy. The present course by Gorbachev and others will provoke "two, three, many Solidarnosc"—even in the Soviet Union.

### A working-class alternative

Contrary to Gorbachev's pronouncement, there is an alternative to *perestroika*. The alternative is a democratically planned economy that is controlled by the majority of the population—i.e., controlled by the working class.

This is a society where soviets (regional and factory committees), modelled after the soviets of Lenin's and Trotsky's time, will

democratically determine the economic policies and democratically distribute what is produced.

Socialization of the distribution of goods is the greatest incentive for increasing productivity, as the working masses have a direct and immediate return from the investment of their labor. The original Soviet Union was also based on democratic Soviet republics, which recognized the right to self-determination of all nationalities. The current demands of the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh should be supported according to this principle.

The programmatic reply to *perestroika* was best put forward by Trotsky in the "Death Agony of Capitalism." He wrote:

"A fresh upsurge of the revolution in the USSR will undoubtedly begin under the banner of the struggle against social inequality and political oppression. Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism [piece work]! Down with Soviet aristocracy and its rank and orders! Greater equality of wages and for all forms of labor!

"The struggle for the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees, for the right of assembly and freedom of the press, will unfold for the regeneration and development of Soviet democracy.

"The bureaucracy replaced the soviets as class organs with the fiction of universal electoral rights—in the style of Hitler-Goebbels. It is necessary to return to the

bureaucratic rule and could spark movements for democratization and change internationally.

### "One big poster"

Within hours of the invasion, Prague had become "one big poster." There were demonstrations everywhere. Clandestine newspapers, radio stations, and television sprang up.

The period after the invasion witnessed large demonstrations in October and November, a three-day student strike, the growth and development of workers' councils and further larger demonstrations in March 1969—eight months after the invasion.

But the mass movement continued to look towards Dubcek and his cohorts for leadership. The underground radio, for example, was at the same time both the main organizer of mass resistance and the medium through which the party leaders appealed for "calm."

The 14th party congress convened secretly on Aug. 22 in a Prague factory. It was both a symbol of resistance and a mechanism through which appeals for "normalization" were made. A proposal for a general strike was dropped in favor of calling a one-hour token stoppage for the next day.

In this way, and over a prolonged period, a solution acceptable to the Soviet bureaucracy was imposed. In April 1969, it was Dubcek himself who proposed that Gustav Husak replace him as first secretary of the party. The party was purged and reorganized, Dubcek expelled, and by the summer of 1970 relatively stable bureaucratic control had been restored.

### Can bureaucracy reform itself?

There have been those on the anti-Stalinist left—of whom Trotsky's biographer Isaac Deutscher is probably the best known—who have propounded the view that the Soviet Communist Party and other Stalinist parties could become transformed into parties that defend the interests of the working class.

According to this view, Stalinist ruling bureaucracies are capable of self-reform, initiating a transformative process leading to genuine socialist democracy. As we have seen, there is absolutely nothing in the Czechoslovakian experience of 1968-69 to back up such a contention.

The main lesson of the Czechoslovakian experience is the need for an independent working-class perspective and leadership, politically outside of and opposed to all wings of the ruling bureaucracy.

A leadership is needed which understands that the struggle must be developed to the point where the entire bureaucratic apparatus can be overthrown and replaced with genuine socialist democracy. ■

soviets not only in their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and Kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants, and Red Army men.

"Democratization of the soviets is impossible without legalization of soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties.

"A revision of the planned economy from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers! Factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organized consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products.

"Reorganization of the collective farms in accordance with the will and in the interests of workers there engaged!"

There is now talk in the Soviet Union of rehabilitating Leon Trotsky. The bureaucracy may finally acknowledge that Trotsky existed, but it will never rehabilitate the soviet form of 1917, which is the only true rehabilitation that can occur.

This will only occur when the soviet workers themselves remove the bureaucracy and gain control of the workers' state. ■

# Black S. African unionists debate strategy of alliances

On June 6-8, the biggest and most extensive strike in the history of South Africa took place. It was called in protest against the Labour Relations Amendment Bill and the increasing repression of the opposition movement. [See July 1988 issue of *Socialist Action*.]

One of the most significant features of the strike—and an important reason for its success—was the fact it was called jointly by the two rival trade-union federations: the 900,000-member Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the 400,000-strong National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU).

The COSATU leadership, which had not long ago accused NACTU of being a "scab union federation" led by "adventurists and racists," had come under increasing pressure from its own affiliated unions to carry out joint actions with NACTU against the apartheid regime.

[The COSATU leadership is politically close to the African National Congress (ANC), while the NACTU leadership is close to the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO).]

At a special congress of COSATU on May 15, 1988, for example, a sizable minority of delegates—in opposition to the leadership—supported a resolution presented jointly by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and the Chemical Workers International Union (CWIU). This resolution called for unity in action with NACTU and for the formation of a "front of all the organizations based on the working class and the oppressed" that would formulate "a common action program to put an end to the capitalism of apartheid."

A week later, 10,000 members of the Commercial and Catering Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), the third largest union in COSATU, staged a noon rally in downtown Johannesburg in which they called for a united front between COSATU and NACTU to fight the labor bill. [The accompanying poster on this page was carried by each unionist.]

After the May 21-22 meeting of NACTU shop stewards sent a letter to the COSATU leadership calling for "a meeting to discuss a common action against the law," the stage was set for the June 1 meeting between NACTU and COSATU, from which the joint call was issued.

## Call for a "broad front"

Despite the step forward represented by the joint strike call, profound differences remain between the leaderships of the two labor federations over what is meant by a "united front."

At the special conference in mid-May, after a very heated debate, a majority of COSATU delegates decided to convene a "conference of a broad range of anti-apartheid organizations to focus on opposing apartheid repression."

The resolution instructs COSATU's central executive committee, together with its "traditional allies" (a reference to the

United Democratic Front, which was banned by the Feb. 24 government decree), to set up a planning committee to draw up a program of action and to invite organizations to attend the conference.

According to one delegate to the COSATU conference quoted in the July/September issue of the British magazine *Socialist Outlook*, this resolution would "allow COSATU together with its allies to draw up a program that will be consistent with its support of the Freedom Charter but with the authority to invite groups such as NACTU and the Five Freedoms Forum to participate." [The Five Freedoms Forum is a white liberal-capitalist organization.]

Other white capitalist groupings that are being asked to participate in the conference, according to the June 1, 1988, issue of *The Guardian* newsweekly, include the Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South

Africa (IDASA) and the National Democratic Movement.

According to the June 5, 1988, issue of the South African daily *The Star*, the ANC leadership has already held various meetings with leaders of these two white organizations to "discuss the possibility of boycotting the Oct. 26 municipal elections and collaborating in other longer-term projects."

## What kind of alliances?

Elijah Barayi, president of COSATU, in his speech to the federation's special conference, gave a good indication of the kind of program a wing of the COSATU leadership would like to see adopted by the anti-apartheid conference. Barayi stressed that the "broad anti-apartheid front" should be based on the principles of the Freedom Charter.

