

# March for choice in D.C. on April 5!

Women's rights are under attack. Their very lives are in danger once again. As a result of state and federal legislation, some 44 million women in this country have already had their right to abortion severely restricted.

Now, the Supreme Court is poised to rule on a case from Pennsylvania that could gut or even overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion.

But supporters of women's choice are fighting back. The National Organization for Women (NOW) is sponsoring a giant March for Women's Lives on Saturday, April 5, in Washington, D.C. The Court

## Women fight back around the world

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and the politicians will be put on notice that women will accept nothing less than safe, legal, and accessible abortion and birth control.

In a message sent out to thousands of women's rights supporters around the country, NOW President Patricia Ireland pointed out: "The March for Women's Lives is an opportunity to increase the size and visibility of this struggle. We can mobilize the anger and frustration felt by women and men across the country about the threat to abortion rights and the continued denial of equal rights.

"And we can mobilize it in such a massive show of strength and determination that our demands cannot be denied. We won't go back! We will fight back!"

Over 150 organizations have endorsed April 5. Students on over 300 campuses are mobilizing for the march.

Participants in the march are urged to wear white clothing in the tradition of the women's suffrage movement at the beginning of the century. Delegations will carry purple, white, and gold banners that are replicas of those carried by the Suffragists.

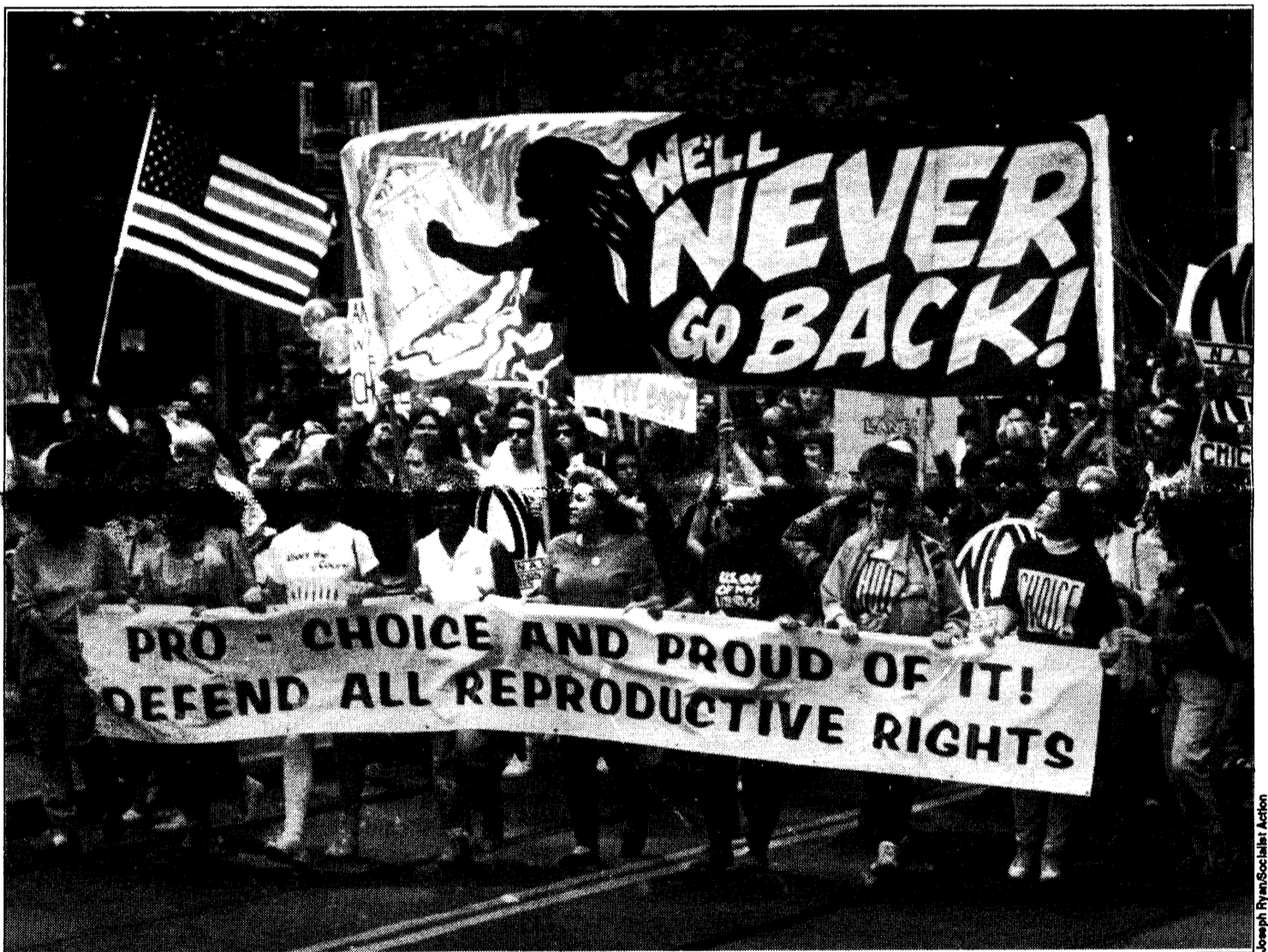
The marchers will assemble at 10 a.m. on the Ellipse in Washington. The march will then culminate in a mass rally.

NOW has set up a special hotline telephone number to organize support for April 5. For information, call the hotline at (202) 331-0066.

In the meantime, women's rights supporters on the West Coast expect tens of thousands to take part in a demonstration in San Francisco on Sunday, March 29. The event, sponsored by the San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition, is seen as a building action for April 5.

Busloads of demonstrators are expected to come from as far away as Utah for the S.F. march and rally.

All out for March 29 and April 5!  
Defend All Reproductive Rights! ■



## S. African 'whites only' referendum: A blow to Black freedom struggle

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

South African President D.W. De Klerk's announcement of a March 17 whites-only referendum hit the country with the force of a nuclear explosion.

Blacks feel they've been betrayed once again. The referendum is a flagrant violation of the principle of "one person, one vote." It gives the white minority population an effective veto over the process of writing a new democratic constitution.

The question before the voters reads: "Do you support continuation of the reform process which the state president began on Feb. 2, 1990, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiations?"

In effect, whites are being asked to approve CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa), the negotiating body in which the government, the African National Congress (ANC), and other Black groups participate. CODESA is scheduled to resume deliberations this month.

The referendum represents a gamble by De Klerk and his advisors that he can calm the fears of white voters—and thus, for the time being, stave off his right-wing critics. De Klerk wants to be given a free hand in order to snare the ANC and its allies into a power-sharing arrangement that would give whites strong guarantees.

The ANC, however, issued a statement condemning the referendum as an attempt to save white-minority rule. According to one ANC executive member, "This is an insult to Blacks and a warning to the world that the process of change is not irreversible." (*London Observer*, Feb. 23, 1992.)

Nevertheless, the Feb. 21 *Los Angeles Times* points out: "The ANC has acknowledged that De Klerk needs the unqualified support of his white constituents to be an effective negotiator and to keep the negotiating forum functioning as a decision-making body."

Other Black liberation forces, mean-

while—including militants inside the ANC—said that the white referendum proves it was a mistake for Blacks to participate in CODESA. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which has been steadily gaining strength in the Black townships, said that CODESA should be scrapped.

### Challenge from the right

De Klerk's call for the referendum came one day after his National Party was trounced in a district election by the pro-apartheid Conservative Party. The defeat took place in a rural district (De Klerk's boyhood home) that was once a stronghold for the "Nats."

The Conservatives charged that De Klerk no longer has a mandate from the white electorate to participate in negotiations with Black groups. Addressing himself to De Klerk, Conservative leader Treurnicht taunted: "You don't represent the white nation at CODESA. You can't speak on

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# "Democracy" versus human rights



## Fightback

By  
Sylvia Weinstein

In a 1983 referendum in Ireland, voters narrowly approved a constitutional amendment that made all terminations of pregnancy illegal, even those resulting from rape. Because of this so-called "exercise in democracy" a 14-year-old rape victim has been denied her human right to end a pregnancy imposed on her by force and violence. By law, she must give birth to a child after having been raped by her best friend's father. Ireland's second-highest court issued a permanent injunction preventing the 14-year-old girl from traveling to Britain where she could have a legal abortion.

In his ruling, Judge Declan Costello of the High Court of Ireland said that the girl had repeatedly threatened to commit suicide if she could not have the abortion, and he acknowledged that the case was a "tragedy which involves a great measure of human suffering." But the judge ruled that under the Irish constitution's ban on abortion he had no choice but to issue the court order barring the operation.

Between 4000 to 7000 women cross the Irish Sea every year to seek abortions in England and Wales, where they are legal. The judge's ruling would make criminals of them all, as well as anyone who assists them. Therefore it is important to know how this teenager's intentions came to the attention of Irish authorities.

It all started when her parents asked police whether they should retain tissue samples from the fetus—after the abortion—for use in criminal proceedings over the rape charge. The Irish forces of law and order said absolutely not! Thus the rape victim was put in a classic "Catch 22" trap: The court prevented her from having an abortion. Thus, a crucial element of proof for convicting the man who raped her was blocked by the same court's action. And if she carries the pregnancy to term, the crime against this 14-year-old girl is immeasurably worsened.

Apologists for such social injustice will argue: "But, the people of Ireland approved this law in a democratic referendum."

Leaving aside, for now, how "democratic" the electoral procedure in capitalist "democracies" like Ireland really is, putting basic human rights up for a vote is an outrageous social injustice.

We have such a case in South Africa today. There the white minority has been asked by the head of that government to vote on whether or not apartheid—the juridical denial of human rights to the Black majority—shall remain the law of the land. Any bets on the outcome of that election?

We also had such an infamous instance of "democracy" when slavery was instituted in this country and "democratically" upheld for over 80 years after the Declaration of Independence. That historic document declared that "all men are created equal." It failed to mention either Black people or women as having been created equal. We're still paying

for that one.

And after slavery was abolished, "Jim Crow" law—the American version of apartheid—was "democratically" upheld for nearly 100 years by the United States Supreme Court and both houses of Congress. And to this day, despite the Black movement's successful overthrow of "Jim Crow," *de facto* second class citizenship for Blacks still prevails.

But these instances of legal hypocrisy are only a drop in the bucket. American democracy is spotted by many other atrocities such as the branding of all American citizens of Japanese descent as dangerous to this country and then locking them up in concentration camps to be kept prisoner without trial during most of World War II.

And in another sphere of human rights just last year, the

"democratically elected" House of Representatives and President of the United States forced striking railroad workers back to work under a contract imposed on them—in flagrant violation of the Constitution which proscribes involuntary servitude.

Voting on human rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and the simple pursuit of happiness is a ruling class trick.

No one has a right to vote on my right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness—no matter how unhappy it makes them. And as long as the system of capitalist "democracy" compels me to yield my rights to someone else, my human rights are violated.

What is happening to that 14-year-old young woman in Ireland is now a threat to young women everywhere and to all who love and care for them.

Whether it is "democratically elected" politicians who make the laws, or whether it is "impartial" judges who will "interpret" them, we don't have to accept their assault on our rights. We still have the right, and the duty, to get out there into the streets, in great numbers, and just say, "NO! We will not tolerate your assault on our basic rights—not without a fight!"

All supporters of the right to choose must come out to march and protest in San Francisco on Sunday, March 29, and again in Washington D. C. on April 5, against the mounting attack on women's rights. LET'S MARCH IN SOLIDARITY WITH OUR YOUNG SISTER IN IRELAND!



# I'm okay, you're okay in the women's mov't



## ... and in this corner

By  
Joni Jacobs

Gloria Steinem has taken a lot of heat lately for her new book, "The Revolution Within."

Steinem has always considered herself to be a "radical" feminist because she wanted to get to the root cause of female oppression. She was far too radical to be more than tertiarily involved with the "reformists" (as she called them) of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Instead, Steinem gravitated to the National Womens Political Caucus (NWPC). Their strategy is to liberate women by putting a Democrat in the White House. Really radical stuff.

These days, Steinem says that the cutting edge of feminism involves the self-esteem of women.

Her theory is that because society doesn't value children, they grow up with all kinds of psychological hangups which they act out politically. She speculates that George Bush's aggressive foreign policy is a result of his being raised by a strict father who beat his children if they weren't

perfect. Ergo, Operation Desert Storm wasn't about securing American capitalism's domination of world markets—Bush was just working out his "issues" with his father.

Steinem says that the women's movement hasn't focused enough on making women feel good about themselves. In order for women to make political change, she says, we first have to change our attitudes about ourselves. What's necessary is for the women's movement to revive the consciousness raising circles of the 1970s so women can come together and discuss their oppression.

It's true that women need to develop the strength to reject all the crap society puts out about women—that we're not beautiful if our measurements aren't 36-24-36, that we need men to be happy, that we're not as smart as men, etc., etc., ad nauseum.

But proposing that raising women's self-esteem is the answer to sexism is sort of like blaming the victims. It substi-

tutes mysticism and pop psychology for a materialist approach to women's oppression. Instead of challenging oppression, just change your emotional response to it.

Surely women lack self-esteem. Who wouldn't when the Supreme Court is telling us we can't be trusted to make decisions about abortion without government interference? Who can exude self-confidence when she faces a one-in-four chance of being raped in her lifetime? How can a young woman grow up with self-esteem when schools still discriminate between boys and girls when they teach math and science?

I can understand why, at age 57, Steinem is pushing an individualistic solution to the systematic oppression of women. She's spent her whole adult life in a movement and has seen so little concrete change result. It's very depressing to see the pay gap between men and women actually widen after 25 years of feminism.

But Steinem's approach to politics has always been to elect the lesser of two evils among capitalist politicians. She's never relied on the power of a massive, autonomous, politically-independent movement of women. Instead, she's placed the fate of women's liberation in the hands of one politician after another who's either sold out women's rights or been ineffective in making change.

Steinem's rhetoric may be hitting a response among feminist activists who've been around

awhile, but I hope younger feminists will reject it for the pessimistic, liquidationist psychobabble that it is.

Recently, I was discussing Steinem's ideas with some activists at a clinic defense. An activist named Victoria had heard Steinem's lecture. While she agreed with much of what Steinem said, she was disturbed by the focus on consciousness-raising. "I'm not interested in a movement that sits around talking and doing nothing," she said. "I want to take action."

As we talked, we agreed that what really raised our self-esteem was defending the clinic. We knew that we were taking direct action to stop Operation Rescue—if only for a day—and it

made us feel really good about ourselves. Everytime Operation Rescue threatened to close down our clinic, we outnumbered them and scared them away to another jurisdiction where, unfortunately, the police looked more favorably on their campaign of antiwomen terrorism.

Defending the clinic teaches young activists that they can control their own destiny, that they—not politicians—can and will make social change. You can't get that kind of empowerment from a consciousness-raising circle.

When Steinem feels down about feminism, she should attend a clinic defense. She could learn a lot about self-esteem from activists like Victoria. ■

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# Haitians forcibly repatriated

By HAYDEN PERRY

By an 8 to 1 decision, issued Feb. 24, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that it is permissible for the U.S. Navy to intercept boats with Haitian refugees aboard on the high seas, seize the passengers, and deliver them to a brutal dictator who kills his opponents.

Fifteen thousand Haitians have fled for their lives since Sept. 30, when Lt. Gen. Raul Cedras ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically-elected President in Haiti's history. They had good reason to flee, as Ton Ton Macoute and Army death squads roamed the streets, shooting down as many as 1000 Aristide supporters.

Bush says that he "deplores" the military takeover and admits that some civilians have been shot, but claims that all but a few of the Haitian "boat people" would be in no danger if they returned.

The navy has already transported 3400 fearful refugees back to Port au Prince, where squads of soldiers fingerprint each returnee.

This ominous reception has already been followed by the persecution, torture and death of some returnees. Others have fled a second time to save their lives.

Lawyers for the Haitian refugees have given the Bush administration documentary evidence of these new atrocities, but they have been ignored.

The administration intends to press on with the forced repatriation of the 12,000 refugees still in U.S. custody at the Guan-



Haitian refugees face an unknown fate when they are returned to brutal dictatorship.

tanamo Navy Base in Cuba. They don't really care what happens after their cargo of desperate Haitians is unloaded.

The American people, however, are getting more and more disturbed as they see Bush, the self-styled "leader of the free world," rounding up Haitians as though they were runaway slaves, and returning them to their masters.

Protesters are holding meetings and rallies in cities from Boston and Miami to San Francisco. President Bush was picketed when he appeared at a fund-raiser event in San Francisco on Feb. 25.

On Feb. 1, Katherine Dunham, a famous Black choreographer, went on a hunger strike to protest against the brutal treatment of Haitian refugees. Speaking to

demonstrators outside her hospital window, she said, "This is the first time I've felt bad about being an American."

Now that there is no hope in court action, supporters of a free Haiti are campaigning to pass the Haitian Refugee Protection Act of 1991. This bill would halt the "deportation," in mid-ocean, of foreign nationals who are not even on American soil.

They also want the U.S. Attorney General to extend Temporary Protection Status to Haitians. This would give them sanctuary until it is safe for them to go home.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., and Port au Prince, intense negotiations are in progress. The Organization of American States (OAS), the Bush Administration,

and Aristide are maneuvering to come to a political settlement.

On Feb. 24, Aristide and the two Houses of the Haitian Parliament signed an agreement recognizing Aristide's right to his office. They also agreed that Rene Theodore, a leader of the Haitian Unified Communist Party, should be Prime Minister.

Despite his party affiliation, Theodore stands to the right of Aristide. He wants to continue to work with Gen. Cedras, while Aristide wants to put the general in jail. But the military wants an amnesty for all who participated in the coup.

Washington and the Haitian elite want a civilian government that would end the uncontrolled violence that is driving people to flee. The Ton Ton Macoute are gangsters operating with military sanction. No one is safe from robbery and extortion.

At the same time, the people of property fear the desperate urban and rural poor. Only Aristide commands their loyalty. But Aristide, too, must be controlled. He will not be given the power to purge the military. Hence, the current negotiations may collapse if Aristide insists on control of the military.

The military has power today. The U.S. embargo has been modified so they are not hurt badly by it. They will set the terms for Aristide's return, and that will not involve the generals giving up politics.

Until the Haitian poor can mobilize the political power to determine their own destiny, they must have escape routes when life becomes too dangerous.

The American people can help by repudiating the U.S. government's racist policy and welcoming persecuted Haitians, who need a sanctuary from a murderous dictatorship. ■

## 5000 march in NYC to support Haitian people



Jonathan Haidt/Socialist Action

By GERRY FIORI

NEW YORK—On Feb. 7, a rally was held in midtown Manhattan in solidarity with the people of Haiti. Called by the Haitian Resistance Movement, it drew a mostly Haitian crowd—estimated at 5000—to Times Square where they chanted and waved Haitian flags.

The main demands of the rally were the return to power of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the granting of political asylum to the thousands of refugees who have fled the murderous military dictatorship that overthrew him. Chants and slogans on signs carried by many of the militant marchers included "Democracy or Death!", "No Aristide, No Peace!" and "Who Do We Need? Aristide!"

The crowd was addressed in English and Creole (the language of most Haitians) by a large number of representatives of the Haitian and American Black communities.

The speakers echoed the demands of the crowd for Aristide's return to power and asylum for Haitian refugees, and called for a total embargo on Haiti until the military dictatorship is removed.

They also condemned the U.S. government for ordering the deportation of 12,000 refugees back to Haiti, where they face possible torture and death at the hands of government death squads. The attitude of Washington toward the Haitians was pointedly contrasted with its open border policy in 1980, when thousands of Cubans were allowed into the U.S.

After the initial rally, the demonstrators, singing and chanting, marched through midtown Manhattan, tying up rush-hour traffic. The marchers went in a circuitous route that passed by the *New York Times* building, the Dominican Republic Consulate, and the offices of the U.S. State Dept. at Rockefeller Center, before reaching the final destination—the United Nations.

In front of the *Times* building the crowd expressed their anger at the newspaper's editorial justification of the coup in Haiti and its highly distorted coverage of events there. A short rally was also held in front of the State Department offices. At the UN a final rally was held, with speakers calling for the continuance of "active resistance" until the demands of the Haitian people are met. ■

## March for Women's Lives on March 29 in San Francisco

### Defend All Reproductive Rights!

11 am – Assemble at Justin Hermann Plaza (foot of Market St.)

12 noon – March

1 pm – Rally at Civic Center Plaza

Sponsored by: San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition  
Call (415) 255-1989

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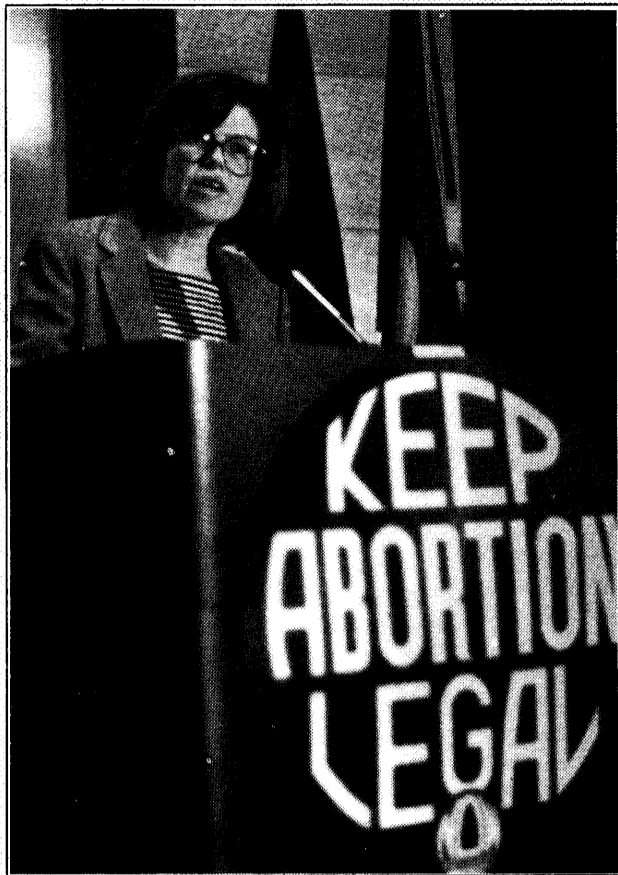
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# Trade unionist points way forward in fight for women's right to choose



Cynthia Burke speaking at Jan. 19 pro-choice rally in St. Paul, Minn.