"We urge all those who are genuinely

interested in peace and security," Barayi said, "to consider a future in the terms we have formulated in the Freedom Charter." Barayi's position is a step backward from that of the African National Congress, which in early May issued a joint statement with NACTU which stated that the issue of the Freedom Charter should not be a stumbling block to unity. [See statement in July 1988 issue of *Socialist Action*.]

Barayi's position is consistent with a decision by the last regular COSATU congress calling to build "disciplined and permanent alliances with other progressive and democratic forces within the country." The term "democratic forces" is a code word for sectors that include components of the white liberal capitalist class.

There is, of course, nothing unprincipled about uniting *in action* with sectors of the capitalist class around specific democratic demands. But a program based on the Freedom Charter that is oriented to cementing "permanent alliances" with sectors of the capitalist class has nothing to do with a united front. It is a recipe for a popular front.

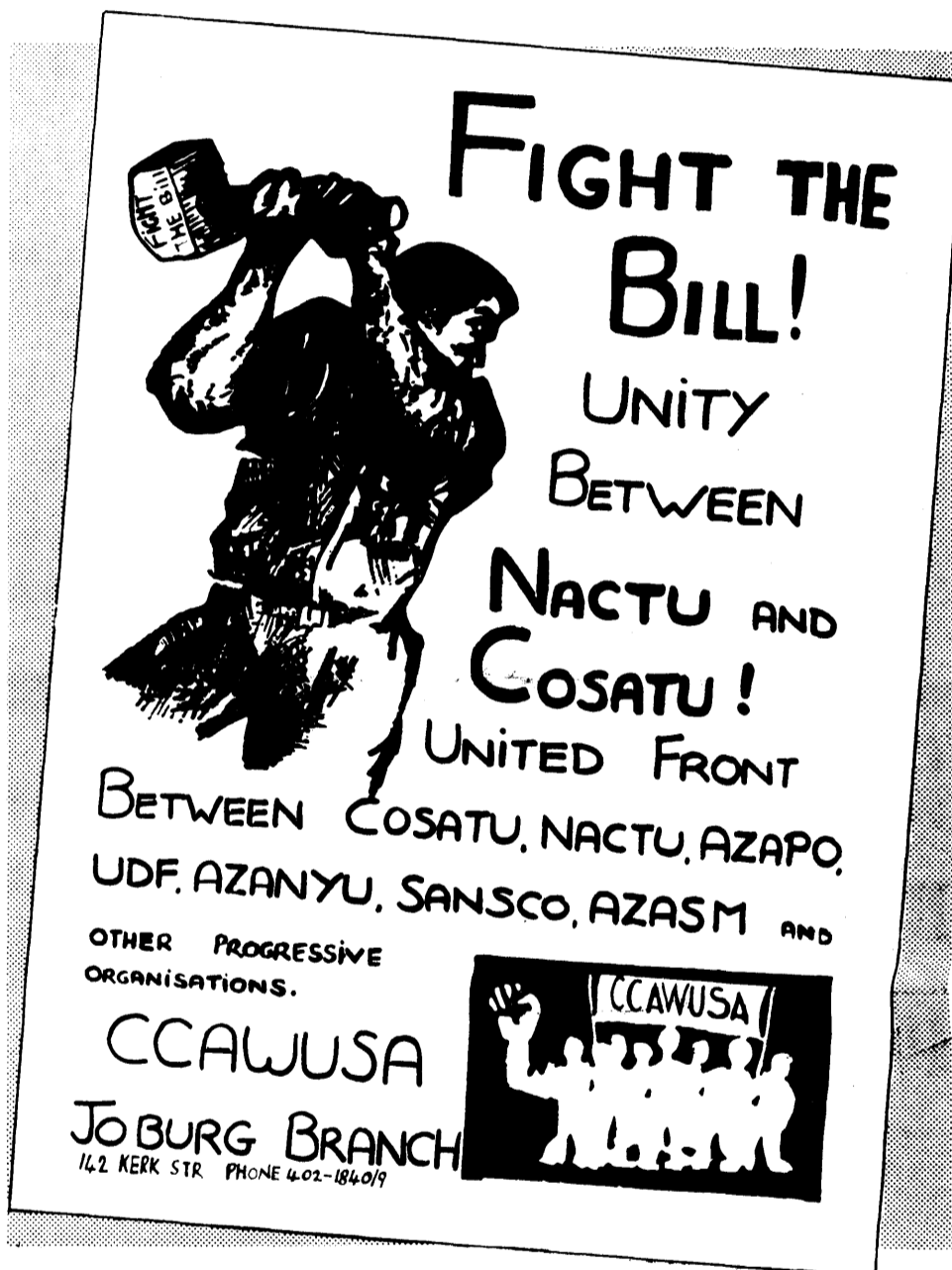
A popular front is a *programmatic*—not a temporary, limited, or action-oriented—alliance between the workers' movement and the liberal bourgeoisie. Because of its logic of class collaboration, it sets off a dynamic that restrains and derails the struggles of the workers and the oppressed. Such a front is explicitly based on the respect of capitalist property relations.

The leadership of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), the organization to which the bulk of the NACTU leadership looks for political guidance, has consistently opposed "popular fronts." It can therefore be expected that NACTU, too, will reject participating in a "broad front" that opposes apartheid but accepts capitalist exploitation.

For the moment, no date has been set for the anti-apartheid conference called by COSATU. But a heated debate within the Black working class is already under way concerning who should be invited to the conference and what program should be adopted.

The success of the June 6-8 general strike, the imposition by the rank and file of a united action, and the increasing resistance within COSATU itself to the imposition of the Freedom Charter are all indications that the anti-capitalist sentiment among the Black working class of South Africa is extremely deep. They are indications that there will no doubt be strong resistance within COSATU as well to the political orientation proposed by Elijah Barayi.

This sentiment bodes well for the future of the South African revolution. ■



## NACTU leader hails unity forged in general strike

The following are excerpts from an interview with a member of the executive committee of the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) of South Africa. It is reprinted from the June 1988 French-language socialist monthly *Tribune Internationale*.

**Question:** The three-day general strike in early June was the first time that the two labor federations of South Africa, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), jointly issued a call to strike. Could you tell us how this came about?

**Answer:** We consider that this protest action was historical and that it demonstrated the need for united action—i.e., for the unity of the working class to show its potential power. I should note that we had always dreamed of the day when we could

achieve unity in action among all trade-union federations. But, above all, we think that the workers in our country should be united under one single banner.

The COSATU took the decision to call the three-day "stay away" protest before NACTU had reached a similar decision. Nonetheless, NACTU considered that it was important to consult COSATU to see if it was possible to issue a joint call to unite the entire working class in this protest.

NACTU wrote a letter to all organizations—and to COSATU in particular—to invite them to sit down at the table and discuss calling a joint action. Fortunately, COSATU agreed to this meeting. The meeting was held, all the problems were discussed, and we reached the conclusion that on this particular action COSATU and NACTU could march

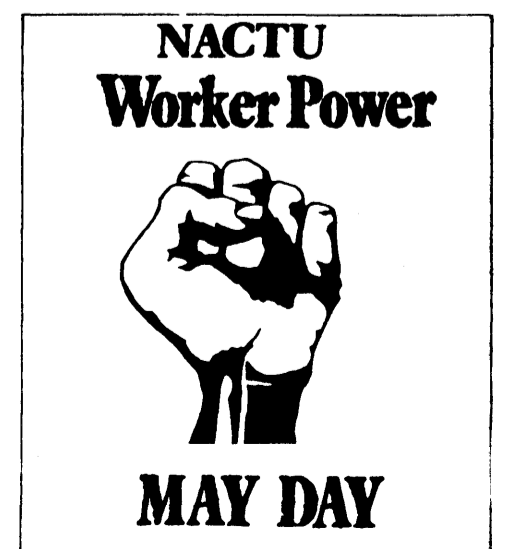
together. We hope this will be the beginning of future common activity.

**Question:** After this three-day strike, the apartheid government extended the state of emergency. At the same time it did this, however, it proposed to carry out negotiations with COSATU in relation to the Labor Relations Amendment Bill. It appears that the government may be ready to negotiate. [The COSATU leadership agreed to meet with the government to discuss amending the bill.] What is your position on these negotiations?

**Answer:** Our position is very clear. All the liberation forces in our country, including those that were recently banned by the government, have been opposed to negotiating with this government. This is our policy as well. We reject any platform decided by the government as a basis for negotiations.

We believe that as long as political prisoners—particularly trade unionists—are still in jail, the state of emergency is still in effect, and the ban on 17 liberation organizations is still in place, there is no basis for meeting or negotiating with government ministers.

We must keep in mind that during the "stay-away" protest, Manpower Minister Piet du Plessis repeatedly called on the bosses to fire striking workers. These declarations only encouraged the bosses to further attack the workers. This is why we believe that, at this stage, we cannot negotiate with the minister. ■



# Mexican candidates protest government election fraud



Presidential candidates (left to right): Rosario Ibarra, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and Carlos Salinas de Gortari

By RUDY ZAVALA

The July 6 elections in Mexico produced what many feared but most expected: a monumental fraud to ensure the "victory" of the ruling-party presidential candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

According to the official tally, produced over one week after the actual vote, Salinas de Gortari obtained 50.4 percent of the vote, while the two major challengers, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the National Democratic Front and Manuel Clouthier of the National Action Party (PAN), obtained 31.1 percent and 17.1 percent respectively.

Rosario Ibarra, candidate of the Popular Unity coalition and the only socialist candidate to challenge the three capitalist politicians, obtained 0.6 percent of the vote, according to the Federal Electoral Commission.

Ibarra used the ballot status of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) to field her candidacy. The PRT, the Mexican section of the Fourth International, actively supported her campaign.

Ibarra's official vote, due to widespread fraud, was significantly below the 1.5 percent required for political parties to maintain their ballot status and receive government funding. Unless reversed, this means the PRT will lose its legal ballot status.

Elections to Mexico's National Congress were also held on July 6. The official tally gives the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) 260 seats in the Congress, with the remaining 240 seats apportioned to the two opposition capitalist formations.

The PRT, which had elected six deputies in the last elections six years ago, appears not to have won any seats in the congress. At press time, three weeks after the elections, the government has still not announced the PRT's congressional vote.

## Cárdenas was the winner

The official votes, however, have little to do with the actual votes cast. Literally thousands of cases of fraud have been documented and published extensively in the opposition and international press.

It is widely accepted that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of the populist ex-president Lázaro Cárdenas, won the presidential election by a substantial margin. In fact, five days after the elections, some PRI officials in the Federal Electoral Commission publicly acknowledged that Cárdenas had won.

Likewise, the rate of participation, which on the evening of July 6 was supposed to be one of the highest in the history of the country, nearly 80 percent, fell to about 51 percent when the elections were announced.

The delay in publishing the official vote is commonly attributed to infighting in the inner circles of the PRI over what results to announce and how to announce them.

According to Sergio Rodriguez, a leader of the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), PRI government ministers, understanding that Cárdenas had won, offered Cárdenas five posts in the cabinet if Cárdenas agreed to accept the election of Salinas de Gortari. Cárdenas is said to have angrily rejected the offer.

Cárdenas has initiated a national campaign, the "journey for democracy and popular sovereignty," to denounce the fraudulent elections and to demand that the real returns be made public and respected. Based on the estimates of his poll-watchers throughout the country, Cárdenas claims he was robbed of some 3 million votes.

On July 16, close to half-a-million people gathered in the downtown Zócalo (main square) of Mexico City to hear Cárdenas, Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) leader Heberto Castillo, and Rosario Ibarra

protest the massive fraud.

In her speech to the rally, Ibarra described how the government had offered to give her more votes than she had won in two electoral districts in order to take votes away from Cárdenas. She also urged continued mass mobilizations against the illegitimate PRI government.

## "Commitment to democracy"

Ibarra's position on the elections was spelled out more fully at a press conference on July 9, where she stated:

"We consider Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas the president of our country. We take this position despite our ideological differences—in fact, because of our ideology, since we are firmly convinced that the only way to achieve socialism is through a clear commitment to democracy.

"And today in Mexico the fight for democracy involves precisely defending the

sovereignty of the voters. We think that those who voted for Cárdenas did so in the firm conviction that it was necessary to defeat the PRI.

"We share this view entirely, although we do not agree with the governmental alternative represented by Cárdenas. We say explicitly that if Cárdenas were president, we would be part of the intransigent opposition to him, outspokenly supporting a socialist alternative."

## Attack on PRT

The government's attack on the PRT was equally bold. According to PRT leader Sergio Rodriguez, the PRT is widely believed to have obtained close to 2 percent of the vote. This vote total is smaller than the PRT had hoped, a result of the groundswell of support for the populist Cárdenas, whose father had nationalized the oil industry and deepened the agrarian-reform program during his 1934-40 term of office.

"In the city of Hermosillo, just to give you one example of the fraud," Rodriguez told *Socialist Action*, "Rosario Ibarra only obtained 250 official votes. But we have over 500 members in this city. We know for a fact that at least 1500 people voted for Rosario in Hermosillo."

Rodriguez explained that the PRT has not been demoralized by the election results or the prospects of its losing its ballot status. "We have been out in the streets every day, leading the mass protests against the fraud," Rodriguez said. "We have put out over 1 million PRT flyers explaining our views. Our paper has appeared three times a week."

Rodriguez stated that the PRT is calling on the newly elected Congress to call for new elections. He also announced that Rosario Ibarra would soon be initiating a speaking tour throughout Mexico to expose the government's fraudulent elections. ■

*In the next issue of Socialist Action, we will be publishing an extensive interview with Rosario Ibarra on the meaning of the recent Mexican elections.*

## ... Palestine

(continued from page 16)

force, and mass arrests to coerce Palestinian merchants to adopt Israeli-determined schedules. Fisher continues:

"The army has admittedly given up its intensive effort as a lost cause. The new schedule (determined by the clandestine revolutionary leadership) of commercial activity is more or less permanent, certainly in the main centers of business, conceded a senior source in the occupation authority."

A further dimension of the *de-facto* institutionalization of the Palestinian revolution is that the population buys Palestinian manufactured goods only and is boycotting Israeli items. Once banned cassettes featuring songs of praise to the Intifada and "the revolution in all of Palestine" are ubiquitous. Dan Fisher reports that a barber told him, "I sell 50 of these tapes a day."