By CYNTHIA BURKE

The following speech was given by Cynthia Burke at a Jan. 19 pro-choice rally in St. Paul, Minn. Burke is a member of Transportation Communication Union Lodge 1310, is a member of the Twin Cities chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and is a national committee member of Socialist Action.

On April 5 of this year, hundreds of thousands of women and men will converge upon Washington, D.C., to tell the Congress that gave us the "Gag Rule," and the Supreme Court that is chomping at the bit to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, and President Bush, who is giving aid and comfort to the gang violence of Operation Rescue, that pro-choice is the majority sentiment and that we will not be stopped. We will not go back. We will not be satisfied with anything less than safe, legal and accessible abortion rights for all women regardless of age or income.

We want an end to government interference with women's reproductive lives in whatever form it takes, including schemes to coerce low-income women to limit their family size.

The Democrats and Republicans are all for ending legal restrictions on big corporations—they call it deregulation. They've deregulated the railroad industry,

they've deregulated the airline industry; but when it comes to women's bodies—that's something else. On April 5 we will notify them that we are going to stay in the streets until we achieve deregulation that really benefits the public. We are fighting for the deregulation of women's bodies, to put the decision of when and whether to bear children into the hands of individual women—where it belongs.

We face an uphill battle. There are many similarities between the situation we face, as pro-choice women and men, to the situation faced by the civil rights movement of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. That movement faced then, as we do today, a hostile Supreme Court, a hostile Congress, a hostile White House—politicians, Democratic and Republican alike, who had built their careers on enforcing segregation and institutionalized racism in all its forms.

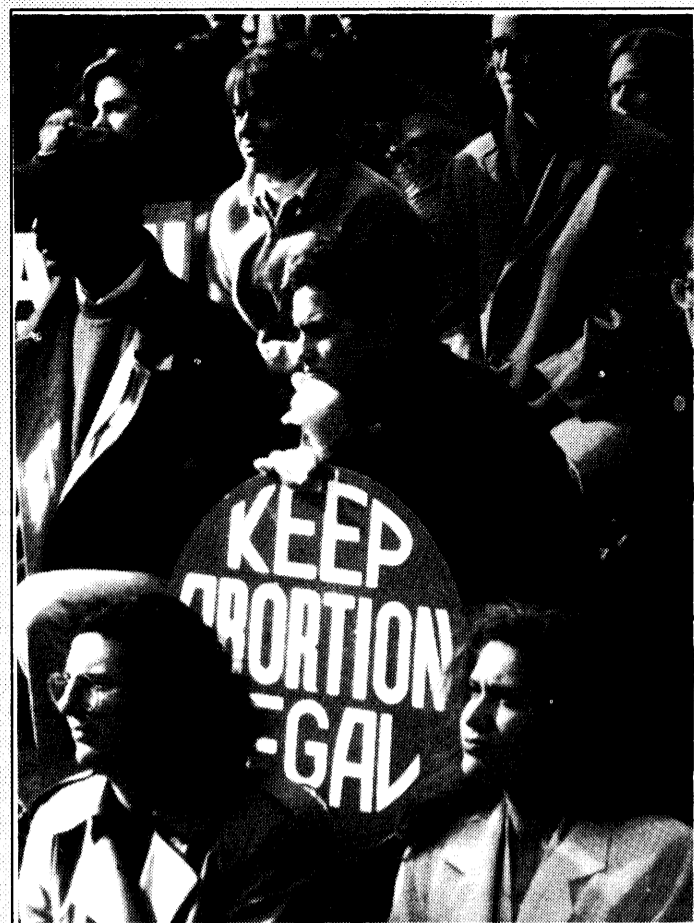
If leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks adopted the strategy of appealing to the politicians to end their evil ways, had those leaders confined their struggle to lobbying and precinct caucuses, had they given in to the strategy of compromise and staying within the accepted political process—there would have been no Civil Rights Act, there would have been no Voting Rights Act, and the important gains in formal, legal equality for African Americans would not have been achieved.

The Civil Rights movement fought power with power. Each successive attack on Black rights was answered with bigger and mightier mobilizations in the street. These actions let loose a social movement which the government could not contain no matter how it tried. Truthfully, we can go back and study every social protest movement from the abolitionists, to women's suffrage, to the labor movement, the Civil Rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement and find that every one of these movements registered their gains through mobilizing the population independently of the Democratic and Republican parties. This was done through strikes, demonstrations, picket lines and the kinds of actions which put irresistible pressure to bear and forced concessions from the governments and the courts.

The negative corollary to that is that when the labor movement, the Civil Rights movement and the women's movement leave the streets and go back to "politics as usual" out of the public eye, the opposition goes right to work on undoing what has been accomplished.

The ink hadn't even dried on *Roe v. Wade* before a women's right to choose abortion was limited by one new restriction after another: Only if she can pay for it and not if she's on Medicaid, not if she's a minor, only if she can prove rape or incest, not in federally-financed clinics, not in this or that state, and not without someone else's say so.

In 1989, after the *Webster* ruling, the National Organization for Women, which is sponsoring the April 5



Joseph Pyra/Socialist Action

march, organized two marches in Washington, D.C., and on the West Coast that brought out over a million people.

On April 5, the nation's Capitol will witness women and men of every walk of life, marching shoulder to shoulder for a common purpose.

There will be high school and college students who were born since 1973, joining hands with older people who know firsthand the horrors of illegal, butcher abortions.

There will be unionists marching behind their union banners, unemployed workers, religious activists, undocumented workers, Gulf War protesters and Gulf War veterans, anti-racist fighters, professionals, single parents, gays and lesbians.

There will be longtime political activists who have traveled to D.C. many times for this and other causes, sharing Constitution Avenue with people who have never marched for anything before in their lives.

But they'll march for this, they'll march on April 5. In the weeks between now and then, we have a big job to make sure that everyone in Minnesota and North and South Dakota who wants to can get to this historic national march.

Is it inevitable that abortion rights will be overturned? Are we doomed to go back to the alleys and kitchen tables? Don't you believe it.

Basing our movement on the strategy of every successful social protest movement of this century, that of uniting every sector of society in visible, mass protest independent of the Democratic and Republican parties, we can overtake and force into retreat the opponents of abortion rights from the White House, to the Congress, to the state legislatures and everywhere in between.

Let us join together in the fight to make abortion safe, legal and accessible.

Forward to the march on April 5 in D.C.!

Printed below is the speech by a representative of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT), the Mexican section of the Fourth International, at the Jan. 19 pro-choice rally in St. Paul, Minn.

Sisters and brothers:

We want to tell you that the children are so beautiful, that the children deserve everything, that our children some day will be our support and perhaps our governments. That's why before having children, we have to think: How many do we want, how many will we be able to clothe, to feed and to educate. That has to be our first question before having children who we didn't want, that we didn't expect and that we won't have anything to offer. Then those children wouldn't have any hope in this world.

Also we want to tell you that in Mexico, just to name one case, over 90 percent of the children bear extreme poverty, that infant mortality is as high as 40 percent, that their parents are 50 percent unemployed and the rest work for \$4.50 a day.

Obviously these children are not fed properly. And this case easily can be extended to the rest of the Third World countries. The anti-choice people will ask (we also have many in Mexico, unfortu-

## Weight of Catholic Church oppresses women in Mexico

nately) why don't women get birth control? Why do they risk their life aborting?

In Mexico, the lack of sexual education has been the result of first, the weight of the Roman Catholic Church—which is enormous, politically, socially, and cul-

turally. This church in general supports measures tending to maintain the current ruling system and thus has a very negative position in relation to women. For example, the Church—which opposes legal abortion, and even divorce or contra-

ception—also promotes a policy of a submissive role for women.

Second, the lack of democracy in Mexico: Mexican law allows abortion only in exceptional cases which medically have to be proved. Laws against legal abortion make illegal abortions a big business because an illegal abortion in Mexico costs an average of \$500 and, as they have to be clandestine, women risk their lives and their fertility in every abortion.

The church and the Mexican government work together like a hand and glove. The church needs more believers, and the government needs more cheap labor to offer to the "Free Trade Agreement."

You say, "Defend and Extend Abortion Rights!" We agree!

To defend abortion rights in the U.S. will mean extending the struggle for abortion rights on the whole American continent. It will mean extending the struggle for abortion rights in the Third World countries. Women from all over the world have the right to decide what to do with their bodies and with their lives. No woman needs any government regulating what to do or not to do with her uterus. We say, we don't want even one more child unwanted, unwished for.

Long life to the women's organizations!



# "Backlash"—compelling testimony on the erosion of women's rights

By JONI JACOBS

*"Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women," by Susan Faludi. Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1991.*

"In dispensing its spoils, women's liberation has given my generation high incomes, our own cigarette, the option of single parenthood, rape crisis centers, personal lines of credit, free love, and female gynecologists," wrote Mona Charen, a young law student, in an article called "The Feminist Mistake" published by *The National Review*.

"In return," Charen continues, "it has effectively robbed us of one thing upon which the happiness of most women rests—men."

According to a recent book by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Susan Faludi, Charen has succinctly enunciated the dilemma for women in the "post-feminist" era. If women have achieved equality, why are we so miserable? The answer proposed by Charen—and a host of others—is that women weren't meant to be equal. When feminism told us we were, it gave us false hopes that, when dashed, resulted in misery.

As Faludi documents in "Backlash," however, women's misery is not due to their attainment of equality, but to the prolonged denial of equality. Faludi asserts that the past decade has seen a powerful counterassault—a backlash—against a handful of feminist gains and victories. She calls this counterassault the "Big Lie" because it turns reality upside down and proclaims that women's liberation has led to women's downfall.

Backlashes are not new in American history. Several backlashes against women's improved status—or even the perception of improved status—have taken place since colonial times. Always, the backlashes begin before the gains of the feminist movement are significant enough to make structural changes. Always, the backlash's message is that the "unnatural" autonomy of women will lead to their psychological misery.

However, the rise of mass media and mass marketing in the last century has increased the effectiveness of the current backlash. Because the feminist movement of the 1970s made its most substantial progress in the areas of economic and reproductive freedom, the current backlash is eroding these areas of women's rights with the most force.

"Backlash" is a surprisingly easy book to read, both because of its structure and its cogent style. Faludi lays out her basic argument in the first chapter, and each subsequent chapter expands upon the evidence and effects of various aspects of the counterassault on feminism. Some of her most fascinating chapters discuss the role of women in the anti-feminist movement, the hatred of women in the fashion industry, and the "neocons" of anti-women pop psychology.

## Women in film

Because one way to measure the erosion of women's social status is to monitor how popular culture depicts women, Faludi spends an entire chapter on the changing images of women in film. What she finds is disturbing, although not surprising.

In the 1970s, Hollywood movies projected strong, independent, happy women who either escaped from the oppression of marriage or avoided it altogether. A few celebrated and popular movies of the time included "Julia," a tale of a fiercely independent and political woman; "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore," a story of a woman's rebirth; and "My Brilliant Career," an affirmation that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.

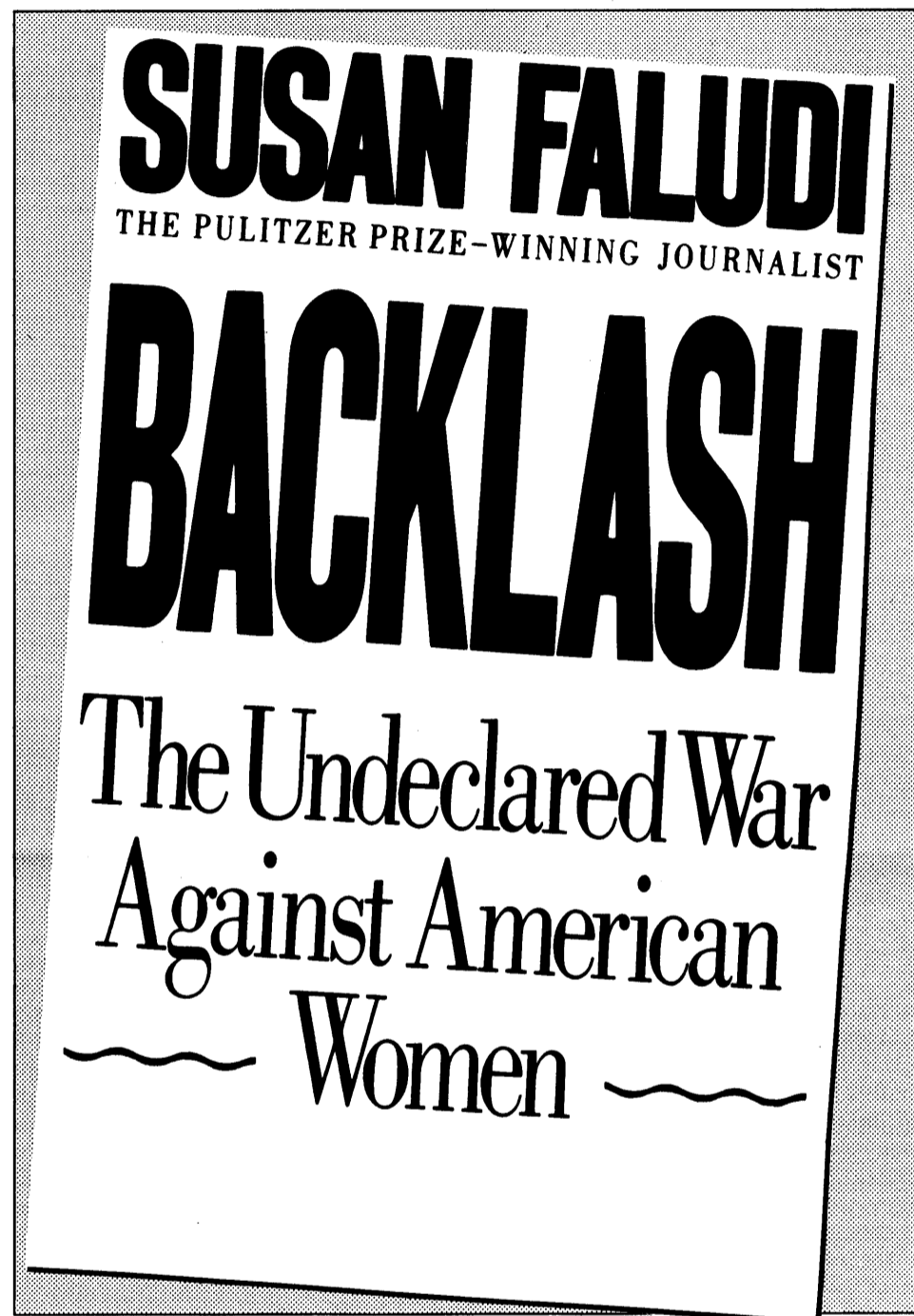
By painful contrast, Hollywood in the 1980s decided that women without men (and children) were sick, twisted, deformed, or dead. Even movies with admirable female characters—like "Tender Mercies," "Moonstruck," and "Terms of Endearment"—depicted them in decidedly domestic

situations with their triumphs coming solely from vanquishing threats to the homefront.

The quintessential backlash movie is "Fatal Attraction." This 1987 thriller centered on a woman so psychologically disfigured by her lack of husband and child that she sets out to destroy the idyllic domesticity of a man with whom she had a casual affair. Faludi reports that the ending to "Fatal Attraction" was actually rewritten because the director wasn't satisfied that the single-career gal committed suicide—she had to be killed to make sure his

protection policy that prevented women of child-bearing age from working on the production line. The policy was based on studies that showed exposure to the toxics on the production line would cause birth defects. Rather than cleaning up the workplace for both men and women, the company required women to be surgically sterilized—"neutered," as company pamphlets called it—in order to keep their jobs.

Five out of seven women working in one production department underwent the surgery—suffering depression, alienation, and further harassment from their male co-



message got out. In the end, it is the good, stay-at-home wife who lays the evil harri-dan to rest.

## Are women "taking over"?

If the silver screen was killing working women, real life was marginalizing them and then covering it up by claiming that women "had it all." Newspapers reported that the pay gap between women and men was closing, based on one flawed survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The reality was that the gap was widening.

Headlines blared that women were "taking over" in every male-dominated arena, from college department chairs to corporate boardrooms to the factory floor. Sadly, just the opposite was true. The number of women in traditionally female jobs increased from 67 percent to 71 percent between 1976 and 1986.

Even when women were able to break into male-dominated workplaces, they faced new dangers. Faludi reports on the women at the American Cyanamid factory in Willow Island, W.V. In 1973, the federal government threatened American Cyanamid with legal action if it didn't begin hiring women for its chemical production lines; 36 women were hired between 1974 and 1976. From the outset, these women faced daily harassment and taunting from their male co-workers, and little or no support from the company.

In 1978, the company unveiled a fetal-

workers. In 1979, OSHA fined the company \$10,000 for violations of worker safety, and specifically cited the protection plan as a workplace hazard. But instead of cleaning up the plant or scrapping the fetal protection policy, American Cyanamid shut down the factory. After less than three years, the women lost the very jobs they had been sterilized to keep.

## Avoids class analysis

Unlike much backlash reporting, which quotes anonymous sources or questionable studies to prove its point, the studies, polls and sources cited in "Backlash" are painstakingly documented. In fact, Faludi points out that readers should suspect articles that refer to "many women" or "most people" to buttress an argument. Most likely, such pieces are written not to report reliable information, but to influence public opinion.

Unfortunately, "Backlash" is weak on explaining the who and why of the backlash because its analysis avoids recognizing the existence of social classes. Despite Faludi's assertion that the backlash is not the result of an organized conspiracy, her lack of a class analysis leads her to misidentify the perpetrators of the backlash as an amorphous collection of televangelists and religious demagogues who want to oppress women merely because they hate them.

Faludi pinpoints the emergence of the

current backlash in the late 1970s to the fringes of the evangelical right, and portrays its steady growth into mainstream prominence under the Reagan administration. "If the contemporary backlash had a birthplace," she writes, "it was within the ranks of the New Right, where it first took shape as a movement with a clear ideological agenda."

In Faludi's analysis, the rise of Religious Right demagogues in the 1980s was similar to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and Father Coughlin's movement in the 1920s and '30s. Each time, the growth of these regressive movements coincided with signs that an oppressed group was believed to be on the verge of a breakthrough. Each time, while these regressive elements may not have been responsible for the backlash, they carried it out and benefited from it.

In essence, what Faludi defines is the rise of fascism and its role in pushing backward the gains of the working class. However, because she fails to understand the relationship of fascism to the decline of capitalism, she completely misses the point of its emergence.

For instance, Faludi doesn't understand that the feminist movement is a wing of the larger working-class movement. By presenting feminism as an isolated social phenomenon, she also isolates the effect of the backlash against women from the backlashes against other segments of the working class.

Women have not been the only victims of the backlash of the 1980s. Both Blacks and the labor movement have suffered tremendous economic setbacks and cultural backlashes. But Faludi ignores this completely. If the backlash has been most fiercely directed against women, it is because the feminist movement has been the most organized and effective segment of the working class in the past decade.

## Divided against ourselves

Faludi also ignores the economic timing of the current backlash. While backlashes occur when one segment of the working class is perceived to be gaining power, Faludi fails to see that such periods also take place when the ruling class is facing an economic crisis. In such periods of crisis, the ruling class intensifies sexism and racism to keep the working class divided against itself. When workers fight each other—rather than joining forces to fight the bosses—the bosses consolidate their power over them.

The reality is that there has been a decades-long sustained assault on the rights of all working people, not just women. In order to fight the assault, all working people will need to join together. Faludi's anti-male bias tends to confuse women as to who the enemy is, and contributes to the divisions between women and men.

Moreover, Faludi centers the backlash in the 1980s; that is, during the Reagan/Bush administration. The implication is that if there had been a Democrat as president, there either would not have been a backlash, or it would not have been so vicious. Faludi consistently blames the policies of the Reagan administration for eroding women's rights, while she completely ignores the role of the Democratic-controlled Congress and state legislatures.

In reality, the backlash has no specific party affiliation—it doesn't need one. Both the Democrats and the Republicans are anti-working class and anti-women, and would employ a backlash if it were economically necessary to do so.

Faludi's lack of class analysis leaves her without the ability to propose solutions. Recently, when she appeared on "The Dennis Miller Show," Faludi suggested that the only way to stop the erosion of women's rights was to change the cultural definitions of feminine and masculine.

However, social roles and attitudes don't change independently of social transformation. In order to eradicate the oppression of women (or of any other segment of the working class), we must eradicate the system of capitalism that depends on the oppression of women for its very survival.

"Backlash" is full of useful, interesting, and frightening evidence of the counterassault on women's rights. Even with her limited analysis, Faludi has written a valuable resource for women.

I suggest that all feminist activists read "Backlash" to confirm what we've already suspected—we're not paranoid, they really are out to get us. However, activists should also read some socialist feminist analysis to understand who "they" are. ■

# Ban on 14-year-old rape victim throws Irish gov't into crisis



Pro-choice protesters in Dublin. The Church has so far remained in the background in this affair.

Tony Ryan/Maxwell's

On Feb. 26, the Irish Supreme Court overruled a High Court injunction and ruled that a 14-year-old rape victim had the right to travel to Britain to have an abortion. The following article was sent to us shortly before the Feb. 26, Supreme Court decision.—the editors

By ANNE CONWAY

DUBLIN—A High Court injunction, preventing a 14-year-old pregnant rape victim from traveling to Britain to obtain an abortion, has led to a major political crisis for the Irish government.

The story became main news headlines since it first came to public attention on Feb. 13. There was an immediate response to the judgment, with several militant and angry protests organized by feminists, student activists, and others opposed to the judgment. On Feb. 22, up to 20,000 people marched through Dublin protesting the ruling.

The girl and her parents went to England to obtain an abortion. Prior to travelling, they had inquired from the gardai (the Irish police), who subsequently inquired from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), whether fetal tissue could be used in the Irish courts as legal evidence to identify and convict the rapist.

The DPP's office contacted the attorney general, who immediately issued an interim injunction banning the girl or the family from obtaining an abortion. The family and the girl, who were in England at this stage, returned without her having had the abortion. They were distraught. According to professional opinion, the girl is suicidal.

On Feb. 17, the High Court upheld the injunction, restraining the girl and her parents from leaving the jurisdiction for nine months.

## Threats against women

The injunction has been described as barbaric and medieval, putting women in Ireland in a position similar to those in Khomeini's Iran and Ceausescu's Romania. It has demeaned the status of women, and will ensure that female rape victims will not report such assaults in the future for fear of interrogation or criminal victimization by the courts or the state.

It strikes fear into all women, and makes women contemplating an abortion open to

injunction if their intentions are reported to the authorities. It also increases the threat to women that the life of the fetus will be given precedence over the mother's life in a complicated birth or medical emergency situation.

The judgment disregarded the mental and psychological health of the girl—even though she is suicidal. The court ruled that she is obliged to continue with the pregnancy.

LIFE, an offshoot of the anti-abortion group Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), offered to care for her until she bears the child. Their cynicism and disregard for the girl and her family have alienated people from them. They are being seen more clearly as reactionary bigots.

The case presents the government with a major political problem. Clearly the politicians are pushing for the Supreme Court to lift the injunction. They are anxious to avoid a referendum to amend or repeal the anti-abortion amendment to the constitution that was passed in 1983.

Significantly, the Catholic Church has so far remained in the background in this affair. An opinion poll conducted by a popular radio program showed a majority in favor of removing the anti-abortion amendment.

## Escalating attacks

It is just over eight years since the anti-abortion constitutional amendment was passed, and in those years we have witnessed a continuous and escalating series of attacks on women's reproductive rights.

First, the pregnancy counseling and abortion-referral services of the Dublin women's clinics were closed down through rulings that found in favor of SPUC, which claimed that the clinics' activities were contravening the anti-abortion article of the constitution.

Secondly, British magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan*, were censored for carrying advertisements for British abortion clinics in their Irish editions. Students were enjoined and hauled through the courts for disseminating and publishing abortion

information. In the last few months, publications such as *Everywoman* and *Our Bodies Ourselves* were removed from the Dublin city council central library because they contained information on abortion.

In 1983, the dominant bourgeois political parties were experiencing political instability as a result of the mass struggle and the election victories of the H-Block-Armagh campaign around the hunger strikers.<sup>1</sup>

Challenged from the left, the main political parties were looking to the right for stability. Fianna Fáil, the main nationalist bourgeois party, after brief consultation with SPUC, readily agreed to hold a referendum on an anti-abortion amendment to the constitution. They hoped to gain votes on a Catholic nationalist conservative ticket. Today, however, populist Catholic nationalism has run its course.

Since 1983, the oppressed—women, youth, the rural poor and the working class—have experienced massive unemployment, emigration, diminishing civil rights, and other setbacks.

These have led to an unprecedented level of political instability and alienation from the two main political parties, as attested by the election of Mary Robinson, a woman with progressive views on social issues, as president, and the sizeable votes for the left parties.

SPUC, LIFE, and other anti-abortion groups today are contributing to the political instability. They are damaging Ireland's image in Europe. The politicians who once courted them now want to take their distance from them, as does the Church.

## International pressure on gov't.

Because of the case, the Irish government is confronted with a problem with regard to the referendum on the Maastricht treaty, which calls for closer collaboration among the Common Market countries. They may have to amend the constitution in order to get this treaty ratified.

Because of the anti-abortion article in the Irish constitution, the Irish government sought and was granted an exemption from the terms of the treaty on this point. There is now a very real fear among the ruling class that the backlash caused by the present case of the 14-year-old rape victim could keep the treaty from being ratified. So, this is a real pressure on the Irish government to amend or repeal its anti-abortion amendment.

It is vital, therefore, for feminists and activists throughout Europe and worldwide to organize protests in support of their Irish sisters, and in particular for the lifting of the injunction and repeal of the anti-abortion amendment.

As this is written, the family of the 14-year-old rape victim is appealing the High Court Injunction to the Supreme Court. The strategy of the government and the opposition parties seems to be to interpret the amendment loosely enough to take the heat out of the situation without offending the Church.

However, if the Supreme Court lifts the restrictions on the 14-year-old (an outcome SPUC claims to favor), it will not appease the forces of the right, who will continue to widen their assault on women's rights as soon as the present crisis subsides.

On March 8, International Women's Day, a major national demonstration will be held in Ireland. We would welcome messages of support and solidarity. They can be sent to the Repeal the Amendment Campaign, c/o 38 Norfolk Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7, Ireland (temporary address). ■

<sup>1</sup>The first hunger strike of Republican political prisoners in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh concentration camp in Northern Ireland took place late in 1980. This desperate action was forced by British attempts to criminalize the Republican prisoners. It was ended when the British seemed to concede the substance of political status for the prisoners.

A second one began in early 1981 when it became clear that the British did not really intend to yield on this issue. The second strike ended after the deaths of nearly a dozen prisoners. The protest in Long Kesh was linked to one in Armagh, where the women political prisoners were held, although there was no hunger strike there.

A number of hunger strikers were put up as candidates in the Irish general elections of June 1981. They got an unexpectedly high vote, and some were even elected. This was the first big warning sign that the Irish bourgeois electoral system was becoming unstable.

## What does Bernadette Devlin McAliskey think?

The rationale for the Feb. 26 Irish Supreme Court decision reversing the ban against a 14-year-old rape victim travelling to Britain to obtain an abortion had some amusing aspects.

It was a comedy of the politicians and the Catholic Church teachers of morality hiding not only behind a court, but even behind the supra-national institutions of the European Common Market, which supposedly guarantee the right of movement for citizens of EEC countries.

*Socialist Action* called Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, a leading Irish socialist and spokesperson for human rights, and asked for her opinion on the decision. She told us that she was sure the court would hand down such a ruling because the public support for the 14-year-old rape victim was so strong. If it had not, she said, the establishment politicians and the Church would have had to face a new referendum on the constitutional ban on abortion, this time with a real possibility that the anti-abortionists would lose.

She laughed at the claim that the court was acceding to the principles of the EEC, since internal deportation and exile are commonly used by the British authorities against Irish republicans and suspected republicans and sympathizers, and no one has ever thought that the EEC guaranteed them any right of movement. She also thought that the court showed a disrespect for the Irish constitution, which itself guarantees the right of travel.

The very righteous Irish Catholic officials, McAliskey said, were continuing to use the availability of abortion in Britain as a safety valve for the consequences of their reactionary policy in Ireland. She feared that the court decision would allow the Dublin government to avoid the issue posed by the plight of the 14-year-old rape victim, and stressed the need for continuing international solidarity with the fight for women's rights in Ireland.—the editors

# Polish women's abortion rights targeted by pro-capitalists and Catholic Church

By JAN SYLWESTROWICZ

WARSAW—In pursuing its attempt to restore capitalism in Poland, the government is not restricting its attacks to purely economic matters. It is also waging a bitter fight to undercut basic democratic rights. As in the former Soviet republics, the move to capitalist restoration is being accompanied by the attempted introduction of more authoritarian forms of government. For the rulers of these countries, democracy and capitalism are incompatible.

In Poland, women's rights have been singled out for the fiercest attack. Women already suffer most from the effects of the new economic policies—unemployment among women is substantially higher than among men, and climbing more rapidly, while women are hardest hit by the cuts in social spending (provisions for pre-school children, in particular) and healthcare.

In addition, the Polish parliament is now poised to outlaw abortion—in all cases except a direct threat to the woman's life—and those at the forefront of this reactionary undertaking flatly state that they will want to follow this up with a ban on contraception.

A first attempt to revoke Poland's present, relatively liberal, abortion law was made last summer. But it was abandoned in the face of strong opposition; the members of Poland's parliament backed down at the prospect of a mass campaign of protest just before the general elections scheduled for October last year.

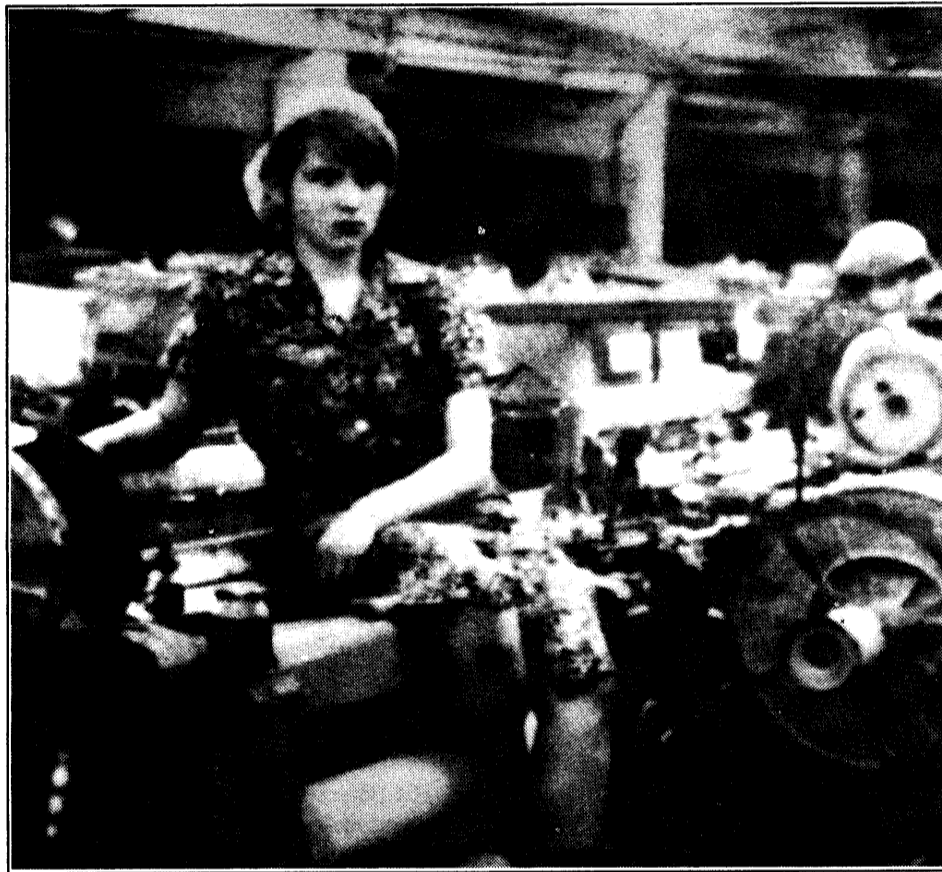
(Ironically, the Polish anti-abortion lobby claims that the current law is a "relic of the Stalinist policy directed against the Polish nation." In fact, it dates from the "thaw" of 1956, and was adopted as a concession to public opinion, replacing restrictive legislation introduced at the height of the Stalinist terror.)

Obligated to retreat last summer, the anti-abortion forces began preparing themselves for a new offensive right after the elections. At the end of November, they succeeded in getting the congress of the Polish doctors' association to amend its statutes. Any doctor now performing an abortion is liable to be banned by the association from practicing medicine.

This amendment to the association's statutes (introduced at the congress without warning, and catching the medical community by surprise) is a violation of the Polish constitution as it currently stands. Yet the government has done nothing to have the constitution enforced.



Women in Poland today—young and old alike—are having their democratic rights taken away as part of the restoration of capitalism.



A Lodz textile worker during a strike in 1981. Polish women played a leading role in the struggle against Stalinist oppression. They won't back down now.

This is hardly surprising when we look at the composition of the new government of Prime Minister Jan Olszewski. The greatest role in this government is now being played by the extreme rightist and clericalist ZChN (National Christian Union), a party which openly demands that Poland's constitution—indeed, Polish politics as a whole—be based on "Catholic values." In its internal press, this party praises both the past clerico-fascist, Spain's General Franco, and his present counterpart in France—the notorious racist Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Despite the full support of the Catholic Church, the ZChN won only eight percent of the votes in last October's elections. Yet today it is fast becoming the most powerful force in Poland's political institutions. It heads three ministries, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

The party's hold over the country's repressive apparatus further tightened in early February, when another ZChN supporter was appointed head of the Office of State Security (still overwhelmingly staffed by members of the old Stalinist secret police). In addition, the speaker of Poland's parliament, who plays an important role within the present system, is the national chair of the ZChN.

A ZChN spokesperson declared at the end of February that his party had collected the signatures of over half the members of Poland's parliament supporting the proposed anti-abortion legislation. In this situation, it seems very possible that the bill prepared by ZChN activists will be discussed by parliament in the next few weeks.

Women's activists had previously believed the ZChN would wait for the adoption of a new constitution before trying to have their bill passed. Yet the experience of the doctors' association demonstrates that constitutional niceties are no obstacle to the extreme right.

Estimates of the number of abortions performed annually in Poland range from 400,000 to 650,000. This huge figure reflects the limited access to, and information on, contraception. All opinion polls conducted over the last two years have shown a firm majority in favor of maintaining the present legislation. Yet the demand for a referendum on the issue is rejected by clericalist politicians and the Catholic hierarchy as being "immoral."

Pro-choice campaigners are beginning to mobilize again in Poland. In Warsaw, for example, a broad coalition of left organizations and feminist groups was set up at the start of February to fight the proposed legislation.

With a determined anti-abortion (and totally unrepresentative) parliament against them, however, those defending abortion rights in Poland face a difficult battle. International solidarity is needed. ■

## East German women 'kicked downstairs'

*Below we have translated and slightly abridged an article that appeared in the January 1992 issue of **Avanti!**, a journal published by the Fourth Internationalists in the former East Germany.—the editors.*

In the German Democratic Republic, as in the other "Eastern Bloc" states, about 92 percent of women were working. As in the industrialized countries of Western Europe, their average wage was about two-thirds that of men. Unemployment benefits and pensions were calculated in line with that, and therefore low. In East Germany also, poverty is feminine.

Now, it is clear that the aim of labor-market policy is to reduce the level of female employment to the Western level, that is to about 45 percent. The companies are saying this quite unashamedly. Jobless women are not left without work to do. They can keep themselves busy with housework, at least until they have eliminated some of the previous years' burden of double work.

Then the mechanism that is well known to women in the West goes into effect. They cannot take jobs unless there is childcare. But there is no childcare for unemployed women. Thus, the percentage of female unemployed is markedly higher than for men. (At the end of August, 9.6 percent of men were jobless, as against 14.5 percent of women). In the former East Germany, 61 percent of the unemployed are women. In West Germany, it is 48 percent.

The decline of the textile industry in East Germany is putting mainly women on the street. Because of their family ties, women are not so mobile as men. They cannot become commuters just like that. For this reason, as well as the orientation of the labor market, they have less possibilities for going to West Germany.

The biographies of East German women show that it was possible while the East German state existed for them to fulfill their wish for children without being pushed entirely out of employment. Through their right to abortion, women could largely determine the number and timing of their children. The present attempt to criminalize abortion and remove their ability to space their children is of course aimed at putting women at the mercy of the labor market.

When women are needed on the labor market, certain childcare facilities are offered. When they are pushed out of the labor market, such facilities are reduced. And all this is accompanied by the appropriate ideology to make it clear to women that they are either good or bad nurturers. Anyone who has followed West German policy for a while is familiar with the mechanism.

That women in East Germany understand the sort of situation they are in is shown, for example, by the fact that the women's congress of I.G. Metall [the largest industrial union] could not get agreement on a ban on night work. Women from East Germany fought furiously for the right to do shift work and night work, because otherwise they would be less competitive on the labor market.

The danger this involves is indicated by the reflections of the Bank, Retail and Insurance Employees' Union (HBV) over the fact that less and less employees are being covered by the contract. There is a steady increase in those who are either kicked upstairs into jobs not covered by the contract, or those who are kicked downstairs.

The latter, of course, are the majority. They are being pushed into jobs without any social protection, for which the wage in the West is 480 marks a month (about \$240) and 220 marks in the East.

It is estimated that 4 million to 5 million people are employed in such unprotected jobs! Thus, it is urgent to support the demand of Heide Pfarr (the minister for women and social welfare in the state of Hesse) that social insurance be extended to these hand-to-mouth jobs.

The small number of women in the German parliament makes it unlikely that much initiative on this question will come from there. Finance Minister Waigel has postponed until 1997 his pledge that kindergarten places will be provided for all children between the ages of three and six by 1993.

Women in East Germany are already reacting by being more reluctant to have children. Many are trying to be sterilized and thus solve the problem once and for all. At the same time, the activity of the women's groups is declining.

When will women finally wage a united fightback? ■

On Jan. 31, 1992, U.S. District Court judge Charles Wolfe ruled in favor of imprisoned political activist Mark Curtis in his lawsuit against the Des Moines, Iowa, Police Dept. Curtis was awarded \$11,000 in damages to be paid by Charles Wolf and Daniel Dusenbery, the two cops who severely beat him when he was arrested on March 4, 1988.

Curtis, who is a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), was arrested, framed-up, and convicted on charges of rape and burglary. He is currently serving a 25-year prison term. A national campaign is underway to demand that Curtis be paroled.

The following is an interview with John Studer, who is the national coordinator of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee. The interview was conducted by Joseph Ryan on Feb. 1, 1992.

**Socialist Action:** Can you tell us the background to Mark Curtis's victory against the Des Moines Police Department?

**John Studer:** The night that Mark was arrested and framed-up by the Des Moines police, they took him to the city jail, they took him in the back room there. They stripped him naked, they handcuffed him behind his back, and then they brutally beat him.

While they beat him they called him a "Mexican lover, just like you love those coloreds," which was what they considered his real crime to be. They obviously knew who he was. They knew that he'd been involved in the fight at Swift [a meat packing plant in Des Moines], and they knew that he'd been involved in a demonstration two weeks earlier against anti-Black racism in the Des Moines police department.

They beat him so badly that they created a blowout fracture to his cheek, which is a fracture that occurs when you are hit so hard that it swells up and the bone breaks from the inside. They caused gashes all over his face, the biggest one of which took 15 stitches to close. And then, as they often do with workers that they beat up, they tried to turn the victim into the criminal and they filed charges against him, claiming that he attacked them.

After his frame-up trial took place that fall and he was convicted, the cops dropped the "assault" charges against him. They claimed he'd already been convicted, so it didn't make any difference. And Mark filed a lawsuit against them in federal court, charging them with violating his civil rights and with brutality.

**SA:** Can you tell us about Mark's suit?

**JS:** It had two parts. One, was that the individual cops who beat him committed battery. They beat him and they violated his civil rights under the federal law.

And two, that the city [of Des Moines] was responsible for it, because the police department in Des Moines has a policy that condones or covers up for brutality on the part of the cops. When the case was getting ready to go to trial, the police filed a motion for summary judgment in relationship to the city, saying that at least the city should be let out of the lawsuit because there was no evidence that the mayor said: "Let's beat up Mark Curtis," or the Chief of Police was involved, or anything like that.

Mark and his lawyers, and the defense committee, worked together to draw up a legal brief which drew together the history of the last 10 years of the [Des Moines] police department, which is a blistering indictment of the cops. It demonstrates that they have a continuing record of racism, sexism, brutality, and violations of constitutional rights. Over the years the police department went through four different governmental investigations, ranging from the city level, to the state level, to the federal level, all of which said the same thing.

They concluded that the cops were brutal, that they were racist, and that their internal affairs department was a coverup agency, and not a serious agency to investigate any complaints. And the cops refused to ever do anything about it. So we presented that to the judge. He decided that he wasn't going to let the city out of the case.

**SA:** How did the judge come to his decision?

# Mark Curtis wins suit against Des Moines cops

**JS:** First, he divided the case in half. He said that [in regard to] the case against the city, there's no point in arguing about that unless you can win your case against the individual cops. So he said "We'll put that off for the future. This trial that we are going to have is just about the two cops."

That trial began last Nov. 25. It took two days. And it was obvious that the judge wanted to believe the cops. He's had to run a lot of trials like this... But even by the cops' own story—it was clear at the trial—he was uncomfortable with their version of the story.

How could Mark Curtis end up looking like he looked? How he could have been so brutally injured? And that's how the trial ended. He said, "I'm going to have to grapple with this: if it all happened the way you guys [the cops] said, how did he end up looking like this? And then he said, "OK, I'll get back to you." And he had a reputation of making rulings quickly.

Shortly after the trial took place, Des Moines was rocked by another case of police brutality. On Dec. 2, a 35-year-old African American worker named Larry Milton called the police for help when he was afraid for his life. And they came. But instead of helping him, they brutalized him. They beat him so badly, it took 28 surgical staples to close the wounds to his head. And there has been an uproar in the city ever since.

There have been demonstrations, meetings of over a thousand, all kinds of protests. And the last thing we expected was, in that context, the judge would issue a ruling in Mark's case, but that's what he did. On Jan 31, he issued his ruling. He awarded Mark \$11,000 in damages for the injuries caused by the beating.