Bethlehem had once been earmarked as a fast-growing shopping center for Israelis from Jerusalem and surrounding Jewish suburbs. *The Jerusalem Post* only one year ago used to carry a special section highlighting Bethlehem stores and restaurants. "Today the sight of a car with a telltale yellow Israeli license plate is rare in Bethlehem," the *Post* article states.

## Successful tax boycott

Economic life throughout the occupied territories "has ground down to a minimum." The tax boycott ordered by the underground revolutionary leadership has virtually eliminated Israeli control: "Tax collections are off by more than 50 percent,

said the senior civil administration source."

The "civil administration" is run entirely by army officers. Palestinians indicate that tax collections have virtually ended, wiping out the \$250 million annual budget. All West Bank "development projects" that is, projects run by the army, have had to be frozen. Draconian measures have been attempted by the military authorities to little avail.

The city of Tulkarm was placed under curfew for 25 days. Tax collectors went from door to door. The military confiscated hundreds of automobiles and personal possessions.

The "civil administration" source confessed to Fisher:

"This is now the main character of the Intifada—the striving to disconnect Palestinian society from all symbols of Israeli occupation. And the clearest symbol is the civil administration. If they succeed it means anarchy and the taking control through popular and other types of local committees. This is the final victory of the Intifada, and we have to prevent it."

Four months of closing of 800 schools have succeeded no better than the shutting of 1200 schools in the West Bank and Gaza in February. Over 20,000 detainees have not impeded the revolution or caused one leaflet to be missed by the underground revolutionary leadership.

All reports now concur in their view that the escalation of brute force by the Israeli authorities, with the thousands of detentions and disappearances, the gassing of the population, has not only failed to crush the rebellion but has fueled its generalization.

*In part two of this series, Ralph Schoenman will examine Israel's plans to attempt the expulsion of the Palestinian*

population under the cover of a new war, the pretext of which will be a missile threat from Syria and Saudi Arabia.

The new declaration by Bassam Abu Sharif on behalf of Yasir Arafat offering direct negotiations with Israel on terms akin to Camp David will also be examined along with the recent proposals by Zionist liberals such as Jerome Segal for a demilitarized dependent Palestinian state with a national anthem and flag acceptable to Israel. ■

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# Stage is set for more contra aid

Exactly one year after the Central American "peace plan" was signed in Esquipulas, Guatemala, the Reagan administration is once again asking Congress to approve increased aid to the Nicaraguan contras. At press time, most commentators expect that some form of "humanitarian" aid to the contras will be forthcoming.

While Nicaragua has been the only country in the region to abide by the terms of the plan drawn up by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, it has nonetheless come under vicious attack from the U.S. government and its junior partners in Central America for allegedly not moving quickly enough toward "democratization."

Oscar Arias, the supposed "peace dove," has been a central actor in this reactionary campaign. At every key juncture in the "peace process"—particularly during the weeks leading up to a vote on contra aid in the U.S. Congress—Arias has focussed his wrath on the Sandinista government, thereby providing the rationale for increased contra aid.

This time is no exception. At a meeting with top contra leader Alfredo Cesar in Costa Rica on July 24, Arias said: "Before it was the United States that was isolated. Now it is Nicaragua that is completely alone."

Echoing the demands of the U.S. government, Arias called on the Sandinistas to reopen all press outlets, grant amnesty for all ex-Somoza National Guardsmen, and hold "democratic" elections in which the contras could challenge the Sandinistas for political power.

Arias's remarks came one week after the Sandinistas expelled U.S. Ambassador Richard Melton, closed the right-wing newspaper *La Prensa*, jailed leaders of the CIA-financed internal opposition, and then proceeded to nationalize the country's largest private business, the San Antonio sugar mill.

The Sandinistas took these measures to counter the continuing U.S. destabilization drive against Nicaragua. The crackdown on the U.S. diplomatic corps and on the contras' internal front was in response to the launching of a public campaign, promoted by U.S. Ambassador Melton, for a "government of national salvation."

[The capitalist opposition forces in Nicaragua had previously called for 17 constitutional reforms aimed at providing them with unlimited space to mobilize against the revolution. The campaign for a "salvation government"—a call for an end to the Sandinista government—represents a new stage in their struggle to reverse the revolution.]

"What government in the world would accept this kind of behavior? None. There is a war here, and for the opposition to be calling for insurrection is unacceptable," a Sandinista party member said of the call for the "salvation government" in an interview

with *The Christian Science Monitor*. (July 13, 1988)

"We are supposed to accept it to placate the [U.S.] Congress as it votes on contra aid," the Sandinista member continued. "But Congress is not the government here. We are a sovereign government."

The Reagan administration, in order to ensure bipartisan support for renewed contra aid, has also launched a major diplomatic campaign to "make Nicaragua respect the peace agreement." Its stated goal is to press the Nicaraguan government back to the negotiations table on terms demanded by the contras.

Talks between the contras and the Sandinistas broke down on June 9 after the contra negotiators, at the behest of the U.S. State Department, raised new last-minute demands designed to sabotage the talks.

The Sandinista government had agreed to widespread political concessions—something Sandinista leaders said they would never do—but the contras and their U.S. patrons wanted more. Specifically, they wanted an immediate implementation of their "democratization" program, not the gradual implementation proposed by the Sandinistas.

Secretary of State George Shultz is now slated to meet on Aug. 1 with the foreign ministers of four Central American nations. On Aug. 9, he will meet with the presidents of these countries. Shultz hopes to line up the regional heads of state to condemn the Nicaraguan government for allegedly blocking a peaceful settlement in the region.

"All this may well breathe new life into the peace process," contra leader Alfredo

Cesar said of Shultz's diplomatic flurry. "Talks could easily resume during August."

Cesar went on to explain what the contra directorate would be demanding at the next round of talks, should they be resumed. He said:

"We are going to be insisting that the Sandinista army be separated from the party and become a national army; that the supreme court and electoral tribunal become independent, that there be unlimited freedom of expression, and that there be a real mixed economy, with guarantees for the private sector." (*New York Times*, July 25)

Cesar's intention is to reverse the gains of the Nicaraguan Revolution and to pave the way for a capitalist "normalization" of that country. For that purpose, the contras and their U.S. mentors must keep up a credible military threat. And that cannot occur without stepped-up aid from the U.S. Congress.

The war in Nicaragua is not over. Here in the United States, we must mobilize in the streets to protest contra aid and the U.S. war drive in Nicaragua. That is the most effective contribution we can make to the defense of the Nicaraguan Revolution. ■

## Christic suit will continue

By JEFF MACKLER

On June 23, 1988, a federal district court decided to dismiss the Christic Institute's long-running lawsuit against a "secret team" of professional terrorists working for the U.S. government.

The lawsuit, filed by Christic Institute chief counsel Daniel Sheehan, sought \$17 million in damages stemming from a CIA-instigated 1984 bombing in La Penca, Costa Rica. The bombing severely injured journalist Tony Avirgan (a plaintiff in the suit) and killed eight others.

Federal Judge James King ruled, just four days before the trial date, that the case "lacked sufficient evidence." The ruling was characterized by the Christic Institute as "an outrageous claim, since the judge himself threw out key evidence without a hearing."