And the judge has now set a hearing for Feb. 11 to discuss whether there will be a second trial and what the scope of it will be. We say that to really be able to prove that the cops systematically coverup for brutality in the department, we need to see all of their files.

The judge said that would be a reasonable thing for him to consider if we got to this point. The city is dead opposed to it!

**SA:** So you envision a situation where you have the right to discovery in the second phase of the trial in the context of an uproar in the Black community about the beating of Larry Milton?

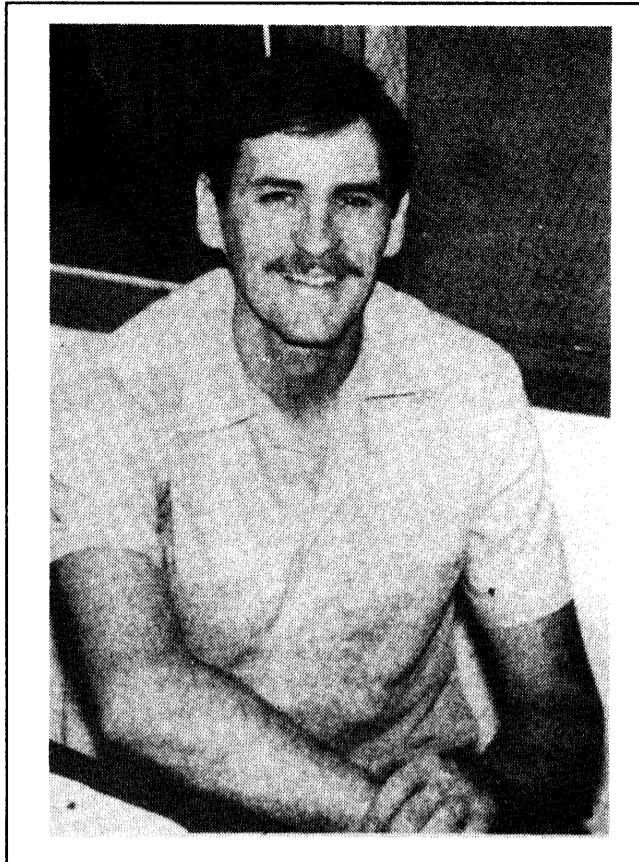
**JS:** That's right. That's why the city authorities are really going to have think about what to do with it. And that is why a lot of people in Des Moines are very excited. People who went into political motion around Larry Milton feel they now have a victory...

**SA:** Who would the cops brutalize? Would it just be Blacks or Hispanics, or would it be white workers?

**JS:** They have a non-discriminatory beating policy. They beat working people in general in Des Moines, and they beat working people in general all around the country. The cops are not there to serve and protect; the cops are there to intimidate and brutalize people. And they are going to need to do it more, because the program of the rulers of this country for the future is more prisons, more cops, and more violence against working people.

But they give special attention to Blacks and Latinos, and other oppressed nationalities. That is certainly true in Des Moines, and it is true around the country.

The first protest meeting that took place



Mark Curtis: Prisoners see his victory as their victory

after the beating of Larry Milton was a meeting of a thousand people. It was largely Black. And according to federal census statistics there are 14,200 Blacks in Des Moines, so that means one out of every 15 men, women and children who are Black in Des Moines came to that meeting. It was a powerful meeting.

**SA:** Could you give us a feel for the effect this has had on Mark and also on his case?

**JS:** Mark is probably the best known prisoner in the state. He's been transferred seven times from prison to prison as different wardens get fed up with his political activity or nervous about his influence. He has met a lot of the prisoners who were in these institutions and a lot of people know him. And they know he is fighting for justice, both against the conviction and against the police brutality.

His lawsuit against police brutality was tremendously popular in the prison. Opposition to police brutality is deep-seated in the prisons, because a lot of these prisoners have faced brutality in the course of their arrest or in other dealings they have had with the police.

For instance, after Larry Milton was beaten, Mark and one other Black prisoner drew up a letter of solidarity with Larry Milton. And of the 138 people in the John Bennett unit at the prison he is in, 25 of them signed the letter, which takes a lot of

courage, because their signatures are seen by the people who review the mail.

When Mark was brought back to the prison after the police brutality hearing, some prisoners gave Mark a bunch of clippings that people had kept from newspapers in their areas about the question of police brutality.

Four people wrote messages about what had happened to them and sent them to the defense committee to be read at the rally we had the day before the trial began. People really followed the police brutality trial. So they were really celebrating out there—the best you can inside a penitentiary—when the judge ruled in favor of Mark. They view it as their victory, and they feel more confident.

**SA:** At this juncture, what would you tell people to do to assist in freeing Mark Curtis.

**JS:** I think that the best thing that people can do right now is to get out the truth about his story. There is a unique opportunity here. If you read the ruling by the judge, he says that after listening to these cops, he believed that they lied. They lied to coverup the fact that they knowingly used unnecessary brutal force against Mark Curtis. If the cops did that, it is not hard for people to think: Maybe the cops lied to cover up for themselves so they could frame up Mark Curtis.

I think this victory will open the door to a tremendous broadening of support for the case. So, I think the best thing people can do is to get the video on the case, the literature on the case, and step up efforts to get it around. It's important to tell people about the victory in this case, and to try to sign up and win new supporters for the Mark's defense.

**SA:** And if people want to get in touch with the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, who should they reach?

**JS:** Our office in Des Moines is the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. And our phone number is (515) 246-1695.

**SA:** Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add?

**JS:** Just that I think that there is something happening in this country right now in relationship to the political question of police brutality. I think that there are more and more people who are standing up to fight against it. And the context is a context of worsening economic conditions.

And I think the more that people learn that fights against police brutality are taking place in other cities as well as their own, and that victories are being won, it's going to inspire people to keep fighting back.

We plan on having a victory rally in Des Moines next week, and I know that there are people coming who are involved in police brutality fights from Los Angeles to New York. They are inspired by Mark's victory and they view it as an opportunity to meet other people like them who are fighting. ■

## Greetings from Socialist Action

The following are greetings from Socialist Action to a Feb. 8 rally in Des Moines celebrating Mark Curtis's lawsuit victory.

Dear Friends,

We have recently learned of the victory in Mark's lawsuit against the police who viciously beat him as part of the frame-up that resulted in putting him behind bars on a 25-year sentence. Congratulations!

Congratulations to Mark himself for this victory, which is in no small part due to his unwavering and principled fight from behind prison walls. He has been an example to all working people everywhere who have or may face government persecution for their defense of our rights and living conditions and for the socialist future of humanity.

Congratulations also to the defense committee and all who support it, for without their efforts this victory would not have been won.

Because Mark was convicted mainly on the testimony of one cop, and the fact that the defense was not allowed to present evidence that even the thoroughly corrupt and racist Des Moines police department cited this cop for a record of lying, nor to present evidence of the vicious beating the cops administered, this victory helps undercut the frame-up itself. Let's use this victory to renew our efforts until Mark Curtis once again is free!

In Solidarity,  
Jeff Mackler  
for the Political Committee



# 2000 rally in S.F. to defend Cuba



"Peace for Cuba" supporters: A protective line around meeting hall while...



... 200 anti-Castro "gusanos" screeched and screamed across the street.

SAN FRANCISCO—Over 2000 people rallied here on Feb. 2 to demand an end to the U.S. government's 30-year undeclared war against Cuba. The event was the largest Cuba solidarity rally in this city's history and was an impressive follow-up to a rally of 3700 held in New York City a week earlier. Both events, sponsored by the Peace for Cuba International Appeal, were centered on the demands of ending the U.S. trade embargo, lifting the travel ban, and normalizing diplomatic relations.

Speakers at the San Francisco rally included journalist Margaret Randall; novelist Alice Walker; Mosala Mosegomi, African National Congress; Dr. Frantz Delva, coordinator, Haitian Lavalas (pro-Aristide); Andres Gomez, Antonio Maceo Brigade; Diane Wang, chair, Human Relations Committee, OCAW 1-326; Yvonne Golden, chair, S.F. Bay Area Peace Council; Piri Thomas, poet and author; and Bobby Castillo, International Indian Treaty Council. In addition, messages of solidarity were read from Kris Kristofferson, singer-songwriter; Brian McWilliams, ILWU International vice-president; and Hortensia Allende, widow of assassinated Chilean president Salvador Allende.

While the rally was underway, about 200 anti-Castro Cubans—most of whom were bused from Los Angeles—demonstrated across the street. Other than screaming frenzied epithets, the "gusanos" were unable to disrupt the four-hour-long event.

The following is the message that was read from Cuban President Fidel Castro at the Feb. 2 Peace for Cuba Rally in San Francisco, Calif.

## Message from Fidel:

### '...the last word has not been said'

Dear comrades and friends, brothers and sisters,

Under the present circumstances, your decision to organize this demonstration in support of the people of Cuba is a moving evidence of honesty and courage.

This meeting is also a testimony of solidarity which deeply touches each and every Cuban, absorbed as we are in the gigantic effort to which we are all dedicated today.

I address not only those who share the ideas of the Cuban Revolution, but also those who experience a sincere concern about Cuba's peace and security, those who believe that the right of us Cubans to self-determination should be respected, and that any kind of intervention or aggression against our country should stop.

Today Cuba faces an unprecedented challenge. The collapse of socialism in Europe and the disappearance of the Soviet Union have deprived us, all of a sudden, of our main source of essential supplies, including oil, foodstuffs, raw materials, and all kinds of equipment, obtained by means of a fair and equitable trade relation.

Thus, a second blockade has in fact appeared, which comes on top of the cruel economic blockade forced on us for more than 30 years by the government of the United States.

The U.S. administration believes that Cuba will not be able to resist, that the time has come to terminate the Revolution, and to that end takes stronger measures in order to suffocate our economy, increase hostility and pressures, encourages the actions of the counter-revolutionaries, and uses all its influence and that of its more reactionary allies in promoting a media campaign unparalleled in its deceit and distortion of the truth.

We are calmly facing this test with determination. Our present difficulties are the consequence of external factors, not the result—as some want to make believe—of the failure of our noble revolutionary efforts.

As a matter of fact, it is the Revolution and socialism that give our people strength to face this challenge. We have the will and the patriotic spirit needed to resist and to win. We are not demoralized, nor are we defeated. We are working hard, and we are basing our struggle on the fighting spirit, the intelligence and the scientific potential we have been able to develop in all these years. We are a united and cohesive people. The vast majority of Cubans support the concept that only in the free Fatherland, with the independence and social justice which the Revolution has given us, we will be able to find true answers to our present difficulties, to improve our system, and to build the future we deserve.

To those who argue that Cuba should be crushed, humiliated and destroyed because there are no longer a Soviet Union nor a European socialist community, we say that our Revolution is and always will be as Cuban as the palm trees, that we didn't ask anybody permission to carry out the Revolution, and that the Revolution exists and will keep on existing because of the sovereign will of our people.

We have many problems and shortages. However, even in these conditions we have not renounced the social achievements of which we are justly proud and which account for our well-being.

Let me point out just one example. Last year the infant mortality rate in our country as a whole was a third of Washington's rate. Ours is a poor country, and we have had to stand this terrible blow in the midst of a very hard struggle for development. But even in the "special period" we are able to bring education to all our children and youngsters, we manage to guarantee to every one of our workers the right to a decent job, we take proper care of our elderly, and keep a comprehensive system of social security. As you all well know, there are no such scourges in Cuba as prostitution, organized crime, drugs,

beggers, racial discrimination.

Cuban women, with the active support of all society, are front-line participants in history and in the struggle for their full equality.

Our people, nevertheless, have to endure once again the attempts to force on us counter-revolutionary subversion, destabilization and terrorism.

The anti-Cuban policy of the U.S. government encourages the worst counter-revolutionary elements—both within Cuba and out of the country—to carry out all sorts of irresponsible and criminal actions. A few days ago we had to control again our emotions when we buried three young men who had been brutally murdered. Once again we have to deal with infiltration attempts into our territory by terrorists trained and armed with total impunity in the U.S. for the self-admitted purpose of sowing death and panic among our people, and even new plans for the assassination of our Revolution's leaders.

We are witnesses to a shameless farce played out in other countries by opportunists, cowards, demagogues, and fakes, all of whom dare to condemn Cuba for enforcing Cuban law, for exercising its inalienable right to protect the life of our children and the sovereignty of our nation, for upholding the constitutional order approved in popular referendum by more than 90 percent of our people. However, not a single word is spoken about the responsibility of those who tolerate such actions, or in condemnation of the repeated acts carried out against us.

To bestow upon common terrorists the status of dissidents is as absurd as to try to characterize as criminal the legitimate actions of a state like Cuba, dedicated to the welfare of the people and to the attainment by every citizen of a productive and spiritually full life.

We are confident that truth will prevail. Lies and slander are not eternal. This bitter and confusing moment in which the world is living will also pass away.

On the other hand, the last word has not been said, nor are we enacting the final chapter of social revolution as an alternative of justice and development. In order to be able to talk about the failure of socialism, it would be necessary to announce the solution through some other way of the abysmal problems facing three out of every four men and women on the planet today, as well as the social evils which befall the so-called first world. But nothing at all like this has happened.

We are sure that socialism will emerge again from this crisis, a cleansed and perfected socialism, the only program of social change and true democracy for which it is imperative to fight according to the traditions, the historical experience and the national consensus in each country.

We are not preparing for an apocalypse, but we are ready for everything, and we will do every sacrifice necessary precisely because we are convinced that the future belongs to us and that right is on our side.

Only those who resist win, those who do not weaken when faced with difficulties, those who have confidence in their ideas and in the moral and revolutionary reserves of the people.

We, Cubans, are not and will not be alone in this extraordinary hour. Nobody should feel pity or be sorry for us. One can feel sorrow for traitors and weaklings, but not for a people writing some of the most heroic and honorable pages of its history. What Cuba now needs, above all, is understanding and respect. You give us much more than that when you do not hesitate to express your solidarity with the Cuban people in this crucial moment.

What is at stake at this very instant in our land is not only the future of our country, but also to a great extent the future of justice, of socialism and of the poor peoples of the world. Therefore, you could very well say the same words written by Jose Marti almost a century ago: "A mistake in Cuba is a mistake in America, a mistake in modern mankind. Whoever stands today alongside Cuba, stands forever."

Thank you very much, my dear brothers and sisters. (signed) Fidel Castro Ruz

# Healthcare in America: Right or Privilege?

By CHRIS BIELER

The following is an edited and abridged version of a talk given by Chris Bieler at a Feb. 7 Socialist Action forum in New York City titled: "The Crisis in Healthcare."

Increasingly there is a two-tier system for healthcare in this country. The rich, who live in their pristine enclaves, receive state-of-the-art healthcare. They have access to the most advanced medical research and technology in the world.

Meanwhile, working people, the unemployed, and the poor are receiving less healthcare; less in quantity; less in quality. More than one-third of pregnant Black women and one-fifth of pregnant white women receive inadequate prenatal care. The infant mortality rate in some parts of New York City is higher than some of the poorest countries in Latin America.

Over 36 million Americans have no health insurance coverage at all, and the number is growing. These are not just the unemployed or the homeless; millions of them are the working poor, who receive no medical benefits.

There are 53 million Americans who, although they have some form of health insurance, have no coverage in the event of a catastrophic illness. Americans over the age of 65 on average pay 50 percent of their medical costs out of their own pockets. Around half of all personal bankruptcies in the United States are the result of financial problems caused by the high cost of illness.

But there certainly is no crisis in the medical insurance industry, whose bottom line is profits. The chief executives of healthcare and medical insurance companies have the highest median income of any corporate CEOs, averaging almost \$1.5 million each. The medical insurance companies have combined assets estimated at \$700 billion to \$1 trillion. For one year in the mid-1980s the profits of health care institutions (including hospitals) totaled \$2.8 billion. The biggest profit-reapers were the pharmaceuticals and medical equipment companies, making profits of \$5.6 billion and \$1.8 billion, respectively.

At the same time, healthcare costs for working people, already high, went through the roof. In 1988, for example, insurance premiums increased by 30-40 percent. This was happening at the same time that government budget cuts slashed funds for public health services and other entitlement programs. These are programs that are desperately needed by the poor, a disproportionate number of whom are Black, Hispanic, and single women with children.

## Central role of trade unions

The issue of healthcare and medical coverage has been a central question for unionized workers—especially the industrial sector. Over 78 percent of the strikes in 1989 involved a fight against attempted company takebacks of workers' medical benefits. In almost every contract dispute in the last decade, the cutting edge of company demands, besides lowering wages, was increasing the deductible that workers have to pay for medical insurance, thus saving money for the companies and increasing their profits.

During the 1940s and '50s it was the trade-union movement that led the charge for employer-financed healthcare coverage for its members. But unfortunately, the short-sighted leadership of the unions limited their medical coverage demands to the unions' membership alone, instead of demanding a comprehensive employer-financed national healthcare program for all workers—union, non-union, and unemployed alike.

A recent national poll cited by the Oil,



Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) disclosed that while only 30 percent of those who responded would support a healthcare program that would only benefit the uninsured, a whopping 73 percent supported a national healthcare system that would benefit everybody.

Currently, six bills for healthcare "reform" have already been introduced in

Congress. Virtually all of them are limited to making "improvements" in the current market-based health insurance system.

President Bush's proposal—by far, the most useless—is to give tax credits of up to \$3600 per family for health insurance coverage. Such so-called "credits" don't even come close to covering the average family's health insurance costs and in no

## 25,000 protest health cutbacks in N.Y.C.



By GERRY FIORI

NEW YORK—A rally of 25,000 healthcare workers and their supporters took place at Columbus Circle in midtown Manhattan on Feb. 7. It was called to protest a proposal by Democratic Party Gov. Mario Cuomo to cut approximately \$1 billion in Medicaid payments to hospitals in New York State.

The marchers, members of Hospital Workers Local 1199 and the American

Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council, chanted "No Cuts!" and "Tax the Rich!" as they marched to the rally site from their gathering point at 53rd St. and 7th Ave.

They were joined by a number of their patients, those who require wheelchairs and those who receive Medicaid-funded home healthcare. The proposed cuts will directly affect both groups through layoffs of workers and loss of services to patients, as hospitals struggle to make up for lost funding.

Speakers who addressed the crowd included Dennis Rivera of 1199, Cardinal John O'Connor, and a number of city hospital officials. They attacked any cuts in the healthcare system as being unfair because it hurts those who are most in need of assistance.

The cutbacks were attacked as potentially disastrous to a system already seriously underfunded; a system in which many people do not get adequate care; a system where hospital workers are overburdened with large numbers of patients; and a system that tolerates high incidences of diseases like measles and AIDS when what is needed is increased rather than decreased funding.

While the healthcare workers displayed enthusiasm during the march, they lack direction and a clear sense of how to apply their demands. A campaign of lobbying the legislators in Albany is being planned by the organizers of the march. But this will only divert the struggle for adequate healthcare.

What is needed are more marches like this one, linked with the organizing of a community and labor coalition to fight for socialized medicine—the fight for the right to free quality healthcare as an inalienable right of all working people and their allies.

way do they provide coverage for catastrophic illness. The Democrats, on the other hand, have proposed a "play or pay" plan, the Mitchell Bill, which would require employers to insure their workers or pay a 7 percent payroll tax toward a government health fund. All of these proposals are no more than a band-aid on an already cancer-ridden system.

Typically, the AFL-CIO trade-union bureaucracy is lending its support to the Mitchell Bill. The bureaucrats echo the opinion of a large section of the capitalist class, like Lee Iacocca and the president of General Motors, who say some kind of national healthcare is needed so that the cost to them is eliminated, thus making the American capitalists more competitive with the Japanese, who already have a national healthcare system.

## Who should pay?

But as long as healthcare is tied into the health insurance industry, which is privately owned and interested only in profits, there will be no fundamental change. For years, they have functioned, together with the American Medical Association (AMA), as a trade cartel. They routinely serve on each others' boards of directors, encourage inflated costs and fees, and collaborate on raising the costs of premiums.

The other side of the coin is: Who will pay for national healthcare? The rich or working people?

In Canada, medical coverage is provided by a single payer, a national health insurance agency. Its strongest feature is that all treatment is free, with universal access to all—young and old, employed and unemployed. At the same time, the middlemen of the health insurance industry have been eliminated.

But national healthcare in Canada is in a tenuous situation. Their system leaves untouched the "fee for service" system, which allows doctors, hospitals, and other medical treatment institutions to charge the government whatever price they want for services. None of these institutions are accountable to working people or the communities they serve.

In fact, today in Canada health costs are rising and some government-owned healthcare facilities are being privatized. The U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement removes restrictions placed on U.S. corporations managing hospitals in Canada, and the Ottawa government has already announced cutbacks due to rising costs. As long as healthcare entrepreneurs can charge their own prices for health service, healthcare, as a right, is on flimsy foundations in Canada.

A better example, is the system in Cuba, where doctors are the employees of the state, and private speculation in medical care is prohibited. (See story on opposite page.) Such a system is not called a national health plan; such a system is known by the term socialized medicine. That is, healthcare is not to be a profit-making business; it is to be a guaranteed right for all working people—not a privilege for the rich.

And who should pay? It should be the rich—who benefit the most from a healthy work force; after all, they exploit the ability of workers to labor—that is, to produce profits.

Every proposal for U.S. healthcare advanced so far leaves open the question of who will pay for a national health plan. Any plan that is finally adopted will be both inadequate and inequitable. Furthermore, the cost for such a plan will undoubtedly be passed on to working people through an already regressive tax system.

Working people and their organizations should place no confidence in either the Democrats or the Republicans to formulate a healthcare plan that's beneficial to all.

The right to socialized healthcare—cradle to grave, free, quality healthcare—will be won, as all rights throughout history have been won, through a struggle of working people and their allies around their healthcare proposals: "Healthcare is a right, not a privilege!" "Tax the rich!"

If the capitalists balk, as they undoubtedly will, then working people should enforce their own healthcare policies—just as they did in Cuba in 1959.

# What Cubans have and Americans need—cradle to grave free healthcare

Jesus Hernandez/AIH



"Cubans are protected not only from the cradle to the grave, but also through those critical months which determine the health of the yet-to-be born."

By HAYDEN PERRY

While citizens of the world's richest country agonize over the problem of healthcare, the Cuban people are enjoying one of the most comprehensive systems of lifetime health maintenance in the world.

Cubans are protected, not only from the cradle to the grave, but also through those critical prenatal months which determine the health of the yet-to-be-born. The infant mortality rate is 10 per 1000 births; only slightly over the American national rate of 9.1. But the U.S. rate is misleading. In New York City, for example, 26 Black babies out of 1000 die in infancy. The healthy Cuban baby can expect to live longer than the American: 76 years compared to 75.2 in the U.S.

The comparison is all the more striking when we note that per capita income in the United States is around \$15,000. In Cuba it is \$800. Yet the poorest Cuban has access to the pharmaceuticals and technology that, in the United States, only wealthy Americans can afford.

Before the revolution in 1959, life expectancy in Cuba was only 58 years. Then, there were no more than 6000 doctors for 6.5 million Cubans. Seventy percent of the doctors practiced in Havana. Half of the poor never saw a doctor. There were no polio shots or other immunization procedures for those who could not pay. Malnutrition and infectious diseases were epidemic. When the Cuban revolutionaries came to power, half the doctors fled the island.

## Health care is a right

The first concern of the Castro leadership was the health of the people. The priority of healthcare was clearly codified in the new Constitution. It states: (1) Health care is a human right rather than a product for economic profit. Therefore, all Cubans have equal access to health services, and all services are free; (2) healthcare delivery is the responsibility of the state; (3) prevention and curative services are integrated with national and social development; and (4) the population participates in developing and maintaining the healthcare system.

But first revolutionary Cuba had to produce doctors. There was only one medical school, so the health system had to be built from the ground up. The medical education system was expanded to 21 medical schools spread throughout the island. These schools have graduated over 39,000 physicians, half of whom are women. Today, there is one doctor for every 400 Cubans. In the United States, planners hope to have one doctor for every 375 people by 1999.

Cuba has also made a contribution to world health by sending medical personnel,

**"...getting doctors, nurses, and medicine to every sick Cuban demands social organization that is quite beyond the U.S. 'medicine for profit' system."**

a total of 15,000 people, to 11 Asian and Latin American countries and 26 countries in Africa. The Cubans have built their own pharmaceutical industry, which supplies 80 percent of their basic needs, and earns hard currency by selling a surplus of some drugs overseas.

Of course, getting doctors, nurses, and medicine to every sick Cuban demands social organization that is quite beyond the U.S. "medicine for profit" system. All Cuban medical resources are controlled by the Ministry of Public Health and directed to the areas of greatest need.

The first task in the 1960s was wiping out the infectious diseases that ravage most tropical countries. Malaria, infantile tetanus, rabies, polio, and diphtheria were eradicated by 1980. The incidence of malnutrition among Cuban children is now 0.1 percent. Among American children the rate is 5 percent!

To fight endemic diseases the Ministry of Health relied on hospitals and a series of large polyclinics. Each clinic was expected to care for as many as 25,000 patients. The result was long waits and complaints by citizens that doctors gave them very little attention.

While there was a shortage of doctors these problems were hard to overcome. By 1980, however, the doctor shortage had passed, and the diseases bred by centuries of poverty were brought under control. It was now time to concentrate on the key to good health—prevention rather than cure.

## Neighborhood clinics

In 1985, the Ministry of Public Health launched the Family Doctor Program. This embodies a simple concept with profound consequences. Teams consisting of a doctor, a nurse, and often a social worker, sets up shop in each village or neighborhood. Usually a building is put up for them. There is a clinic on the ground floor, and apartments for the doctor and the nurse on the second and third floors. These mini-clinics serve about 120 families in the immediate neighborhood. The emphasis is on wellness rather than illness.

A visitor from the United States described a typical clinic: "The clinic consists of a few exam rooms, a simple laboratory. ... The small office abounds with patient education material on pre-natal care, government benefits to new parents, immunization and nutrition posters, birth control, and detailed information on AIDS awareness and prevention.

"The nurse...proudly showed us her well-kept filing system which includes, not only a medical record of every patient, but information on their physical living conditions and problems in the home that might affect the patient's health.

"They also keep a file projecting several years ahead to determine their patients' needs on a regular basis. ... Because of this detailed system throughout the country, immunization rates are nearly 100 percent, and most preventable contagious diseases have been eliminated entirely. There were no cases of measles in Cuba in 1990, while there were 25,000 in the U.S."

All of the medical information about patients is not obtained by the three-person team alone. Residents of a neighborhood collectively participate in their own healthcare. At open meetings in the community, citizens meet with the medical staff to discuss local health problems: a chemical smell in the air, lack of fruit in the stores, or alcoholism.

At the national level, mass organizations—including the Federation of Cuban

Women and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution—send delegates to conferences to advise on the goals and priorities of the Ministry of Public Health.

The mini-clinics are not designed to be substitutes for hospitals or the care of medical specialists. Two hundred and fifty hospitals are available in provincial centers, together with ambulance service to get there. Much of the time, however, Cubans need nothing more than the preventative care that the local clinic provides.

Birth control information and devices are available, and abortions are performed upon request. Treatment of AIDS patients has been the subject of some controversy. There is no AIDS epidemic in Cuba, and the authorities are determined to prevent one. They insist that the few AIDS patients be hospitalized and treated in isolation from all other patients.

Although the best possible care is given to victims of AIDS, some observers believe such a quarantine is unnecessary, and is a burden on the patient and his or her family.

Paradoxically, some healthcare specialists who have visited Cuba question whether young Cubans are being given excessive medical attention. They point to a rural kindergarten where 200 healthy youngsters under five years old were given weekly examinations by a pediatrician. Even wealthy American parents would feel this is unnecessary for their children.

This is partly due, these critics assert, to the fact that doctors tend to dominate the healthcare system.

Nurses also suffer from doctor domination of the health care system. The wide gap between nurse and doctor makes patients feel they are getting a lesser level of care if they don't see the doctor even for a simple injection.

Medication, according to these U.S. observers, is inclined to be over-prescribed. But these are "faults" that the people of most Third World countries wish they could have in their healthcare systems!

## End the U.S. embargo!

As the U.S. embargo against Cuba tightens its noose and help from the former Soviet Union disappears, over-medication is the least problem. On the contrary, shortages of drugs and the inability to buy needed medical equipment are already threatening to degrade the excellent quality of Cuban health care.

The embargo has cut off Cuba's traditional source of pharmaceuticals. The only medical supplies received from the United States in 30 years were some shiploads sent in 1962 in exchange for the counter-revolutionaries taken prisoner during the aborted Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

When the U.S.-supported Chamorro government took power in Nicaragua in March 1990, the peoples' healthcare network there was all but destroyed. Cubans know that will be the fate of their healthcare system if U.S. aggression against them succeeds.

The battleground against that aggression is in the United States. Americans must demand an end to the undeclared war against Cuba and the conquests of its revolution—a revolution that provides free, quality healthcare for every Cuban citizen.

Shipments of needed medicines can reach Cuba—and must be sent. For information on how you can help, contact: Global Exchange, 2141 Mission St., #202, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415) 255-7296.

The Cuban experience in public health is not only a tremendous gain for the Cuban people. It proves to the world that universal healthcare is a practical goal when the medical profiteers are pushed aside. ■

## International Viewpoint

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By NAT WEINSTEIN

A group of Black South African militants in this country, the Organization of South Africans/Azians for Liberation Education (OSAALÉ), recently invited Socialist Action to send a representative to address its membership in New York City. The author of this report was given this assignment. The following are his impressions of what OSAALÉ is and what it stands for.

About 35 Black South African students met at a regular meeting of OSAALÉ on Feb. 1. This group was organized about five years ago as a united front-type formation for the purpose of clarifying the aims and objectives of revolutionaries in the land of apartheid. Present at this meeting were members and supporters of a range of different currents active in the South African freedom movement.

It appeared to this observer that the great majority of those present were supporters of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), and the Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO) and other Black Consciousness groups. Also present were several supporters of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) and the New Unity Movement (NUM), which shares many of the views of WOSA. Many in the leadership of WOSA consider themselves to be revolutionary Marxists.

All these currents are participating in this united front for the purpose of explaining what Black South Africans are fighting for. They point out that they are for full freedom and democracy for all and reject any policy which gives veto power to the white racist ruling class. And since the overwhelming South African majority is exploited and oppressed by rulers who are white, they support the demand for "Black Majority Rule!" as most appropriate in the current political context.

I discovered that although the apartheid regime divides the oppressed majority into African, Colored and Indian, all of these oppressed people consider themselves Black. This is not unlike how African Americans of all colors and shades accepted the designation of their whole people in this country as "Negro" or "Colored" in the past, and now "Black" and/or "African American."

The message that came through to this observer indicated that these freedom fighters have few illusions about what is wrong in racist, capitalist South Africa—they appear to be unanimously opposed to a

# United front of S. African students meets



new constitution written with the "help" and "participation" of the apartheid regime. They are convinced that any constitution supported by the white ruling class will be one that permits the white minority to have veto-power over the future of a new South Africa. OSAALÉ insists on nothing less than Black majority rule.

Thus, the currents present at this meeting are for the election of a truly democratic Constituent Assembly, which will then write a new constitution designed to end white minority rule and establish genuine majority rule. But WOSA and others know that a genuine democratic revolution is impossible without the overthrow of the capitalist social, economic and political dictatorship.

OSAALÉ also feels the need to unite against those political forces in South Africa—within the Black majority as well as the ruling white minority—who favor a compromise that can only result in veto power for the white ruling class. Consequently, sentiments expressed at this meeting were highly skeptical that the

negotiations between the Pretoria regime, the African National Congress (ANC), and Black groups openly allied with the de Klerk regime—like Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha Party—will lead to any significant change in the material conditions of the majority of the people, the Black working class.

It is important to note that while OSAALÉ opposes the view of the ANC, which is for compromise with the white ruling class, they welcome the participation of the ANC and its supporters in their united front.

## Class consciousness

My presentation to the OSAALÉ membership focused on the undiminished revolutionary capabilities of the world working class despite the over 40-year period of relative prosperity. This, I argued, resulted in a steady decline in working-class combativity in the centers of world imperialism—especially here in the United States. And now that world capitalism threatens to enter a new period of crisis and

instability, a new rise in the class struggle would in that event be certain to follow.

I further argued that South African Blacks and other oppressed nations in the world should not rule out the reemergence of proletarian internationalism in the heart of imperialism, especially in the United States. On the contrary, I emphasized, they should expect that their revolutionary struggles will enter a new and more dynamic stage when the developing crisis of world capitalism compels workers in the centers of imperialism to return to the class struggle strategy that led to labor's giant step forward in the United States in the 1930s and '40s.

Although it is well known that the great majority of Black South Africans are workers, I was nevertheless surprised at the high level of class consciousness revealed by this group in the course of the question and discussion period. They, on their part, also expressed surprise at hearing such a point of view from an American socialist.

The comments I heard, moreover, revealed that a relatively high degree of working-class consciousness was shared by many in the vanguard of the South African freedom movement. This is not to say that a majority of South African Blacks are committed to the perspective of socialist revolution. Only the WOSA component of OSAALÉ and many among the left wing of the Black Consciousness Movement are consistent advocates of socialist revolution. As yet, only a minority of the broad masses fully understand that racism, exploitation and oppression are endemic to capitalism.

The representative of WOSA told me that although the level of class consciousness among the masses victimized by capitalism is higher than in other African countries—and certainly higher than here in the United States—they must go through further experiences before revolutionary possibilities in South Africa will have fully matured.

To find out more about OSAALÉ, readers of *Socialist Action* can get a copy of the latest issue of *OSAALÉ NEWS*, a newsletter published by this group. Send \$2 (plus two dollars for postage and handling—\$4 total) for the latest issue to: OSAALÉ NEWS, 899 Davidson Road, Piscataway, NJ 08854. ■

## Revolutionary trade unionism in S. Africa

By NAT WEINSTEIN

During the discussion at the OSAALÉ meeting, a large number of leaflets and newspapers were circulated by the different currents present. Someone handed me a newspaper, *SACCAWU NEWS*, published by the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union. After my return to San Francisco, I looked it over carefully.

It was something of a revelation. This union publication has little in common with most union newspapers published in this country today. Tomorrow, when the class struggle heats up, of course, it will be quite different, as was the case in the not so distant past. It's safe to predict that there will be a revival of class struggle union publications in the coming period of resurgent labor militancy.

Finally, I was told that although the leadership majority of SACCAWU supports the ANC, WOSA also has a significant influence in this union.

Below are a few representative selections from this union newspaper to give you a taste of its radical anti-capitalist orientation and educational function. (This issue of *SACCAWU NEWS* is dated February 1991.)

• One article from this newspaper is titled "Workers Reject Job Loss Threats." The following paragraphs sum up the line of this piece:

"The capitalist system is the cause of retrenchments. Capitalism means cut-throat competition between companies. This, coupled with a recession in the economy and a profit-grabbing style of

management, causes some company managements to plan to 'rationalize' and 'restructure.'

"This means that management may sell companies or assets. Capitalists may close stores, catering outlets or hotels. In this way bosses shift the burden of financial losses, arising out of capitalist production methods, onto the working class. Bosses cut workers' jobs and squeeze existing workers to produce more

**"If the Apartheid state can rule and exploit the masses with their 'permission' then South African capitalism will have a longer lease of life. This is what the De Klerk regime hopes."**

**—SACCAWU NEWS**

so that company shareholders can increase their profits.

"In the retail sector bosses cut costs by retrenching organized workers with permanent jobs, increasing shifts, and employing unorganized casual workers at lower wages. Workers need to plan, and take action, on a national scale to meet the ongoing threat of retrenchments. All workers in COSATU need to show solidarity and fight together against retrenchments." [COSATU stands for Coalition of South African Trade Unions;

SACCAWU is affiliated to this major labor federation]

• Another article, headlined "VAT (Value Added Tax)—what is it?", explains the concept of regressive taxes like VAT or the more commonly known sales taxes. It sounds like similar articles printed in *Socialist Action* newspaper. The piece concludes: "In summary, the tax burden is thus being shifted from companies and wealthy individuals to the poor."

• Finally, the editorial in this issue of the *SACCAWU NEWS* is titled, "Union members: Raise your voice!" The line of this editorial comes through clearly in the following substantial extract:

"The apartheid regime has over the past year initiated so-called reforms. They have removed apartheid laws from the statute books without fundamental change in the ownership of the land, shops, mines and factories. Their sole aim has been to get oppressed workers to agree to their capitalist exploitation.

"If the apartheid state can rule and exploit the masses with their 'permission' then South African capitalism will have a longer lease of life. This is what the De Klerk regime hopes.

"But what the apartheid state offers, and objectively can offer, is the crumbs and not the whole loaf. This De Klerk knows. Therefore the 'reform' process must be accompanied by a softening-up process, that is, the weakening of mass organizations.

"Strong and militant mass organizations are hindrances to the acceptance and forcing down of crumbs. Strong and militant organizations raise the specter of the 1984/86 insurrectionary struggles.

"In essence, the strategy of the state is

to co-opt, to weaken mass organizations and to involve the leaders of mass organizations in the 'process of change' but without the masses. But we know only the masses can emancipate themselves, only the masses can make history....

"The newspaper should become a forum for debate. We must meet the challenge of this period of change, for workers in South Africa and for the international working class. We need to debate our strategies, our politics, our economics with each other to develop a working-class perspective for a new South Africa.

"Differences will always exist in mass workers' organizations. These differences reflect the different experiences of different sections of the working class.

"Debate can become a process of clarifying our different understandings. The newspaper can become a forum for sharpening our ideas and strategies. We must be honest in our assessments and learn the lessons of our defeats as well as our victories.

"However we must harness these debates to build the union. In our debates we must stick by the principle of proletarian democracy: freedom of criticism but unity in action. This means that we debate vigorously, reach a majority decision, then all carry out this decision even if we do not agree.

"Any minority can continue to raise their assessments of any decided action/strategy until they persuade the majority of the need for a new plan; but meanwhile they must act in solidarity with the majority decision.

**"FORWARD TO FREE DEBATE!  
FORWARD TO THE VOICE OF  
WORKERS."** ■

By ELIZABETH CAMPBELL

# South African socialist begins 17-city U.S. tour

NEW YORK CITY— Mercia Andrews, the national organizer of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) in South Africa, kicked off a 17-city tour of the United States and Canada with her arrival here on Feb. 27. The tour, sponsored by the Democracy in South Africa Tour Committee, will conclude with her return to New York City on March 28.

The first event of the tour was a brown-bag lunch at the Africa Institute at Columbia University. Andrews appeared at the invitation of Prof. Anthony Marks, who had met and worked with her in Capetown. Her presentation on the prospects for change in South Africa was generally well-received, and inspired a lively question and answer period with 30 students, professors, and activists who came to hear the socialist perspective.

On Feb. 28, Andrews was interviewed by Zenzile Khoisan, executive producer of "The Africa Report," a radio program that is broadcast on WBAI in New York and on other stations across the country.

For information on when the interview will be broadcast in your area, call Zenzile at WBAI. Telephone (212) 279-0707.

Andrew Lukele, former professor at the New School and a member of the Organization of South Africans/Azansians for Liberation Education (OSAALE) also took part in the interview.

In the evening, Andrews spoke at a public meeting at the Union Theological Seminary in upper Manhattan. About 70 people attended the meet-



Mercia Andrews

ing. Socialist Action member Paul Siegel chaired the meeting, and Andrew Lukele introduced the topic and the featured guest. Andrews gave a sketch of the political situation today in South Africa, and fielded questions from the audience.

The discussion centered on the question of the call by Black activists in South Africa for a constituent assembly. Andrews also explained how WOSA is implementing the tactic of

the united front.

On Feb. 29, Andrews spoke at a meeting of OSAALE in the afternoon. That evening, she attended an OSAALE social gathering. Both events were attended by South Africans from various political currents, several of whom had come long distances to hear her news from home and her critical analysis of the current situation.

At a reception on March 1, hosted by Edith and Paul Siegel, the constituent assembly was again the main topic of discussion. Some people objected that the demand for a constituent assembly would not in and of itself create socialism in South Africa.

Andrews answered that WOSA had no illusions that a constituent assembly would lead straight to a revolution. However, she did not think that the De Klerk government would allow even this basic democratic demand.

At both the public meeting and the reception that evening, Andrews stressed the primary importance of rebuilding the mass organizations of the Black South African working

class—the trade unions, civic groups, women's organizations, and youth groups—most of which have dwindled to mere shells of what they were during the rebellion of 1984-1987.

Andrews pointed out that every member of WOSA must belong to at least one of these organizations or associations.

If Andrews comes to speak in your area, by all means cancel other engagements and go to hear her! Here in the heart of imperialism, we have plenty to learn from her and WOSA. For more information, on her tour schedule and radio engagements, telephone (415) 821-0459. ■

## Mercia Andrews tour schedule

Feb. 27-March 1	New York/New Jersey
March 2-3	Minneapolis/St. Paul
March 4	Pittsburgh
March 5	Lewisburg, Pa.
March 6-9	Boston
March 10	Milwaukee
March 11	Iowa City
March 12-13	Chicago
March 14	Toronto
March 15-16	Cleveland
March 17	Baltimore Washington, D.C.
March 18-20	San Francisco
March 21	Portland
March 22-24	Los Angeles
March 25	Kansas City, Mo.
March 26-28	New York City New Brunswick

## ... S. Africa referendum

(continued from page 1)

our behalf!"

But rather than accede to the Conservatives' demands that he call a whites-only general election—which could be difficult to win—De Klerk decided to appeal to whites by means of a single-issue referendum. "If I lose that referendum," he conceded, "I will resign."

A decade of increasing economic hardship and political instability has spread alarm among the white population—even creating dissent within De Klerk's own party. They fear, not without some justification, that they will lose their remaining privileges under a government dominated by the Black majority. The Conservatives' reactionary calls for "self-determination for whites," and for a "white homeland" are gaining a hearing.

And so, in the campaign for a "yes" vote on the referendum, De Klerk has tried hard to reassure white voters that he is working to protect "minority" interests within the new constitution.

At the same time, National Party campaigners emphasize that a "no" vote would be suicide for whites. If the "reform" process doesn't go forward, they warn, it could spark a radical—if not violent—response by angry Blacks. The whole world could unite against the isolated white minority, and young white men once again could be sent to the frontier to die.

### A change of tactics

It's not without irony that De Klerk and the National Party present themselves as the "reform" wing of white politics. During the last 44 years of apartheid rule, National Party governments used every means in the book—including arrests, assassinations, and bloody massacres—to fortify their power against the Black majority.

But the declining economy and the strong resistance by Black workers and township dwellers caused the "Nats" to change their tactics. Although the climate of political violence has hardly diminished (6000 Blacks have been killed since the



White South African neo-Nazis celebrate Conservative Party election victory.

beginning of 1990), the watchword today is "negotiations."

De Klerk hopes to preserve white capitalist power by drawing in a portion of the Black political leadership to share the spoils. It is for that purpose only that the ANC and other Black organizations have been given a place at the CODESA table.