For example, evidence exists to prove that John Hull, a large landowner in Costa Rica, is a CIA agent running a drug/arms depot for the contras. Yet, according to attorneys for the institute, Judge King "failed to cite key witnesses like John Hull for contempt" when they walked out of their depositions.

Top government officials feel threatened by the suit, which has the potential to expose the whole intricate network of ruling class-sponsored terrorism. The cover-up actually began in 1987, as part of a bipartisan decision to limit the Iran/Contragate hearings to an exposure of underlings like Oliver North.

But the glaring inconsistencies and omissions of the Contragate hearings were re-raised by the Christic lawsuit. It was necessary to quash the case, especially since the trial was due to take place at the same time that the national election campaign reached a crescendo.

Recent investigations lead directly to the doorstep of Vice President George Bush. In May, sworn testimony was submitted implicating former Deputy CIA Director Theodore Shackley in political assassinations and other crimes, which were carried out when he was employed by then-CIA Director Bush in 1976.

"In the last two months," the Christic Institute asserts, "our investigation exposed a direct link between the vice president's office, three of the defendants, and an illegal arms supermarket in Honduras funded by drug money."

The Christic Institute will seek to reverse Judge King's ruling before the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. In the meantime, the institute is asking supporters to continue fundraising efforts, publicizing the facts of the lawsuit, and protesting the U.S. government's cover-up.

For more information, write the Christic Institute, 1324 North Capitol Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20002. ■



Larry Boyd/Impact Visuals

## Nicaragua's largest sugar mill nationalized

On July 13, the Sandinista government sent an important signal to Nicaragua's still-powerful agro-export capitalists when it decided to nationalize the San Antonio sugar mill, the country's largest private business. To quote Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, owners of businesses who sabotage economic production "don't have a place here in the mixed economy."

This bold decision represents an important step forward for the Nicaraguan Revolution. The San Antonio mill, and its tens of thousands of acres of land, is not just any business. For the past nine years, it has been "the symbol of the private sector in Nicaragua." During the peak of the harvest season, it employs over 5000 workers.

Ramiro Gurdian, the newly appointed head of the Democratic Coordinating Committee, the main anti-Sandinista coalition, put it this way: "Today they are sending a message to every private business, and that message is that if they can seize San Antonio, they can seize anything."

After refusing for over six years to

heed the demands of the San Antonio workers, who repeatedly called for nationalization of the mill, the government decided to act. It did, however, offer to pay compensation to the mill's owners—a proposal many of the workers have strongly opposed.

Jaime Wheelock, minister of agriculture, said the owners had allowed the complex to deteriorate and production to fall because of a lack of investment. Leaders of the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) said the Pellas family, the former owners, stopped investing in the complex after the 1979 revolution.

The sugar complex was totally bankrupt when the government finally took it over. Its sugar production had fallen to just over one-third of its 150,000-ton capacity. Its farm machinery and industrial plant had been totally neglected.

The decapitalization by the Pellas family of the San Antonio mill is typical of the behavior of the other large agricultural capitalists. Living under a revolution that has mobilized the workers and the peasants simply "does not offer a climate conducive to

investment," these capitalists explain. Their goal is to restore such a "climate"—i.e., to overthrow the Sandinista government and drive back the revolution.

The problem confronting the revolution, however, is that this capitalist sector still owns and controls a majority of the country's export crops. At a time when the country's economy is reeling under the effects of the U.S.-contra war, maintaining a "mixed economy" that allows economic sabotage and decapitalization like that which occurred at San Antonio is a danger to the revolution.

This is precisely what more and more of Nicaragua's workers and peasants seem to be saying as well. At a recent "Face the People" assembly of rural workers in Matagalpa, speaker after speaker got up to demand the confiscation of lands that had been abandoned or underutilized by the large coffee growers.

The Sandinista government has heeded those workers at the San Antonio plant. There are many more whose voices need to be heard.—A.B.



Frederick Engels on the barricades in Elberfeld, Germany, in 1849

# Why socialism is the next step forward for humanity

By RALPH FORSYTH

Most of us have been inculcated with the idea that our thoughts and values are independent of our material and historical circumstances. We have grown up believing in some form of "free will."

Thus, people in our society tend to believe that social and historical events are caused by "great geniuses" (either benevolent or evil). For example, many people believe that Herbert Hoover caused the Depression in 1929 and Adolph Hitler caused the Second World War.

Alternatively, some people will argue a determinist position, that our greedy "human nature" will always result in social conflict no matter what system we live under.

The materialist conception of history disagrees with both these views in that it attributes much of the content and form of our behavior and thinking—both as individuals and groups—to the prevailing forms of the means of production and distribution.

This theory was put forth by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels during the last century. In "Socialism Utopian and Scientific," Engels summarized the theory and its ramifications. He wrote:

"The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent on what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged.

"From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch."

## Development over the centuries

The evidence for this theory is based on correlations between the historical evolution of systems of production and distribution of products and the economic, political, legal and social forms of each epoch in society.

Over the centuries, human beings have developed their use of tools and their economic production skills to create ever higher standards of living. History has

documented this progress from the early primitive cave dwellers to today's sophisticated production society.

The rate of this progress has been quite uneven, surging madly forward at times and sometimes regressing—as during the Dark Ages and periods of great wars and natural disasters. Progress has also been remarkably diverse in different parts of the world; technologically primitive cultures coexist, even today, with the automated factories in industrial areas.

## The earliest societies

Evidence indicates that the earliest human economic activity was food gathering and, later, hunting and fishing with stone tools. The means of obtaining food, shelter and protection demanded cooperative behavior, a "primitive communism." Thus, there was a material basis for the common interest.

Gradually, in each society, more efficient tools were developed. The significant invention of agriculture and, finally, field cultivation and livestock accumulation revolutionized the existing economic and social relationships.

For the first time, a relative abundance of food could be produced with only a part of the tribal clan working. The improved material conditions (newer and easier ways to satisfy human needs) which allowed agricultural surplus required the consolidation of small plots of arable land and the need for specialized field labor.

Rather than being killed, captives from neighboring groups were needed to work in the fields. Thus, the first class division appeared when the producers (the slaves) no longer owned the products of their labor. A dramatic restructuring of life from a nomadic existence to land-based settlements occurred, the first signs of private property.

The rate and ferocity of the exploitation of the slaves ultimately resulted in the escalation of this class struggle to the point of mass slave revolts and the reluctance of slaves (and freemen) to fight for their masters.

Despite impressive economic development for the time, the chattel slave economic system was unable to sustain further economic growth, and the system collapsed. The resulting chaos (the Dark Ages) caused a long period of economic decline and the return of barbarian tribal warfare, which impeded any significant economic development until the Middle Ages.

## Rise of feudalism

Coincident with the decline of slavery

and the resulting scarcity of slave labor, most of the mines and farms failed. Owners began leasing land to former slaves and destitute freemen demanding a share of their produce and their labor for the use of the land.

Seeking security from marauding raiders, the owners established their own defense forces from their work force, the serfs. This new system gradually developed (in various forms and very different rates in different parts of the world) into the system of feudalism.