With De Klerk's obvious approval, the ANC has been remaking itself from a Black liberation movement into a populist parliamentary-type party. Speaking at the ANC's 80th anniversary celebration on Jan. 8, Nelson Mandela announced the organization's plans to convert itself into an electoral party that would strive to get out the vote for ANC candidates "like a well-oiled machine."

Along the way, however, the ANC's political positions are being retailored to

appear less offensive to a multi-racial electorate—as well as to the capitalist class. The ANC shuns the slogan of "Black majority rule" in favor of self-determination for the "entire" South African nation. (*Johannesburg Star*, Feb. 19, 1992).

Mandela recently assured business leaders in the United States and Europe that the ANC is for "free enterprise" and that it would reevaluate earlier pledges to nationalize certain industries. In *Africa Business* magazine last month, ANC economic advisor Vellay Pillay spelled it out: "There is no intention on the part of the ANC to attack property rights."

Meanwhile, within the CODESA forum, the ANC indicated it was willing to make major concessions on the issue of power-sharing, even after a new constitution is approved. ANC Secretary General Cyril

Ramaphosa said in an interview with the *London Financial Times* that if the ANC wins a large majority of votes in a future election, it would still be willing to rule in coalition with the National Party.

It's no wonder that many Blacks feel that the CODESA negotiations are a trap. Chris Dlamini, vice president of the COSATU trade-union federation, told the *Johannesburg Star*: "The feedback we get from many of our members is that the government is taking the ANC for a ride. They feel that the ANC should withdraw from the talks and go back to the bush—so that the government should feel the impact of the majority in South Africa."

The white referendum will certainly strengthen this opinion among the Black population. How the ANC will respond remains to be seen. ■

# Communist Party USA fractures and retrenches

By JEFF MACKLER

(Second of a series)

The Feb. 9, 1992, disaffiliation vote of the 325-member Northern California district from the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) is symptomatic of events to come.

The previous CP leadership norm for dealing with dissenting groups over the past 60 years has been expulsion and public slander. Those who dared to utter even the most muted criticism were pilloried as "anti-Soviet, anti-leadership factionalists," and "harborers of alien class ideas," if not "outright capitulators to imperialism."

Similar slanders were routinely hurled at all those outside the CPUSA, especially those in the Trotskyist movement who expressed the very same criticisms of American Stalinism that are voiced today from every quarter of the still-existing world Stalinist movement and from its most recent splitoffs.

The Northern California district conference charged the Gus Hall-led faction of the CPUSA with a political policy of "cultlike exposition of dogma." The district chair, Kendra Alexander, and other central leaders, are among the many dissident CPers working nationally in a loose association of current and former members called the Committees of Correspondence. This group plans a San Francisco Bay Area conference in June.

Central leaders and rank-and-file majorities of party districts in New York, Massachusetts, Oregon, Wisconsin and elsewhere are in the process of similarly breaking relations with the rapidly disintegrating CPUSA.

The Jan. 23, 1992, issue of the New York State CP newsletter, *The New York Party Mobilizer*, reports, "The crux of the internal debate and division up to the 25th National Convention was whether these different trends would be allowed legitimacy in the Party. The National Convention, by its actions, sealed this debate, made it irreversible and proceeded purging party members, [and], in the name of 'factionalism'... lock[ed]-out all those who refused to accept the 'correct view,' as epitomized by Gus Hall."

The *Mobilizer* concludes, "We are continuing to feel the brunt of this atmosphere of purge as whole districts and collectives are disenfranchised and locked-out due to untenable circumstances in the Party."

The New York State organization, which claims some 550 members in New York City alone, has announced a reduction in dues payment to the National CP. In bold-faced type, it explained to CP club treasurers that henceforth, "All contributions to the fund drive go completely and directly to the District treasury."

Money has today become an important element in CP internal factional considerations. According to Soviet documents, an annual \$2 million subsidy from Moscow was discontinued in 1990.

## Still the same politics

Consistent with its Stalinist tradition of falsifying history, the Hall faction and its political organ, the *People's Weekly World* (PWW), denied that the Northern California rupture occurred. The Feb. 22, 1992, PWW reports a subsequent meeting of the district held "only a week after the former district leadership, unwilling to accept the majority decisions of the 25th Convention, attempted to dissolve the district organization."

A "temporary leadership," according to the PWW, was elected from the remaining CPers in the area. It was charged with "...reorganizing the clubs and commissions and other Party infrastructure, and reviving communications and cooperation with the CPUSA national center."

The newly elected interim chair, identified in the PWW as "Juan, a Mexican American trade unionist," described the December 1991 Cleveland, Ohio, CPUSA



Hall wing of CPUSA is placing their bets on another Soviet coup attempt.

National Convention as having "reaffirmed Marxism-Leninism as our guiding science, [and] democratic centralism as our principle of organization. It recognized the class struggle as the motor force of society and the working class objectively as the revolutionary class in today's world."

This reversion to traditional socialist concepts is limited exclusively to the realm of rhetoric. In practice, the CPUSA, like its co-thinkers in the reforming and reuniting Stalinist grouplets in the former USSR, maintains its 60-year commitment to a partnership with the liberal wing of the capitalist Democratic Party in the United States.

In the same issue of the PWW in which the new California leadership proclaims its allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, lifelong CP functionary and PWW staffwriter Simon Gerson reported on the recent New Hampshire primary election:

"Democrats, with the exception of Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, offered no bold challenge to the Bush administration and no far-reaching program for the change urgently demanded by the voters."

Gerson described Harkin, who has called for a five percent cut in the military budget, as the candidate with "substantial support in the labor movement." Turning to the upcoming primary elections in the South, Gerson predicts that Harkin's support in labor, combined with Jessie Jackson's support in the African American community, could derail the influence of Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton in the South.

Gerson explains: "The Rev. Jessie Jackson, with great influence in these states, could affect developments. This alliance, if effective, can make of the Harkin campaign a genuinely strong force and can possibly bring him to the Democratic nomination."

Both wings of the CPUSA have not budged on this key question of class independence. The minority wing refers in the *New York Mobilizer* to building an, "all-people's front against reaction" and the majority in the PWW to the "anti-monopoly coalition." In both cases, the politics are the same. The lesser-evil Democrat will be sought at the expense of building an independent working-class party.

## Canadian CP breaking apart

By HAROLD LAVENDER

Following is an article from the February/March 1992 issue of *Socialist Challenge*, the newspaper published by Fourth Internationalists in the Canadian state.

The official death of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) appears close at hand in the wake of the collapse of Stalinism and the break-up of the Soviet Union.

For 60 years, the Communist Party of Canada was characterized by slavish adherence to Moscow's Stalinist line. This contributed to the party's marginalization and failure to challenge the New Democratic Party (NDP) for political influence. Partly due to the failings of social democracy and the weakness of the revolutionary left, the CP gained pockets of influence in the trade unions, municipal politics, social action coalitions, and the peace movement, especially in British Columbia (B.C.).

Things finally began to change with the rise of Gorbachev. A new generation of leaders arose who advocated a pro-Gorbachev line. They sought to shed some of the Stalinist baggage of the past. Unfortunately, this was not done in the name of revolutionary politics. Like some other CPs around the world, the new Hewison leadership underwent a process of embracing the politics of the social-democracy.

The new leadership's agenda is in some ways a retreat to the right, but in contradiction, it also represents some positive trends. This includes a new openness to social movements, a new non-sectarian emphasis on left unity, and the dropping of the Communist Party of Canada's organizational/political sectarianism towards the NDP.

At the last CP convention in the fall of 1990, the new Hewison leadership won a slight majority. But tensions ran very high as the neo-Stalinist old guard resisted the transformation of the CP. While some of the old guard's criticisms may have validity, the Stalinist past is manifestly bankrupt. But Gorbachev's project also failed. An explosion inside the CPC was almost inevitable.

The Hewison leadership has no loyalty to an admittedly embarrassing history. They will drop the name Communist Party at the first opportunity. Indeed, the new independent *Pacific Tribune*, a CPC newspaper, is perhaps a harbinger of where they are going politically. However, they would like to keep the CP's not inconsiderable material assets.

As a result there is a very messy divorce. A number of the old guard were expelled in December. In Vancouver, B.C., the old guard seized control of the party's B.C. headquarters, locking out the elected leader, Kim Zander, and the staff of the *Pacific Tribune*. The Zander leadership has replied by seeking a court order.

It's a sad ending. But the price tag for big political illusions, justification of the unjustifiable, and a long history of reprehensible political practices is very high.

While the pages of the PWW are replete with support to this or that liberal Democrat, a most instructive editorial appeared in the Feb. 22 issue.

Under the headline of "An unholy plot," the modern day Stalinist journalists write: "On June 7, 1982, President Reagan met with Pope John Paul II to plot 'the demise of Communism' in Eastern Europe, starting with Poland... Reagan signed a secret directive authorizing economic, diplomatic and covert measures to destabilize the socialist countries."

The editorial concludes ominously: "The war continues today, seeking to block any attempt by the Polish or Soviet people to restore governments that will defend socialism."

## Look to Soviet Stalinists

The key word here is *restore*. By "defending socialism," the American Stalinists mean a return to power of the same bureaucracy that for the past six decades not only suppressed all genuine socialists, but physically annihilated the core leadership and ranks of the original Bolshevik Party—a party that, under Lenin and Trotsky—championed working class rule and real socialist democracy in the USSR.

The CPUSA looks to a resurgence of Soviet Stalinism in the former USSR, including another coup attempt, albeit, this time better planned and with a populist flavor.

The PWW approvingly described the Feb. 9 Manezh Square demonstration in Moscow organized by a combination of Stalinist ex-functionaries, military officers, anti-semites, and other currently dispossessed careerists.

This demonstration of an estimated 120,000, was a highpoint of the campaign of the old-line Stalinists against the equally pro-capitalist Yeltsin government. It was designed to take advantage of the generalized anger at the Yeltsin price hikes and the rapid decline in the standard of living.

The rally platform featured speakers combining social demagoguery and Great Russian chauvinism with neo-Bolshevik rhetoric. It foretold a future alliance of political and military reactionaries with anti-semites and neofascists of the Pamyat type.

The Hall wing of the CPUSA sees its future directly tied to the success of these still-powerful Stalinist elements in the former USSR.

Hall, in a taped speech just days after the August coup, declared his support for the coup, albeit with some criticism of the "narrow" nature of the combination of CP leaders behind the effort. Hall opined:

"The setting up of the crisis committee was a rush job, and therefore I think it reflects certain weaknesses. ... The committee was too narrow. It could have been much more influential if it wasn't so much related to the heads of the security organizations."

Hall went on to critique the coup-makers failure to properly utilize Soviet television to discuss the problems in the Soviet Union "with the people." The fact that this discussion was to take place while the coup-makers intimidated the Soviet people with guns and tanks was ignored. Hall, however, quickly changed his tune when it became clear that the coup would be defeated.

The newly-informed Gus Hall then stated, "The attempted coup was an illegal, unconstitutional takeover of power, using the phony excuse of Gorbachev's health."

Today, the Soviet Stalinists are scattered but still in control of many aspects of military, political, and economic life. They have publicly stated, as has the CPUSA, that the current government has no legitimacy.

Those members of the CPUSA who have resigned, or who will resign in the near future, have abandoned even the pretense of building a revolutionary vanguard party. Their project is a broad regroupment of liberal and left elements around an amorphous program. In short, both wings of the crisis-ridden CPUSA reflect two sides of the same coin of Stalinist politics.

The CPUSA will continue to exist in this country, perhaps with a bit more leftism in its rhetoric as befits the times. Its final demise will only be assured when the workers and farmers of the United States and the former USSR resume their historic march for power.

(To be continued)

# 'Inner Circle' depicts paranoia, terror and naiveté of Stalin period

By PAUL COLVIN

"The Inner Circle," a movie directed by Andrei Konchalovsky.

Back in the 1960s, director Andrei Konchalovsky happened to meet an elderly man who worked in the screening rooms for the Soviet film censors. One day, the man revealed that he used to be employed in the Kremlin as a projectionist for Stalin himself. That moment was the genesis of a new film, "The Inner Circle."

In Konchalovsky's script (co-written with screenwriter Anatoly Usov), the projectionist at a KGB officers' club is summoned abruptly from his bed on his wedding night. He is assigned to replace the regular projectionist in the Kremlin, who has mysteriously and suddenly died.

Ivan, the new projectionist, has difficulty believing his good fortune in being in the exalted presence of Stalin, Beria, Molotov, and their cohorts. Stalin actually speaks to him.

Ivan's adulation of these figures seems woefully exaggerated, but the director, Andrei Konchalovsky, uses the naiveté of the character and his vantage point to show the contrast between the official version of Soviet society and the harsh reality.

The chief concern of the state apparatus is security. The Soviet state is supposedly beset by a host of external and internal enemies—bourgeois imperialists, fascists, tsarist remnants, and Trotskyists—who will spare no efforts to undermine and eventually destroy the achievements of the first workers' state.

The main targets, of course, are the top leaders themselves. Hence, the extraordinary precautions to safeguard their every move, including thoroughly screening projectionists and other personnel. Security becomes more than an obsession. Only Stalin and his inner circle can be trusted—and not even all of them.

In one scene, a spring breaks in the projector during a film showing. Suddenly, the future of the Commissar of Cinema, who is present, looks very uncertain. The casual repartée of Stalin and the others, seemingly gently chiding the commissar, takes on a sinister cast. The commissar begins to sweat.

In fact, the entire population of the Soviet Union is suspect. People are taken away from their homes and families in the middle of the night for having associated with foreigners. Then the KGB comes for their families. Then it comes for their friends. Then for anyone who had any contact with them.

Very few, if any, real enemies are caught, but hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens disappear into the Gulags—or worse. This is the period of the purge trials of the mid-1930s, the time referred to by Russians as the "hell-black night."

Ivan believes every word that rationalizes this paranoid world, even when it begins to affect his own personal relationships.

His wife drifts away. Even children whose parents have

been charged as "enemies of the people" call him naive.

Outwardly, Ivan's faith is unshaken. He resembles, in his invincible ignorance, many supporters of Stalinism in other countries—especially those here in the United States.

What is the explanation for all of this? Konchalovsky presents a chilling picture of what life was really like for the average citizen—and the privileged few at the top—but it was not his purpose to offer a political analysis.

The only thing remotely resembling an explanation for why the workers, two decades after overthrowing the tsar and capitalism, were living in a constant state of terror is when an old man who shares an apartment with Ivan tells him that Satan lives in the Kremlin. Whether he means it literally or figuratively is unclear.

It still remains for a filmmaker to combine the artistry shown in this production with the political realities that have been known since Trotsky wrote "The Revolution Betrayed" in 1937—which are being verified by events in the former Soviet Union in the present day. ■



Ivan, played by Tom Hulce, idolizes Stalin.

## TV program slanders Castro

By BARBARA PUTNAM

"The Last Communist," a public television documentary presented on "Frontline," Feb. 11, 1992.

"Frontline" recently ran a slanderous TV program about Fidel Castro titled "The Last Communist." It appeared to be a hastily stitched together propaganda piece—a direct response to two rallies of historic proportions that recently took place in New York and San Francisco, which defended Cuba and its leadership.

The program opened with the narrator saying, "Last month, the passions that have split the United States and Cuba for 30 years spilled into the streets of New York City as anti-Castro protesters confronted a Peace for Cuba rally."

The narrator set the theme in "The Last Communist" by asking: "How was this revolutionary hero [Castro] transformed into the isolated dictator who has brought his country to the edge of ruin?" In order to bolster their point of view, the film makers interviewed several opponents of the Cuban government.

The program likened Fidel Castro to an old-line dictator of the Stalinist variety. And then it went even further, attempting to draw an equals-sign between Castro and Mussolini and Hitler.

Georgie Anne Geyer, author of "Guerrilla Prince," said about Castro: "His heroes in those teenage years were Hitler, Mussolini, and the Spanish falangist Primo de Rivera. They were not any of the democrats of the world. He used to walk around the high school at Belen with a copy of Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'."

Later, Ms. Geyer said: "I think he was much more affected by Mussolini than by Hitler. Mussolini was, after all, a Latin leader. Fidel loved his speeches." Here the viewer saw first a shot of Mussolini ranting and raving, then one of Castro giving a speech.

Joseph Hansen answered these kinds of charges long ago in 1978 in his book "Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution—the Trotskyist View" (Pathfinder Press).

On page 121 of this book, Hansen said: "Whoever patiently listened to or read Castro's speeches and studied their role in the Cuban revolution will find anything in them but megalomania (or 'ranting and raving' as the bourgeois commentators put it). Each speech serves a definite political purpose connected always with mobilizing support for the defense or deepening of the revolution. Each point in each speech is logically placed. Every explanation and every illustration is admirably chosen to drive the points home. The appeal is to the best emotions, not the worst, and the predominant relation between the speaker and audience is intellectual."

It is not logical nor permissible to equate means and ends, i.e. Castro gave speeches that move masses, Mussolini gave speeches, that moved masses, therefore Castro and Mussolini are the same thing. Mussolini served ends that kept capitalism alive in Italy by crushing the working class, whereas Castro serves ends that overturned capitalism and erected a workers' state in Cuba, which is anathema to U.S. imperialism. ■

## ... Soviet coup?

(continued from page 20)

Yeltsin are not fundamental.

The various *Pravda* writers are usually careful to say that they are also in favor of the market reforms, it is just that they are in favor of a slower pace. Russian Vice President Rutskoi, who has been given a lot of space in former Communist Party organs lately, says that he favors the price rises but just thinks they should have been postponed, maybe to October.

In fact, in its Feb. 5 issue, *Pravda* ran an interview with Valery Smirnov, the very same who intoned a war song to the glory of Great Russia in the Feb. 22 issue quoted above, but who this time was introduced as a representative of the new entrepreneurs.

The piece was titled, "The entrepreneurs go into opposition." Smirnov raised some arguments whose sincerity might be doubted, such as that business depended on the prosperity of the people and thus had the same interests, and that both honest entrepreneurs and the people were opposed the bureaucrats seizing ownership of state property. But his protest against the government's new tax on profits was no doubt more genuine.

This tax, like other measures conceived by Yeltsin's economic team may be badly formulated. But the price rise has meant an enormous increase in profits, while privatization is reducing the base of the state's

finances. The government obviously had to do something.

Curiously enough, it seems that both major factions of the bureaucracy, the Yeltsinites and the neo-Stalinists, are now accusing each other of backing bureaucrats seizing state property. On Feb. 28, Yeltsin's government promised a crackdown on this practice.

However, there are really only two candidates for running a capitalist economy, foreign capitalists or reconverted bureaucrats, both of which are becoming the focus of popular hatred and therefore demagoguery by the contending bureaucratic factions.

One of Smirnov's principal complaints was that the policies of the Yeltsin government—in particular, the breakup of the USSR—are making it impossible for Russian businessmen to compete with foreigners. In this connection, his chauvinist appeals and association with the neo-Stalinist assault on the Yeltsin government take on a particularly sinister cast.

### Anti-semitism surfaces

Anti-semitic slogans appeared in both the neo-Stalinist demonstrations. Moreover, representatives of the anti-semitic, neofascist Pamyat organization and other such groups participated in the Congress of Patriotic Forces held over the weekend of Feb. 8-9 in Moscow.

Aleksander Rutskoi, Yeltsin's vice president, also attended. He has taken a line similar to that of the neo-Stalinists,

although he claims to still support the Russian president. The major forces at this congress seemed to be the self-proclaimed rightist parties of the Narodnoye Soglasie bloc that broke from Democratic Russia, the former opposition coalition on which Yeltsin bases himself, because of the latter's refusal to defend the "indivisibility of Russia."

The Yeltsinites have called the neo-Stalinist campaign a "red-brown plague" ("brown" for fascist). The most reactionary forces and personalities have been associated with the "red," "patriotic" mobilizations. Thus, the Feb. 23 neo-Stalinist demonstration was organized by the military officers association, ostensibly to honor the Soviet armed forces.

*Pravda* reported in its Feb. 25 issue: "Mayakovski Square and the adjacent streets were decorated with the flags of the Soviet Union, the army and the navy, as well with those of the patriotic movements (ROS, NASHI and others)."

The speakers called for "beginning preparations for an all-people's *vecha* [the name given to assemblies of burgers and princes in the East Slavic city states of the Middle Ages]. Popular discontent with the government's course is so strong that even a defender of nonviolence as Father Lazar called on people to seek new Minins and Pozharskiis (the heroes of Russian state revival in the 17th century)." Orthodox priests and Russian aristocrats have been featured in these "patriotic" demonstrations. Both the main factions of the bureaucra-

cy have been tugging at the beards of the notoriously venal Russian Orthodox clergy. Yeltsin embraced Alexei II, Patriarch of all the Russias, in the post-coup period. Before that, the moth-eaten cleric had supported the calls for emergency rule.

Both the Feb. 9 and Feb. 23 demonstrations involved confrontations with the Moscow police, which is under the authority of the reformer, Mayor Popov. The police had to keep the neo-Stalinist demonstration separated from one in support of Yeltsin.

On Feb. 23, there were clashes between the police and demonstrators. This gave the neo-Stalinists the opportunity to accuse the reformers of Stalinist methods, as well as national blasphemy, i.e., assaulting patriots and veterans of the Great Patriotic War.

It would be natural enough for the Yeltsinites to resort to the tactics of the Stalinist bureaucracy, from which they come, even if it is a bit thick to see the pot calling the kettle black. But the Yeltsinites do not yet have the sort of structured repressive forces that the Communist Party regime had, or the worked-out ideological justification for using them.

The neo-Stalinists thus still seem to represent the most immediate threat of repression. And the "brown" undertone of their demonstrations underlines the dangers of the process of capitalist restoration in the former Soviet Union, which is supported by all factions of the decaying Stalinist bureaucracy. ■

# Trade unionists honor Harry DeBoer

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

ST. PAUL, Minn.—Harry DeBoer, a veteran of the the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes and a longtime revolutionary socialist, was honored at a memorial meeting in Teamsters' Local 120 Hall on Feb. 16.

Over 150 people attended the two-hour event, as an impressive list of speakers took the podium to eulogize Harry's achievements. Some pointed out how the modern International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) was built by means of the militant class-struggle tactics introduced by Harry DeBoer and his Trotskyist comrades, who worked in the Minneapolis coal yards during the 1930s.

Harry was a solid supporter of the TDU (Teamsters for a Democratic Union). TDU activists organized the memorial meeting and acquired the use of the Teamsters Hall. They invited Teamsters leaders from the national and state levels to speak about Harry's contributions.

IBT President Ron Carey sent special greetings that were read at the meeting. Carey's message said, in part: "Harry DeBoer's contributions to the labor movement were many. His leadership and fighting stance helped move labor forward and improve the lives of the working men and women and their families that he loved so much. His strong voice and his dreams for democracy and reform are becoming

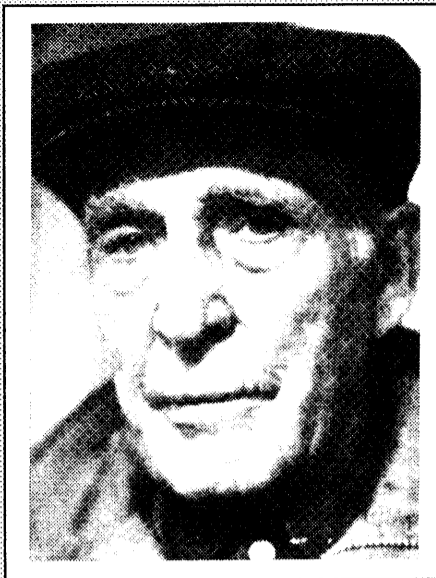
Harry DeBoer died on Jan. 1 at the age of 86. He had been ill for several years with Alzheimer's disease.

In February 1934, DeBoer was working in the Minneapolis coal yards when the workers went on strike. He became part of the leadership of the strike, and played a key role in the two truck drivers' strikes that took place later that year. In those strikes, under the militant leadership of Teamsters Local 544, thousands of workers organized mass marches and picket lines, demanding union recognition and higher pay. The 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike is considered to be one of the seminal labor struggles of the 1930s, when hundreds of thousands of workers organized industrial unions.

As a picket captain, DeBoer developed the tactic of "cruising picket squads." He and other strikers would intercept moving trucks driven by scabs and attempt to persuade the non-union drivers to join the picket lines. He was seriously wounded when police fired on the strikers on "Bloody Friday," killing two and wounding 50, mostly in the back. He was hospitalized for more than four months with a leg wound.

After the union victory, he became a full-time organizer for the Teamsters.

In 1941, however, DeBoer was blacklisted by Teamsters officials after a federal



court convicted him and other Teamsters and members of the Socialist Workers Party on frame-up charges of conspiring to "overthrow" the U.S. government. He served 18 months in prison.

In 1982, Harry DeBoer was expelled from the Socialist Workers Party for having political differences with the bureaucratic Jack Barnes-led leadership. But Harry remained true to his socialist ideals and the labor movement, speaking at numerous meetings throughout the country. ■

realities, thanks to his tireless leadership and support for these causes."

If Ron Carey had not won the IBT presidency this year, it's doubtful that Harry DeBoer would have been honored by any Teamster leader. Harry's background as a militant trade unionist would have made them recoil. But having Harry honored in a Teamsters hall is a small victory that shows there are possibilities for deepgoing reforms in today's Teamsters union.

Some of the speakers took time to criticize the business-labor partnership that has forced American workers to accept disastrous concessionary contracts. The government's labor relations boards were also indicted as the enemies of workers. All the speakers praised the Teamsters organizing drives of the 1930s, in which Harry played a central role, as an example of how to build a powerful trade-union movement.

The memorial was a fine tribute to Harry DeBoer. It affirmed that Harry's struggle to build a democratic and powerful Teamsters union for the rank-and-file would be carried on by others.

Jack Maloney, a veteran of the 1934 strikes, was the only speaker who touched on Harry's grandest ideals. He pointed out that Harry thought workers should have their own party—a labor party. And Harry foresaw the day, he said, when the American working class would do away with the bosses and build a socialist society.

Harry DeBoer believed that American workers, in cooperation with the workers of other countries, would usher in a new age of genuine freedom and economic equality for all. ■

By HAL MERCER

WASHINGTON—The Teamsters union (IBT) inaugurated its new international leadership here on Feb. 1. The slate of reform candidates, headed by General President Ron Carey, had been elected by the membership last December in the first-ever direct election of top officers held by the union. But the inauguration was delayed by a last-minute sour-grapes legal appeal by defeated incumbent bureaucrats—which was rejected by the government.

The newly-elected officers invited all union members to attend the inauguration, which was held at the international union's Washington, D.C., headquarters.

The mood was very upbeat, as officers and hundreds of rank-and-file members, including dissidents who had previously been barred from the Marble Palace, poured into the headquarters. Grinning, shaking hands, and hugging courageous brothers and sisters who had once been treated as pariahs by the Old Guard, they celebrated the rebirth of the IBT as a fighting instrument of the membership.

With new optimism, they talked of strikes that now could be won with the help of the international union. The New York White Rose strikers, for example, were out for a year facing scab herding by a hostile New Jersey IBT joint council.

## Carey takes the helm in Teamsters

Meanwhile, a member of the New Directions caucus in the United Auto Workers commented that he wished he was allowed into his union's international headquarters!

After he was sworn into office, Ron Carey addressed the union members in a speech that brought cheers. "Today we begin the work of building the new Teamsters, and our mission is to give this union back to our members," he said. "We've lived through a period where Teamsters couldn't hold their heads high because of the constant news reports about our corruption, mob influence, and lavish lifestyles of our leaders.

"But changing our image will take a lot more than public relations and press releases. The real work starts in this union, and it starts now."

"I pledge to you today," Carey told the unionists, "that I will use the full power of this office to rid this union of mob influence, and win this battle once and for all."

Carey said he would begin his first day on the job by putting up for sale the luxury jets, limousines, and the condominium in Puerto Rico that are owned by the Teamsters. He is also refusing benefits under a provision in the union constitution that allows the general president and a com-

panion to vacation anywhere at the expense of the membership.

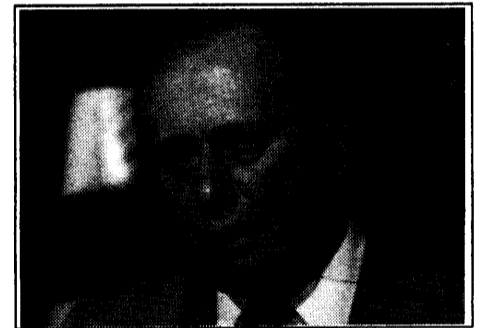
"To that special perk, I say, no thank you!" Carey announced. "That is not how your hard-earned money is going to be spent in the new Teamsters." He added that he would reduce his own salary.

In outlining his program for a more democratic union, Carey underlined the need for a new ethics committee to investigate misconduct and corruption, and to recommend disciplinary action. He said that grievance panels (many of which are dominated by the employers) would now invite rank-and-file participation.

Carey also vowed to hire committed organizers to rebuild union strength and increase the union's 1.5 million membership. He asked for the help of all members in the organizing project.

Finally, Carey said that "cleaning up this union is important. But it is only our first step. Our members and their families need better contracts. The entire labor movement has been losing ground at the bargaining table.

"If we want to change that record, we need new strategies to strengthen our position. We need to do a better job of telling the public our side of the story. We need to



do a better job of using our economic clout to win a better life for our members.

"We'll fight for legislation," he added, "to stop employers from firing workers who exercise their right to strike and for other measures that support working men and women."

Most union members eagerly followed Carey's speech and discussed it with one another afterward. Now, for the first time, they felt part of a real labor movement ready to take on the boss.

Several old-time bureaucrats joined in the clapping for Carey's address. ("The king is dead. Long live the king!") Others remained silent. Most of the leading dinosaurs and scab herders were absent.

Meanwhile, though generally keeping a low profile, some 200 Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) activists were there—grinning. ■

By JEFF MACKLER

Efforts to win the freedom of Marine Corps antiwar activist and Gulf War conscientious objector Tahan Jones were set back on Feb. 24. A motion by Jones' attorney, John Murcko, to dismiss the charges against his client "with prejudice" against the Marine Corps was rejected.

Instead, a two-day Camp LeJeune court martial against Jones ended when the presiding military judge dismissed the charges against Jones, but "without prejudice" against the Marine Corps, thus giving the military yet one more opportunity to press new charges against Jones and begin the legal proceedings all over again.

The Marine Corps is making a mockery of federal speedy trial legislation. The fact that more than 120 days had passed between the time Jones was originally charged with desertion in time of war, and the date of his court martial proceeding, should have resulted in both the dismissal of the charges "with prejudice" against the Marine Corps and Jones' freedom.

It is clear that the Marine Corps intentionally delayed Jones' court martial to maximize the time he spends at Camp LeJeune.

Jones' court martial revealed that the original May 16, 1991, death penalty-associated charge against him, "desertion in time of war," was used essentially to block his May 1991 San Francisco federal court effort to win dismissal from the Marine Corps, which was

## USMC continues persecution of resister Tahan Jones

based on a clearly-established family hardship.

In the middle of this May proceeding, a Marine Corps attorney rose to present Jones with a faxed copy of the charges. The result was a decision by the S.F. Federal Court judge Walker to dismiss Jones' pleas for discharge in apparent deference to the Marine Corps' more serious allegations.

During the Feb. 24-25 Camp LeJeune court martial, however, the Marine Corps argued that it had no intention of pursuing its original "desertion in time of war" charges. The Marines maintained that this charge, although sent to Jones, was effectively dropped, and filed away in some office and forgotten, ostensibly when the Marines learned that the United States had not declared war on the Iraqi people.

Two months later, lesser charges were pressed against Jones, including intentional missing of a troop movement and absence without leave.

Defense attorney Murcko, pointing out the original death penalty-associated charge against Jones, countered that the Marine Corps' maneuvers, including their delay in bringing the matter to a court martial, constituted "cruel and unusual punishment" against his client, not to mention great stress.

have been even more severe. Jones himself was repeatedly faced with Marine Corps pressure to testify against his friend and fellow Marine, antiwar fighter Erik Larsen, in return for an implied reduction in his sentence.

Jones' refusal to bend on his principles and his loyalty to his friend set a magnificent example of courage for all military resisters and for the antiwar movement itself.

Jones will now be compelled to begin his legal travail all over again, beginning with a new Article 32 hearing, a preliminary procedure he had already completed. This will be followed by a new court martial, "without prejudice" to the Marine Corps, which seeks to further punish Jones and isolate him from supporters and friends.

Funds are urgently needed for legal expenses. Checks should be made payable to the Jones/Larsen Defense Committee and mailed to: 1678 Shattuck Avenue, Box 225, Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone: (510) 655-1201. Letters to Jones can be sent to: Cpl. Tahan Jones 564-43-9553, HQ, 2nd MEB, Subunit 1, Bldg. 435, Rm. 311, MCB, Camp LeJeune, NC 28542-5090. ■

At that time, many of the Gulf War resisters incarcerated at Camp LeJeune felt compelled to accept plea-bargained multi-year prison sentences rather than risk a trial where the result could



# WHY CAPITALISM GOES THROUGH CRISES

Ever since 1825 or so, after the capitalist system of production had rapidly expanded from its beginnings in the cotton cloth industry in England to dominate Britain and spread to other countries, the world has experienced the phenomenon of periodic economic crises.

These crises have been given various names—"panics," "depressions," and "recessions" being some—but they all refer to the same thing. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels described what these crises are like in the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848:

"Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells..."

"It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on trial, each time more threateningly. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of overproduction. Society suddenly

finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed. And why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce...

"And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented."

Today, we are once again in the midst of one of these crises in the United States. How deep will it become? How much devastation will it wreak? That partly depends on how internationalized the downturn becomes.

Even Bush's economic experts, who predict an upturn soon—just as they did last year—say that their rose-colored assurances are based on the hope that the rest of the world will absorb big exports from the United States.

But much of the world is already in a downturn. The majority of the underdeveloped capitalist countries, those com-

monly referred to as the "Third World," are already very deep in crisis. Britain is in a severe recession. Industrial production in Germany is reportedly beginning to fall—and Germany has the strongest economy in Europe. Japan's economy is slowing, although it has not gone into the red yet.

The countries of the former Soviet bloc, where the bureaucratic caste is attempting to restore capitalism, are in a horrible crisis. Each move they make back towards capitalism makes things worse. So who is going to buy all these goods that Bush expects U.S. capitalists to sell abroad?

Marx and Engels describe an important feature of these periodic crises: In the course of the history of capitalism they tend to get worse. The grand-daddy of them all was the Great Depression in the 1930s. Then, after the Second World War, they abated in their severity, and it appeared that we could avoid really devastating "recessions."

But the period of relative capitalist stability and overall growth following the war was based in part on the enormous destruction of the war itself. The economies of Europe and Japan were in ruins, literally beaten flat. That certainly was "enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces."

Downturns have also been ame-

## Learning About Marxism By Barry Sheppard



liorated by unemployment payments, social security, medical benefits, and other "social wages" the working people have won through big battles, and which the miserly capitalists thought better to grant than face workers' revolutions.

These social wages put some buying power into our pockets during crises, which keeps markets from falling even further.

But times are changing. Germany and Japan have emerged as powerful competitors of U.S. capitalism once again. International competition has intensified and can only grow more acute. There is overproduction on a world scale—the world market cannot absorb all the products the competing capitalists would be able to produce if they used all their potential capacity.

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall has once again come to the fore, driving all capitalists not only into greater competition with each other, but to seek to squeeze more profits from the

workers of the world. That means they are cutting back on the "social wage" as much as they can get away with—as well as our regular wages when we have work.

The "conquest of new markets" and the more "thorough exploitation of the old ones" no longer means opening new areas of the world for capitalist plunder, or rebuilding devastated Europe and Japan, but ever fiercer competition over already existing markets.

How much "enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces" will it mean this time for a new revival? And how long will that last before a new and more serious downturn? No one knows.

But all signs point to a world capitalist economy in the period ahead of us—during the next years and decades—of crisis and hardship for workers. Uniting to fight back is the only way forward for us, and that is the road that leads to ending this system once and for all. ■

## George Chomalou: 1929 – 1992

By SHIRLEY PASHOLK

George Chomalou died Dec. 4, 1991, at the age of 62. As a child growing up during the Great Depression, George became convinced of the need to replace capitalism with a system based on human needs. At the age of 12, he joined the Communist Party's Youth for Democracy. Although he left after a year, he remained true to his socialist convictions his entire life.

After leading a student strike at Akron, Ohio, Central High School in his senior year, George joined the Akron branch of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

In 1949, George married Sophia M. Pappas, who became his lifelong companion, comrade, and friend. Before, during, and after their marriage, George received formal training as an opera singer. He studied at Julliard in New York City and with private teachers in Cleveland.

George's singing career was interrupted when he was drafted for military service despite a history of rheumatic fever as a youth. After being honorably discharged from the army, George returned to his home in Akron. He tried to join other members of the Akron SWP who were actively participating in the Rubber Workers Union. But a day in one of the local tire plants was enough to convince George that his health would not allow him to hold such a job. He resumed his musical training and went on to sing professionally.

Both the Akron and Youngstown SWP branches were hit hard by the 1953 Cochran split, in which a large number of party trade unionists left the SWP.

Losing membership under pressure of the witch hunt atmosphere of the 1950s, the SWP was forced to close both the Akron and Youngstown branches, and many other branches. For a time, George traveled to Cleveland to participate in the Cleveland SWP.

Eventually, George found it impossi-

ble to remain a member of the Cleveland SWP while living in Akron and dropped out. But he continued to support the SWP, holding firm to his political beliefs. When he moved back to Cleveland, he became a familiar sight at the SWP's weekly Friday night forums. He would come in dressed in a cape (the costume he was wearing at his singing engagement of the time.)

George rejoined the SWP in Cleveland and was a leader in the local Central America solidarity group. In 1981, open-heart surgery further restricted George's physical activity. At this time, George was concerned with the direction the SWP was taking. He fought against the SWP's increasing abstention from social movements and against the party's abandonment of its political program, especially its rejection of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.

George was inspired by the general strikes sweeping Poland in 1980 and 1981. He was shocked when the SWP organizer confronted him before a branch meeting and, pointing to the Solidarnosc button George was wearing, ordered him to "remove that reactionary button." In January 1984, George was one of many SWP members undemocratically expelled because of their political beliefs.

After his expulsion from the SWP, George joined the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and remained in it until his death. Despite increasingly poor health, George participated in anti-racist and anti-apartheid activities and joined in the movement against the U.S. war in the Persian Gulf. George's media expertise benefited many local social movements.

George maintained a personal friendship with members of many socialist groups. His home was always a place where one could count on lively political conversation, good food and liquor, and a large collection of classical music. He will be dearly missed by all who knew and worked with him. ■

San Francisco Forum:

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## Socialist Action's fund drive completed

By SHANNON SHEPPARD

The final results of the fall fund drive are in. We collected \$19,550 out of a total pledged of \$20,859, or 94 percent.

The shortfall resulted from two factors. One was the impact of the recession. Some of our supporters were laid off after they had made pledges, and just weren't able to pay the full amount. The other reason was that some supporters over-projected how much they would be able to raise in total pledges.

At the start of the drive, we projected raising \$24,000. This figure turned out to be unrealistic. A problem we had was that it wasn't until after the drive was started that we began to appeal to supporters around the country for pledges, so the \$24,000 figure was a shot in the dark.

In future drives, we should do more consulting with our supporters before launching the drive, to arrive at a more realistic goal.

An important feature of this drive was

the response we got from people who first heard about it through the newspaper. All these contributions, which ranged from a few dollars to over \$100 are an important sign that *Socialist Action* is appreciated by its readers.

These funds helped us move into our new headquarters, where the newspaper staff has adequate space for its work and for an extensive reference library.

The Business Office also has much better facilities, which should result in increasing our circulation, building on the success of our recent subscription drive.

We share space with the national departments of the Socialist Action organization, our Bay Area branch, and Walnut Publishers, all of which have more spacious facilities, too. These include a large forum hall and a storefront bookstore, and increased storage space.

Congratulations! And thanks to all who pitched in to raise this much needed money. It is being put to good use in helping us to expand our efforts to get out the truth from the viewpoint of the working class worldwide. ■

# Malcolm X's legacy: Inspiring message for Black youth today

By MALIK MIAH

The following is an abridged and edited version of a speech given by Malik Miah to a Socialist Action forum in San Francisco on Feb. 21. Miah is the editor of the book, "The Assassination of Malcolm X," Pathfinder Press.

It was exactly 27 years ago today—on Feb. 21, 1965—that one of the greatest American revolutionaries of the 20th century, Malcolm X, was assassinated in New York City. Malcolm X was only 39 years-old when he died, but he outlined a political perspective that is still relevant for African Americans and all working people today.

More Black youth identify with Malcolm X—the person and his ideas—than ever before. High unemployment, rotten education, lack of healthcare, and growing attacks on affirmative action and civil rights make Malcolm X—who stood up to the *status quo* and who advocated Freedom Now by any means necessary—a hero.

It's also why those seeking to influence Black youth have in the past and are now trying to pin "X" to their lapel. It includes Black Democrats like New York's Mayor David Dinkins, Black Republicans like the new Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and other former strong critics of Malcolm X.

The reverence of Black youth for Malcolm X, however, is genuine. That's why they buy the colorful "X" baseball caps or wear T-shirts with Malcolm's portrait. That's why the new rappers put his words in their songs. That's why last year a photo exhibition of his life in Detroit—scheduled to run for three weeks—went for five months. That's why Spike Lee's three-hour movie on Malcolm X is widely anticipated and already being debated.

Because of his untarnished political legacy, it's not surprising that few people attack Malcolm X openly. But I expect this to change when Spike Lee's movie is released. If the movie gives even a glimpse of this great person's life, it will upset the powers that be. This includes not only the capitalist rulers, but the pretenders in the Black community who don't want to hear about racism and oppression—or about the need for independent political action, which Malcolm advocated.

## Malcolm's final year

After Malcolm X's break with the Nation of Islam in early 1964, his political thinking developed and evolved. Of course, I should add, the seeds of his final views are evident in his earlier speeches made while he was a spokesperson for the Nation of Islam.

The speech "The Ballot or the Bullet," which we will hear more about later tonight, was one of his first speeches after breaking with the Nation. He gave it after he established the Muslim Mosque, Inc. and before he set up the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU).

This speech includes Malcolm's most succinct explanation of "Black nationalism." After his trips abroad, he dropped use of that phrase, while keeping the essence of its meaning.

Five days before he was assassinated, Malcolm spoke in Rochester, N.Y. In that speech [reprinted in "Malcolm X: The Last Speeches," Pathfinder Press] he outlined some of his thinking on the struggle for freedom. He explained that the struggle of Afro-Americans could not be seen any more as simply an American problem. It must be placed in its international context

as a world problem.

Malcolm elaborates on his world view later in that same speech. What are some of his key points?

First, he says, he believes in the "brotherhood of man." That is, he seeks a world where people are judged as human beings, not by the color of their skin. He explains that while U.S. society claims it is for equality, that isn't true. And it won't be true until there is

## Meetings nationwide commemorate Malcolm X's life



Schomburg Center

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Interest in the life and ideas of Malcolm X is growing. This is shown by the enthusiastic response to forums about Malcolm that took place last month in four cities.