In the "Evolution of Property" Paul LaFarge succinctly described feudalism: "The system in its essence, is a compact of reciprocal services; the feudal lord only holds his land and possesses a claim on the labor and harvests of his tenants and vassals on condition of doing suit and service to his superiors and lending aid to his dependents.

"On accepting the oath of fealty and homage, the lord engaged to protect his vassal against all and sundry by all the means of his command; in return for which support the vassal was bound to render military and personal service and make certain payments to his lord. The latter, in his turn, for the sake of protection, commended himself to a more puissant feudal lord, who himself stood in the relation of vassalage to a suzerain, to the king or emperor."

The social, political, and legal aspects of feudal society were remarkably different from those of the previous epoch. Organized religion was transformed to insist on a sense of duty by the serf or tenant to

his lord and to justify the "god-approved" system of economic slavery.

## The growth of trade

The methods of production under feudalism kept improving slowly over periods of several centuries. New ships and improved methods of navigation eventually allowed commercial exploration and trade for luxuries for the lords and the church. To pay for these imports, the lords intensified the exploitation of the serfs and developed mining and small manufacturing industries.

Soon refugees from serf revolts, along with dissatisfied craftsmen, established towns and cities outside the lord's influence. Trade began to grow between towns; peasants would trade surplus food for clothing or other commodities. Craftsmen were stimulated to make and sell a wider and improved variety of products.

But trade and communication were hindered by the semi-independent feudal kingdoms which demanded tariffs and passage fees. The new bourgeois class was carefully restricted from hiring labor by the guild system, which was essentially a monopoly of production for the benefit of a few skilled craftsmen.

The cultural and social norms of loyalty to the lords and church were being undermined for the needs of the new exploiters, the bourgeoisie, who viewed the nobility as parasitic and socially useless.

In Europe the revolutionary conflicts in the late 1840s signalled the completion of this change to a new capitalist society, which would bring its own new social relationships and systems of belief and thinking.

## Development of capitalism

Initially, under capitalism, the skilled craftsmen owned their own tools of production; but quickly it became apparent that assembly-line manufacturing with newly developed machines was much more efficient. In industrial countries, the working class grew from a small minority to an overwhelming majority.

Since the early 1900s, competition greatly increased between the capitalist classes of Europe, America, and Japan for trade markets, raw materials, and cheap labor. This has resulted in an almost continuous series of wars and economic rivalries.

Business production periodically stag-nates during periods of recession or depression because of overproduction of commodities which cannot be sold for profit. The system of capitalism is now—like during the latter period of feudalism—becoming more and more inefficient in terms of allowing economic growth and advancing the living standards of the majority of the people in the world.

A new worldwide system is on the agenda, one in which the means of production, now run socially, will be owned socially and products will be produced for use, rather than for exchange.

Marx and Engels formulated this theory more than a century ago; their writings indicated they felt capitalism was then on the verge of collapse. Although they underestimated the viability of the capitalist system, their analyses remain remarkably timely.

They stress that revolutionary changes will not appear automatically; they depend on an aroused, informed working class that is aware of its own self-interest and the organization needed to achieve it. ■

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# 'The Last Emperor:' Why Chinese gov't helped to make the movie

By MARTY DENZEL

"The Last Emperor" tells the story of Pu Yi, who at the age of three ascended the Dragon throne in Beijing's Forbidden City to become titular ruler of one-half the people on earth.

After the Chinese Revolution of 1949, Pu Yi spent 10 years in a prison for war criminals, undergoing a process of "reeducation." In 1959, he was pardoned and ended his days as an assistant in Beijing's botanical gardens.

The ostensibly radical subject of the film—an aristocrat who is reeducated to become a worker, achieving personal freedom in the process—is virtually unprecedented for a film that garnered nine Academy awards and the praise of numerous critics in the West.

The film was promoted by capitalist corporations and banks eager to increase their connections to the Chinese market. Financing was arranged by independent English producer Jeremy Thomas, who put together a multinational banking consortium headed by the Hill-Samuel Bank in London.

Thomas stated that the bankers "were attracted not only by the project, which they found interesting in itself, but also by a project that would give them contacts and links in China." (*Variety*, Jan. 28, 1987, my emphasis)

While such an enterprise should not be condemned in principle, we would hope that the Chinese government would make the distinction between capitalist techniques used in service of the workers' movement and those which might be used to reshape the economy as a whole.

However, as with growing numbers of other joint ventures between capitalist states and workers' states, there is no sign that such a distinction is being made. For example, there appears to have been no demand for good wages for the Chinese film-production workers and more than 19,000 actors, including 1000 soldiers from the People's Liberation Army.

## Mao—the new emperor?

The China Film Coproduction Company, operating within the Ministry of Culture, agreed to allow Bertolucci to make the film in China (the first Western feature film made there since 1949). Studio facilities and an unlimited supply of extras were offered in return for Chinese distribution and the right to approve the script.

"Nothing in the script was challenged by the Chinese," said Bertolucci, "except for a few details of fact." The film is consistent with a new point of view within government circles in which portions of their history have been reevaluated to aid in the push for market reforms.

For example, the film ends in 1967 with Pu Yi coming upon a group of Red Guard youths carrying posters of Mao and parading several prisoners wearing duncecaps. Among the latter is the prison warden who reeducated Pu Yi and whom Pu Yi had come to respect.

After the warden refuses a youth's instruction to "confess" to his "crimes," he is ordered to "kow tow to Chairman Mao." This sequence is a direct parallel to an opening sequence in which subjects of the Ching court were commanded to kow tow to the emperor. Bertolucci thus, with the full approval of the Chinese government, equates Mao metaphorically with an emperor.

## "A number of millionaires"

China's vice minister of culture, Ying Ruocheng, played the part of the prison warden. Ying (who has acted

in other productions from the West) has embarked on a series of broad reforms of the performing arts, including the encouragement of performing-arts companies to seek private support.

According to Ying, "With reform in the economic fields, we now have quite a number of millionaires, and some of them are willing to sponsor certain artistic efforts" (*New York Times*, Jan. 10, 1988). The social inequality resulting from China's economic reforms is thus sanctioned by a high-ranking official.

Since "The Last Emperor" was the first fiction film about modern China to be directed by a Westerner, it was important that a director be chosen who would encourage a sympathetic viewpoint toward current developments in

China. It is not surprising that the bureaucrats approved of Bertolucci, a longtime supporter of the Italian Communist Party.

Bertolucci has stated that the film's story about the change the emperor undergoes "for some reason coincides completely with China today. China is changing, a big mutation is in progress....The movie is somehow in sync with that." (*Sight and Sound*, Winter 1986/7)

It is clear from his comments that Bertolucci does not understand the basis for the new changes promoted by the Stalinist bureaucracy nor what this change will mean for the Chinese masses—not just for the intellectuals and artists.

We as socialists also want to see change in the form of greater openness in China, but we want that openness to include the workers and the general population who are prevented from making any decisions that affect government policy. Measures that yield a greater conciliation with Western capitalism can only result in further erosions of the gains made in the Chinese revolution. ■

## Black play satirizes effects of racism and stereotypes



A dance skit with J. Allen Taylor and Velina Brown

By MILLIE GONZALEZ

"Somebody has chopped up pieces of my pain and put it on display against white walls and the wrong kind of light, so that when I go searching for my reflection, the scattered images make me feel incomplete."—George Wolfe

In association with the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, George Wolfe's "The Colored Museum" recently played at the Eureka Theatre in San Francisco.

The play takes a satirical look at stereotypes within

American Black culture. It relates how racism controls a race of people by attacking their definition of what it means to be Black.

Against a backdrop of a "living museum," a series of comical skits are performed. While poking fun at stereotypes, the scenes also focus on the struggle to reclaim a sense of Black pride as a people.

In one of the skits, "The Photo Session," we are made aware of the high cost of selling one's blackness as a commodity in the advertising world. A glossy facade of happiness and "perfection" obscures the reality of selling out. "No contradictions, no pain—no gain," the characters say.

"The Hairpiece" touches upon stereotypes of beauty within the Black community. In this clever skit, two wigs (the "Natural" vs. the "Barbie-doll" look), engage in a conversation with their owner, revealing how white standards of beauty have warped Black women's sense of dignity.

Racism in this instance has been inverted to inflict self-hatred. Says one wig to another, "She done fried, dechemicalized, and lost her hair. The bitch is bald!"

"The Last-Mama-on-the-Couch Play" is a mock melodrama about racism, performed in high soap-opera style. This skit pokes fun at a variety of stereotypes—from the Bible-thumping grandma, to the radical "sistuh" who stands in solidarity with her "sistuh" everywhere, to brother Walter—who denounces "The Man" for all his pains.

Walter dies, but rapidly comes back to life. As mama says, no one ever dies in an all-Black musical. "If we want to live, we gotta dance."

In the Eureka Theatre production, directed by Claude Purdy, the play's parade of skits were presented against a background of slide projections taken from magazine advertising, news photos, and everyday life.

Before coming to San Francisco, "The Colored Museum" was produced as part of the New York Shakespeare Festival, where performances were sold out for over a year. The production later moved to London.

This is not a play to dwell on. But if you'd like an evening's entertainment that is light and humorous but rich with social insight, catch this play if it comes to your area. ■

## Our readers speak out

### Won bet

Dear editor,

I'd like to order a subscription for a co-worker of mine who lost the enclosed money on a bet with me. Prior to the Democratic convention, when Bentsen was named as candidate for vice president, many people who had put their hope in Jackson thought that surely Jesse would repudiate the choice and the ticket.

We readers of *Socialist Action* knew better. We knew that Jackson's role is to attempt to lead the growing numbers of people disenchanted by the charade of a two-party system back into the voting booth on the side of the Democrats.

Less than a week after the Bentsen choice was announced, Jackson was backing the ticket and I was collecting my money. In consolation to my co-worker, I promised to use his money to buy him a subscription to a newspaper that might keep him from making silly bets like this in the future.

Perhaps socialists should place

more bets. If we had five bucks for every prediction that came true, especially where the Democrats are concerned, it could help to finance the movement!

Kathy Setian,  
San Francisco, Calif.

### Candidates

Dear editor,

I have enjoyed reading your progressive journal for the last two years. Up until this issue [July 1988] I heartily applauded the revolutionary Trotskyist-oriented stance that your publication took on domestic and international affairs.

Thus, I was astounded to read that *Socialist Action* has endorsed the Socialist Workers Party's candidates for president. It seems to me *Socialist Action* wants to have it both ways. You preach left-wing socialism, but you class-collaborate and endorse candidates of the right-wing communist SWP.

Why didn't you endorse your own candidate or at least remain neutral?

Your endorsement even admits that the founders of the SWP—such as [James P.] Cannon, not to mention [Farrell] Dobbs and [Leon] Trotsky—have been reduced to a place of secondary importance in the SWP today.

T.H.,  
Harrisburg, Penn.

### Donation

Dear editor,

I am enclosing a donation with this letter. We would like to see the funds used in building the Aug. 6 celebration of the Fourth International—although you may, of course, use the money if you have critical needs elsewhere.

The meeting on Aug. 6 will probably be the most important planned political event for the remainder of the year. At least *Socialist Action* and your co-thinkers around the world have not lost sight of the role of the working class, the revolutionary party, and the importance of building independent

mass movements.

There are no substitutes for any of these three elements—which will lead to the liberation of all humanity (as well as all other living things).

L.H.,  
San Francisco, Calif.

### France '68

Dear editor,

I would like to further receive your publications, which are important for the exchange of opinions between militants and forces from different continents.

From your material, I see as very important the analyzing of the current situation of the Nicaraguan Revolution—the will not to hide the difficulties and dangers. We have the duty to spell out the truth, and all the truth.

On the other hand, allow me to consider the article, "How workers almost made a revolution in France" [an article by Michael Schreiber in the June 1988 *Socialist Action*, which commemorated the 1968

French rebellion] as very superficial and poor on events, the consequences of which are shaking France until this very day.

These events include De Gaulle's resignation in 1969 and the overt political crisis of the French bonapartist regime during all the '70s, when it was saved only by the traitorous standing of the Stalinist [Communist] Party. The masses never forgave them. See the hasty decline of that party from more than 25 percent to less than 10 percent of the electorate!

The truth is that there is a contradiction between the headline and the content, which would be better put as, "How the students almost made a revolution in France."

The class ground was ready for a major confrontation [in the 1960s], and the student strike—which was itself nourished by the working-class struggle during more than two years—served in its turn as a detonator for the general strike of 10 million workers.

A reader,  
Ramat Aviv, Israel

# Palestinian casualties mount as mass uprising escalates

By RALPH SCHOENMAN

The Palestinian uprising has escalated to new heights. Despite efforts by both the Israelis and the United States to black out news of the both Palestinian resistance and Israeli repression, the scale of struggle has intensified to the point where the media have been forced to acknowledge it.

Dan Fisher, for example, reported in the *The Los Angeles Times* (July 22, 1988):

"An upsurge in the uprising, or *Intifada*, has returned the pace of fatalities to the peak levels of last April. Thursday's three victims brought to 17 the number of Arabs killed in the last two weeks. Eighteen have died so far this month, up from 14 in June."

Official figures now average a death a day. Palestinian mobilizations are continuous as the repression encompasses the very young. A nine-year-old was shot dead one day, a 15-year-old the next. General strikes have become the norm.

A general strike paralyzed the West Bank and Gaza as workers stayed home throughout the post-1967 occupied territories. Israelis responded by shutting down six West Bank schools for the rest of the school year and threatening to close the remainder.

## Spreading the struggle

The savagery of Israeli repression has not merely deepened Palestinian anger but spread the struggle. In Nablus, huge crowds filled the streets as troops opened fire at point-blank range. A 17-year-old was shot dead.

Palestinian youths throughout the West Bank erected barricades. In Anapta, troops opened fire on students who had massed after classes, killing a 16-year-old, who was shot three times in the chest from a few feet distance.

One-hundred-fourteen major clashes with soldiers and large actions in 62 towns, refugee camps, and villages throughout the West Bank and Gaza were documented between July 4 and July 9 by *Facts*—the English-language underground Palestinian newsletter published weekly.

By July 24, *The Los Angeles Times* reported that "Jerusalem is now focus of uprising. Israeli officials expressed growing concern that Jerusalem is becoming the center of the seven-and-a-half-month-old Palestinian rebellion."