On Feb. 25, *Socialist Action* staff writer Malik Miah spoke to some 200 people in Baltimore. The audience at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, (UMBC), campus was made up predominately of Black students, with several community organizations in attendance as well. The discussion was lively, stretching over three hours and touching on many questions of tactics and strategy in the Black freedom struggle.

Malik Miah was also one of the speakers at a Socialist Action forum in San Francisco on Feb. 21—the 27th anniversary of Malcolm's assassination. (Portions of Miah's speech are reprinted on this page.)

About 110 people jammed into the Socialist Action Bookstore for the event, which was highlighted by actor Michael Lange's rendition of the famous "Ballot or the Bullet" speech—originally delivered by Malcolm X on April 3, 1964. The San Francisco program was chaired and introduced by Kwame Somburu, a founding member of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity.

On Feb. 25, over 60 people, mainly from the Black and Puerto Rican communities, attended a Socialist Action forum in Chicago. Socialist Action member Ken Miliner summarized the lessons of Malcolm's ideas and activities, and the Gil Noble documentary film, "El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz—Malcolm X," was shown.

In Boston, on the same evening, well over

100 people crowded into the African American Institute at Northeastern University to view "El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz" and to hear speakers from South Africa, Haiti, the Nation of Islam, and the Tahan Jones/Erik Larsen Defense Committee. The meeting was sponsored by the Defense Committee and dedicated to the defense of Jones and other Gulf War resisters.

Chris Nteta, a long-time supporter of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, chaired the meeting. He stressed that the struggle in South Africa is tied up with the struggle in the United States, Haiti, and elsewhere—and that all of these struggles owe a debt to Malcolm X and the ideas that he implanted.

Guy Laurent, of the Haiti Communications Project, told the meeting that Malcolm "always represented something real" to him because Haitians are living under the gun. The philosophy of "turning the other cheek," he said, has played a role in perpetrating the oppression of the Haitian people.

Minister Rodney X, of the Nation of Islam Mosque #11, traced Malcolm's history before and after leaving the Nation. He said that, in view of his growing understanding of the government's role in dividing the movement, Malcolm tried to reach an understanding with the Honorable Elijah Muhammed.

Minister Rodney told the meeting, "it is a damn lie" that the Nation of Islam killed Malcolm. He asserted that the same enemy who instigated Malcolm's murder sought to blame it on the Nation, and he left no doubt who that was—the U.S. government. ■

W.I. Mohareb, Richard Hill, and Vinnie Longo contributed to this report.

radical change—that is, a revolution.

Second, speaking as a "realist," he explains, America is a racist society. And for it to change, Blacks as an oppressed and discriminated people must be independently organized as Blacks.

That's why Malcolm organized the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) was formed. Its aim, Malcolm said, was to organize all Blacks—whatever their religious or other beliefs—into a common group to win freedom now.

The Muslim Mosque, Inc. was set up, he said, for those who supported orthodox Islam. But the OAAU was secular so it could carry out political action, to lead

the anti-colonial revolution inside the United States—that is, the struggle for Black freedom.

Third, Malcolm said, Blacks must see ourselves as part of the majority of the world—not a minority. It is why he explains, as he also does in the "Ballot or the Bullet," that the problem of Blacks is a world problem, not an American problem. He says the issue must be one of human rights, not civil rights. He proposed taking the fight of Blacks to the United Nations.

Fourth, Malcolm categorically rejects the Nation of Islam's view (a view he once defended) that the source of Black oppression was the white race. He learned this, he said, on his trip to Middle East, where he met revolutionaries who were Brown and white.

## Reappraisal of Black nationalism

Lastly, Malcolm does not define his or the OAAU's philosophy as Black nationalism. Did this mean he now rejected the aims of Black nationalism? No.

In an interview he gave in 1965 to the *Young Socialist* magazine [reprinted in "Malcolm X Talks to Young People," Pathfinder Press], he was asked this question and replied: "I used to define Black nationalism as the idea that the Black man should control the economy of his community, the politics of his community, and so forth.

"But when I was in Africa in May, in Ghana, I was speaking with the Algerian ambassador, who is extremely militant and is a revolutionary in the true sense of the word (and has his credentials as such for having carried on a successful revolution against oppression in his country.)

"When I told him that my political, social, and economic philosophy was Black nationalism, he asked me very frankly, well where did that leave him? Because he was white. He was an African, but he was Algerian, and to all appearances, he was a white man...

"So, I had to do a lot of thinking and reappraising of my definition of Black nationalism. Can we sum up the solution to the problems confronting our people as Black nationalism? And if you notice, I haven't been using the expression for several months..."

This is a very important point. There are many people critical of Spike Lee because they fear he will not make Malcolm nationalist enough. In truth, Malcolm's evolution from April 1964 to February 1965 is crystal clear. He was becoming more "worldly," as he put it—an internationalist. He recognized that Black nationalism, simply put, was not enough of a program in a changing world in the battle between the oppressed and the oppressors.

His evolution was towards anticapitalist revolution to win true and full equality for Blacks. He was also becoming sympathetic to socialist views.

Those in the militant nationalist (and later internationalist) wing are few today. But the seeds are being planted in the Black community by the objective conditions of poverty and inequality.

It is the Black working youth who identify with Malcolm X who are the future leaders of the Black nationality. They are more

nationalist and radical than their parents. And they will become more internationalist, as Malcolm did, as they see our fight for full equality as part of the worldwide struggle for freedom.

An independent movement of Black people, in alliance with other oppressed and exploited working people, is bound to arise and fight until full equality is won. This final victory over discrimination will be achieved only with the establishment of a workers' government in the United States—a government which can begin to take the necessary steps to eradicate racism, implement affirmative action, and grant self-determination to Blacks. ■

# United workers seek alternative leadership

By MALIK MIAH

Although members of the International Association of Machinists' union (IAM) at United Airlines (UAL) ratified a new five-year pact in December by a systemwide margin of 71 percent, there is a lot of dissatisfaction among many union members and activists. This includes workers who voted for the contract who saw no alternative leadership in the union to lead a fight against the weak contract.

The sentiment for change in leadership, and more, has been especially true here in San Francisco, where over 12,000 of the IAM's 27,500 members at United work. Unlike most other locals, Local Lodge 1781 had a high "no" vote—46 percent. This opposition was strongest among mechanics. We objected to the "lump sum" bribe for the first two years of the contract and new take-aways in the agreement, including higher medical costs.

Since the agreement, UAL management has indicated that 1991 financial losses could lead to retrenchment and layoffs. Plans for capital expansion—particularly purchases of new aircraft—are being delayed. Scores of part-time and full-time ramp service workers have been laid-off.

## Looking for a change

In this context, some IAM members in San Francisco who opposed the contract are talking about the need for a change. Unfortunately, the direction these members are heading will not strengthen the union.

A group of workers in my work area (I work as a mechanic at the San Francisco airport) are now circulating flyers promoting the idea of mechanics forming our own union. This outfit, called the "Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal

Association" (AMFA), calls for the decertification of the IAM and the installation of AMFA to represent mechanics (and cleaners) only. Other IAM members would be on their own.

AMFA supporters say the reason for the bad contract is that the IAM is a "catch-all" union that allows baggage handlers, kitchen workers, storekeepers, etc., to vote on a contract that affects mechanics. Thus, the IAM is representing their interests and not those of the mechanics. AMFA wants a craft union.

This stance of AMFA supporters is wrong and if carried out will strengthen the company's attacks on all United Airlines' workers. The IAM leadership needs to be changed, and the policy of the union significantly altered. But decertification is no solution. Craft unionism undermines solidarity, a key element to winning struggles today.

## Why industrial unionism

While most members are upset with the top leadership's functioning, to throw the baby out with the bathwater is a big mistake. Unions are strongest when they organize the *most* employees, whatever their skill at a workplace (industrial unionism). They are most effective when the membership controls the leadership. That should be the goal of union activists in the IAM. It is a realizable goal, as the recent overthrow of the Teamster top leadership shows.

Craft unionism, however, is a sign of weakness for the labor movement. To believe that if only all the mechanics were alone we would be better able to fight UAL management, without the support of other classifications, is an illusion. The employers are already playing divide and rule against industrial unions. Smaller

craft unions would face even tougher opposition.

In the 1930s, the rise of industrial unions, in fact, was in response to the failure of craft unionism—an elitist concept. The crafts refused to organize the unskilled and poorest sections of the working class, especially if they were Black. Rank-and-file revolts by these workers led to the formation of "catch-all" industrial unions. These unions—auto workers and steelworkers, for example—strengthen the labor movement.

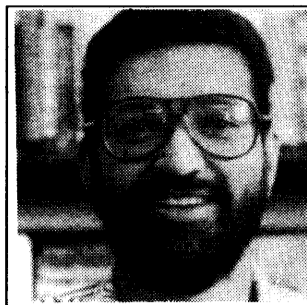
Craft unions like the IAM began to shift their narrow policy under the impact of the industrial union movement. Today, it is more than a machinists' union. That's its potential power. The IAM's strength is precisely because we organize most United ground employees. Unfortunately, we failed to organize reservation and customer service representatives last year. If so, we would be even stronger.

## Pilots example

The main argument of AMFA supporters is that mechanics are paid less because baggage handlers and other workers are paid *too* much. This is wrong. What UAL management pays mechanics is based on what we are strong enough to force them to give us. Of course, the company would love to pay ramp workers less, and mechanics too!

That's the case at Continental Airlines today, which broke the IAM in the early 1980s. Ramp service workers make 50 percent less than ramp workers at United. Mechanics at Continental also make \$5 an hour less. This confirms the historic axiom that wages gravitate downward, not upward—that is, to the lowest common denominator.

That's why it's in the econom-



## Which side are You On?

By Malik Miah

ic interests of mechanics to support our brothers and sisters with less marketable skills and at the low-end of the wage structure. Mechanics will get more wages and benefits if they support higher pay for lower-paid classifications.

Moreover, skilled labor should always use its leverage to help the weakest sections of the working class. Why? Because the more they get paid, the more we get paid. Unless such solidarity is given, we will only turn against each other instead of using our collective power to fight the common enemy (the employer) to advance the interests of all working people. Any mechanic's prejudice against ramp and other workers only helps the employer.

AMFA points to the pilots' high wages to say that's what mechanics could get if we were by ourselves. This is also false. When the pilots first set up their own associations (not unions) in the 1940s, it was to tell management they were more like them than labor. Pilots' associations began to function like unions only after the employers (Frank Lorenzo for example) began treating them like other workers, demanding concessions.

The Eastern Airlines strike had the biggest impact on their ranks. At United, not surprisingly, the pilots, flight attendants, and IAM are now in a loose alliance to deal with the company. This coalition, while tenuous, is a step in

the right direction. The three unions know if they stand alone they stand *divided* against top management.

Prospects for changing the direction at Local Lodge 1781 and the entire district representing United employees' systemwide, can be seen in one small example. Carl Finamore, a ramp service employee (a baggage handler), was recently elected chair of the 250-plus shop stewards' committee. He is the first ramp service person in the history of the local to be elected chair of that committee.

Although some mechanics have openly questioned having non-mechanics in the IAM, and Finamore ran against two mechanics, most stewards voted for Finamore because he stood out as a militant during contract report-backs. He spoke out and tried to organize a large "no" vote. He also explicitly rejected attempts to divide the union along craft lines, explaining that the broadest unity was needed today to fight the company and defend our interests.

What happens next in the local will mainly depend on what new attacks against the contract and union are undertaken by the company. Without a doubt, however, a layer of United unionists are seeking to strengthen the IAM against the wrong policies of the top leadership and the divisive challenges by outfits like AMFA.

## Our readers speak out

### Dialectics

Dear editors,

I have read the series of five articles by Cliff Conner with interest and appreciation. As a professor of history, I appreciate the very simple, easy-to-understand writing style.

The columns read like a lecture given to students in an undergraduate course, easy enough to understand the basics of the philosophies discussed and, at the same time, using real-life examples to enhance that understanding.

Unfortunately, I have lost the first three of the five columns. I am enclosing a contribution which, I hope, will also cover the cost of sending me clippings to replace my lost columns.

Lee L. Schreiber  
Lansdale, Pa.

### A new wind?

Dear editors,

I'm a bus driver in San Francisco. We've suffered one takeback after another on the job. Our wages have been frozen for two years, and the schedules get faster and faster.

In a few months, the city is planning to raise fares and cut bus service. But that's not all. City officials are also considering a proposal to privatize the system. One hopeful entrepreneur has promised to make the service "profitable" by hiring new drivers at a fraction of our current wages.

Our union—once the strongest city workers union—is now just a shell. Our last local president was kicked out for stealing from the members' trust fund.

But a fresh wind is blowing. I read that in our sister union in New York, TWU Local 100, a pro-democracy New Directions slate made gains in the last union elections, getting one-third of the votes for local president. Ron Carey's victory in the Teamsters may be a sign of the times.

W.L.  
San Francisco, Calif.

### New Zealand

Dear editors,

I very much enjoyed Joseph Ryan's article on "Why can't everyone have a job" in the February issue of *Socialist Action*.

Of course, as you know, our distant islands are subjected to the same inhumanity, whose scale is only less because there are less

people here. However, the crudity of the onslaught by the state and the bosses is exactly equal.

I thought the front page of our local paper was sufficient to drive these points home. The Americas Cup becomes the case in point, funded and enjoyed by the bosses as a conspicuous display of their wealth. Meanwhile, their own workers are cast out with no redundancy pay, and their disabled children have to rely on tents for their educational facilities.

Hope this is of some use. Since I have not seen anything in your paper on the Americas Cup, I thought this might be an inducement.

Charles Sedgwick  
Christchurch, N.Z.

### Soviet Art

Dear editors,

I want to congratulate you and your staff of journalists for continuing to put out an eminently readable paper with contents that match and often surpass.

I was particularly surprised—and pleased—to find you could spare room among more current concerns for your recent write-up of the avant-garde theatre designs of the early Soviet Union days exhibited at San Francisco's

Palace of the Legion of Honor.

While the subject was not of the contemporary importance as; say, Sylvia Weinstein's powerful article on Cuba and the United States, as a theatre specialist, I was delighted to find Michael Schreiber covering the exhibit.

I assume that had he felt free to use a bit more space, he might have pointed out—as he surely knows—that the Moscow Art Theatre, which influences our American theatre mightily, did

not go in much for the advanced designs in the exhibit.

In any case, congratulations on keeping your paper on the high level of quality and content it had attained under your previous editor.

I trust a two-year subscription will help you carry on as ably as you have done since his leave-taking.

Martin Ponch  
Oakland, Calif.

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# Is another coup on the horizon in the former Soviet Union?

By GERRY FOLEY

The old-line Stalinists are on the march again in the former USSR. They are trying to exploit the mass desperation caused by the capitalist restoration, as well as appeal to reactionary Great Russian chauvinism.

*Pravda*, the organ of those bureaucrats who are most dependent on the Communist Party structures and ideology, had spoken softly after the failure of the August coup. Since the January price rises, however, it has assumed an increasingly strident tone in denouncing both the Yeltsin government and the West.

The denunciations of the Western powers, in particular the United States, are new. Up until now, in fact, *Pravda* has generally used statements by U.S. and other Western authorities to support its pleas for "moderation" and "stability." In particular, the Stalinist paper has cited the opposition of the United States and its allies to "separatism," that is, to the breakup of the multinational state built by Stalinism.

Now it is raising an alarm about the possibility that the United States may take advantage of the multiplication of jurisdictions to intervene directly in the Soviet crisis.

"I would not be surprised," Yury Glukhov wrote in the Feb. 24 issue of *Pravda*, "if in the near future there were talk about international military support for an 'independent Crimea,' or an independent Kurile islands, Kaliningrad, Chechenia, Tatarstan, or what have you."

The breakdown of Soviet power is, of course, offering opportunities for imperialism. But up until now, the imperialist powers have taken a cautious line. They've done nothing to upset their cozy relations with the various factions of Stalinism, even if the explosion of national aspirations in the non-Russian republics forced them, belatedly, to make some adjustments.

Thus, the resumption of talk about the capitalist foreign devil does not seem to represent any desire to assume a less supine posture toward imperialism, but rather serves the local political needs of Stalinism. For example, a sudden shrill evocation of the imperialist threat by the former KGB boss, Kryuchkov, was part of the introductory music for the August coup, toward which the Western imperialist powers took a very understanding attitude.

## Singing old tunes

The nationalist fanfare of the neo-Stalinists is clearly directed essentially against the peoples of the former Soviet Union who have rebelled against the Stalinist prison house of nations.

One *Pravda* bard, decrying the sad demise of the USSR, even recounted that while waiting for a late local train to Moscow, he saw a group of girls singing the Hymn to the Soviet Union, Stalin's replacement for the "Internationale." He then quoted the verse most hated by the oppressed peoples: "Great Russia welded together an indivisible union of free republics." He took up the refrain, he said, with his voice breaking with emotion.

In a long article in the Feb. 22 *Pravda*, beginning on the front page, Valerii Smirov, the director of of Eksinter, a cooperative [that is, a capitalist enterprise], tried to strike up some even older tunes. He wrote:

"In the division of the country, the regime's [Yeltsin's] best ally, are those international forces that see the destruction of a strong Russia as a gain, the elimination of a powerful strategic rival. In fact,



**"Restoration of the USSR was among the principal demands of the big neo-Stalinist demonstrations on Feb. 9 and Feb. 23 in Moscow."**

the new rulers have given life to what up until has been the unrealized dream of all Russia's enemies from Genghis Khan to Hitler by transforming a great state into a new section of the Third World, into a source of raw materials for the 'civilized countries,' which are intervening like judges in her [Russia's] internal affairs....

"The history of Russia has never before known such an inimical government. It can only be compared with the betrayal of the Rus [the name of the ancient Russian state] by the boyars of the Time of Confusion [in the 17th century], who were ready to accept any division of the country and ready to take any sort of foreign support in the struggle for power."

Smirov tried to turn the principle of breaking up Stalin's empire on its head, arguing that the Soviet republics were actually artificial divisions of Russia. "How can you talk about the breakup of Stalin's empire," he wrote, "when the autonomous authorities and 'sovereign republics' were actually the fruit of the political games of the 'father of the peoples' and his cronies and heirs. They had nothing in common with age-old states. ... Rejecting Stalinism means in the first instance liquidating hundreds of fictitious borders imposed on one country."

Furthermore, he used the argument that if any people has the right to self-determination, then all do. He went on to argue that the Russian settlers in the non-Russian republics have the right to obstruct the reconquest of national independence for these countries.

"How can you talk of the right of self-determination," said Smirov, "if not one of the 'self-determining' republics has recognized the right to self-determination

within it? What sort of irreversibility can you talk about when ... with the separation of the Baltics from the country—despite the fact that for 50 years and for 200 years before that they were incorporated into Russia—we were thrown back to the time of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty?"

Smirov went on to say: "The division of Russia into autonomous authorities is as fictitious as that of the USSR. ... Those who are pushing the country to accept the 'new realities,' in fact are pushing us back to the 15th century, if not before [that is, before the formation of the Great Russian state]."

Smirov's conclusion was that "the first step to overcoming the present crisis is to overcome the consequences of the coup of August 1991 and restore the territorial integrity of the country."

## Chauvinist "left" demonstrations

Restoration of the USSR was among the principal demands also of the big neo-Stalinist demonstrations on Feb. 9 and Feb. 23 in Moscow. The first was organized by a common front of several neo-Stalinist organizations—the Russian Communist Workers' Party, the United Front of Toilers, Working Class Moscow/Working Class Russia, Lenin and the Fatherland, and a group of deputies of the now defunct Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR.

On the basis of the Russian independent press, the Russian language Paris weekly *Russkaya Mysl'* listed the following among the slogans of the demonstration: "Citizens of the USSR, fight for the territorial integrity of the Union!" "Out with the Zionist occupation of the mass media!" "Citizens of the USSR, fight for a united

armed forces of the USSR!" "Say no to the reprivatization and the pulling apart of the Soviet army!" "Yeltsin's return to capitalism is a bloody crime against the people!" "Out with the liquidators of the USSR!" "The fatherland is in danger!" "[Put] Gorbic and Co. on trial for the breakup of the USSR!"

The falseness of the demagoguery linking Stalinist-style Great Russian chauvinism with seemingly left slogans opposed to Yeltsin's procapitalist economic policies was highlighted by the fact that the first speaker at the rally was Colonel Viktor Alksnis, the leader of a group of chauvinist officers known as the "Black Colonels."

Alksnis has declared openly that he supports the capitalist restorationist policies but thinks that they can only be carried out by a "strong government." He backed off from the August military coup, but had argued in the preceding period for the imposition of "emergency rule."

The colonel argued that the present regime is illegal, since "no one has repealed the Union Treaty of 1922 or the constitution of the USSR ... and on March 17, 1991, the entire Soviet people spoke out for one Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." Furthermore, "more than 450 members of the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR have signed a petition for calling a special assembly of that body."

Thus, the neo-Stalinists are trying to use past elections, when the structures of the totalitarian regime remained essentially intact in most of the USSR, as a basis for reclaiming political power.

Obviously, a demonstration that denounced the reform governments so strongly, appealed to the military, and raised a slogan for a new government based on alternative sources of authority, was a serious threat to the Yeltsin regime—to say nothing of the governments of former republics of the USSR that have declared their independence.

## An "entrepreneur" speaks out

However, bluffing is a tactic typical of Stalinists, and it is likely that their objectives still may be more modest than their rhetoric. After all, their differences with

(continued on page 18)