Ephraim Sneh, former head of Israel's military administration in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, told Israeli radio, "The center of the conflict is now in Jerusalem."

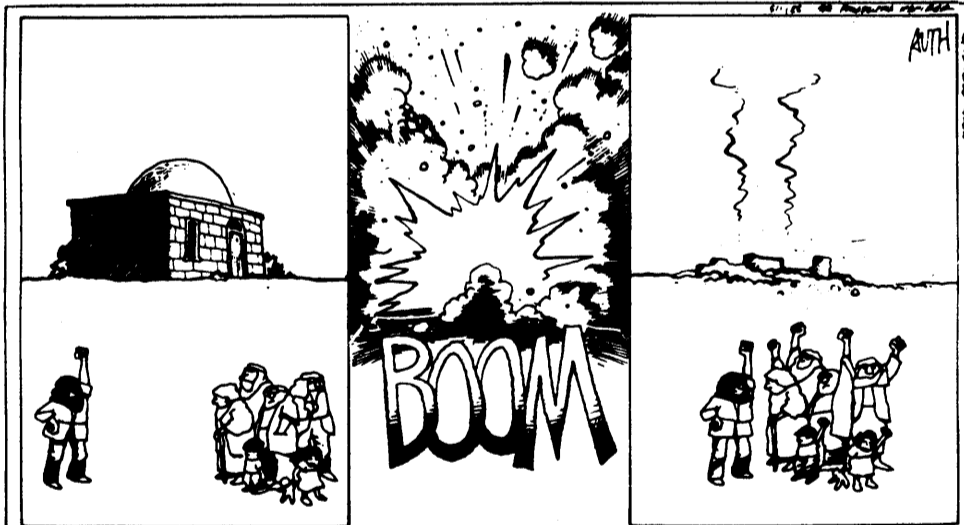
Soldiers in the Christian quarter of the walled Old City fired tear gas throughout the area, sparing neither residents nor shoppers as hundreds of frightened shoppers panicked and fled along the narrow, cobblestone alleyways. Some 17,000 Palestinians had been expected for the Muslim holidays but were turned back at Israeli roadblocks. Curfews enforced by orders to shoot on sight were imposed on 270,000 Palestinians in their homes.

## Gas and torture

Yitzhak Shamir announced through Minister of Construction and Housing David Levy plans for "two thousand new homes for Israelis in the West Bank settlements of Avner Hafetz, Betar, and Netah. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin issued a directive authorizing civilians "to shoot on sight any Palestinian holding a firebomb," while Amnesty International "urged Israel" to investigate the deaths from gas of "at least 40 men, women and children."

Such measures have included torture. *Sada al Watan* reported (July 2-8):

"Israeli occupation forces have been



"By its very nature, the deterrent effect must impinge on those surrounding the terrorist, particularly those members of his family living with him."

— Israeli High Court of Justice

using hypodermic intravenous injections during interrogation of Palestinian youths. Palestinian doctors and witnesses reported puncture marks and openly discussed the danger that the injections may have long-term effects, such as sterilization or the contraction of AIDS."

*The Jerusalem Post* reported that soldiers carrying a black case in Al-Am'ari refugee camp refused to disclose its contents. Eighteen-year-old As'ad Rawhi Sayeed Shafah was beaten unconscious by soldiers and given an injection before his sister, Aisha, an eyewitness.

After his family's house was blown up, *Time* magazine reported on July 18, Nizar Dakdouk, age 18, agreed to discuss the incident with a film crew claiming to be from ABC News. The crew turned out to be from Shin Bet, the secret police who imprisoned the youth. Israeli police seek to prevent Palestinian youths from speaking to the press.

Writing in *The Los Angeles Times* (July

24, 1988), Richard B. Straus, editor of *Middle East Policy Survey*, disclosed a concerted effort to remove "the world spotlight" from the generalized uprising of the Palestinian people:

"The international spotlight is off. The hundreds of special foreign correspondents have gone home. Even U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz has folded his peacemaking tent. ... Israelis were relieved to find their problems with the Palestinian uprising, or *Intifada*, no longer on page one, and especially off evening newscasts."

Straus also describes Israeli "officials" working with the U.S. government to remove awareness of the uprising from public consciousness.

## Extension inside Green Line

What also emerges from Straus's candid account is the depth of the radicalization and its extension to the Palestinian population inside the "Green Line" (pre-1967 Israel).

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir indicated for the first time that the Israeli regime was considering martial law in all of Israel.

No longer pretending that the uprisings could be crushed, Shamir declared: "The so-called *Intifada* will have to be dealt with in the same manner as the threats to our security over the past 40 years."

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and his Labor Alignment echo this assessment: "The more moderate Labor Alignment leaders, such as Foreign Minister Peres, take every opportunity to emphasize their commitment to law and order—supporting deportation and destruction of houses." (*Los Angeles Times*, July 24)

Each day a drumbeat of promised repression has been sounded anew. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin was cited by the Associated Press as promising that "the solution is to meet violence with crushing violence." He warned "that the uprising was not aimed at ending Israel's 21-year occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip but at endangering Israel's future, its security." (AP, July 17, 1988)

Mahdi Abdul-Haj, who directs a Palestinian research institute in East Jerusalem, told Richard B. Straus that the Palestinians have "undergone a radical transformation," adding: "The element of fear is dead in the Palestinian community and we are transferring that fear to Israeli society."

Abdul-Haj continued, "Even more ominous is the spread of fear inside pre-1967 borders on the Israeli side of the Green Line. Recent events have stunned Israelis."

Straus describes the consternation of official Israeli "analysts" who admitted to him that a revolutionary sensibility has become generalized among "Israeli-Arabs" who look upon the Israeli state itself as the object of their struggle.

"What is happening here," Straus cites his high Israeli contacts as saying, "is the 'untold story'—these Arabs are in our belly."

## Engulfing "Israel proper"

*The Los Angeles Times* disclosed on July 16 that the *Intifada* had indeed engulfed "Israeli proper." The article stated:

"Releasing new figures on incidents of unrest inside Israel proper, police commissioner David Krauss said Arab nationalists were responsible for 114 out of 210 forest and pasture fires. Krauss said more than 1000 protests have broken out inside Israel in the last three months."

There were 730 demonstrations in Jerusalem alone and 51 firebomb attacks. Nine hundred arrests of "Israeli-Arabs" occurred with 55 charges of arson.

Dan Fisher's account in *The Los Angeles Times* (July 19) describes how the revolution has now spread inside the Green Line. He also documents the effect on life in the West Bank and Gaza. His story heading reads, "Leaflets dictate pulse of life in occupied territories: Arab uprising is now the routine."

Diplomats from the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem told Fisher they were having trouble pinning down their schedules. "We realized that the reason that we could not plan our week was because we did not have the latest leaflet issued by the Unified National Leadership for the Uprising in the occupied territories."

Matti Steinberg, a Palestinian "expert" at Hebrew University, said, "The *Intifada* has been transformed into routine. It is now the way of life."

"The clearest example of how protest has been institutionalized is the shortened three-hour workday of most businesses in towns throughout the occupied areas," Fisher writes.

The Israeli authorities have tried threats,

(continued on page 12)